

Lower Thames Crossing

Skills, Education, and Employment Strategy

October 2025

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1. Forewords

1.1 Building more than a road: a legacy of skills and opportunity

The Lower Thames Crossing is more than just a road. It's a once-in-a-generation opportunity to build something far greater than infrastructure. It's our chance to shape a new future: one powered by skills and opportunity. A future where people from all backgrounds can take part in delivering a nationally significant project and build long-term careers in the process.

Since we published our first Skills Strategy in 2022, we've made real progress. We've secured development consent, brought on board our Delivery Partners, and forged strong partnerships with Local Authorities, education institutions, industry leaders, and communities across the Thames Estuary.

But with progress comes responsibility. That's why this updated Skills Strategy marks a new chapter, one rooted in transparency, delivery, and accountability.

We are pleased to have appointed Lord Blunkett as our Independent Skills Advisor, bringing his decades of experience in education, policy, and workforce development. Lord Blunkett will also chair our newly established Skills Taskforce, an independent body of MPs, educators, industry experts, and trade unions. Their role is to hold the project to account, challenge us to go further, and help ensure that our legacy is real, measurable and enduring.

This strategy has evolved, because we now better understand the challenges facing both the industry and the region. These include a shortage of young people entering the sector, a greater need for diversity, inclusion, and investment in new green skills. At the same time, we recognise the importance of proactive action, which is why we're already investing in Skills Hubs, outreach programmes, and targeted support for underrepresented groups.

This isn't just about filling roles. It's about creating meaningful careers and equipping a new generation with the skills to shape the UK's sustainable future. Through widespread training and sustainable employment pathways, we're helping to build a workforce ready for the challenges of tomorrow.

This Strategy is a call to action, and an open invitation. To our partners, our supply chain, our local communities; let's deliver something bigger than a road. Let's create a lasting legacy of skills, opportunity, and innovation that drives inclusive growth and builds a better future for everyone.



Matt Palmer Executive Director, Lower Thames Crossing National Highways

1. Forewords

1.2 The power of skills to transform lives and communities

Skills are the foundation of a thriving economy. They are more than qualifications; they are gateways to opportunity, drivers of inclusion, and the building blocks of resilient communities. At a time of economic uncertainty and rapid technological change, investing in skills is an absolute necessity.

The UK faces a stark challenge. We are not training enough people for the jobs we desperately need, especially in sectors like construction, where the skills gap is threatening growth. Over 35,000 vacancies in the industry remain unfilled. This is the largest shortfall of any sector in the country, and a clear call to action.

The Government has recognised the scale of the issue. The creation of Skills England and the Spring Statement 2025 commitment to train 60,000 new construction workers reflect a national imperative: we need bold, joined-up action. The Lower Thames Crossing is best placed to help deliver on that ambition.

Large infrastructure projects like this aren't just about what we build. They're about how we build, and who we build with. They have the power to transform lives by providing meaningful, long-term opportunities for people from all walks of life.

This Skills Strategy is our blueprint for doing exactly that. Through initiatives like Skills Hubs, the Lower Thames Crossing are embedding practical, accessible pathways into the heart of the project, offering training and apprenticeships to provide accessible routes into secure and purposeful work. These Skills Hubs will connect local people to local jobs and give businesses the workforce they need to grow.

To help drive this forward with openness and integrity, I am pleased to serve as Skills Advisor to the project and to chair the Skills Taskforce. This independent group, made up of education leaders, trade unions, industry experts, MPs, and local voices will hold the project to account, test our progress, and challenge us to go further.

This is a chance to do something truly transformative. The success of the Lower Thames Crossing will be measured not just in kilometres of new road, but in the lives it improves, the opportunities it unlocks, and the legacy it leaves behind.



The Rt Hon. Lord Blunkett Skills Advisor Lower Thames Crossing

2. Introduction

We are pleased to present the second edition of the Lower Thames Crossing's Skills Strategy

Since our first Skills Strategy was published in 2022, we've made real progress. Back then, we outlined our ambitions. Today, we are moving into the delivery of our skills legacy, with a clearer understanding of the challenges faced, stronger partnerships in place, and the investment needed to take action.

Our Delivery Partners are now on board. These are the organisations responsible for building the Lower Thames Crossing, and they are fully aligned to our skills priorities. They are actively supporting and delivering the Strategy, helping to turn this plan into action.

The Lower Thames Crossing is one of the most significant infrastructure projects in a generation, but its value reaches far beyond the construction of a new road. It represents a unique opportunity to shape the future of our industry and our local communities by putting people and skills at the heart of the project.

2.1 The construction industry faces urgent challenges

- A shortage of young people entering the industry
- High levels of workforce turnover and difficulties with retention
- Lack of diversity and inclusion across the workforce
- The need to continually upskill and reskill to meet demands
- The emergence of 'green skills' essential to delivering low-carbon infrastructure

Local communities neighbouring the Lower Thames Crossing face their own challenges, including areas with high levels of youth unemployment, low levels of formal skills attainment, and a need for better access to local employment opportunities. We know that large infrastructure projects have the chance to leave a lasting legacy, not just in terms of what they build, but also through the jobs they create and the young people they inspire. Targeted investment in skills, education and training can truly change lives and transform the industry. We want to build on the foundation of other major infrastructure projects and go further.

2.2 Putting purpose at the heart of the project

The Lower Thames Crossing is more than a road; it is a purpose-driven project that can drive real social value. We will create new pathways into the industry for young people, support local employment and businesses, invest in upskilling and reskilling our workforce, and champion diversity, inclusion, and green skills.

The Lower Thames Crossing will be transformational for the southeast region, unlocking growth and connecting communities and businesses. However, equally important to what we build, is how we build.

This infrastructure must be constructed more efficiently and sustainably to deliver a greater legacy for the local region, the industry and the UK economy.

To drive this change, we have defined our purpose for the project. At its core, the Lower Thames Crossing is a catalyst for change, setting a new benchmark for how major infrastructure can deliver social, environmental and economic value. Central to this is our ambition to deliver the UK's greenest road and to do the right thing for local communities and the environment. Our approach is centred around four key pillars:

Community: We'll put communities at the heart of how we build by being a good neighbour. We'll bring local communities closer to nature and create new opportunities for skills and jobs.

Culture: We are a purpose driven organisation that listens and thinks differently to deliver better outcomes for our customers and communities. We do the right thing, with a 'trust first' approach towards our relationships.

