

Derbyshire young people get insight into railway construction

In an interactive workshop run by HS2 Ltd, members of the Derbyshire BME Forum were tasked with taking on the role of bridge builders.

The Derbyshire BME Forum works to deliver and support activities that will increase opportunities for Black and Minority Ethnic young people (BME) and communities in Derbyshire. Fifteen youngsters participated in the HS2 Ltd session, which was held at Donut Creative Arts Studio (DCAS) in Chesterfield on Wednesday 31 July.

After learning about the complexities of constructing major infrastructure components, the young people, aged 10 to 19, were given boxes full of craft materials and challenged to build a bridge over a series of mini obstacles. Once built, the bridges were put to the test by laying track and running a model railway across them.

Skills

Prior to this, the youngsters took part in a quiz which matched their interests and skills to a potential future role helping build HS2, from design to construction, and from cyber security to customer experience.

From left to right: John Isidor; Judith Rowe, Engagement Advisor, HS2 Ltd; Sharmaine Carabana; Reece Carabana; and Antonio Pelayo.

Judith Rowe, Engagement Advisor at HS2 Ltd, said:

At the peak of construction, over 30,000 people will play a role in delivering Britain's new high speed railway. HS2 is investing in young people now to help address the country's skills shortage and ensure we leave a lasting talent legacy for the future.

At events such as these we are introducing children to a diverse range of career opportunities that HS2, and the wider construction industry, can offer. We want to encourage them to think about how they might play their own part in this once in a generation project that will bring Britain closer together.

HS2 Ltd bridge building activity.

From 2033, Chesterfield will be served by HS2, offering new, improved and faster rail services that will reduce journey times and free up space on

existing lines for more local services. The region will also be served by a new East Midlands Hub in Toton, which will provide high-speed connections to core UK cities and a journey time of just 16 minutes to Chesterfield.

Jobs

Not only will Derbyshire benefit from dedicated HS2 services at Chesterfield, the proposed HS2 Infrastructure Maintenance Depot at Staveley offers major opportunities for the area. It is estimated that the construction of the depot could support up to 75 roles and, once operational, the facility will provide 200 high skilled jobs. In addition, Derbyshire County Council's masterplan includes 1,500 new homes and 800 new jobs around the site.

12-year-old Sharmaine Carabana from Chesterfield, said:

We do need HS2, because we have so many cars that can damage the environment and pollute the earth, but using one train that goes around everywhere is better than having lots of cars that use petrol and pollute the skies.

With the bridge building activity, we had to consider things that might happen in the real world, such as building over roads or rocky ground. Working for the railway would really interest me as there's lots of different areas you can get involved with, from building to design, and you can use your skills to enable people to travel around.

10-year-old Antonio Pelayo from Chesterfield, said:

HS2 is great. If I worked on HS2, I would be a digital defender, so I could protect all the railway's information.

Reece Carabana and Antonio Pelayo.

Applicants

At HS2 Ltd, 19 per cent of its staff identify as Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME). The organisation has already taken a number of positive steps towards increasing the number of BAME applicants and staff this year, including launching its own multi-cultural employee's network, and working with its supply chain to attend BAME recruitment events to encourage more diverse young talent into the infrastructure sector.

HS2 Ltd is the first company in the sector to trial 'blind recruitment' which, like auditions on TV's 'The Voice', takes away everything other than technical ability at the very first stage of recruitment. This removes any unconscious bias – where, unknowingly people often favour those presenting in

their own image.

The Derbyshire BME Forum aims to ensure BME youngsters can play an integral role in influencing decisions made about their lives in the county. Consisting of representatives aged 10 to 25, the Forum meets every three months and helps young people to participate in social affairs, identify issues affecting their lives and their mental health and wellbeing, and exchange experiences, information and ideas. The Forum is jointly run by Links CVS – the Chesterfield and North East Derbyshire Council for Voluntary Service and Action Ltd – and Derbyshire County Council.