

ISSUE SIX - SPRING 2015

outperformance

People, projects and services for the construction industry

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VGC plays a vital part in £190 million M1 motorway contract

As a key labour supplier, VGC is supplying all categories of labour to the major upgrade project at the Catthorpe interchange. VGC has been working with main contractor Skanska since the January 2014 start of the project, which will ultimately help to smooth the flow of up to 142,000 vehicles a day.

Britain's motorway network is among the busiest in the world, in many instances coping with volumes of traffic far above its design capacity. As a result there are pressure points that cause serious problems on a daily basis. Among these is the Catthorpe interchange, a major motorway and trunk road junction in the east Midlands marking the start of the M6 and the A14 at junction 19 of the M1.

The existing junction causes congestion with long queues of traffic, particularly at peak periods, and frequent accidents. Local traffic using the motorway adds to the congestion.

In 2014 the Highways Agency engaged Skanska Civil Engineering to undertake a major infrastructure project designed to improve safety, cut journey times and separate local from long-distance traffic.

VGC was engaged by Skanska to supply all categories of staff, including ground workers, pipelayers, kerblayers, traffic marshalls, slinger signallers, gangers and supervisors, as part of a five-year framework contract.

One of the main criteria for the project is that the workforce should be sourced locally and VGC, with its nationwide coverage and years of experience recruiting construction personnel and engaging with local labour brokerages and training providers, was able to meet this requirement. All labour supplied is local: no-one travels more than 45 minutes to get to work. Apart from reduced commuting, local workers also spend their salaries in the area, supporting neighbouring businesses and shops.

VGC is also committed to the training and development of its workers. As a result they are multi-skilled, providing an immediate benefit for Skanska and a long term benefit for individual operatives by improving their employability.



sponsorship



One year on, Sentinel proves its worth

In January 2014 Network Rail introduced the new Sentinel scheme, with a new smart card for each person working on Britain's railways, and significant change to the worker sponsorship process; workers are limited to one primary and two sub-sponsors. This allows companies better control of health, safety and welfare of the workforce, and shares the responsibilities and costs of sponsorship across the supply chain.

As an important supplier of personnel for Network Rail projects, VGC has successfully applied for over 340 Sentinel smart cards for its Labour Solutions, Personnel and Rail Projects workforces. At the time of writing, VGC is primary sponsor for 98% of its rail operatives – only recent recruits have yet to make the transition from secondary sponsorship.

By having such a high percentage of people with primary sponsorship, VGC ensures that it provides regular full-time work, so people do not need to seek 'top up' work with other suppliers. VGC's control over working hours minimises the risk of fatigue and, together with careful vetting of each worker, reduces risk on our clients' projects to the lowest possible level.

Commenting on the scheme and its impact, Group Services Director Ciara Pryce said: "VGC already had stringent controls in place for the management of our rail workers including health, safety, competency and well-being issues, so the new Sentinel system did not represent a major change to the way we operate. It nevertheless provides additional safeguards for the industry, which we welcome."

“ We believe that the new system is a good way of ensuring a higher standard of staff management is implemented across the industry. ”

If you have any questions about Sentinel please contact VGC's Sentinel Co-ordinator Alice Dupree on **01895 671 780**.

“ VGC is a major part of the Skanska supply chain. The project is logistically challenging, and has numerous complex traffic management and construction phases. The VGC team has shown a high level of commitment to the project with excellent contact with the Skanska team to ensure that we are supplied with a highly skilled, competent and above all, safe workforce. ”

Verdun Davies, Skanska's Works Manager on the project

Skanska's 'Injury Free Environment' initiative dovetails neatly with VGC's Be Safe by Choice behaviour-based safety programme. VGC staff have already won awards at Catthorpe for their engagement and promotion of safe working practices. VGC workers Derrick Ashley and William Benjamin received awards last year for promoting a safe working area for their colleagues, and VGC was awarded the contractor HSE award on the project last August.



John Daly, Contract Supervisor on the project

Verdun Davies singled out John Daly, VGC Contract Supervisor at Catthorpe, for special mention: "John has provided 'hands on' management of the contract with regular site visits and communications with Skanska. This has allowed John and the VGC team to develop an understanding of the Skanska safety culture and the Skanska way of working, which is reflected in the calibre of the people brought to work on the site. Any issues that arise are swiftly actioned by John and his team in an effective and efficient manner."

VGC is also working with Balfour Beatty Skanska on the M25 upgrade, on an Anglian Water contract in Cambridge, and with the Costain Skanska joint venture on the Crossrail Bond Street station development in London.



