

New HS2 exhibition space opens at Birmingham's Thinktank museum

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A new exhibition that showcases the hugely ambitious tunnels being constructed as part of the new **HS2** line has been unveiled at Birmingham's award-winning science museum, Thinktank.

The temporary exhibit, curated by HS2's construction partner in the West Midlands Balfour Beatty VINCI (BBV), explores the history and technological advances in tunnelling, alongside the story of HS2's construction. It is designed to help young people understand the engineering complexity of building a new high speed railway.

Thinktank is directly opposite the site where HS2's flagship Curzon Street Station will be built, which means visitors can get a glimpse of the construction works underway to build the viaducts that will carry the new high speed trains into the station.

The gallery space, which is open until 12 January 2024, includes a replica model of Dorothy, the giant 2,000 tonne TBM used to excavate the Warwickshire tunnels that form part of the HS2 network. It is accompanied by a range of interesting and fun facts about HS2's tunnelling programme, with the aim of

inspiring the next generation of budding engineers.

Shilpi Akbar, Head of Stakeholder and Communities at Balfour Beatty VINCI, said: “This fascinating exhibition, featuring our model tunnel boring machine, is a great opportunity to showcase to the region how we’re helping to deliver HS2 right here in the Midlands.

“Visitors can learn about how we’ve tunnelled underneath ancient woodland in Warwickshire, and the three-and-a-half mile tunnel currently underway between Water Orton and Washwood Heath in Birmingham.

“By bringing this highly skilled and innovative work to new audiences, we hope it inspires the next generation of tunnellers and engineers. That’s exactly the type of legacy we want to leave for this region.”

Construction workers and engineers from BBV, alongside representatives from its supply chain, will lead a series of gallery talks during the October half term holiday (30th October – 3rd November) to enhance the overall learning and visitor experience.

BBV will also join forces with Thinktank to deliver interactive science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) workshops from late November, as part of the exhibit’s wider programme. The sessions will involve local schools, giving pupils the opportunity to learn more about the HS2 project, as well as career pathways within the industry.

Welcoming the new temporary exhibition, Laurence Butler, Museum Manager, Thinktank, commented: “We are excited to have the tunnel boring model on display to enable visitors to Thinktank to learn about how the tunnels are being created for the HS2 line between Birmingham and London.

“This exhibit will highlight a new range of STEM careers as options for the future as well as show how modern technology and engineering allow a tunnel to be bored, reinforced and made ready for use, all by one advanced – and very large – piece of machinery.”

Photo credit: HS2 Ltd