Carbon: We have a relentless drive to reach the lowest possible carbon emissions by putting carbon at the heart of every decision. All that we learn we will share as we collaborate with our partners to drive change in our sector.

Construction: We'll deliver the brilliant basics safely, on time and on budget, raising the bar for the construction sector's productivity through our use of data. We'll set new standards for efficient infrastructure delivery.

3. Meet our Delivery Partners

Balfour Beatty

Balfour Beatty was awarded a £1.2 billion contract to deliver the 'Roads North of the Thames'. They will be responsible for the design and delivery of over 10 miles of new highways, connecting the M25 at Junction 29 and the A13 with the Lower Thames Crossing. Balfour Beatty will also deliver fort-two structures including bridges and major viaducts. Utilising modular construction techniques, they will build some structures offsite in a controlled factory environment.

This will significantly reduce carbon emissions by minimising the number of lorry movements and material deliveries to and from site.

Throughout construction, Balfour Beatty have committed to delivering £300 million of local economic benefit to leave a lasting legacy. At least 10% of Balfour Beatty's direct workforce will be filled with early careers positions.

"The Lower Thames Crossing is a significant scheme - one that will stimulate local, regional and national economic growth, create employment opportunities and new, sustainable methods of construction for the future of our industry."

Phil Clifton, Divisional CEO - Highways, Ground Engineering & Major Projects at Balfour Beatty

Bouygues Travaux Publics Murphy Joint Venture (BMJV)

The £1.34 billion Tunnels and Approaches contract was awarded to the BMJV. They will design and construct the 4.2 kilometre twin-road tunnels – the longest road tunnels in the UK. The tunnels will be over sixteen metres wide, allowing for three lanes of traffic in each direction. It will provide more capacity for large vehicles like HGVs, removing congestion from the Dartford Crossing.

The contract's scope also includes the tunnel systems, portal buildings and approach roads. BMJV have used their tunnelling and engineering experience to dramatically reduce embodied carbon, as well as refining the design to reduce disruption to the local community and leave a legacy of green jobs and skills in the region and broader supply chain.

"As a pathfinder project focusing on carbon neutral construction, the Lower Thames Crossing project is going to be an exemplar of sustainable construction. But it is vital we use the opportunity to generate sustainable employment opportunities across the project and deliver an employment and skills legacy that will benefit both the local communities and UK infrastructure. Lower Thames Crossing will be the largest road tunnel in the world on completion, and it should provide the workforce and businesses that participate in the scheme with a platform to further enhance the UK's tunnelling credentials at home and abroad."

John Murphy, Chief Executive Officer at Murphy

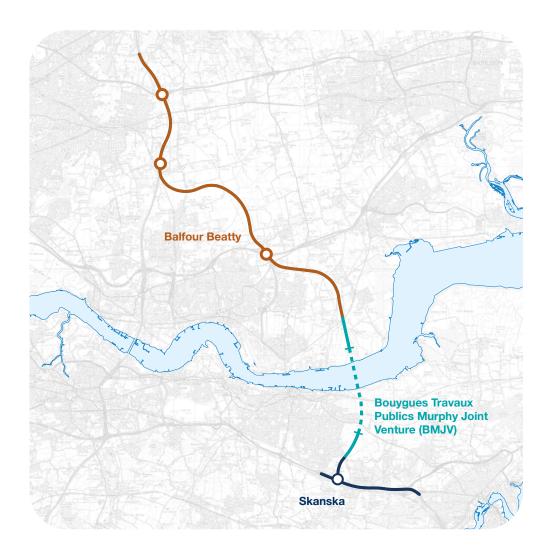
Skanska

Skanska has been awarded the £450 million Kent Roads contract. They will deliver the southern part of the route connecting the A2/M2 to the tunnel approach. It includes almost four miles of new road and structures, one of the widest green bridges in Europe, a new public park, and twelve miles of new or improved pathways for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

We asked for a minimum of 30% carbon reduction across the project. Skanska went beyond this and proposed a more challenging limit. We will continue to support Skanska in their ambition to go even further, adopting a low-carbon design approach and championing new and innovative materials and technologies during construction. They will also aim to beat the project's target of spending £1 in every £3 of the construction budget with SMEs.

"The Lower Thames Crossing provides a fantastic opportunity to improve critical highways infrastructure, open up connections and drive economic growth across the UK. This includes during construction, when Skanska UK will invest in local skills, training and job opportunities that support local people and businesses. Combined with our investment in low-carbon construction, it will bring further long-term sustainable benefits that leave a lasting legacy."

Andrew English, Executive Vice President at Skanska UK



4. From strategy to delivery: what has changed since 2022

Delivering a skills legacy for the Lower Thames Crossing requires action now. We know from experience that we cannot wait until jobs are available on the project to begin preparing local people for them. That's why we're already investing in the initiatives, partnerships and infrastructure needed to develop our workforce.

The construction industry needs skilled people and so do we. We recognise that the industry is facing huge skills shortages, threatening the delivery of infrastructure schemes that can unlock regional economic development.

But we can't wait for construction to start before we begin building that workforce.

We are investing now to ensure:

- Local people are trained and ready when opportunities are available.
- Businesses are equipped to bid for work and are able to grow with the project.
- Our legacy is built into the project from day one.

4.1 Our ambition: a lasting skills legacy

Our ambition is clear: to leave a lasting, positive legacy through skills, education and employment. The Lower Thames Crossing isn't just about better transport and improving connectivity; it's about unlocking potential, improving lives, and preparing the region and industry for the future.

We are committed to using the scale and impact of this project to deliver real change, both in how people enter and progress in the construction industry and in how local communities benefit from long-term investment and growth.

Our ambition focuses on these key areas:

- To deliver the skills needed for the Lower Thames Crossing, providing local jobs for local people.
- To close the gap on the construction industry's national skills shortage.
- To improve the lives of people working in our industry, and attract and retain a more skilled and diverse workforce.
- To develop emerging skills to decarbonise the global construction industry and support a net zero future.