Joint collaboration on safety brings results

Since November 2013 Atkins and VGC have been working on a major project to deliver essential upgrades to the railway network in east Kent.

When completed later this year the project will improve asset condition, deliver operational savings and improve network integration across the Garden of England including the migration of signalling control of a large part of Network Rail's Kent routes into a new signalling centre in Gillingham.

In order to improve safety on the project, in October 2014 VGC Rail Projects Director Jacques Kriel started working with Atkins on a 'Step Change' safety programme, which has already shown remarkable results.

The programme incorporates aspects learned from VGC's behaviour-based safety programme, Be Safe by Choice. These include taking each close call as a learning opportunity to make work safer.

The first step in the programme was to interview all managers, supervisors and controllers of site safety (COSS), to make sure they were aware of the importance VGC places on safety. As a result of the interviews, VGC's internal training school, VGC Training, arranged for an external expert to visit all sites to assess each VGC COSS's on-track competency and behaviours. In addition to these assessments, VGC's construction managers visit each worksite regularly to ensure a safe working environment on a continuing basis.

Both Jacques Kriel and VGC Group Managing Director, Laurence McKidd, visited sites to show their support for the new programme.

After a review of the management and supervision structure of the project, some roles and responsibilities were adjusted to focus more on safety and to allow more time for project surveillance.

An additional delivery manager joined the main site, as well as a new engineer and supervisor, bringing the ratio of supervisors to gangs up to nearly one supervisor to six operatives.

Twice weekly at least six work sites are visited by a joint inspection team consisting of representatives from VGC and Atkins. All inspection information is collated and presented at weekly Step Change meetings, where any issues are discussed and resolved.

The new Step Change process was shared with VGC's suppliers to ensure that all elements of the supply chain were involved.

Going forward, regular planning meetings for all contractors involved will be built into each project, to promote collaboration and encourage synergy. Lessons learned will be noted and shared across the VGC Group for use on future projects.

Jacques Kriel said:

“Everyone at VGC is focused on safe working as well as delivering an efficient contract for our clients. With the support of our excellent HSQE team we continue to improve our safety processes, so that everyone can go home safely at the end of every shift.”

In December 2014 VGC was considered by Atkins to be the very best of all their subcontractors with regard to safety; the team has been nominated for an Atkins safety award.

Thank you to everyone who played a part in helping VGC to achieve the following awards:



Having topped the sub-contractor league table seven times in 2014, VGC won the 'Contractor of the Year 2014' award for the Costain Skanska Crossrail works at Bond Street.



Dai Williams was named Supervisor of the Year at the Heathrow Safety Development Awards (and shortlisted for the Individual and the Engineering & Facilities Contractor awards).



VGC won a safety award from Skanska Balfour Beatty for the M25 section 5 works, and Matt Dean, HSQE adviser, was presented with an individual safety award.



Charmaine Bailey, Quality Manager, received two Network Rail Quality Coin awards.



Skanska awarded VGC a sub-contractor HSE award for the M1 junction 19 project.



VGC was awarded first place in Balfour Beatty's track partnership supplier performance league in January 2015.

'Be Safe by Choice' awards:



Michael Clarey and Trevor Scoble for reporting a close call; John McKenzie for a detailed COSS brief; Stephen Hill for ensuring the RDT was safe; Paul Webb for vigilance that prevented a serious accident; Norman Wood, Steve McDonald, Darren Oxley for ensuring safety when a train had a fault; Tadhg Bolger for a safe, well-organised site.

Outperformance awards:



Tim Rice, Liam Boland, Richard Bromley, Costel Minzu, Shane Brown, Shanelle Wells, Laura Kenneally, Shaun Mills, Jack Pressdee, Steve Langford, Jack Conroy, James Piercy, Zena Wigram, Matt Dean, Ian Keen.

Commendations

Congratulations and thank you to the following 'outperformers', who have delivered excellence for VGC and our clients.



The team from London Underground thanked VGC staff for work delivered over the Christmas and New Year period. In particular they noted the hard work, commitment and professionalism of the team effort at Earls Court, Fulham Broadway and Sloane Square.



Atkins thanked Ben Futter, Nigel Gardiner, Andy Beattie, Cosmin Simion, Ralph Richard, Dan Rickward, Alan Orpwood, Arthur Orpwood and Lee Brookstein for superb work under difficult conditions on the east Kent resignalling project.



