

PRESS RELEASE

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Back on track thanks to HS2

Eight women from the West Midlands have secured jobs or received employment offers within the construction sector, supporting the delivery of HS2, thanks to a pilot work experience programme.

The Women into Construction programme is designed for the unemployed, those looking for new opportunities and individuals from disadvantaged and under-represented groups. It meets with HS2's objectives to tackle the gender gap in the construction sector and ensure that local people benefit from the jobs and opportunities that HS2 is creating.

Fifteen women, aged 24-54, signed up for the six-week programme, which was developed, funded and delivered by HS2 Ltd, Women into Construction, West Midlands Combined Authority, South and City College, and supported by DWP, Birmingham City Council and the National Careers Service.

Following an initial two-week employability course, all 15 women gained their Health & Safety Level 1 accreditation, and 93% achieved their CSCS card. They then moved on to complete four-week work experience placements with HS2 Ltd and local companies within its supply chain.

The work placement element of the programme, delivered in partnership with local companies helping to deliver Britain's new railway, gave the women first-hand experience of the roles and opportunities that HS2 is creating.

Now, just six weeks later, over half of those who enrolled onto the programme have secured a job or employment offer in the construction sector, supporting the delivery of HS2.

HS2 Ltd's Skills Manager, Julie Venn Morton explains:

"Women are vastly underrepresented in the construction industry and that's a trend that we're passionate about reversing.

"With 30,000 jobs expected to be supported by the project, HS2 really does open up opportunities for people from all walks of life. This pilot project

has shown that not only are women keen to get into the sector, but employers are actively looking to recruit them.

“This is just the start of what we’re striving to achieve at HS2. Women have a crucial role to play in the delivery of Britain’s biggest engineering project and we’ll continue developing innovative practices to ensure we bring them on board.”

Alison Tucker, Project Manager at Women into Construction, said:

“We’re delighted to have partnered with HS2 Ltd, its supply chain and organisations in the West Midlands to have delivered this pilot programme, and I hope it opens the doors for many more women in the months and years ahead.

“Construction programmes on the size and scale of HS2 really don’t come around very often, and it’s amazing that local women, who had no idea whether a role in construction was for them, are now part of the team helping to deliver this transformative rail project.”

CASE STUDIES - Women who have gone on to secure full-time employment

- **30 year-old Rozie Harris from Stratford upon Avon** took voluntary redundancy in March, and was keen to get back into work. She signed up for the Women into Construction Programme hoping to ignite a career in civil engineering, which she’d been passionate about since a child, as her Dad worked as a senior site engineer in both the rail and road industries.
In just four weeks, Rozie went on to gain a full-time job with HS2’s early works contractor, Fusion. Working as senior project engineer, Rozie is now playing a crucial role in the early works programme for HS2’s Phase One route between Birmingham and London.
- The programme also helped **26 year-old Charlotte from Acocks Green, Birmingham** to get her career back on track. Charlotte had been working part-time as a lifeguard but wanted a full-time role that offered better career prospects. After a successful work experience placement with HS2’s tier two contractor AECOM, Charlotte has now secured work with the company and is conducting ecology surveys across the West Midlands to help HS2 achieve its

environmental commitments. Between the West Midlands and London, HS2 is creating over 33 square kilometres of new wildlife habitats - the equivalent of 4,600 football pitches, which is 30% more than what there is now. Charlotte has made a great impression with the team at Aecom and is currently spending two months working on site at the southern end of the route in London to enhance her experience and long-term career prospects with the company.

- Following a successful work placement with Currall Lewis and Martin (Construction) Ltd, a subcontractor for LMJV on HS2's West Midlands-based enabling works programme, **30 year-old Michaela** has gone on to secure a full-time role with the company. Eager to work in a hand-on site-based role, Michaela is now happily donning her PPE (personal protective equipment) and supporting the team in delivering ground clearance, site surveys and demolition works.
- **31 year-old Teena from Wolverhampton** has been offered a five-year, degree-level civil engineering apprenticeship with HS2's tier one contractor Jacobs.
- **35 year-old Jade from Handworth in Birmingham** was previously unemployed. She's now taken up a full-time role with Effiage-Kier as Operational Support Planner and Co-ordinator and will be working on HS2's Phase One route, developing mapping solutions and engaging with stakeholders along the line of route in the central region.
- **36 year-old Helen from Oldbury** was desperate to break the chain of working in short-term temporary roles. She's now secured a full-time permanent contract with Total Training Solutions in Solihull, who are a leading training provider for the construction industry.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

- For interview opportunities, please contact Lindsey Preece at Lindsey.preece@hs2.org.uk, 0207 944 6660.

- Works on HS2 are well underway, with over 250 active work sites. The project is supporting 9,000 jobs around the country, including over 320 apprentices.
- Around 2,000 businesses including hundreds across the West Midlands have already delivered works for HS2, 70% of which are SMEs and 99% are based in Britain.
- At peak construction HS2 will support 30,000 jobs, and will create 2,000 apprentices during its construction.
- For more information about HS2 Ltd visit <https://www.hs2.org.uk/>
- Women into Construction is an independent not-for-profit organisation that promotes gender equality in construction. For more information visit <https://www.women-into-construction.org/>