4.2 Our approach: four objectives to drive lasting impact

To realise these ambitions, we have built on the Skills Strategy published in 2022, to share a clear strategy built around four key objectives:

1. Inspiring successful opportunities

We want to spark curiosity and ambition in the next generation by:

- Raising awareness of careers in construction, engineering and infrastructure
- Delivering school outreach, early careers events and STEM initiatives
- Creating pathways for young people who may not have previously been aware of opportunities within the industry

2. Delivering a skills legacy

We want to leave behind a workforce that is more resilient, diverse and future-ready by:

- Investing in upskilling and training for the skills of the future
- Providing apprenticeships, placements and structured training schemes
- Championing inclusive recruitment and progression

3. Supporting local jobs

We are focused on ensuring that the Lower Thames Crossing is a catalyst for employment opportunities by:

- Prioritising recruitment from local communities
- Supporting those furthest from the job market, including young people not in employment, education or training (NEET)
- Collaborating with Local Authorities and government employment services (i.e. the DWP) to connect people to jobs

4. Promoting business growth

We will support and develop a thriving supply chain by:

- Opening up opportunities for SMEs and social enterprises
- Running targeted engagement and capabilitybuilding programmes
- Encouraging fair access to procurement and building long-term partnerships

By delivering on these four objectives, the Lower Thames Crossing will not only connect people and places, but help build a more inclusive, skilled and sustainable workforce for generations to come.

4.3 Indicative workforce and key roles

Since our Delivery Partners came on board, we have a clearer, data-driven view of the workforce needed to deliver the Lower Thames Crossing. Working together, we have undertaken an assessment of indicative workforce demand across the whole project. This has provided a consolidated picture of the roles required and the timeline for when they'll be needed throughout the construction phase.

This data covers our core construction roles - onsite jobs that represent around 80% of the total workforce. It has helped us to identify the highestvolume roles that will form the backbone of our workforce, allowing us to target our training and upskilling efforts where they will have the greatest impact.

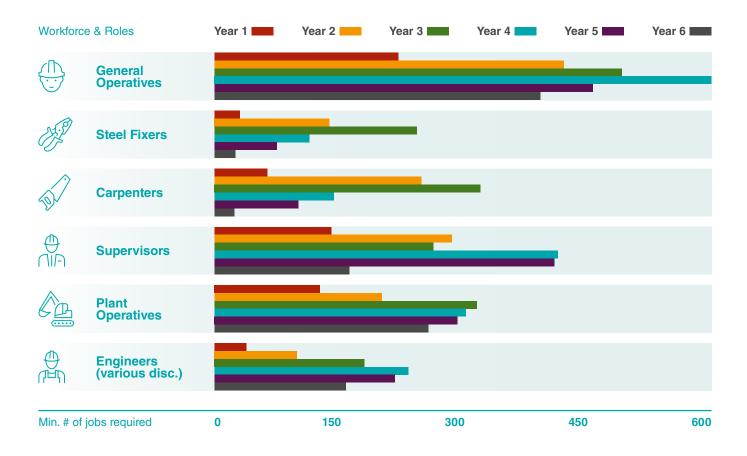
Our focus will be on supporting local people into the following key roles:

- General Operatives
- Plant Operatives

- Site Supervisors
- Steel Fixers
- Carpenters
- Civil Engineers

Understanding the roles and skills required has also enabled us to forecast peak workforce demand. We anticipate that the project will employ around 3,000 people at peak, in the third year of construction. Over the full six-year delivery period, more than 5,000 individuals will be directly employed to help build the Lower Thames Crossing.

Importantly, the impact of the Lower Thames Crossing will extend far beyond these numbers. Through its supply chain and regional economic influence, the project will support thousands more jobs, offering long-term opportunities well beyond the construction site.



5. How we will measure success

Delivering a meaningful and lasting skills legacy means more than just setting targets. It means being accountable for achieving them.

The Lower Thames Crossing will measure performance against skills targets using a Three-Scope Model. This framework enables us to clearly communicate the social impact we are delivering across all levels of the project:

Scope 1 is our people: The actions and outcomes delivered directly by and for the Lower Thames Crossing team.

Scope 2 is our supply chain: The contributions made through our Delivery Partners and wider supply chain.

Scope 3 is our community: The wider impact of our work on local communities, including engagement, outreach and long-term opportunities.

We care about all three scopes because they reflect the full scale of our responsibility and opportunity to drive meaningful change. By focusing on our people, we lead by example and embed a strong skills culture within the project. Through our supply chain, we influence a much larger workforce, promoting inclusivity and green skills for the future. By investing in our communities, we help create lasting social value, supporting local people into employment, enriching education and strategically addressing regional skills shortages.

This model ensures a consistent, transparent approach to tracking progress and demonstrating value to our stakeholders.

To ensure transparency and rigor in how we measure progress, we have also committed to independent oversight and external governance.

5.1 Independent Skills Advisor

In June 2024, we appointed Lord Blunkett as an independent Skills Advisor to the Lower Thames Crossing. With a distinguished background as former Secretary of State for Education, Chair of the Labour Council of Skills Advisors, and leadership roles with the Heathrow Skills and Growth Taskforce, Lord Blunkett brings expertise in education, workforce development and public service.

As Skills Advisor, Lord Blunkett will provide challenge, guidance and insight, ensuring that the Skills Strategy delivers lasting value for local communities, the region and the wider construction industry.

5.2 Skills Taskforce

Lord Blunkett will also chair the newly formed Skills Taskforce. This Taskforce will:

- Review progress against the Skills Strategy
- Recommend improvements to maximise social and economic impact
- Bring together regional leaders to align investment initiatives

The Taskforce includes representatives from:

- Local MPs
- Local Authorities across the Thames Estuary
- Educational organisations

· Industry and trade union leaders

Together, these stakeholders will help us stay focused on delivering real outcomes: from increasing local employment and training, to supporting sustainable economic development across the region.

By establishing this level of independent oversight, we are holding ourselves accountable and ensuring that the Lower Thames Crossing delivers the skilled workforce, employment opportunities and legacy that the local communities deserve.

5.3 Promoting inclusion and representation

We want the Lower Thames Crossing to be a catalyst for change in the construction industry, creating a workforce that reflects the diversity of our local communities and removes barriers for underrepresented groups.

To meet the skills challenge, we must broaden who sees construction as a career for them. That means raising awareness, challenging stereotypes and building inclusive pathways into work. Our aspiration is to achieve local demographic representation across our workforce, including:

- 50% women
- 14.5% disabled people
- 32% ethnic minorities (based on 2023 ONS data)

This isn't just morally right thing to do; it's essential to attracting the future workforce we need. Each of our four skills objectives support this ambition:

 Inspiring future opportunities – engaging young people from all backgrounds, especially girls, through schools and colleges, with strong role models in STEM and construction.

