

Formerly unemployed Londoners celebrate new year with new careers on HS2

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Ten formerly unemployed London residents are starting the new year having secured full-time jobs helping to build HS2, Britain's new zero carbon railway.

Their achievements were marked at a celebratory event in the Lord Mayor's Parlour, Westminster City Hall, after all ten candidates graduated from a paid work trial with HS2's London-based construction partner, Skanska Costain STRABAG Joint Venture (SCS JV) and its contractor Danny Sullivan Group.

In October, unemployed residents from Brent, Camden, Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham, Hillingdon, Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster boroughs, which all border HS2's line of route, were given the opportunity to apply for a bespoke training and paid work trial programme. The opportunity, which allows candidates to earn and learn, while getting a feel for what a career in construction can offer, forms part of HS2's commitment to ensure local people, and those most in need, benefit from employment opportunities on the two-decade long construction project.

Ambrose Quashie, HS2's Skills Manager for Greater London said: "We're working closely with our employment partners in seven London boroughs to help people who are out of work to develop new skills

and progress into skilled jobs with long-term career prospects.

“The paid work trial scheme was a huge success, and we’re delighted for those that completed the four-week programme and have gone on to secure full-time employment.”

All ten candidates begin their new roles helping to build HS2 this month. Four will join the tunnelling operative apprenticeship programme, supporting the 26-mile-long London tunnelling works delivered by SCS JV. The remaining candidates will form part of HS2’s ‘orange army’ working at sites in Ealing and Camden.

Ruairi Coffey, Head of Training, Skills and People Development at Danny Sullivan Group said: “This programme is a fantastic example of how collaboration can have a real impact on the local communities we operate in. Being engaged from the outset and actively supported by HS2 and SCS JV throughout, it’s fantastic to have secured long-term positions for so many of the candidates.

“This is by far the most successful employability programme we have been involved in. The positive feedback from all candidates regarding their experience is testament to the integrated delivery approach we adopted. We are delighted to have all these individuals on board with Danny Sullivan Group and look forward to supporting them to develop long term and successful careers in this industry.”

A workforce of nearly 30,000 are already helping to build HS2 between the North, the Midlands and the South, and SCS JV forecasts that it will need hundreds more people to help construct the network of tunnels on the HS2 route to its southern terminus at Euston. The team is already making rapid progress, with two of the seven TBMs now in the ground.

The bespoke paid work trial programme, delivered in partnership with Camden Council, TheForge@ParkRoyal (part of the Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation), West London College and United Colleges Group, is just one of the ways SCS JV is striving to ensure that local people get to play a part in completing this engineering feat.

Frankie Jones, Skills and Employment manager at SCS JV said: “This programme has shown what a huge difference we can make, by working together as contractors, with HS2 and with our local stakeholders. We have a great opportunity to make a difference and we are committed to ensuring that the people and communities on whose doorsteps we are building Britain’s new railway benefit, not just today but for years to come.

“The candidates we have had the pleasure of supporting on this programme are a fantastic example of how we are bringing that commitment to life and they have a great opportunity to gain valuable skills and experience on the biggest infrastructure project in Europe. A huge well done to them all.”

At the celebration event, the candidates were praised for their commitment during the work trial programme and were each presented with certificates, marking their achievements.

18-year-old Malachi Robinson, from Hammersmith and Fulham, who will begin his tunnelling operative apprenticeship with Danny Sullivan Group said: “When I left Sixth Form I wasn’t sure what I wanted to do,

and then I met Ambrose from HS2 at a careers event for young black men. We kept in touch, and he let me know about the work trial, and from day one I loved it.

“I can’t wait to play a part in building the Euston tunnels. I want to work my way up the construction ladder and get my black hat, hopefully working as a foreman or site supervisor.”

49-year-old Christopher Marshall from Kensington and Chelsea, who will be based at HS2’s North Acton construction site said: “I’ve never worked in construction before, but learning a new trade and getting the chance to work on HS2 really appealed to me. It’s been a great experience.

“I want this to be a long-term career move. If I can stay with Danny Sullivan and work on HS2 up until the point when I retire, then that would be perfect.”

HS2 is actively recruiting for over 160 career opportunities, with vacancies updated daily on its [online jobs board](#). Candidates who are out of work, and eager to start a career in construction, can access specialist support and help with their application via [Camden Council’s King’s Cross Construction Skills Centre](#) or [TheForge@ParkRoyal](#).

Photo credit: HS2 Ltd