

Unemployed Walsall residents offered fast track route into employment on HS2

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In a partnership between construction partner **Balfour Beatty VINCI (BBV)** and **Walsall Works**, a trial scheme to help unemployed Walsall residents start building a new career on **HS2** has been launched.

The work trial scheme allows residents aged 25 and over to access training and develop new skills, with a view to building a career working on the HS2 project.

Entrants must be currently out of work, and keen to learn valuable new skills and work experience, before progressing into permanent employment. Candidates will be offered an eight-week placement with BBV, with opportunities to try their hand in the HR, facilities, procurement and finance teams.

Julie Venn Morton, senior legacy manager at HS2 said: "We're delighted to join forces with our job brokerage partner, Walsall Works, who share our drive to ensure that local residents benefit from career opportunities on HS2.

"Our paid placement programmes have been hugely successful in supporting people of all ages and backgrounds back into the world of work, with promising career prospects for those that successfully

complete their placement. I'm confident this new partnership with Walsall Works will be equally successful."

It is hoped that the placements will allow candidates to get a real feel for what it is like supporting Europe's biggest infrastructure project, and those that impress will be given the opportunity to extend their placements and ultimately progress into full time employment.

Across the West Midlands, over 600 people who were previously unemployed are now working full-time on the project, and the scheme hopes to open the door for further opportunities. The West Midlands workforce is expected to peak at 7,000 as construction from Warwickshire to Staffordshire progresses, so there are plenty of opportunities available for candidates keen to be a part of this momentous project.

Shilpi Akbar, head of stakeholders and communities at Balfour Beatty VINCI said: "At Balfour Beatty VINCI, we remain focussed on providing employment opportunities for people across the region and encouraging new entrants to the construction and infrastructure industry.

"Our latest partnership with Walsall Works is testament to how we continue to go above and beyond to support unemployed people; helping them to jumpstart their careers while working on one of the most exciting projects in Europe."

BBV is expected to be one of the largest employers in the area over the next two years, and it is taking its commitment to local recruitment seriously. Working in partnership with Walsall Works – an award-winning initiative funded by Walsall Council to support local people to find jobs, apprenticeships and access training, while also supporting local businesses that are looking to expand and invest in their future workforce – the organisation is working hard to ensure that local people are the first to benefit from the huge range of employment opportunities that HS2 is creating across the West Midlands.

Councillor Adrian Andrew, Deputy Leader and Portfolio for Regeneration at Walsall Council said:

"The collaboration between Balfour Beatty Vinci and Walsall Works is providing our residents an insight into the development of HS2 and will help to raise career aspirations for those who apply for work or participate in training and work placements".