- Creating local jobs working with local partners to make opportunities visible, accessible, and inclusive for Priority Groups.
- Delivering a skills legacy partnering with community organisations and Local Authorities to support people facing barriers into training and employment.
- Promoting business growth helping local businesses to grow more inclusive teams and attract untapped talent, including those not in education, employment or training (NEETs).

Together, we can help create a construction industry that is more diverse, more inclusive and better prepared for the future.

This is a long-term commitment to skills, but it starts now. Through our Delivery Partners, Skills Hubs and early investment in people and places, the Lower Thames Crossing is setting a new standard for how infrastructure can deliver for its communities.

5.4 Collaborative working with key stakeholders

We have strengthened our partnerships with key stakeholders to better understand local needs and shape our strategies and initiatives accordingly. A full list of partner organisations can be found in Appendix C.

Our bi-monthly Employment and Skills Working Groups serve as a key interface between our Delivery Partners and impacted Local Authorities—including Essex and Kent County Councils, the Chambers of Commerce and CITB, among others. These sessions ensure that our skills initiatives are aligned with local priorities and deliver tangible value to communities. They also provide a platform for stakeholders to share visibility of existing initiatives and explore opportunities for collaboration.

We continue to establish and deepen partnerships with organisations that have a vested interest in helping local young people progress into diverse career pathways. These include The Careers and Enterprise Company, STEM Learning, Go Construct and the Construction Youth Trust. In addition, we have engaged extensively with local colleges and Independent Training Providers through a series of roundtables. These discussions have focused on identifying critical skills gaps within the construction industry and have allowed educational partners to provide feedback on our revised Skills Strategy.

Our Delivery Partners are working directly with local colleges to develop engaging STEM outreach programmes that create clear job pathways. These initiatives will raise awareness of local employment opportunities and provide training aligned with industry needs. Furthermore, we have partnered with local job brokerages, the Department for Work and Pensions and our Local Authorities to improve visibility of job opportunities for local people. We will also support our Priority Groups by helping them prepare job applications, access training and successfully transition into employment.

We remain active members of several strategic bodies, including the Major Projects Skills Working Group, the Construction Leadership Council and the Sector Advisory Group, to promote cross-sector knowledge sharing. This includes contributing indicative workforce data and key role insights to CITB and Local Skills Improvement Plans, supporting broader regional analysis of skills shortages.

6. Inspiring future opportunities

Our role is to champion careers in the construction industry and inspire the next generation of talent. We will do this by boosting awareness of the industry and STEM subjects among young people, teachers and their guardians. We will also provide dedicated strategic support to our Priority Schools and colleges. On the Lower Thames Crossing, we are not just building a road; we are building futures.

This will be measured through the number of hours of STEM engagement delivered. We will use the Careers & Enterprise Company's Future Skills Questionnaire to assess how interest in construction careers evolves throughout a student's time in education. This enables the Lower Thames Crossing to not only measure the amount of STEM engagement delivered to students in schools and colleges but also measure its effectiveness.

Through our people

At the Lower Thames Crossing, we believe every young person should have the opportunity to explore exciting careers in construction and engineering. We are dedicated to ensuring that those living closest to our project will feel inspired to pursue opportunities not just on Lower Thames Crossing, but across the wider industry.

Since the 2022 Skills Strategy, we've expanded our Priority Schools list in consultation with our Local Authorities. As well as schools most impacted by our construction, this list now includes schools with the highest levels socio-economic need, identified by the number of students receiving free school meals. You can find the full list in Appendix B.

In partnership with teachers, career leads and Multi-Academy Trusts, we are delivering tailored and meaningful support to meet each of our Priority Schools' needs. Our STEM Programme, which we launched in autumn 2024, includes:

- Inspiring classroom activities and interactive events for young people
- Career advice and employability support
- Teacher encounters and masterclasses for construction and engineering courses

Every Priority School has a dedicated Enterprise Advisor from the Lower Thames Crossing team, ensuring consistent communication from the project and the development of relevant, age-appropriate STEM engagement. We are proud that many people on the project are already volunteering in local schools, leading workshops, sharing their experiences and preparing students to build the skills they need to enter the workforce.

To bring the world of construction to life, we're creating a library of Career Profiles that showcase real people working on the project. These stories not only challenge outdated perceptions of the industry but highlight the wide range of roles available, from quantity surveyors to carbon management specialists.

This work marks the start of our Role Pathways initiative, developed with local schools and colleges to clearly show students how they can progress into different careers within the construction industry.

"The support that we have received from the Balfour Beatty team over the last year has been over and above what we expected when we entered our partnership. Lauren has worked extremely hard in her role as Enterprise Advisor for Treetops Learning Community and her advice has been invaluable. She is always available to talk though ideas or help us gain access into various employers in and around the local area. Lauren and her team also came on-site to lead a whole trust assembly. It was both informative and interactive, and students of all ages learnt about skills needed to work in the construction industry. On top of this, a select number of students were lucky enough to be involved in a work encounter session at Balfour Beatty and see first-hand what the job entails. We're really looking forward to this partnership going from strength to strength and are excited for the future projects that we've planned."

Lucy Meek, Assistant Headteacher at Treetops School, Grays, Essex

Through our supply chain

Our supply chain partners are facilitating successful opportunities through the delivery of early career roles, including apprenticeships, graduate schemes, work experience placements and internships (including supported internships).

