

University students secure summer jobs on HS2

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Thirty university students have been given a head start with their careers after securing paid summer placements working on High Speed Two (HS2).

For the second year running, Balfour Beatty VINCI (BBV), HS2's construction partner for the West Midlands, is giving budding civil engineers, quantity surveyors and design engineers the chance to put theory into practice and play a part in building HS2.

The initiative is driven by HS2's Skills, Employment and Education strategy, which strives to plug the skills gap by upskilling the next generation. BBV is building the 90km section of the HS2 route from Warwickshire to Staffordshire and teaming up with UK universities, and recruiting graduates, helps to ensure it has the pipeline of talent it needs to complete the civil engineering feat.

Julie Venn-Morton, HS2's Senior Legacy Manager for the West Midlands said: "9,000 people are already helping to build HS2 in the West Midlands and this investment in students, who live or study in our region, is a great example of HS2 delivering local benefits right now.

“Securing a summer job on a world-leading infrastructure project like HS2 is a great start to a promising career.”

Sixteen universities have partnered with BBV on the 2023 undergraduate programme. Locally, they include Aston, Birmingham City, Coventry, Birmingham, Warwick and Wolverhampton. As the initiative extends to students who permanently reside in the Midlands, undergraduates studying at Cambridge, Cardiff, De Montford, Derby, Edinburgh, Liverpool, Loughborough, Leeds, Manchester and Nottingham have also joined this year’s programme.

Two former placement students, that joined BBV’s 2022 summer programme, have since progressed into full-time jobs helping to build HS2 in the West Midlands.

Shilpi Akbar, Head of Stakeholder and Communities at Balfour Beatty VINCI, said: “Last year, we launched our first ever summer placement programme for local university students who wanted to learn new skills and get ahead in their careers. It proved to be a huge success, which is why we’re rolling out the same opportunity again this year.

“I’m looking forward to welcoming our new set of students this summer, including some returners, who’ll bring new and exciting ideas with them, benefitting us as a business too.”

This year’s cohort also includes students studying Architecture, Mathematics, Economics and Accounting and Computer Science, demonstrating the broad range of careers that transport infrastructure projects encompass.

35 year-old Ashley Aish from Berkswell is studying Civil Engineering at the University of Birmingham. Ashley said: “I’m super excited to be working on a project like HS2 this summer. I live really close to a HS2 site, so I’ve always been really interested in what happens there. Now I’ll get to experience it myself and learn new skills along the way.”

42 year-old Naomi Rutherford from Lichfield is studying Construction Project Management at the University of Wolverhampton. Naomi said: “Programmes like this are a great opportunity for women, especially those who are thinking about entering the construction industry but might be worried about fitting in. It’s really encouraging that Balfour Beatty VINCI is giving people a taster of what to expect if they choose this career path.”

20 year-old Anouska Antoine from Smethwick is studying Civil Engineering at Coventry University. Anouska said: “Taking a chance and stepping out of your comfort zone can lead to great things. That’s why I’ve chosen to join BBV on this summer placement and learn as much as I can about the construction industry.”

21 year-old Benjamin Masillamany from Coventry is studying Civil Engineering at the University of Warwick. Benjamin said: “I did my first summer placement with BBV last year, which was a great experience. Everyone I met was really welcoming and generous with the amount of support they gave me. As a result, I learned lots of new skills, which really helped me in my studies too. That’s why I’ve decided to come back this summer and do it all again. I couldn’t recommend it enough.”

For more information about careers and opportunities to work on HS2, visit hs2.org.uk/careers

Photo credit: HS2 Ltd