

ISSUE EIGHT – SPRING 2016

# outperformance

People, projects and services for the construction industry

Inside this issue: • Apprenticeships • Mersey Gateway • Isolation neutral innovation





## Investment in apprenticeships key to VGC's future engineering resources

Experience and industry knowledge are invaluable whatever area of business you are involved in, and this certainly applies to VGC.

A decade ago VGC anticipated the skills shortages currently impacting the construction and engineering industries and implemented a strategy to ensure the ability to meet obligations to clients. At the heart of the strategy was a commitment to invest in training the next generation of skilled workers.

The current government's enthusiasm for apprenticeships through the levy scheme is an unexpected endorsement of our long-standing training programmes, a leading example of which are the 50 VGC members of staff and apprentices currently undertaking NVQs on our Track Partnership contract. Together with apprentices and trainees on other projects, well over 5% of our workforce is currently involved in gaining life-long external qualifications.

The apprenticeship programme starts with 13 weeks of classroom and on-track training managed by Arc Academy and Fastline. At the end of this period, VGC managers interview the apprentices and invite those that show an interest in a career in London Underground to join the Track Partnership programme. Apprentices are then placed in gangs with experienced foremen who are carefully selected to support and develop their charges. While they are in the programme, apprentices receive the full rates of pay for the job as well as support for their training.

Trainers meet apprentices weekly as they prepare for NVQ Level 2 in Rail Engineering Underpinning Knowledge; this is usually achieved nine months after starting the scheme. Once apprentices have passed the NVQ examination, those with aptitude and ability can progress their careers within VGC by becoming foremen and then supervisors. After that there are more opportunities for promotion, as illustrated by Terry Dutton-Wells.



Terry began his career as an apprentice welder and became HSQE director of VGC in 2002. Now a non-executive director, Terry says, "Rail is a great industry because it offers so many career openings in numerous disciplines. You get the opportunity to look at where you want to be in a broad spectrum of industry activities."

Among the apprentices who started out in summer 2015 is Rudy Osborne. He describes himself as "a hands-on person" who enjoys getting involved in the job. "The teams are really good, always helping me out," he says, selecting his foremen for special praise. "Andy O'Shea and Michael McCarney always know what to do. They know I'm new and they've got a lot of experience, they teach me more things every shift.

"Alongside the college training, I've moved around to different gangs and learned technical skills such as how to use various machines and tools, and tips to make things easier." Rudy continues, "The protection masters always brief us before we start work so we know the safe places to be on track. I've been doing re-railing, maintenance, replacing damaged track, adding new ballast – all the things involved in making sure the track is in good condition and the trains can run."

Rudy views his apprenticeship as a great way to get a start in the engineering industry, and he's seen how others have progressed. "I have goals for my career and I want to progress," he says, "I really enjoy looking over something once the job has finished and thinking I was part of making that."



Commenting on VGC's apprenticeship programme, Ciara Pryce, VGC Group Services director, says,

“ Apprenticeships give invaluable training opportunities, experience and career direction to new entrants to the construction and engineering industries. We believe that we have a responsibility to provide training and development opportunities. As well as offering hands-on experience, guidance and life-long qualifications, we're proud that we convert apprenticeships into full-time employment for the majority of our trainees. ”



## VGC and Track Partnership – a productive, long-standing relationship

Track Partnership is the Balfour Beatty and London Underground strategic alliance that maintains the Tube network to which VGC has been supplying staff for 12 years.

At any time there will be up to 170 VGC people working for Track Partnership across the capital. The work, which continues throughout the year, is wide-ranging and includes laying new drainage pipes, building catch pits, repairing and restoring ballasted track, points and crossings.

Most of the work is undertaken in overnight shifts with some special blockades and weekend possessions. Current projects range from station improvements at Ruislip in the west of London to track renewal at Upminster in the east.



## VGC's role on Mersey Gateway boosts local economy

Our commitment to hiring local people to work on projects in their area is once again providing welcome dividends, this time on Merseyside.

The Mersey Gateway is a major infrastructure scheme that has the construction of a six lane, 2.5km long toll bridge across the River Mersey at its heart. The new bridge will link the towns of Runcorn on the south to Widnes on the north. It will also be the centrepiece of a new link road connecting the national motorway network in north Cheshire and Merseyside, when building is completed in 2017.

We have been working on the project since early 2015, providing a range of expertise including carpenters, ground workers, crane supervisors, slinger signallers and experienced foremen.

