

outperformance

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Labour managers meet regularly to discuss how we meet client needs.

Meeting our clients' labour needs

Among the many challenges faced by companies in the construction and rail industries is securing new business. Expertise can be tied up in the bidding process for a considerable time.

We support our clients in workforce planning and management to share some of the burden of tendering and delivering major projects. Our collaborative approach includes working in partnership from the initial stages of a bid.

"We offer our expertise to clients," says Laurence Mckidd, managing director. "We have thorough knowledge of the labour market, access to the skilled personnel required, a multi-skilled and flexible workforce and the convenience of offices located throughout the UK."

Clients know they are dealing with a company that complies with legislation and safety standards. In addition, they are reassured by our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and to placing local people on projects.

Our comprehensive approach

"A current concern is the possible effects of Brexit, but we are well placed to overcome any issues that leaving the EU may cause," says Laurence. "We know that there are uncertainties about labour supply in general and skills shortages in particular; we are planning ahead to mitigate any possible impact."



“Our approach to labour supply has proved extremely successful, and we have built strong relationships with colleges and training providers and, most recently, BuildForce.”

VGC combines labour management with strategic support. Having progressed within the industry, all our labour managers have substantial experience of site operations. They hold formal industry qualifications such as NVQs, IOSH, CSCS, CPCS and PTS. Their people skills, coupled with major projects experience, mean they support VGC’s workforce to meet the needs of each project.

They are supported by our labour resource team. Working closely with our HR department, they ensure that each worker is properly trained and holds all the correct permits and qualifications.

Continuing investment

Now that the HS2 bill has received royal assent, marking the final legislative step before full civil works can begin, we have set up an early bid team to help clients to address the particular challenges of delivering this complex rail infrastructure project. The experienced team assists with strategic planning, aligning with clients to help solve workforce-related issues.

Aware of the need to constantly improve our service to clients, we are investing in a new customer relations management (CRM) system that will come on-stream later this year to further enhance our workforce management.

These initiatives will ensure the future success of VGC and will make sure that we continue to meet our clients’ labour needs.

VGC’s consistent healthy growth



The VGC Group’s sales in 2016 were £72 million, a 20% increase on the previous year. This continues the trend that has seen us double in size over the past five years.

At our half-year briefing in December, Chairman Sean Fitzpatrick thanked staff for the exceptional result. “Our success has been due to the extraordinary effort that everyone has made, combined with our focus on delivering what our customers want.

“Our staff are the key ingredient in our success, and our ambitious growth plans mean we attract the best people in the industry. Over 55% of our workers have NVQ qualifications, and we invest heavily in continuing professional development, including our Institution of Civil Engineers approved graduate training scheme. Our policy of multi-skilling our people means we can offer clients real flexibility.”

He concluded: “We are on an upward trajectory and are well placed to support the delivery of the government’s ambitious infrastructure programmes.”

BuildForce



BuildForce is a new programme to help ex-services personnel find productive and rewarding roles in construction and engineering.

As an event sponsor, VGC attended the launch event earlier this year, where Group Services director Ciara Pryce signed the BuildForce charter on our behalf.

Two members of staff, Simon Clamp and Dan Parkinson, are already training as mentors to support people leaving the armed services who are interested in joining the industry.



At Track Partnership's March 'Boots on the Ground' event, James Woodcock from Samaritans attended to provide information about their services.

These have been well received by the workforce who feel that they can speak up and make a difference.

John Hannan comments: "Our HSQE advisers have been invaluable in promoting feedback through their programme of site visits for safety inspections, meetings with clients, and engagement with operatives and key influencers."

BE SAFE WITH **vgc**

Safety statistics

As of 28 February 2017.
*Accidents per 100,000 hours worked

2,929,590

hours worked over last 12 months

75

days since last RIDDOR reportable accident

598,103.15

hours worked since last reportable accident

0.14

12 month RIDDOR AFR*

Our HSQE team, from left to right: Richard Wheeler (HSQE manager), Ben Keegan (HSQE adviser), John Hannan (HSQE director), Michael O'Shea, Fiona Dowling, Chantal Austin (HSQE advisers)

Safety hand-in-hand with growth

As our business grows, we have expanded our HSQE team, and our health and safety standards continue to be best in class.

