

HS2 contract awards drive growth for Stoke-on-Trent firm

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Thanks to its success in securing HS2 contracts, business is booming for Wardell Armstrong, Staffordshire's largest provider of professional services. The company is among over 2,000 businesses to have won work on Europe's biggest infrastructure project, with UK-based businesses making up 98% of contracts.

The multidisciplinary environmental, engineering and mining consultancy won its first HS2 contract back in 2018 and has since secured a further £6m worth of work, including two new contract awards this year.

The regular pipeline of work, supporting the delivery of the first two phases of Britain's new railway (West Midlands to London and West Midlands to Crewe), has enabled the company to expand its workforce across its 13 UK offices, and at its Stoke on Trent headquarters.

Caroline Mellor, Technical Director and Head of Planning & Environment in Stoke-on-Trent, who leads the company's environmental and ecology works on the HS2 programme said: "Whilst many businesses have struggled over the past twelve months, we've been incredibly lucky. The first national lockdown did temporarily impact workflow in wider areas of the business, but the sheer scale of our HS2 contracts meant we were able to redistribute work and keep our staff in employment."

“Our continued success also drove the decision to invest in creating a new commercial contracts team. Every department across the businesses has grown in size because of our work on HS2 and we’re continuing to create more new jobs for local people.”

First established as a mining and minerals company in 1837, Wardell Armstrong has diversified over the years. It expanded its portfolio in the 1990s to include specialisms in ground engineering and the environment, which ultimately helped it to secure its first HS2 contract two decades later.

The company now estimates that over 100 people across the business are currently working on HS2, with staff in its ecology, archaeology, hydrogeology, health and safety, engineering and bid teams all supporting the delivery of the new railway.

Wardell Armstrong is passionate about investing in young people and welcomed two more graduates into its Stoke on Trent HQ this month, as part of its continued drive to recruit, retain and invest in local talent.

Caroline added: “Our business ethos is very much about building from the bottom up and investing in our people. Lots of our staff have been with us for years and have secured promotions along the way, which we’re all really proud of.”

David Poole, HS2 Ltd’s Procurement and Commercial Director said: “This is a great example of how HS2 is supporting the UK’s economic growth as we strive to build back better from the pandemic.

“Wardell Armstrong’s repeated success in winning work on HS2 has kept local people in employment and is leading to the creation of even more highly-skilled jobs in the local area.

“I encourage more businesses in Staffordshire to register their interest in becoming a potential HS2 supplier, so that local communities continue to benefit from the job creation and security HS2 is driving.”

For more information about joining HS2’s supply chain visit hs2.org.uk/building-hs2/supply-chain/

Photo credit: HS2 Ltd