

Boost for West London as Employment and Skills Hub is set up with HS2 funds

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Businesses and residents in West London are set to benefit from a new Employment and Skills Hub which has been set up with HS2 funding. The Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation (OPDC) has been successful in its bid to the HS2 Business and Local Economy Fund, securing over a quarter of a million pounds. The hub is being delivered in partnership with London Borough of Brent, London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, London Borough of Ealing, West London College and the Department for Work and Pensions.

The hub will help support West London businesses in difficult economic times and beyond, to provide stability and growth and to help businesses recruit, retain and develop a local, skilled workforce. It will also help local people gain new skills and access employment opportunities created by local businesses, as well as OPDC's and HS2's infrastructure and development projects.

The £255,200 funding award has come from the HS2 Business and Local Economy Fund (BLEF), part of a combined total of £40million in funding available to local communities and businesses that are demonstrably disrupted by the construction of Britain's new high speed railway between London and the West Midlands. This award joins the other 125 projects between London and the West Midlands that have

also benefitted.

HS2 Minister Andrew Stephenson said: “As construction of HS2 progresses, it’s crucial that impacted residents and businesses continue to be supported and benefit from the jobs and skills this project creates.

“With over £7 million already invested in helping communities along the HS2 route, it’s great to see this latest funding go to creating a new Employment and Skills Hub in West London, providing an economic stimulus as the country fights back from COVID-19.”

Cathy Elliot, Independent Chair of the HS2 Funds said: “These funds are critical to support business and communities close to the construction of HS2 that are impacted by the works, and I am pleased that this OPDC-led project is supporting the local economy. This award will positively support businesses and communities, providing a lasting legacy.

“I encourage other businesses and organisations near to the line of route to apply and gain the tangible benefits of these funds.”

Liz Peace, Chair of Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation said: “The Employment and Skills Hub will provide an important local lifeline to help counter the impacts of Covid-19. HS2’s funding kick-starts our plans to support local businesses and get people back into work in this tough economic climate.

“Park Royal is one of London’s largest industrial estates, home to 1,700 businesses and 40,000 employees, so its survival and long-term prosperity is key to the capital’s wider economic recovery. Through collaboration with project partners, the Hub will be ideally positioned to tap into local networks and create opportunities for those seeking employment or wishing to develop new skills.”

David Warnes, Deputy Principal Strategy, Planning and Communications and Managing Director, Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College said: “West London College is very excited to be partnering with the OPDC Employment and Skills Hub. Now, more than ever, it is important that we work collaboratively to support employers and individuals into sustainable, high quality employment. The Hub will be a crucial player in making this happen.”

The Old Oak and Park Royal area of West London is currently undergoing an unprecedented transformation as it prepares for the arrival of the new HS2 station. Plans to transform area are being led by OPDC and they project that the area around the new HS2 station will become a neighbourhood with the potential to create tens of thousands of homes and jobs.

In order to construct Phase One of Britain’s new High-Speed Railway between London and the West Midlands, HS2 and its contractors are expected to recruit for around 22,000 roles – many of which will be in West London and surrounding areas. In addition, there will be an estimated 400,000 supply chain opportunities for businesses to work on the project. HS2 and its contractors will work with the new Employment and Skills Hub to support the local workforce and local businesses to make the most of these opportunities.

As construction of HS2 gets underway, applications for the funds are still being welcomed. The Funds for

Phase One, independently administered by community charity Groundwork UK, support urban and rural, community, environmental and business projects.

Photo credit: HS2 Ltd

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