The rise in close calls and observations shows the increasing engagement of our workforce since we introduced our Be Safe by Choice programme in 2012 (see graph).

The HSQE team, under the leadership of HSQE director John Hannan, ensures that our workers are always kept up to date with the latest health and safety information.

One important aspect of their work is to identify trends that may impact safety. Site feedback such as close calls, observations and other reports is collated regularly. The team uses this intelligence to plan toolbox talks, inspection and liaison with workforce key influencers, as well as new themed monthly alerts.



Working with our clients

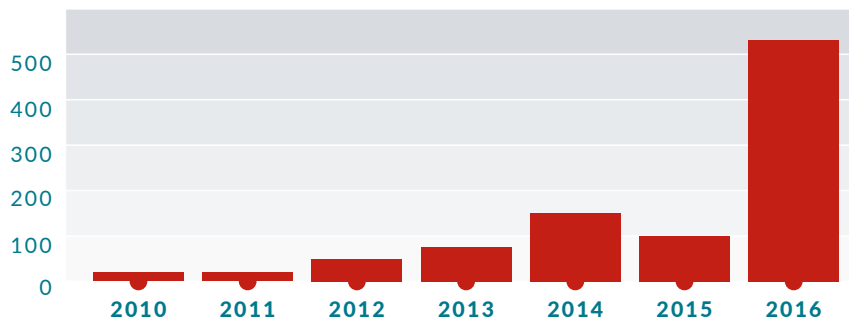
Our involvement with clients begins as early as possible. For example, on the new A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon upgrade project, we have been working from the very start of project set-up to see how we can support safety.



We funded a nurse who carried out free health checks at both the Track Partnership 'Boots on the Ground' events.

In the past few months we have worked with Balfour Beatty on Track Partnership's 'Boots on the Ground' safety stand-down events. Two programmes proved popular, one focused on physical health - a series of free health checks by a qualified nurse - and the other on mental health, supported by the charity Samaritans.

Recently there has been more awareness of mental health issues that affect many people in our industry. Samaritans is VGC's charity of choice for this year, and we will be supporting them with a communications campaign and a series of fundraising events.



Close calls and observations recorded

Advances in cable avoidance



VGC Construction has a major contract with client CVU (Colas, Volker Highways, URS JV) to upgrade traffic signals, roads and footways in London.

“Unfortunately we often come across services which have not been installed to industry standards,” says Will Dalton, contracts manager. “Additions and ad hoc repairs to cables and utilities mean that services are not always located as charted or installed at the correct depth. Consequently, drawings are out of date, and this considerably increases the risk of cable strikes.

“We work closely with the client throughout the project to mitigate this risk. This starts with assessing the pre-construction information and carrying out investigations including ground penetration radar. Workers are also fully briefed, wear full PPE, and use insulated tools.”

In addition:

- We're investing in the latest developments in digital cable avoidance technology
- We have revised our communication processes, including daily checklists and daily reviews of permits
- We work with CVU on site-by-site risk management from the very start of each project
- We have implemented a more stringent permit-to-break-ground system that we developed in collaboration with CVU.

Will continued: “HQSE manager Richard Wheeler and I are working closely with LoHAC (London Highways Alliance Contract) contractors working for CVU and Transport for London to develop a safety forum on buried services, including sharing best practice on searches, permits and working methods. We are on an upward trajectory and are well placed to support the delivery of the government's ambitious infrastructure programmes.”

Clients recognise outperformance

“Thank you to everyone who contributes to our reputation for outperformance – performing over and above what might be expected.” Laurence Mckidd, managing director

Our staff continue to gain commendations from our clients, some of which are listed below.

Balfour Beatty

Apprentice Lewis Bennett working at Crossrail Woolwich box was commended by the Balfour Beatty site manager.

During 2016 we came second only to principal contractor Balfour Beatty in the monthly pyramid safety scores on the A21 Tonbridge bypass project.