"I'm Ashleigh, a Business Admin Level 3 apprentice working within social value. I went to school locally and heard about the job on my careers page. I am enjoying learning about our plans for engaging with the community" **Ashleigh, from Thurrock**

"Being here has taught me how to work efficiently within a team, how to effectively manage hard tasks and to always talk when something may be too difficult. The project has become almost like a home to me now, a place to feel safe, a place where I want to be and a place where I can shape my future!" Callum, from Basildon

"If you're looking to get into employment, definitely do not discount taking the apprenticeship route into the construction industry! Working on the Lower Thames Crossing project has taught me so much, in both the office environment and the hustle and bustle of our site work. It's a fantastic opportunity to learn from so many angles - I'd 100% recommend it." **Aaron, from Thurrock**

"I have found my apprenticeship very enjoyable so far, and have met and learned from so many people. I started off my apprenticeship in health and safety and I'm now two months into my project management rotation. Both rotations have given me great insight and knowledge on what it is like to work on a major project and I'm now looking forward to what I'll be doing next." Luke, from Thurrock

"I'm a Civil Engineering Degree Apprentice at COWI and I've been on the Lower Thames Crossing programme for just over 3 years. I study Civil Engineering BEng at London South Bank University one day per week, and have just begun my fourth year. I absolutely love working on the Lower Thames Crossing. As an engineer in the early stages of my career, I'm fortunate to have access to such a wealth of incredibly knowledgeable people who have been more than happy to help me both at work and with university. I enjoy the variety of work I get exposed to due to the scale of the project." Adam, from Benfleet

Through conversations with our local education partners, we have learned that tutor shortages, especially in construction and engineering, are a major challenge across Essex, Kent, London and beyond. In response, we are designing programmes to help counter this crisis.

We are sharing the expertise of our own workforce (including engineers, designers, environmental specialists and more) through tutor masterclasses across local colleges. These sessions include lesson delivery, curriculum enrichment, tutor coaching and site visits, with a focus on modern construction methods and low-carbon technologies. These initiatives are designed to bring real-world experience into the classroom.

We are also working closely with teachers and career leads to tailor our support to their specific needs, whether through our 'Support to Educators' initiative (see Appendix D), or through national programmes like the Careers & Enterprise Company's Teacher Encounter Programme.

Inspiring students to pursue careers in the construction industry is often most effective through hands-on work experience placements. We are offering meaningful work experience placements to local young people, enabling them to see first-hand the wide range of careers available on a major infrastructure project like Lower Thames Crossing. These work experience placements are aligned with the Gatsby Benchmarks and will open doors to apprenticeship programmes and then long-term careers.

Through our supply chain (continued)

In 2024, Balfour Beatty launched their 'Industry Insights' hybrid work experience programme, providing local students with first-hand exposure to careers in construction and infrastructure.

We piloted the programme with thirty-three students from USP College in Thurrock and Frances Bardsley School for Girls in Havering. Working in teams during school hours, the students were challenged to design, cost and plan a "school for the future," a creative project that brought together sustainability, innovation and real-life problem-solving.

Each student took on a specialist role, such as Project Director, Finance Manager and Sustainability Manager, allowing them to explore the breadth of careers present across major infrastructure projects like the Lower Thames Crossing.

The programme ended with students presenting their projects in-person to a panel of industry professionals. Their ideas, teamwork and presentation skills were outstanding. This is just the beginning. We're excited to continue working with these talented young people and will be sharing early career opportunities with them as the project and their education progresses.

Through our local communities

In autumn 2024, the Lower Thames Crossing launched the Youth Ambassador Forum, bringing together passionate young people from across Kent, Essex and East London who are keen to explore careers in construction and shape the future of their local communities. The forum gives young people a real voice on the project, helping us to design better ways to inspire and engage their peers whilst building a lasting legacy of skills and opportunity.

As members of the Forum, young people take part in:

- Pre-employment training
- Mentoring and networking with industry experts
- Insight visits to construction sites and project offices
- Shaping how LTC connects with schools, colleges and young people

Members of the Youth Ambassador Forum also provide valuable feedback on how we run our education and outreach programmes, ensuring our STEM activities and community engagement campaigns truly resonate with their generation.

Young people have often been underrepresented in consultations on major infrastructure projects. The Youth Ambassador Forum changes that, creating a two-way platform where the project learns from young people just as much as we aim to inspire them.

7. Delivering training and developing skills

Building a workforce with the skills to deliver the Lower Thames Crossing, increase low-carbon construction capability across the industry, and provide communities with the skills needed to work on this project and the pipeline of further investment being planned for the region.

This will be measured through the number of people who receive training and the number of people who progress into employment.

Through our people

At the Lower Thames Crossing, we are committed to creating an inclusive, supportive working environment, where everyone, regardless of background or experience, can thrive. We know that great projects are built on diverse talent. That is why we are going beyond inclusive recruitment practices to build a culture where all our people feel welcome, valued and empowered to succeed.

To do this, we are delivering tailored support for underrepresented and Priority Groups, ensuring that individuals get the support they need to flourish. This includes:

 Training for managers to foster inclusive teams and improve staff retention.

- Specialist support, such as autism awareness training through organisations such as the Sycamore Trust (a local charity based in Havering).
- A reverse mentoring programme where junior team members mentor senior leaders, sharing their real, lived experiences to help shape a more open and inclusive culture.

By investing in our people, listening to their voices, and learning from one another, we're not just building a better team, but hopefully a better industry.

"We are delighted with the enthusiastic response we have received from Balfour Beatty, and we are very much looking forward to delivering our CPD-accredited Autism Awareness training to the team working on the Lower Thames Crossing project. We are also very pleased that Balfour Beatty are providing an opportunity for a very talented autistic individual to gain some work experience on such a prestigious project and he is looking forward to his week. It can be difficult for young people on the spectrum to find employment and it's wonderful to find an employer who takes diversity and inclusivity seriously and is also willing to offer work experience to a member of the autistic community."

Steve Dixon, Marketing & Communications Manager at Sycamore Trust, Havering

Through our supply chain

The construction industry is facing a challenge: by 2028, the UK will need an extra 250,000 workers to meet demand, 10,400 of those in the Southeast alone. That is why the Lower Thames Crossing is taking action now.

We are commissioning dedicated Skills Hubs in Gravesham (Kent) and Thurrock (Essex) to open up thousands of training and job opportunities for local people. This not only supports the delivery of the Lower Thames Crossing, but also the wider construction industry. A particular focus will be on delivering low-carbon construction skills, enhancing existing accredited courses to support the industry's transition to net zero.

Sustainable construction is at the heart of the Lower Thames Crossing's delivery, and a key motivator for many young people who are keen to find purpose in their work. This is why we are working closely with local schools and colleges to promote the low-carbon construction initiatives on the project and in turn, inspire the next generation of talent to join the industry.

Our Skills Hubs will bring together local employers, colleges, charities and government to deliver:

- Pre-employment training and upskilling
- Technical qualifications
- Clear job pathways
- Tailored support for those furthest from work

These Hubs will connect local people to real jobs, from entry-level to higher-paid roles as plant operators, site supervisors and civil engineers. Importantly, more than fifty local suppliers have pledged to upskill their existing workforce and recruit directly from these Hubs, ensuring that training leads to genuine opportunities.

