

HS2 celebrates more than 1,000 apprenticeships

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HS2 is celebrating another major milestone, with more than 1,000 apprentice starts now confirmed on the UK's flagship transport levelling up project.

The total number of new starters has reached 1,126, putting the company building Britain's new railway on track to smash its target of creating 2,000 apprenticeships.

In September 2020 when construction began on the first phase of the project, linking the capital and the West Midlands, HS2 forecast that it would create 22,000 jobs in the coming years. Its skilled workforce has now reached nearly 30,000, with thousands more jobs supported across the country in the wider supply chain.

With three further phases of HS2's construction in the pipeline, extending the new zero carbon railway to Crewe, Manchester and the East Midlands will provide a further boost to the UK's economy and the Government's levelling up agenda, years before the first trains run.

Rail Minister Huw Merriman said: "HS2's benefits clearly go far beyond improving connectivity and this is

another great example of how it is changing lives across the country.”

“The apprenticeship programme is an incredible opportunity for people starting their career, giving them the chance to work on the biggest infrastructure project in Europe while ensuring this pioneering project is being spearheaded by the very best new talent.”

The demand for HS2 apprenticeships has grown exponentially since the pandemic, with 715 new starters recorded since March 2020. The vast range of courses on offer, at intermediate to degree level, is proving attractive to career movers and college leavers seeking to specialise in roles from carpentry and cyber security to tunnelling operatives and environmental technicians.

Mark Thurston, CEO of HS2 Ltd, who began his career as an apprentice said: “It’s great news that we’ve passed the halfway mark and are well on our way to achieve our target of 2,000 apprenticeships at HS2. Creating early career opportunities and investing in the development of a skilled workforce delivers both immediate and long-term benefits to the UK economy, as well as giving us the opportunity to become a world-leader in high speed rail.

“Every person at the heart of that investment is helping to transform our railways and make city to city travel cleaner, greener and more reliable for future generations. There’s a great sense of pride about what we’re achieving at HS2, including the legacy that we’re creating.”

The ability to earn, learn and gain nationally recognised qualifications adds to the appeal of an apprenticeship and is what attracted HS2’s 1,000th apprentice, Jessica Miles, to start a new career.

30-year-old Jessica from Cockfosters, North London, worked in retail fashion for six years and climbed the ladder to management level. She had always been interested in a career in Human Resources but found it difficult to secure a job without the relevant qualifications or industry experience.

In 2022, Jessica joined HS2’s construction partner Align joint venture on a two-year Level 5 HR Consultant apprenticeship, where she combines work with study at West Herts College. It was the new start she was looking for, and the move has put her on track to secure the CIPD qualifications and work experience needed to build a long term career in the sector.

Jessica said: “It just goes to show that it’s never too late to follow your dreams. I was 30 when I started my apprenticeship, but my college education meant I was able to begin studying at Level 5, so I’m on track to gain a fantastic qualification that will really boost my career.

“I’m working on the biggest infrastructure project in Europe, helping to recruit a talented workforce to deliver the amazing construction challenges I see in front of me every day. I’m not just building my career, but helping thousands of others too, and we’re all working together to deliver this once in a lifetime project. It’s amazing!”

Every year, HS2 and its construction partners invest in bringing more apprentices into the business. Career pathways are now supported in over 40 different apprenticeship types, with education and training provided by colleges and universities across the country.

Investing in skills, employment and education is one of seven strategic objectives set out by HS2 to ensure the project leaves a lasting skills legacy. Through initiatives set out in its Skills, Employment and Education Strategy, HS2 is making great progress in its bid to upskill and create careers, not just jobs, for the thousands of people already on board.

For more information about careers opportunities with HS2, visit hs2.org.uk/careers

Photo credit: HS2 Ltd