

HS2 commits to inspire future engineers

October 15, 2020



HS2 has signed up to The Tomorrow's Engineers Code of Practice, which is designed to make engineering careers accessible for this and the next generation of young people.

HS2 Ltd CEO, Mark Thurston, has signed the Code today, declaring HS2's support to increase the number and diversity of those entering the engineering sector.

In confirming its commitment, HS2 Ltd has agreed to work alongside other signatories to:

- Ensure all young people have opportunities to engage in engineering-inspired activities, so that no one is left behind;
- Ensure programmes contribute to a sustained and rich STEM journey for all young people;
- Promote a positive, compelling and authentic view of engineering and showcase the breadth of opportunities; and
- Improve monitoring and evaluation of programmes and activities to develop a shared understanding of what works.

Mark Thurston, HS2 Ltd CEO said: "HS2 is a project of vast opportunity and has a construction timescale

that spans two decades.

“That puts us in a unique position, as we can support young people’s learning of STEM subjects through our schools-based workshops, and provide pathways into work experience, apprenticeships and wider employment opportunities on the project. Today’s primary school pupils really could be the future engineers working on HS2.

“As a former apprentice, I know first-hand the value of inspiring young people at an early age. We’re proud to be part of this initiative and will continue to invest in young people to help make engineering accessible for all.”

HS2 has a well-established programme of curriculum-focused activity and has delivered over 50 STEM workshops in primary schools, through its Zoom Rail programme, engaging with nearly 2,000 7-11-year-olds. Secondary school pupils have also benefitted, with 110 STEM workshops delivered through its EPIC Engineers programme which is designed for 11-14-year-olds.

HS2’s dedicated education team works closely with local authorities and education providers along the route of Britain’s new railway to ensure that young people are at the forefront of learning, training and employment opportunities.

The team also provides support to businesses in HS2’s tier one supply chain, whose contracts stipulate that they too must deliver STEM-focused education outputs within local communities. Links into the wider rail and engineering sector, through programmes like Routes into Rail and partnerships with bodies including Engineering UK, ensures HS2 is driving a joined-up approach on school engagement in line with good practice standards.

The pandemic has presented unique challenges, but HS2 has been quick to respond, working with partners to adapt its education and work experience programmes to ensure that young people don’t miss out.

Richard Winter, HS2’s Education Manager explains: “We’ve had to adapt quickly and have modified our schools-based workshops to provide online resources which teachers and parents can deliver in school or at home.

“We’ve also seen a surge in demand for work experience placements, as a result of young people choosing to defer entry to University, or because they missed out on securing their place this year. We’ve begun the process of seeing how we can help by providing even more placements, as the opportunity to learn on one of Europe’s biggest engineering projects is invaluable to those seeking a career in the sector.”

HS2’s education team and its dedicated core of education ambassadors, who give of their time freely to mentor and coach young people, has also supported 130 careers activities including mock interviews, careers presentations and speed networking sessions. 160 students have so far been supported on work experience placements, with over 80 referred by HS2’s partner charity the Social Mobility Foundation.

Photo credit: HS2 Ltd

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