By creating permanent physical places where people and businesses can access support, the Skills Hubs will ensure that the benefits of the project are felt widely and early.

In October 2024, we ran a successful two-week pilot in Maidstone, Kent. Participants included prison leavers and experienced workers retraining in low-carbon methods of construction. Every person who completed the programme is now employed within the construction industry and over seventy organisations attended the launch to pledge their support.

With the success of the Skills Hub pilot, we are now moving forward with the commissioning of permanent Skills Hubs in Thurrock and Gravesham, tailored to meet the needs of the region. These Hubs will adapt over time, with courses shaped by real-time workforce data from our partners.

Through our Skills Hubs, we're making sure local people have access to the skills and support they need to thrive in the construction industry, now and long after the project is complete.

"The Employment Hub at HMP Rochester is delighted to be working with Lower Thames Crossing to look at employment opportunities for our prison leavers. Having a criminal record is seen by some as a barrier to gaining employment which makes this collaborative working with Lower Thames Crossing so worthwhile and needed."

Andy Crowhurst, Prison Employment Lead at HMP Rochester

Through our local communities

We are working closely with regional partners to design and deliver training that goes beyond construction, helping local people prepare for work and stay in long-term employment.

Through close collaboration with colleges, training providers and community organisations, we are developing tailored upskilling programmes that reflect the needs of the community and support our Priority Groups, especially those furthest from work. We have partnered with the Department for Work and Pensions and the Construction Industry Training Board, who have agreed to co-locate in our Skills Hubs to provide wider pastoral support to the local community, including jobs coaches and new entrant mentors.

This means offering not just technical skills, but also:

- Pre-employment training to enhance work readiness
- Support for confidence building, communication and teamwork skills
- Guidance on how to thrive in the workplace

Since launching our first Skills Strategy in 2022, we have engaged extensively with local educators to understand what is working, where there are challenges and how we can provide support. These conversations have helped shape our vision for the Lower Thames Crossing Skills Hubs, designed to complement what is already available and fill key gaps in support and training.

We are working closely with local colleges to support curriculum development that aligns to job opportunities on the Lower Thames Crossing. This will ensure that courses aligned to key roles, such as civil engineering, are adequately resourced and effectively advertised and therefore meet the needs of the project and the career aspirations of local young people. Early career roles will also be promoted in local colleges so that students have the best opportunity to apply for work experience, internships and apprenticeships on the project.

"The Lower Thames Crossing provides a valuable opportunity to address the skills gaps outlined in the Kent and Medway Local Skills Improvement Plan. By investing in local training, raising awareness of career opportunities within the supply chain, and fostering collaboration between industry and education, the Lower Thames Crossing project can contribute to developing a skilled workforce that supports both the Project and the region's long-term economic development."

Lucy Druesne, Chief Contracts & Policy Officer at Kent & Medway Local Skills Improvement Plan

8. Creating local jobs

Providing local residents with new job opportunities, and the training required to support growth and progression into higher paid higher skilled roles. We want everyone who works on the Lower Thames Crossing to feel valued, recognised and proud of their contributions towards delivering

a project of national significance. This will be measured through the numbers and percentage of local people working on the Lower Thames Crossing.

Through our people

We are committed to making sure local people benefit the most from the jobs and opportunities created by this project.

That is why we have set a bold ambition to ensure:

- At least 45% of our workforce will live within twenty miles of the project
- At least 20% will come from the most impacted boroughs of Gravesham, Medway, Thurrock, Havering or Brentwood

Our goal is to prioritise local talent, helping people residing in nearby communities to gain access to work, new skills and build lasting and meaningful careers. This "local first" approach is one of the ways in which we are making sure that the Lower Thames Crossing delivers real, long-term value for the region. We will report workforce figures within twenty miles and across each of our five impacted Local Authorities.

Through our supply chain

All of our Delivery Partners on the Lower Thames Crossing are committed to hiring locally, with a shared target of at least 45% of the entire workforce residing within twenty miles of the project. This commitment will also extend across our wider supply chain, built into contracts to make sure local people benefit from every stage of delivery.

We are going beyond simply setting targets. We want to ensure that local people feel ready and supported to enter the workforce and develop their careers. We will ensure that jobs available on the Lower Thames Crossing are readily available for the people who live and work in our local communities.

To support local employment, we are:

- Running pre-employment programmes and accredited short courses through our Skills Hubs.
- Helping people who are unemployed to acquire the skills and confidence to apply for jobs.
- Removing unnecessary barriers, such as academic qualifications for entry-level roles, so that more local people can apply and succeed.

Through our local communities

We are working closely with trusted local organisations, like the Department for Work and Pensions with their 'Connect to Work' programme, to ensure that local people can access job opportunities on the Lower Thames Crossing.

Though this collaborative working, we gain valuable insights into what people really need, whether it is building confidence, addressing mental health challenges or helping those who have been out of employment to become 'work-ready'. This is not just about providing local people with job opportunities but also supporting retention of roles and progression in careers.

This collaboration helps us:

- Tailor how and where we advertise roles
- Remove barriers to employment
- Offer the right support, at the right time, for those who need it most
- Support job retention

We are making it easier for people to find opportunities too. All Lower Thames Crossing job openings will be posted on our website and shared via local job centres and job brokerages.

With help from our partners, we will support people through every step of their employment journey, from application and training to entering the workforce and progressing in their careers.

9. Promoting business growth

Creating a Supply Chain Support Programme designed to improve the capability and capacity of local suppliers. We will provide local businesses with the tools to adapt to a greener economy, win new work and maximise economic benefits during and after construction.

This will be measured through the number of local suppliers and SMEs working on the Lower Thames Crossing. At least £1 in every £3 will be spent with SMEs, which is approximately £800 million throughout the supply chain.

Through our people

We are creating a Supply Chain Support Programme to help local businesses grow, adapt and thrive, during the delivery of the Lower Thames Crossing and long after it is complete.

