

News

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Morgan Sindall Construction bridging the skills gap in East Anglia

East Anglia's science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) sector has seen significant growth over the past half a century, with the current cluster of STEM-based companies in the region now one of Europe's most successful.

However, this success is being met with new challenges. According to CITB data, over 24,000 new construction workers will be required in the region by 2023, however one fifth of all vacancies in the industry are persistently difficult to fill due to a lack of relevant skills, qualifications or experience.

In order to help bridge the skills gap in the region, Morgan Sindall Construction has been engaging in a number of initiatives to inspire the next generation of construction professionals.

The company's senior team in the region is involved at a strategic level with engagement in key programmes and bodies that are helping to shape the future of STEM education and development across the region.

Bob Ensich, area director for Morgan Sindall Construction in the East, has long been a passionate advocate of projects and initiatives that will inspire, engage, and upskill the next generation of construction professionals, and the business has launched a number of programmes in partnership with Construction Industry Training Board (CITB), the National Federation of Roofing Contractors (NFRC), apprenticeship training agency TrAC, Form the Future and regional colleges to help advance the uptake of STEM subjects in the region.

Bob has also recently been selected as Non-Executive Director of the Employment and Skills Board for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority. The Board was established in the autumn of 2019 and looks to help steer the skills agenda in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, building on work currently being undertaken by all partners, of which Morgan Sindall Construction is one.

Helen Clements, Community Investment Advisor for Morgan Sindall Construction East, sits on the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) skills advisory board, and chairs New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (NALEP) construction sector skills group for building growth.

Bob Ensich, said: "Working closely with our industry partners, Morgan Sindall Construction has developed and supported a range of initiatives across the region that have had significant impact in engaging and attracting young people to STEM based courses and encouraging them to develop STEM skills.

"As development in the East accelerates, the impact of the skills shortage we are experiencing is being exacerbated across our supply chains and proactive, strategic action to counteract this is crucial.

"Schemes such as apprenticeships and work experience opportunities are an essential aid to the sustained growth of our industry, and we are working hard to continue to build on our strong track record of skills, training and engagement to ensure we're reaching the next generation and developing the construction professionals of the future."

Regionally, the company has been working with The Careers & Enterprise Company and NALEP to become a Cornerstone employer across Cambridgeshire, Ipswich and Norwich. By galvanising their networks and collaborating with other employers in the region, they provide meaningful engagement for pupils looking to enter the industry, whilst supporting schools in achieving their Gatsby benchmarks at the same time.

The company has also appointed five Enterprise Advisers to the network across East Cambridgeshire and the Fenlands, Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk. The advisers use their strategic skills to work directly with school leadership teams to develop their careers programmes, raising aspirations for young people in secondary and college education.

Morgan Sindall Construction has also been proactive in partnering with organisations to arrange interactive and educational sessions with pupils in their school setting, including Design Engineer Construct! (DEC) in Cambridge and Suffolk, and Eyes on Construction in Lowestoft, East Sussex.

Last year, Year Four pupils from Stapleford Community and Icknield Primary Schools were led by volunteers from Morgan Sindall Construction in a Cambridge LaunchPad project day through Form the Future, an organisation connecting young people to career possibilities through apprenticeships, outreach activities and work experience opportunities.

The project day focused on breaking down some of the common misconceptions and stereotypes that surround the construction industry, aiming to show the children that a career in construction is accessible to everyone.

Also in Cambridge, pupils from Ernulf Academy, St Neots, were given the chance to explore industry careers by participating in a series of fun and educational tasks organised by Morgan Sindall Construction through the EDGE skills partnership in November.

Tasks included a housebuilding challenge that was judged on criteria including cost, sustainability and design innovation, and required students to take on different roles within a construction team in order to showcase the variety of jobs available within the industry across a number of disciplines and trades.

Some of the placements organised by Morgan Sindall Construction include 13 work experience opportunities provided for students at the South Essex College Digital Technology Campus project in Basildon, and two young women completing their work experience through SECTA, who have also named Morgan Sindall Construction as a strategic partner.

For more information about this news release please contact Ruth Cobban or Sophie Anderson at Influential on 0151 239 5000 or email cobban@thisisinfluential.com or anderson@thisisinfluential.com