

# HS2 CEO: Rail sector not attracting as many young employees as it should

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The Chief Executive of HS2 Ltd says although some real progress has been made, that the sector isn't attracting as many young people out of college or university as it should.

Mark Thurston was speaking to the Transport Committee last month when he said the gaps for HS2 are particularly when it comes to engineering.

He said: "We have been talking about skills in our sector for some time. There has been a lot of work done in not just transport but infrastructure, construction and engineering more broadly.

"The facts are that, as a sector, we do not attract as many young people out of college or university as we should.

"A lot of work has been done by the Engineering Council, the Royal Academy of Engineering and the institutions that has made real progress in attracting more young people from school and education into the sector. That is a much broader macro thing.

“It is engineering particularly. If you look at the back of the second half of our programme, it is mostly in systems. It is about getting qualified signalling engineers, system engineers, telecommunications engineers.

“Some areas are more niche than others, but we have a bit more time, clearly, to build up capability from the market for those.

“We have the national college, which is part of the HS2 agenda to bring skills into the High Speed 2 arena. We have a whole apprenticeship programme.”

He told the committee about a commitment for 2,000 apprentices right across HS2. Currently there are around 500 across HS2 and its contractors.

He said: “As a slight aside, as engineering and construction become much more digitally enabled and technology-driven – there is a lot of work going on in construction to move to more modular, technology-driven techniques – you will start to see a greater appeal of the sector.

“This will be particularly for young people and women. We need to bring a lot more women into our sector; we are also not very well represented in the BAME area. HS2 is an opportunity for the country to really grow a pipeline of talent, not just to serve HS2 but beyond.”

Click here to [read](#) the full transcript of the session.

*Photo credit: HS2 Ltd*