

HS2 contractor invests in upskilling Bucks residents ready for jobs on HS2

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Buckinghamshire residents have been given a helping hand to launch a career in construction with HS2's Aylesbury-based contractor, Blackwell Earthmoving Limited.

HS2's construction partner, Eiffage, Kier, Ferrovial Construction and BAM Nuttall (EKFB), appointed Blackwell Earthmoving to deliver the earthworks on a 30km section of the route from Calvert South to the North Chilterns. The scale of work to create the embankments and cuttings for Britain's new high speed railway is extensive, and the team forecast more local jobs would be created as a result.

To ensure local people were first in line to benefit, the team worked closely with Bucks Training Academy to support those looking for a new career. A local recruitment campaign resulted in over 1,500 enquiries and the free training programmes have so far led to 63 people securing a new job.

Ignacio Chicharro, Project Director at EKFB said: "We're delighted that Blackwell is going the extra mile to ensure local people benefit from the jobs it is creating. Over the next three years, around 12million cubic metres of earthworks will be delivered on this section of the HS2 route. It's a huge operation, and it's fantastic that the local community is playing a part in what we're delivering."

45-year-old Lincoln Dhana from Milton Keynes and 36-year-old Stephanie Oliver from Aylesbury both completed their training and transitioned straight into full-time employment.

It's been a huge change for Stephanie, who worked as a care worker during the pandemic. She never imagined she'd find herself driving a 60-tonne dumper truck, but the career change has left her feeling less stressed and gives her more time to spend with her family.

Stephanie said: "If I'd known there was a role like this for me in construction, I'd have gone for it years ago. I didn't imagine myself driving a 60-tonne truck, but now I'm here I absolutely love it.

"This is my first full-time job, and it gives me the security I need to provide for my family. Being local also means I have a great work-life balance, and for me that's really important."

Over the last year, Lincoln has completed three different training courses, which means he's now qualified to operate a broad range of plant machinery.

Lincoln said: "I've progressed really quickly, and new doors are opening for me all the time.

"Working as part of the team on HS2 is rewarding. You can see exactly how you're contributing to building the railway. I'll be able to look back knowing that I was part of the team that helped to make it all happen, and that's amazing."

Blackwell Earthmoving currently employ around 125 people to help them deliver their programme of work on HS2. They're proud that 13% of their workforce is female and that two thirds of their trainees come from the local area.

Paul Bird, Blackwell's Resources Lead said:

"Our contract with HS2 has really enabled us to engage with the community and as a small business, we like to employ local people wherever can."

"We're about careers, not just jobs, and that's why we invest heavily in training our workforce. The ability to live and work locally is really important to people and that's what we can offer, alongside the promise of a long-term career."

To register an interest in training opportunities with Blackwell Earthmoving Limited, email your CV to training@blackwellearth.co.uk. For details of all the latest jobs and opportunities working on HS2, visit hs2.org.uk/careers