

Flannery Plant Hire open skills hub to upskill operators ready for jobs on HS2

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Flannery Plant Hire has joined forces with HS2's construction partner EKFB (a team made up of Eiffage, Kier, Ferrovial Construction and BAM Nuttall), to create a new training centre that can upskill local people ready for jobs on HS2 in as little as two weeks.

The purpose-built Operator Skills Hub, which has opened its doors and is already training over 100 new recruits, includes a 16-seat classroom, three indoor plant simulators and a four-acre outdoor space for practical training and assessments. It has been built on HS2's A422 Brackley Road compound in Westbury to enable trainees to see exactly how the skills they develop can be put straight into use supporting HS2's construction.

Patrick Flannery, managing director of Flannery Plant Hire said: "We're delighted to be opening the Bucks Operator Skills Hub. This will support local people to enter the construction sector, where there are significant skills and employment shortages, by gaining the skills to become a highly effective Plant Operator.

"We have worked collaboratively with many key stakeholders to get this established, including the Bucks

LEP, EKFB and the DFE. We look forward to it being a huge success.”

Flannery Plant Hire secured funding from the Department for Education to deliver a broad range of training programmes, including its two-week ‘Skills Bootcamp’ in plant operations, which is free to local residents over the age of 19. The two-week programme provides all the training and accreditation needed to start work as a plant operator and is designed to support those most in need, or who are looking for a career change, to develop new skills and secure employment in record time.

Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education Robert Halfon said: “We want local people to benefit from huge projects like HS2, and this new training centre will open up the ladder of opportunity to those who want to upskill or retrain in Bucks and Northants.

“Skills Bootcamps are at the heart of our ambitious skills agenda, delivering high quality training that will support more adults to gain the skills they need to secure good jobs in sectors like construction and transport.”

Recognising the crucial role that the Operator Skills Hub will play in upskilling the next generation and supporting Bucks residents into employment, the region’s Skills Advisory Panel has supported the Hub by providing funding for a complementary mobile training centre.

Furnished to a high spec, including classroom space and its own plant training simulator, the mobile centre will be used to engage job seekers at local careers fairs as well as providing a vital link into schools and colleges to demonstrate the local training and careers opportunities available.

Richard Harrington, CEO of Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership, said: “We were delighted to support Flannery with £750,000 Getting Building Funding to support the establishment of the Bucks Operator Skills Hub.

“This scheme will support local people to access the skills required to get sustainable employment in the construction sector, including future skill areas such as GPS training, virtual reality plant simulators and remote management systems on the most advanced construction equipment.”

The Operator Skills Hub will also deliver 12-month Trailblazer apprenticeships, which provide candidates with the skills and certification needed to operate four different types of plant machinery. Upskilling opportunities are also available, which ensures the Hub is accessible to anyone in the local area who wants to progress or start a new career in plant operations.

The Skills Hub has the capacity to deliver 400 Skills Bootcamp trainees and 100 Trailblazer apprenticeships every year, and the team behind the new centre hope to attract a further 200 people onto their bespoke two-week Skills Bootcamp over the next five months.

The Hub is seen as vital in addressing local skills shortages and in creating the lasting skills legacy that HS2 set out to achieve. Through its broad range of training programmes, the Skills Hub will create a pipeline of talent capable of supporting not just HS2’s construction, but other local and major infrastructure projects of the future.

Jhen-Nel Swanston, HS2's skills manager for the region said: "The new Operator Skills Hub will allow local residents, and those who are out of work, to access free training and develop skills for life, which they can quickly put to use in well-paid jobs in the immediate area.

"We have an extensive construction programme ahead of us and shortage of skilled plant operatives from the local area, which means our construction partners and their contractors are offering long-term opportunities with fantastic career development."

EKFB estimates it will need thousands of skilled plant operatives to deliver its programme of work on the 80km section of the new high speed railway between the Chiltern Tunnel and Long Itchington Wood in Warwickshire.

Emmanuel Rossigno, programme director at EKFB said: "The Skills Hub is a fantastic initiative and we're pleased to see it doing so well. Being able to provide quality, hands on training and experience to local people and those wishing to enhance their skills is important to EKFB.

"We want to leave a skills legacy that will improve people's lives, as well as bring more people into the project.

"We will need thousands of skilled plant operatives to help build the new railway and Flannery, EKFB and HS2 are providing an opportunity for people to be part of this once in a lifetime project, as well as equipping them with desirable transferable skills for the future."

For more information about the Operator Skills Hub, or to register an interest in joining its training programmes click [here](#) or visit [Flanneryplanthire.com](https://flanneryplanthire.com).

Image credit: HS2 Ltd