In line with our policy of contributing to the local economy and minimising impact on the environment wherever possible, the majority of our staff live within 45 minutes of the Gateway site. As a result, not only do local retailers benefit from spending by local residents, but reduced commuting times mean less impact on regional transport infrastructure.

VGC's staff are part of the near 1,000-strong workforce working on the project at peak. Work started in May 2014 and has involved laying temporary access roads on either side of the river and a 1,000 metre long temporary trestle bridge to provide access for the construction work on the elegant cable-stay structure and three towers of the bridge.

While the local economy is benefitting during the construction phase, the wider Cheshire/Merseyside region will gain greatly when the Gateway opens in autumn 2017.



## ISO 50001 accreditation brings energy management benefits

With rising energy costs and increasing concern about greenhouse gas emissions, VGC is committed to efficient energy management, best practice and sustainability.

Rising energy costs and increasing regulatory pressure to reduce greenhouse gas emissions make the need for effective energy management a priority for all organisations.

ESOS, the Energy Savings Opportunity Scheme, is mandatory for all large UK businesses. It was introduced in the UK as a result of the European Commission's Energy Efficiency Directive. This states that all EU member states must introduce a programme of regular energy audits for large organisations.

Following a stringent audit, VGC has successfully achieved ISO 50001:2011 Energy Management Systems certification. ISO 50001 is the international standard for energy management and accredited ISO 50001 certification satisfies the legal requirements of ESOS.

ISO 50001 brings the company a number of benefits:

- We comply with ESOS legal requirements.
- Measurement and management of energy consumption helps us to increase energy efficiency and reduce energy costs, one of our 2016 corporate objectives (see page 7).
- It helps us to promote energy efficiency internally and with our suppliers.
- It reassures our clients and partners that we are a responsible company.

"We are delighted to have achieved ISO 50001." said John Hannan, HSQE director. "Not only does it satisfy our statutory requirements under ESOS, but it means that we have an effective and auditable management system. This will help us drive continuous improvements as well as saving money and reducing VGC Group's environmental impact."

“ We are delighted to have achieved ISO 50001. ”

## BE SAFE WITH vgc

### Safety statistics

Hours worked over last 12 months	2,085,899
Days since last RIDDOR reportable accident	115
Hours worked since last reportable accident	698,377
12 month RIDDOR AFR*	0.14

As of 31 January 2016. \*Accidents per 100,000 hours worked



### Outperformance awards:



Austen Harrison

The monthly safety inspection form winners were Jason Yadao, Bobby Hayre and James Burke. Other outperformers were Robert Tabacaru (Crossrail Anglia), Adam Hards and Austen Harrison (Network Rail rail delivery contract).



# commendations



Crossrail works at Bond Street

Some of the compliments and thanks received by our 'outperformers'.



## Siemens north Lincolnshire resignalling

We received a large number of compliments from Siemens and Network Rail for our teams who worked over the Christmas holidays on the north Lincolnshire resignalling project. They included:

"Thanks and congratulations to all involved. The successful commissioning of north Lincs has only been possible by the amazing effort and teamwork from everyone. Thank you all for your hard work, sacrifice and commitment." The senior installation manager at Siemens thanked Tom Pickford, Billy Jones, Gary Mitchell, Richard Hirst and Andrew Corish for their work on the north Lincs project: "Their enthusiasm and willingness to work is a breath of fresh air".

Mark Williams (team leader), Daniel Leonard, Stephen Baxter, Jason O'Keefe and Dave Cotterill usually work in Manchester, and travelled to north Lincolnshire to work on recovering materials from the track for recycling. The signalling team leader extended "a huge thank you to the team for the effort and dedication shown".



## Siemens Crewe resignalling

Key influencer Ben Daly was commended by the Siemens project manager at Crewe for his briefing, safety and leadership.



## Costain Crossrail Anglia works

Network Rail thanked the teams working on the Crossrail Anglia UTX works over Christmas.



## Ferrovial Agroman Bravo taxiway at Heathrow airport

James Burke was thanked for "being so proactive in delivering such a positive attitude towards health and safety".



## Network Rail National Supply Chain rail delivery contract

Ben Johnson, Heath McQueen, Andrew Johnson and John Waite were thanked for excellent work.

Austen Harrison and his team were commended for "their hard work and dedication to getting the job done" on a difficult rail drop at the Severn Tunnel, and also for their "excellent" work delivering rails to the Martello tunnel in Folkestone.

