

HS2 takes on first full-time employees from the Kickstart initiative

December 16, 2021



HS2 has welcomed its first tranche of young people who undertook the Kickstart project into full-time jobs.

The UK Government launched the Kickstart project in 2020 to help young people whose employment prospects were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. It gives people aged between 16 and 24, who are on Universal Credit, the chance to secure a paid work placement.

HS2's construction partner, Balfour Beatty VINCI (BBV), pledged it would provide 30 young people with a six-month paid placement. Now, the first of those taken on through the initiative have gone on to secure full-time jobs with BBV on HS2.

Julie Venn-Morton, HS2's skills manager for the West Midlands said: "We've already committed to creating 2,000 apprenticeships, and this is a further sign of the employment boost that HS2 is creating, especially for young people.

"We hope that everyone who successfully completes their paid work trial will go onto secure not just a job, but a life-long career opportunity."

Amanda, 22, from Solihull, Samuel, 22, from Tamworth and Jack, 23, from Birmingham have all signed new employment contracts with BBV, enabling them to begin their careers working full-time on Europe's biggest engineering project.

Amanda struggled to find work, and so she decided to volunteer in her local community. She heard about the paid placement with BBV but didn't imagine that the construction sector would offer the type of job that she was looking for.

Amanda, who is now working as a performance and reporting analyst, said: "If you'd have told me growing up that I'd be working in construction I really wouldn't have believed it, but that's because I had no idea about the variety of jobs that are needed to help deliver HS2.

"I'm a detail person, so an analytical role really suits me, and I can see myself developing a career from this opportunity."

Thanks to his Kickstart placement, Jack was able to put his maths degree to good use. He had always wanted to work in finance and accountancy, and his new role as a site support officer is a step on the ladder towards achieving his career goal. On a daily basis, he's responsible for invoicing, matching suppliers and buyers and ensuring that everyone gets paid on time.

Jack said: "This is such a landmark project. I feel lucky that I'm starting my career here and putting my degree into practice. Kickstart enabled me to get my foot in the door, and just two months later, I've got a full-time job doing exactly what I wanted to do. I'm excited for what the future holds."

Samuel had been working as a labourer but was laid off during lockdown. The construction sector had always appealed to him, and he'd set his sights on becoming a mechanical engineer. After successfully completing his work placement, BBV has offered him a Level 4 site engineering technician apprenticeship.

Samuel, who will split his time studying at South and City College and working across BBV's West Midlands and Warwickshire construction sites, said: "The scale and challenge that this role offers is huge, and I know I'll probably never work on a project this big ever again. It's exciting to know I'm going to be part of the team laying the tracks for Britain's new railway. I'm so grateful for this opportunity."

Shilpi Akbar, head of stakeholders and communities at Balfour Beatty VINCI said: "At Balfour Beatty VINCI, providing opportunities for young people across the region is one of our absolute priorities. We want everyone – particularly those who are currently unemployed – to enjoy the wide range of opportunities available through the construction of HS2.

"Through the Kickstart scheme, young people will not only develop and hone the skills required to thrive in their future careers but will see the substantial benefit of their work enjoyed for years to come. As the first of our Kickstart placements settle happily into their permanent roles, it is clearly not an opportunity to be missed."

BBV estimates that it will need a workforce of around 7,000 people to deliver its programme of work on the HS2 project. As part of this it employs apprentices, graduates and is providing free training and support to

help local people who are out of work into employment.

Image supplied by HS2.