

HS2 heralds formal start of construction as a 22,000 'jobs boost' for Britain

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HS2 Ltd has today announced the formal start of construction on the project, highlighting the large number of jobs the project will be recruiting for in the coming months and years.

Earlier this year, on 15 April, the Department for Transport (DfT) gave approval for HS2 Ltd to issue Notice to Proceed (NtP) to the four Main Works Civils Contractors (MWCCs) working on the project to commence full detailed design and construction of Phase One of the HS2 railway (the route from London - West Midlands).

Today's symbolic announcement signals that the MWCCs are moving from enabling works, scheme design and preparatory work, to full construction of the railway.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said: "HS2 is at the heart of our plans to build back better - and with construction now formally underway, it's set to create around 22,000 new jobs.

"As the spine of our country's transport network, the project will be vital in boosting connectivity between our towns and cities.

“But HS2’s transformational potential goes even further. By creating hundreds of apprenticeships and thousands of skilled jobs, HS2 will fire up economic growth and help to rebalance opportunity across this country for years to come.”

The move to construction also heralded a ‘jobs boom’ on the project, demonstrating the value HS2 is bringing to the economy many years before it is complete, particularly in the post-COVID economic environment.

HS2’s main works contractor for the West Midlands, the Balfour Beatty VINCI Joint Venture (BBV JV), along with its supply chain partners, has said it expects to be one of the biggest recruiters in the West Midlands over the next two years, with up to 7,000 skilled jobs required to complete its section of the HS2 route. The EKFB Joint Venture (Eiffage, Kier, BAM Nuttall, Ferrovial) – building the section from the Long Itchington Wood site in Warwickshire south to the Chiltern tunnel portals, has said it will recruit over 4,000 roles in the next two years, many based in Milton Keynes, as work ramps up in the area.

HS2’s Tier One construction partners based in Greater London: Skanska Costain STRABAG (SCS JV), Balfour Beatty VINCI SYSTRA (BBVS JV), Align JV and Mace Dragados JV, confirmed that they will collectively recruit over 10,000 new jobs as HS2 gears up for major construction. HS2 Ltd itself is already directly recruiting for 500 new roles over the next three months, with the majority based in Birmingham, as the project moves into the construction phase. The forecast jobs boost is a clear sign of the key part that HS2 is already playing in supporting Britain’s post-coronavirus economic recovery.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said: “Today marks a major milestone in this government’s ambitions to build back better from Covid-19.

“Shovels in the ground to deliver this new railway means thousands of jobs building the future of our country’s infrastructure. This fantastic moment is what leaders across the North and Midlands have called for – action to level up our country by boosting capacity on our railways, improving connections between our regions, and spreading prosperity.”

Mark Thurston, CEO of HS2 Ltd said: “This is a hugely exciting moment in the progress of HS2. After 10 years of development and preparatory work, today we can formally announce the start of full construction, unlocking thousands of jobs and supply chain opportunities across the project.

“We are already seeing the benefits that building HS2 is bringing to the UK economy in the short term, but it’s important to emphasise how transformative the railway will be for our country when operational. With the start of construction, the reality of high speed journeys joining up Britain’s biggest cities in the North and Midlands and using that connectivity to help level up the country has just moved a step closer.”

The HS2 railway is a significant investment both in the near and longer-term economic health of the country. At this crucial time HS2 is already driving investment right across our country. Jobs, including apprenticeships, are beginning to be released on HS2’s construction partners’ websites and will also be promoted through employment partnerships with local authorities and specialist employment support agencies. Promoting job vacancies in this way helps HS2 to ensure that local people benefit from the thousands of opportunities available. HS2 forecasts that the project will create at least 2,000

apprenticeships on Phase One.

The Balfour Beatty VINCI Joint Venture expects to recruit 7,000 construction jobs on the West Midlands section of the HS2 route, with women and under-25s the core focus for recruitment and skills investment.

Michael Dyke, Managing Director for BBV JV said: “HS2 presents a significant opportunity for the West Midlands, with comprehensive plans to attract and retain the talented workforce required to deliver one of the most ambitious infrastructure schemes ever delivered in the UK now underway.

“Working alongside HS2, local authorities and charities, we are committed to offering people of all ages and backgrounds across the West Midlands the chance to benefit from the wide range of employment opportunities available through the scheme, including numerous apprenticeship and graduate positions.”

Skanska Costain STRABAG JV has confirmed that it will create an estimated 4,800 jobs, including employment for around 550 previously unemployed people and 400 apprenticeships.

James Richardson, Managing Director, Skanska Costain STRABAG Joint Venture, said: “The green light on HS2 has meant Skanska Costain STRABAG Joint Venture can now create more jobs and apprenticeships for the communities we’re working within and strengthen our industry for the future.

“We value our work in partnership with charities and communities to help promote these opportunities. This means we can attract the best talent, support those who might face barriers to returning to work, and make sure we’re representative of the communities we serve.”

Align JV expects to recruit 1,200 vacancies, with over 100 opportunities for apprentices. They plan to target their recruitment and investment in upskilling local people who are currently unemployed, with a particular focus on women, under 25s and those with disabilities.

Daniel Altier, Align Project Director said: “At Align we are committed to leaving a skills and employment legacy to the local communities alongside our works, and to this end we are working closely with local schools, universities and organisations to ensure local people are able to access opportunities for employment, apprenticeships and work experience.”

BBVS will employ a workforce of approximately 1,400 to support the construction of Old Oak Common Station. As well as providing over 250 apprenticeship positions, the joint venture is committed to attracting local candidates, of all ages and backgrounds.

Nigel Russell, Project Director for Balfour Beatty VINCI SYSTRA said: “HS2 is critical to the economic resilience of the UK and essential in driving the skills agenda forward; providing a variety of employment opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds, including a number of graduate and apprenticeship positions.

“As works begin to ramp up at Old Oak Common, we are now turning our attention to attracting, training and retaining the best talent, offering the opportunity to work on the largest new station built in the UK in over 100 years and play a key role in delivering Britain’s first low carbon, high speed railway.”

Mace Dragados JV, who this month moved onto the construction site adjacent to Euston station, forecasts that it will need 3,000 workers to help deliver the capital's new central high speed station.

Mace Dragados Project Director, Martyn Woodhouse, said: "The construction of HS2's Euston Station is an amazing opportunity to get into the heart of the local community and provide not just jobs but lasting careers. People sometimes focus on the construction jobs but there's so many more careers available on a big project like this and we want everyone to get involved."

David Lowery, Director of EKFB JV said: "It's our mission at EKFB to use the platform of the HS2 project to lead the transformation of our industry, influence future generations, support the UK economy and leave a legacy that improves people's lives.

"The creation of around 4000 jobs provides an unprecedented opportunity to do this. The focus of our employment legacy will be apprenticeships, worklessness and supporting people in education. We will also provide training and work experience programmes that can lead to employment opportunities for younger and other unemployed individuals, as well as working to attract underrepresented groups."

An estimated 400,000 supply chain contract opportunities for UK businesses will be created during Phase One of HS2, supporting thousands of jobs on site and many more around the country. It is estimated that around 95% of those contract opportunities will be won by UK based businesses and around two thirds of those will be small and medium sized businesses. HS2 will also significantly improve connectivity in the North and Midlands and will also integrate the existing network serving stations into Scotland, creating hundreds of thousands of extra jobs and an estimated 90,000 homes around HS2 stations.

Photo credit: HS2 Ltd

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