This programme will:

- Boost capability and capacity amongst local suppliers
- Equip businesses with the tools and knowledge to champion the transition to a greener economy
- Help them win new work and maximise opportunities across the region

We are also aligning everyone working across the Lower Thames Crossing, from local firms to global companies, to champion our shared goals:

- Achieving net zero
- Leaving a lasting skills legacy
- Building a more diverse and inclusive workforce

With the strength of these partnerships, we are making sure that the benefits of the Lower Thames Crossing go further to supporting our local economy. Our Delivery Partners also have immense power to transform the wider construction industry through their broad reach, positively impacting how we will build mega-infrastructure projects and place local people and the environment at the heart of delivery.

Through our supply chain

We aim to make it easier than ever for local and small businesses to access work opportunities on the Lower Thames Crossing.

Our Delivery Partners are creating Supply Chain Support Programmes focused on helping local SMEs develop. We are concentrating on:

- Carbon reduction and reporting methods
- Investment in skills and training programmes
- Fair, open access to contractual opportunities

Recognising that previous major projects have had extremely complex procurement processes and tender documents, we are removing unnecessary barriers so that bidding for work on the Lower Thames Crossing is simpler, faster and more accessible for smaller businesses. This includes:

- A streamlined bidding process designed with SMEs in mind
- Transparent and fair opportunities, upholding procurement best practice
- Adoption of the Common Assessment Standard to reduce administrative burdens for suppliers

We are also making subcontracting opportunities easy to find through a dedicated portal on the Lower Thames Crossing website. We are supporting local businesses every step of the way through:

- Mentoring programmes and dedicated workshops on how to win work and grow your business.
- Tailored guidance on social value, scaled to contract size but focused on local impact.
- Ongoing engagement events to share our procurement pipeline, minimum requirements and make introductions with our Delivery Partners.

By building strong partnerships with local suppliers, we are not just delivering the Lower Thames Crossing; we are strengthening the region's economy and creating a supply chain fit edto deliver the infrastructure of the future.

We are also helping to ensure that local businesses build their workforce of the future, by encouraging large businesses in our supply chain to share any unused apprenticeship levy funds. Under government rules, large employers can transfer up to 50% of their unspent apprenticeship levy to other businesses every year.

We're working to make sure this funding goes to local SMEs, with the support of Local Authorities and Further Education Colleges. This will create more training opportunities for local people to gain employment with local businesses, help smaller businesses to develop their talent pipeline and tackle regional skills shortages which threaten the future of the construction industry.

Hole Farm is a new 100-hectare community woodland near the M25 being delivered by Balfour Beatty. It was designed to attract visitors, protect wildlife and inspire young people about environmental sustainability. It is a key, and early part of our environmental legacy on the Lower Thames Crossing.

We are proud that Hole Farm is being built by local people and local businesses. So far, 41% of our spend with the wider supply chain, outside of Balfour Beatty Group, has gone to SMEs, and 84% has gone to local suppliers. This not only supports local jobs but also drives local economic growth. Many of these businesses became known to us through our Supply Chain Directory, which informed Balfour Beatty's early market engagement.

Through our local communities

We are working closely with key local organisations, including Essex and Kent Invicta Chambers, the Civil Engineering Contractors Association and the Federation of Small Businesses, to ensure that SMEs and local suppliers can access opportunities to work on the Lower Thames Crossing.

Through these partnerships, we are helping members:

- Gain visibility of our procurement process and timeline
- Understand minimum tender requirements
- Connect directly with our Delivery Partners and Strategic Suppliers

Local businesses are invited to dedicated engagement events where they can learn more about upcoming packages of work and receive expert advice from the project and our partners. These events are delivered in conjunction with regional partners such as CITB, the Essex Construction Alliance and the Kent Construction Focus Group. These engagement events support local businesses development, preparing them to bid for work on one of the biggest infrastructure projects in the UK.

"It is great to be engaging early with the Lower Thames Crossing Delivery Partners on working together to ensure we can maximise opportunities for local and SME suppliers. The impact of this project will be significant not just for the local economy but for the skills and career development of our young people and our wider community."

Tudor Price, Chief Executive, at Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce

Appendix A: Priority Groups

Priority Group	Definition
Unemployed	Unemployed people who are without a job, have actively sought work in the last four weeks and are available to start work in the next two weeks; or are out of work, have found a job and are waiting to start it in the next two weeks.
Prison leavers	Anyone who is in or is seeking employment and has criminal convictions.
NEETs	Young people aged between 16 and 24 who are no longer in education, employment or training.
Military leavers	Anyone who has served His Majesty's Armed Forces (Regular or Reserve) or Merchant Mariners who have seen duty on legally defined military operations.
Adult learners	Anyone over the age of 19 returning to education.
Homeless (or those at risk)	A person with no available, suitable or safe accommodation or legal right to occupy their accommodation.
Women returners	A focus on women and girls to increase the gender diversity in the construction and engineering industries.
Care leavers	A young person aged 16-25 years old who has been 'looked after' at some point since they were 14 years old, and were in care on or after their 16th birthday.
Special educational needs or disabilities	A child or young person has special educational needs and disabilities if they have a learning difficulty and/or a disability that means they need special health and education support.

Appendix B: Priority Schools [1/2]

School Name	DP Accountable	Local Authority	School Type
Beacon Hill Post 16 (SEND)	Balfour Beatty	Thurrock	Sixth Form
Benyon Primary School	BMJV	Thurrock	Primary
Chadwell Children's Centre (in Herringham Primary)	Balfour Beatty	Thurrock	Children's centre
Chadwell St Mary Primary School	BMJV	Thurrock	Primary
Cobham Hall Independent School	Skanska	Gravesham	Secondary
Cobham Primary School	Skanska	Gravesham	Primary
Condovers Scouts / Thurrock District Scout Council	BB / BMJV	Thurrock	Scouts
Drapers Academy	Balfour Beatty	Havering	Secondary
East Tilbury Primary School	BMJV	Thurrock	Primary
Endeavour Co-Operative Academy	Balfour Beatty	Brentwood	SEND
Gad's Hill School	BMJV	Gravesham	Secondary
Herringham Primary Academy	Balfour Beatty	Thurrock	Primary
Ifield School (SEND)	Skanska	Gravesham	Primary + Secondary
Inspire Academy	Skanska	Medway	SEND
Inspire Youth Hub	Balfour Beatty	Thurrock	Youth Hub
Lansdowne Primary Academy	BMJV	Thurrock	Nursery + Primary
Northfleet School for Girls	Skanska	Gravesham	Secondary
Northfleet Technology College	Skanska	Gravesham	Secondary
Olive AP Academy - Brentwood	BMJV	Thurrock	Secondary (AP)
Olive AP Academy - Havering	Balfour Beatty	Havering	Secondary (AP)
Orminston Park Academy	BMJV	Thurrock	Secondary
Orsett Church of England Primary School	Balfour Beatty	Thurrock	Primary
Orsett Heath Academy	Balfour Beatty	Thurrock	Secondary
Painters Ash Primary School	Skanska	Gravesend	Primary
Riverview Junior School	BMJV	Gravesham	Primary
Shorne Church of England Primary School	BMJV	Gravesend	Primary
Singlewell Primary School	Skanska	Gravesham	Primary

