

HS2 urges jobseekers to sign up for thousand new training opportunities

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Jobseekers living near the **HS2** route will benefit from 1,000 new training opportunities from this week thanks to funding secured by one of the project's key subcontractors.

More than 600 people have already passed through the three dedicated plant training centres at Iver (Buckinghamshire), Brackley, and Sutton Coldfield which are run by Flannery Plant Hire in collaboration with HS2's main works contractors.

The purpose-built Operator Skills Hubs are designed to upskill local people ready for jobs on HS2, and other Flannery projects, in as little as two weeks, with funding from the Department for Education.

As the rail project nears the peak of construction, the hubs offer a broad range of training programmes, including its two-week 'Skills Bootcamp' in plant operations, which is free to local residents over the age of 19.

The two-week programme provides all the training and accreditation needed to start work as a plant operator - controlling the machines such as earth movers and dumper trucks that are vital to any

construction site. The programme is designed to support those most in need, or who are looking for a career change, to develop new skills and secure employment in record time.

Jhen-Nel Swanston, HS2's Ltd Legacy Manager said: "Once complete, HS2 will improve connections between London, Birmingham and the North while freeing up space for more local trains on the most congested southern end of the existing West Coast Main Line into London Euston.

"But we are also bringing benefits now, through initiatives like the Operator Skills Hubs, which allow local residents, and those who are out of work, to access free training and develop skills for life, which they can quickly put to use in well-paid jobs in the immediate area."

One of the people who have already benefited from the skills training is Leoni Moore from Northamptonshire. She signed up last year to be a Plant Operator and, as well as driving articulated dumper trucks, is also thought to be the first woman in the UK to be qualified under the Construction Plant Competence Scheme to drive a 'grader', a 25-tonne machine with a long blade underneath used to create a level surface.

Commenting on her experience, Leoni said: "It was kind of scary to begin with, because everything seems huge, but it was quite easy to pick up. I got on the machine and I absolutely loved it and just thought, I wish I'd done this sooner."

The Brackley Hub, where Leoni trained, includes a 16-seat classroom, three indoor plant simulators and a four-acre outdoor space for practical training and assessments. It has been built on HS2's A422 Brackley Road compound in Westbury to enable trainees to see exactly how the skills they develop can be put straight into use supporting HS2's construction. The hubs are run in partnership with HS2's two joint-ventures delivering main civil engineering in the central and northern sections of the line. Eiffage, Kier, Ferrovial Construction and BAM Nuttall form the EKVB JV, while Balfour Beatty and VINCI make up the BBV JV.

Aaron Davis, Flannery's Safety and Skills Director, said: "It has been a fantastic opportunity to work with BBV, EKFB and their respective supply chains to ensure a lasting skills legacy along the delivery route giving employers the skills they need today whether via new entrants or those already in industry upskilling. To be able to continue to build upon that legacy with the next wave of the Governments Skills Bootcamp programme is an exciting offer and shows what can be achieved when we all come together and collaborate for success both project and route wide."

The Operator Skills Hubs will also deliver 15-month Trailblazer apprenticeships, which provide candidates with the skills and certification needed to operate four different types of plant machinery. Upskilling opportunities are also available, which ensures the Hubs are accessible to anyone in the local area who wants to progress or start a new career in plant operations.

The Hubs are seen as vital in addressing local skills shortages and in creating the lasting skills legacy that HS2 set out to achieve. Through its broad range of training programmes, the Skills Hub will create a pipeline of talent capable of supporting not just HS2's construction, but other local and major infrastructure projects of the future.

The 1,000 places are expected to be spread over all three sites depending on demand over roughly 18 months.

For more information about the Operator Skills Hubs, or to register an interest in joining its training programmes click [here](#) or visit Flanneryplanthire.com

On 25th April, Flannery is co-hosting a Recruitment Fair at the 'EKFB' construction compound on the A422 near Brackley in Northamptonshire to promote the hundreds of careers and jobs currently available on the HS2 project. Visit EKFB.com for more information on how to register for the event.