The works delivery supervisor emailed to thank Adam Hards, Sascha Rogers, Mick Taylor, Neil Martin, Tony Trevaskis, Petru Ardeleanu, John Waite, Anthony Scott, Heath McQueen, Ben Johnson and Andrew Johnson for successful rail drops. Network Rail also emailed their appreciation for Simon Clamp's "collaborative and knowledgeable response".



## Track Partnership work on London Underground

Track Partnership thanked the teams working over Christmas on the successful Paddington blockade: "a superb performance from everyone. You should all be proud of your achievement."



## Costain Skanska Crossrail works at Bond Street station

Mohammed Hasan and Adrian Iliuta received observation health and safety awards from Costain Skanska JV at Bond Street Crossrail. After winning the monthly safety award every single month of 2015, the VGC team was awarded the Crossrail Skanska JV 'Safety Contractor of the Year 2015'. That's two years running!



## London Underground Four Lines Modernisation

The lead construction manager on LU's 4L Modernisation project thanked Sean Thompson and Marilu Pittelli for their support setting up Farringdon SER: they've "set the bar moving forward". This is part of the SSR (sub-surface rail) project being delivered by Thales.



## Balfour Beatty Crossrail works at Abbey Wood

Naven Bhanot and Cliff Harvey were thanked by Balfour Beatty in the August 'close call winners' presentation. They'd shared improvement opportunities at the Abbey Wood Crossrail site for safe access and vehicle safety and logistics.



## Balfour Beatty Thameslink KO2 project

Jagdip Singh and Prabu Kuttykrishnan were commended by the team leader for "exceptionally hard" work.



## Mace Terminal 5 fit-out at Heathrow airport

Kelvin Austin was complimented for his "positive can-do attitude on site each and every day. His work ethos and mentality have contributed massively to all projects: he is a key factor and plays a crucial role for MACE."



We always make sure that operatives are aware of the issues they may encounter. We won't compromise: safety is paramount.

## Simon Clamp – ensuring fully capable VGC teams are ready for action every time

Not only is the infinite variety of customer demands among the most enduring and appealing aspects of the construction and engineering industries, it is also the most challenging for those whose task it is to respond to them. Dealing with customer demands is part of the daily routine at the VGC Group, and rail delivery operations manager Simon Clamp is in the vanguard.

Simon is responsible for VGC's rail delivery teams who work on assignments across the country. A total of 55 people are organised into 13 teams and Simon has to ensure that they are ready to be deployed to handle the tasks assigned to them, professionally and safely.

"I have to allocate teams to the jobs, ensuring that they are fully briefed and able to deal with any issues they may encounter," Simon says. "The constant challenges are what make the role interesting and keep me focused. While much is routine, there are frequent late changes outside our control that need to be managed in a safe and efficient way."

A military background and subsequent experience as a trainer has equipped Simon well for his current position. "I started with VGC five years ago as a track machine operator. When VGC saw that I had training qualifications they offered me the opportunity to become part of the training team. I progressed within VGC's training department and on the retirement of the rail delivery operations manager, I was approached to take over the role."

Simon arrived at VGC with TACQUA (A1 Assessor) qualifications and a successful track record in training; he is a classic example of promotion from within based on skills, experience and personality. With the encouragement of the company he undertook and passed the Diploma in Training and Assessing in the Workplace Environment at the University of Derby.

"VGC definitely encourages people to seek appropriate qualifications and further their personal development," he says.

While his training qualifications are important, Simon also acknowledges the part his industry knowledge and experience plays in how effective he is in his operations role. "I started with British Rail in 1994 in its Rail Engineering School and then moved into the signalling and telecommunications side of the industry. My experience in training underlines my commitment to ensure that everyone I send out to a site is fully competent. Another benefit is that by holding all the competencies myself, I am able to mentor and support my staff and, if necessary, even fill gaps in our resources when required."

A strong advocate of VGC's Be Safe by Choice behavioural safety programme, Simon says that while the workforce were initially uncertain, they are now fully committed to it and the benefits it brings.

"Safety is definitely top of the agenda at VGC," he says. "We always make sure that operatives are aware of the issues they may encounter. We won't compromise: safety is paramount."



## Isolation neutrals prompt innovative team solution at Crossrail Anglia

As part of the £150 million Crossrail north-east spur project, works on cable routes required a series of isolation neutrals between Gidea Park and Crowlands in Essex. Recognising that the neutrals had the potential for serious disruption and cost, a team from Network Rail, Costain and VGC got together to find a way to resolve the issues involved.