Appendix B: Priority Schools [2/2]

School Name	DP Accountable	Local Authority	School Type
St John's Roman Catholic Comprehensive School	BMJV	Gravesend	Secondary
St John's Roman Catholic Primary School	BMJV	Gravesend	Primary
St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School	BMJV	Thurrock	Nursery + Primary
Stifford Clays Primary School	Balfour Beatty	Thurrock	Primary
Thames Park School	Balfour Beatty	Thurrock	Secondary
Thamesview School	BMJV	Gravesham	Secondary
The Gateway Academy	BMJV	Thurrock	Secondary
The Rowans AP Academy	Skanska	Medway	Alternative Provision
Thurrock Youth Cabinet	BB / BMJV	Thurrock	Youth Cabinet
Treetops School (SEND)	Balfour Beatty	Thurrock	Primary + Sixth Form
Tymberwood Academy	BMJV	Gravesham	Primary
USP College	BMJV	Thurrock	FE
Wild Thyme Outdoors	BB / BMJV	Thurrock	Youth Hub
William Edwards School	Balfour Beatty	Thurrock	Secondary
Woodlands School	Balfour Beatty	Brentwood	Primary
Woodside Academy	Balfour Beatty	Thurrock	Primary

Appendix D: Our ambitions and targets (2025-2026) [1/3]

In the 2022 Skills Strategy, we shared minimum targets used in the procurement of the Delivery Partners and have since been enshrined in each of their contracts. In certain areas, our Delivery Partners have made further commitments to exceed these minimum targets to maximise

the value delivered to our people, supply chain and local communities. Although most of these targets will be met during the construction period, when we are employing the majority of our workforce, we have included targets for certain commitments for the next twenty-four months.

	Definition	Method of Measurement	2025-2026 Target
Apprenticeships	An apprenticeship is a genuine job and under all circumstances an apprentice will be employed from day one. Apprenticeships combine practical training in a job with study. An apprentice will: Work alongside experienced staff Gain job-specific skills Earn a wage and get holiday pay Be given time for study related to their role (the equivalent of one day a week) A guide to apprenticeships	Number of apprenticeships completed Number of individual apprenticeships on the Project for at least 6 months of sustained employment (for new apprenticeships) Number of individual apprenticeships on the Project for at least 12 weeks (for existing apprenticeships) This includes apprentices via the supply chain where their apprenticeship has already started	33 apprenticeships (8% of total Project target which is 437 apprenticeships)
Graduates & Industrial Placements	A graduate scheme is an entry level training programme for those with a degree. A graduate will get: Hands-on experience of different areas of the Lower Thames Crossing A structured training programme A route to develop their talent as a future leader Graduate schemes generally last from 1 to 4 years. Industry placements give students an opportunity to develop practical and technical skills in a role directly relevant to their vocational course. They also give employers the chance to ensure young people are developing the skills and experience that industry needs. Industry placements vary in time depending on the course (ranging from T Levels to a graduate degree). Graduate schemes: getting a place	Number of graduate programmes completed Number of graduates on the Project for at least 26 weeks Number of industry placements completed	11 graduates / industry placements (4% of total Project target which is 291 graduates or industry placements)

Appendix D: Our ambitions and targets (2025-2026) [2/3]

	Definition	Method of Measurement	24 Month Target
Work Placements	Work placements are opportunities for school and college students to take part in workplace experiences. A work placement will involve: Carrying out a minimum week placement Shadowing someone or a team of people at work to see what their job is like Going into a workplace for one day a week over a set period Undertaking virtual or hybrid work experience	Number of individual work placements	180 work placements (38% of total Project target which is 470 work placements)
STEM Engagement	STEM Engagement is working with students to break stereotypes and offer engaging activities to inspire the next generation into the possibilities of STEM pathways. Where possible, this should focus on identified Priority Schools, but can include others. STEM Learning	Number of hours of STEM Engagement delivered Number of young people in receipt of STEM Engagement	867 hours of STEM Engagement (17% of total Project target which is 5,000 hours of STEM Engagement)
Support to Educators	Support to Educators uses business experience to help demystify the world of work to education leaders and ensure careers education remains reflective of the fast-changing labour market. Support to Educators is 'non-student facing' engagement and can include attendance at events but must reflect direct support given to education leaders. Your experience matters: Help schools and colleges shape futures	Number of hours of Support to Educators	172 hours of Support to Educators (9% of total Project target which is 2,000 hours of Support to Educators)

Appendix D: Our ambitions and targets (2025-2026) [3/3]

	Definition	Method of Measurement	24 Month Target
Training & Upskilling	Training is defined as the provision of formal accredited courses delivered to provide meaningful opportunities for someone to enter the workforce/industry for the first time. Upskilling is defined as formal accredited courses delivered to provide an opportunity for someone to progress their career into higher skilled, higher paid work within the workforce/industry. Delivery of training should support the objectives of the Local Skills Improvement Plans: Place employers at the heart of local skills systems Facilitate direct and dynamic working arrangements between employers, providers and local stakeholders Help learners gain the skills they need to get good jobs and increase their prospects	Number of people to receive training / upskilling opportunities % of people trained/upskilled that are local people	86 people trained / upskilled (of which 45% should be local people) (10% of total Project target which is 855 people)
Business Upskilling	The number of businesses to receive training, mentoring or wider support that enables them to better win work and/or develop their businesses.	Number of businesses to receive support or training Number of businesses in receipt of training or support who have entered the Lower Thames Crossing Supply Chain	285 businesses upskilled (29% of the total Project target which is 1,000 businesses)

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Registered office Bridge House, 1 Walnut Tree Close, Guildford GU1 4LZ

National Highways Limited registered in England and Wales number 09346363