Network Rail thanked

- Nigel Pearce, Mark Lowther, Nathan Storry and Keith Gallagher for 'pulling out all the stops' to solve a difficult series of challenges to make a safe delivery
- Fiona Dowling and Michael Elwood for replanning some difficult changes
- Adam Hards, Sascha Rogers, Neil Martin and Mick Taylor for teamwork and 'excellent work safely done'
- Ian Green, Petru Ardeleanu, Shane Vaux and Nathan Storry for 'safe and professional work'
- Ian Green, Alan Axon, Paul Gregory, Stephen Hill and Keith Gallagher for diligence.



Story Contracting thanked Tommy Hunter and the team for completing work without incident and ahead of programme at Ravensworth Terrace in Dunston.



Balfour Beatty complimented Daragh Byrne on his work ethic and helpfulness (Crossrail West outer) and congratulated Shane Jupp, James Piercy, Joshua Cormack and Steven Hodge for setting an excellent example of safety good practice for their work in Gillingham in Kent.



Transport for London track partnership complimented Malcolm Redhead, Damian Walsh, Michael Yanni, Nuno De Sousa, Riaan Kotze and Andrei Teletin on their high levels of commitment and enthusiasm.



Lawton Tools thanked VGC Rail Projects for input and support in the development of the insulated measuring wheel.

Ensuring that excellence in safety standards is delivered every day, everywhere.



Moyo Gisanrin – an exemplary key influencer in the VGC family

There is nothing wrong with ambition in life if it gets you where you want to be, and Moyo Gisanrin demonstrates this fact.

Former plumber Moyo was introduced to VGC by a friend in 2011. Four years on, Moyo is a pipelayer, as well as a deputy foreman and a key influencer on site. VGC key influencers are the eyes, ears and voices on site, ensuring that excellence in safety standards is delivered every day, everywhere. Those standards are maintained by people like Moyo and his peers in the VGC Be Safe by Choice programme.

Moyo admits it can sometimes be difficult to find the right way to approach a colleague and tell them they are working in an unsafe fashion – after all, people don't like to hear they are doing something wrong.

But the father of three has a simple philosophy: if you speak to colleagues as if you are scolding children you get nowhere fast, but speak to them like adults and explain the safety implications for their well-being, even years down the line, and your audience will stop, think and listen. He distinguishes between telling people they are no good at their job, and making a constructive suggestion that it could be done more safely.

Moyo has taken the mantras he learned from his key influencer course with him every day – he even photographed all the literature from his course on his phone so he can refer to it whenever he needs to. Sound like something of a stickler? You bet he is.

Safety is a point of pride for Moyo. He wants to justify the investment that VGC has made in training him by ensuring that every colleague, every day, is working in a safe and professional environment. His nickname '10 Metres' is a mark of respect from his mates on site – he makes sure that everyone observes the 10-metre exclusion zone around any road rail excavators at all times, without exception!

He encourages colleagues to stop and think before they start any task and memorise or even write down the names of those working around them. By doing this, people are more likely to treat their colleagues as part of the VGC family and ensure they don't get hurt.

Moyo files monthly reports on how the job is progressing, the manner in which it has been carried out and any potential hazards. Moyo openly contends he never, ever, wants to file an accident report form. He can proudly say that there has never been any accident or incident in his area of responsibility since he made the step up to key influencer.

Nothing could demonstrate his diligence and professionalism more than that.

Contracts update

The VGC Group saw 12% growth in 2014, reaching sales of over £53m. At December's company update meetings in Manchester, London and east Kent, staff were thanked for the hard work that has allowed the group to maintain strong growth despite the recession.

Chairman Sean Fitzpatrick said that he expects the group to continue to expand over the next five years through sustained and managed growth in all divisions. Managing director Laurence McKidd said: "With a record order book for 2015 and forecast sales of over £58 million, we plan to achieve £90 million by 2019."

VGC Rail Projects

- Atkins nominated VGC for an award for the step-change safety initiative at east Kent (see p4)
- Network Rail has extended VGC's rail delivery contract to the end of May 2015
- Currently bidding on several contracts totalling £12million

VGC Construction

- VGC Construction was commended for its high level of safety standards applied on the Earls Court Head House project for Costain
- We are pricing a number of road and paving schemes for Amey

VGC Personnel

- In 2014 VGC Personnel increased sales by 33% over 2013
- New clients include Mace, Carillion, Interserve and Vinci

VGC Labour Solutions

We have secured work on projects across the UK:

- Woolwich station fit-out – *Balfour Beatty*
- Crossrail tunnel fit-out – *Alstom TSO Costain JV*
- Heathrow Bravo taxiways and landside works – *Ferrovial*
- Heathrow Sierra taxiway – *Morgan Sindall*
- Further work at Urenco – *Kier*
- Various contracts in north east England – *Story Rail*
- North Lincs, Watford and Crewe resignalling schemes – *Siemens*
- Highways Agency area 10 – *Balfour Beatty Mott MacDonald*
- Edinburgh to Glasgow railway improvement (EGIP) – *Morgan Sindall Costain Babcock alliance*
- Pontypridd railway station – *Dawnus*

Cole Hire

- In 2014 Cole Hire achieved record sales and utilisation of its vehicle fleet
- We recently installed the 'in-car cleverness' vehicle monitoring system
- We now supply refrigerated vans to West Sussex Primary Care Trust

Appointments

The VGC Group continues to expand our team to manage the increasing workload. To see the new appointments, please visit www.vgcgroup.co.uk/new-colleagues

Corporate objectives

The VGC Group objectives for 2015 set out how we will continue to outperform while we work towards achieving our target growth.



Profitable markets

- Achieve or exceed budgeted sales and margins
- Expand sales to new and existing customers and sectors
- Increase brand awareness within the industry



Safe & healthy communities

- Reduce safety risks to as low as reasonably practicable
- Promote the health, wellbeing and development of our people



Sustainability

- Employ locally, promote diversity and engage with communities
- Manage and reduce our environmental impact
- Source and manage materials and products responsibly



Charity update

The company continues to raise funds for our chosen charity Leukaemia & Lymphoma Research. As well as office dress-down (or up) days for Halloween, Christmas, and Valentine's Day, the coffers were swollen by the efforts of Paul Hambidge, Mark Nunn and Matt Dean, who tackled 178 miles between them on the Leukaemia & Lymphoma Research Bikeathon. For ongoing information about VGC's charity fundraising and a list of forthcoming events please see our website 'news' pages.

News in brief



Tony Trevasakis and Ben Johnson test the new measuring wheel. (photo: Adam Hards)

Collaboration leads to innovative new tool

Network Rail, VGC Group and Lawton Tools have worked together on the development of a bespoke insulated measuring wheel, which has been approved by Network Rail for use in

live third rail areas. The new tool will give more flexibility in planning and undertaking walkouts.

Railway engineering course partnership

In a new partnership, VGC Labour Solutions is guaranteeing job interviews to all students who pass the new NVQ railway engineering course at Edinburgh College. Successful students will have the chance to go straight into a job with VGC, working on projects such as the £650m Edinburgh-Glasgow Improvement Programme (EGIP), a major enhancement of the rail links between Scotland's two principal cities.

MP praises VGC's apprenticeship scheme



During a visit to VGC's Ruislip head office, local MP Nick Hurd met some of the apprentices working on schemes including Crossrail and the east Kent resignalling project. Mr Hurd said: "The VGC Group's apprentice scheme offers valuable opportunities to get training and career direction in a very exciting industry. I really enjoyed chatting to the apprentices and hearing their stories. They are remarkable young people and I wish them all the best in their future careers."



PM visits Cattothorpe works

Prime Minister David Cameron visited the M1 junction 19 works in November 2014 (see p2 for more about the scheme).

Five star accreditation in Building Confidence audit

In September's Achilles Building Confidence audit, VGC gained the top five star rating. In addition, the auditor noted that VGC leads best practice with its behavioural change programme (Be Safe by Choice), and in equality and diversity. This is the third year running that VGC has achieved the accreditation, demonstrating compliance and improvement against the UK construction industry's accreditation and registration standards.

Checks help staff to improve their health

Health checks run by VGC for staff across the country are encouraging staff to take responsibility for their health. One member of staff lost two stone in six months and feels "years younger". As a result of the feedback from the tests, VGC is working on an education campaign to promote healthy eating and support those who want to quit smoking.

New HSQE induction booklet

VGC's new HSQE booklet provides an overview of the company and its health, safety, quality and environment policies and rules. It will make sure everyone knows about the ambition to 'outperform' our competitors and constantly exceed client expectations.

Get involved – we'd love to hear from you



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Follow us on LinkedIn (VGC Group)

The VGC Group:
People, projects
and services for the
construction industry

VGC Labour Solutions:

Trades and labour
recruitment

VGC Personnel:

Professional, technical and
managerial recruitment

VGC Rail Projects:

Mainline rail and London
Underground contractor

VGC Construction:

Building and civil
engineering contractor

VGC Training:

Training and competence
management services

Cole Hire:

Vehicle rental

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