

WMCA hosts visit from infrastructure leaders bringing HS2 to the region

July 20, 2020



The Balfour Beatty VINCI joint venture, responsible for the delivery of two High Speed 2 (HS2) main civil engineering contracts, has visited the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) to see how it is upskilling local people to work on the rail project.

Balfour Beatty VINCI shared its experience of delivering social value with the WMCA and its partners, showing how the construction of high speed rail projects across the world has benefited communities in those areas, in the long term.

During last Friday's visit to Solihull, Balfour Beatty VINCI also saw how local people are learning new skills to help the region build its way out of the Covid-19 economic shutdown, thanks to funding from the WMCA through its Construction Gateway programme.

This included demonstrations of the new construction simulator training centre at Solihull College & University Centre – the first of its kind in the region – and hands-on civil engineering and plant training at training provider RMF Construction's academy in Solihull.

Andy Street, the Mayor of the West Midlands, said: “HS2 is Europe’s biggest infrastructure project and will be vital to our region’s economic recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

“At a time of such economic uncertainty we need to use major schemes like HS2 to help secure people’s employment and create jobs for those who sadly fall out of work. The WMCA’s Construction Gateway aims to support construction projects like HS2, by offering free training and a guaranteed job interview to those who are unemployed or at the lower end of the jobs market.

“I’m very pleased that the delegation from Balfour Beatty VINCI have taken the time to come and see this fantastic work we’re funding, and I am sure we will continue to work together on future projects to help create local jobs for local people.”

Balfour Beatty VINCI also met employers who are interviewing trainees for roles available now working on HS2, and other partners who are working with the WMCA to give local residents new opportunities in construction through the project.

These include the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB), Flannery Plant Hire, Lynch Plant, Tenstar Simulation AB, Solihull College & University Centre, and RMF Construction.

HS2 Ltd is also currently searching for people to play a part in the delivery of Britain’s new low carbon high speed railway. It is directly recruiting for over 300 roles, across a broad range of disciplines, to be based at its flagship head office in Birmingham and is prioritising local people in its job search.

Julie Venn-Morton, HS2 Ltd’s skills manager, said: “HS2 will create thousands of opportunities for people in the West Midlands in the months and years ahead. Right now, we are recruiting for 300 Birmingham-based roles and I’d actively encourage local people who are looking for work, or a career change, to sign up and take part in our skills match assessment at www.hs2.org.uk/hs2-and-you/.”

Balfour Beatty VINCI, a long-established joint venture between two global infrastructure leaders, is responsible for earthworks, ground engineering, viaducts and tunnels along a 90 kilometre stretch between the Long Itchington Wood Green tunnel in the south to the West Coast Main Line tie-in near Lichfield in the north with a major junction into central Birmingham at Curzon Street.

The five-strong delegation to Solihull included Alun Williams of Balfour Beatty VINCI, who said: “It was great to see for ourselves how local people are benefiting from the latest training in construction skills as well as the programmes in place, to support people in securing employment.

“We look forward to learning more about the good work being done by WMCA and its partners over the coming months and to continuing our relationship as we begin to construct Britain’s new low carbon, high speed railway.”

The WMCA’s Construction Gateway programme offers unemployed people, or those on short-hours contracts or low-skilled jobs, free construction training and a guaranteed job interview at the end of the course.

Cllr George Duggins, WMCA portfolio holder for productivity and skills and leader of Coventry City Council, said: “As we recover from the Covid-19 lockdown, the construction of HS2 will provide a much-needed jobs boost for our region.

“The Construction Gateway is a great opportunity for local people to gain the skills needed to land these jobs.”

To sign up for construction training, contact the National Careers Service West Midlands on 0121 296 5550, or you can find out more information about the National Careers Service via <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/> or by calling 0800 100 900.

Residents can access links to new job opportunities and online adult education training by visiting the WMCA’s Covid-19 support site at <https://beta.wmca.org.uk/what-we-do/covid-19-support/online-resources/>

Photo credit: West Midlands Combined Authority