

# HS2 first to secure Platinum Standard for equality and diversity

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HS2 Ltd has earned the accolade of becoming the only organisation in the UK to have achieved the Clear Assured Platinum Standard accreditation.

It received the award in recognition of its commitment to embedding inclusive best practice into all elements of its work, including the design and delivery of Britain's new railway.

In less than ten months, HS2 Ltd has enhanced its Clear Assured rating from Gold to Platinum. Through evidence-based assessment, it demonstrated that it had moved beyond ensuring its policies and procedures underpin the diversity and inclusion strategy, to demonstrating that its ideology is based on diverse talent being included in every aspect of operational performance.

A key element of the Platinum Standard accreditation is an organisation's ability to exert influence and make change happen externally. HS2 Ltd was credited for reflecting the wider communities it works with, and assessors praised it for being consistent and for helping to make a difference.

HS2 Minister, Andrew Stephenson said: "It's absolutely vital that we strive continuously to increase

diversity and support inclusion across government, public sector projects and beyond.

“HS2 Ltd has made a commitment to put inclusivity at the heart of their work and it’s encouraging to see their continued efforts receive recognition as the only organisation in the UK with this accreditation.”

Kate Headley, Director of awarding body the Clear Company said: “In an unprecedented achievement, HS2 Ltd has undoubtedly shown its ability to deliver constructive, authentic change.

“They have transformed inclusion with innovation, determination and excellence and are delivering a sustainable legacy of belonging for employees, the engineering sector and future rail users. Our assessment team were left with an overwhelming impression of an organisation that has the desire and direction to do so much more.”

HS2 Ltd’s approach in considering the needs of the end users of Britain’s new railway was also a key factor in the assessment. It demonstrated that it had stretched the boundaries of thinking in its design of Birmingham’s flagship Curzon Street Station, which received accolade from the assessors.

It concluded that HS2 Ltd went above and beyond mandatory regulatory obligations in setting new standards, using focus groups, workshops, panels, and soundboards to understand what inclusive design means for those with protected characteristics.

Mark Thurston, CEO of HS2 Ltd said: “This accreditation reflects the investment and commitment we’ve made to our company values at HS2 and the culture we are creating. Equality, diversity and inclusion are at the heart of that culture and all that we do, ensuring that we have an open, fair and positive environment for our employees to do their best work every day.

“However, we’re certainly not complacent and there is always more that we can do, including the challenge to embed that same level of commitment across the thousands of companies that make up our UK supply chain.

“We’re building a railway for future generations that will help connect many of the major towns and cities of our country, so it’s imperative that the diversity of the communities it will serve is reflected in our approach to the development, design, construction and operation of the railway.”

In a further sign of its commitment to the equality, diversity and inclusion agenda, HS2 Ltd has retained its Disability Confident Leader status for another three years. It is striving to address the gender imbalance inherent across the construction and rail engineering sectors and is actively aiming to recruit more disabled workers into roles right across the project.

In its latest performance data, HS2 Ltd exceeded industry benchmarks set for the percentage of Black and Ethnically Diverse, disabled and female employees that make up its workforce.