The combined team devised a new procedure that allows RRVs to travel safely under live overhead lines within possessions on the project. The procedure depends on communication and signalling between the key individuals controlling the worksites and PICOP land involved.

Full risk assessments of the procedure were carried out before it was introduced. Results to date have been encouraging, with better use being made of combined resources, and consequent significant cost-savings.

"The Crossrail Anglia project has been running since 2014 and this is the first time that a road-rail vehicle has passed under a live overhead line," said Jacques Kriel, VGC Rail Projects director.

Mike Condon, contracts manager, thanked all those involved in devising the new procedure and in its introduction. "It's very exciting to be working as part of an integrated team to develop new procedures that can be used in future to deliver this logistically complex project as efficiently as possible. I'm sure other projects will benefit from our Crossrail Anglia experience in the future."

### Charity update

Our current running total for cancer charity Bloodwise (formerly Leukaemia & Lymphoma Research) is a triumphant **£7,875** after a race night, various raffles and dress down (or up) days.

## Successful frameworks

VGC has a number of framework agreements that allow us to be involved in almost all of the UK's key infrastructure projects.

One of our key frameworks is the Morgan Sindall labour desk, where we are one of only five partners. Ben Wallis, our labour co-ordinator, works out of the Morgan Sindall office in Euston. Through the labour desk, our teams are working on projects across the UK, including Crossrail, EGIP and Network Rail, as well as the decommissioning of Sellafeld, and, starting soon, Thames Tideway.

"We value our relationship with VGC, and they are excellent at providing safe, competent staff to our projects," said Graham Edgell, Morgan Sindall Director of Sustainability and Procurement. "Because we know that VGC supports the long-term social, environmental and economic wellbeing of their communities, we were pleased to support them to become a partner in the Supply Chain Sustainability School (see p8). Morgan Sindall also nominated VGC for the 2015 Infrastructure 21 Training award (see Outperformance issue 7).

Frameworks give us closer relationships with our clients and mean that we have access to labour histograms. These help us in long-term planning, so we can offer consistent employment to our workforce, and continue to grow our business.



## 2016 corporate objectives

### Profitable markets

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

### Safe and healthy communities

- Continue to raise awareness of Be Safe by Choice across VGC
- Manage safety risks
- Promote health, wellbeing and development of our people
- Collaborate to achieve positive outcomes
- To be recognised as an employer of choice

### Sustainability

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



# News in brief

## New recruits on EGIP



Chris, David and Robert are among the new recruits now working for VGC on the Edinburgh to Glasgow Improvement Programme. They were previously unemployed, and thanks to our partnership with GP Strategies Training Limited their determination and hard work has paid off: they have now started long-term careers in the rail industry.

## VGC's fleet: safe, efficient and environmentally sound



FORS, the Transport for London Fleet Operator Recognition Scheme, has given independent confirmation that our operations, managed by VGC'S fleet management company, Cole Hire, are run safely, efficiently and in an environmentally sound manner. VGC's fleet is on average less than 12 months old, and last year the company took delivery of 43 new vans – all five-star safety rated by NCAP. All VGC vehicles are fitted with in-car-cleverness tracking systems to support drivers to drive safely with minimum fuel consumption.

## Get involved – we'd love to hear from you



Follow us on Twitter @VGCGroup



Like us on Facebook /VGCGroup



Follow us on LinkedIn (VGC Group)

## Training team shortlisted for awards

VGC's training team made the shortlist for the Training Team of the Year in the RailStaff awards, and was also shortlisted in the Training and Development category of the UK Rail Industry Awards. UKRIA judges said: "VGC has empowered its 1,000-strong workforce through up-to-date, multi-skilled training programmes that have allowed for several promotions, ideal for boosting staff morale and supporting business continuity." They administered 4,079 training courses and a training spend of £285,000 in 2015.

## Bob Webb awarded ICE Fellowship



VGC non-executive director Bob Webb has been accepted as a Fellow of the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) in recognition of his significant contribution to the civil engineering profession over more than 35 years. ICE Regional Director for London Suzanne Moroney said: "Fellowship of the Institution of Civil Engineers is our highest form of membership. Bob's work in setting up VGC's graduate training programme has shown his commitment to the future of civil engineering."

## Supply Chain Sustainability Gold



VGC is the only labour supply company partner of the Supply Chain Sustainability School.

We are also one of only 12 companies to have been awarded gold status.

The School, which works to develop sustainability within our business and that of our supply chain, has 42 bronze, 75 silver and only 12 gold members.

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recruitment

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