Alex Soare, traffic marshal on the M5 smart motorway project, received a safety award from Balfour Beatty.

Carmen Masdrag, welfare operative at Crossrail Abbey Wood station, was presented with a continuous excellence award by Balfour Beatty's senior programme manager.



The senior project manager emailed about Thames Tideway enabling work at Blackfriars: “Thank you for all your support and help on this project. VGC is high on our list of contractors.”

A Volker Highways senior manager commented that “works [were] carried out to a high standard of quality and health and safety, with due care for pedestrians and road users.”



The works manager thanked Janis Ernestovskis, groundworker, for his safety observation card on the M25 junction 30 Balfour Beatty Skanska JV smart motorway works.



Steven McNeill, section foreman on EGIP, won a 'make a difference' safety award.

SIEMENS

The Siemens installation supervisor emailed his thanks to the civils team commissioning the Manchester signalling works: “They were outstanding. Their attitude was excellent... These are the people that make the team and make the work happen. Many thanks.”



Welfare operative Maria Spiridon was commended by our client BBMV “for the excellent work that she does for our project” at Whitechapel Crossrail C512.

London Underground Commissioner Mike Brown described the teamwork on the B2F project where we are working for TfL as “an outstanding example of innovation and collaborative working”.



The VGC Crossrail Anglia team won the Network Rail Costain contractor award for August.

Our teams working on Track Partnership to upgrade the Tube network received a number of thank you emails, including: “Hats off to everyone for delivering such a complex and dangerous job without suffering an accident or incident.”

In addition, members of the public thanked Josh Cormack, Lee Pearce, Shane Jupp, Paul Gregory and Paul Axon for assistance.

Workforce solutions in high security environments

Certain categories of construction environments demand additional checking and vetting processes. For years VGC's human resources team, trained by the UK Borders Agency, has screened personnel to work on railways, airports and nuclear facilities throughout the UK.

The team undertakes the stringent clearance processes to assure the integrity of each placement. For example, in nuclear facilities such as Sellafield, Urenco and the new power station at Hinkley Point, security is of the utmost importance, and the screening process particularly rigorous.



While our human resources team is based at our head office in west London, our site personnel and site management have a distinctly local flavour. Our Sellafield labour manager George Farquhar (left) is an excellent example. Living and working in Cumbria near Sellafield for years, he is committed to VGC's policy of employing local people wherever possible.

George says, "It makes sense to encourage and develop the local workforce. Not only does it reduce the environmental impact of long-distance commuting, it also ensures that the local economy benefits, as wages are spent in local shops and businesses."



A similar story can be told about our workforce at the new nuclear power station under construction at Hinkley Point in Somerset. Labour manager Dan Cooke (left) uses his local knowledge to maximise recruitment from the surrounding towns and villages. He says,

"It is a real challenge to resource such a major project from what is essentially a rural area; however by doing so we will enhance the skills and prosperity of the region."

Our work on airports as far apart as Heathrow and Glasgow offers parallels in how they are administered and managed: VGC is accredited to provide clearance to work in security restricted airside locations. And, as always, our labour managers provide the expertise to make sure that these projects are delivered to meet our clients' requirements.

Success at Crossrail Anglia



The Christmas works by our Rail Projects contracts division on the Crossrail Anglia project for Costain once again demonstrated our ability to deliver complex works in tight timescales.

Over six shifts during the Christmas shutdown, our team completed over £1 million worth of work. This included a retaining wall built on difficult ground conditions and two undertrack crossings (UTX). One of these, under six tracks, incorporated three chambers and required significant temporary works and monitoring of an adjacent flyover bridge with various sub route connections. To make matters even more challenging, engineering trains travelled through our worksite during the operation, to support other unrelated work on the project.

All VGC works were completed and the track handed back on time to allow the lines to re-open as planned, a considerable achievement bearing in mind the scale and nature of the works.

Successful project on Tower Bridge Road



Our high-profile contract for client CVU on Tower Bridge Road included keeping members of the public safe while we upgraded pedestrian crossing points and related traffic signals. An important part of our logistics management was coordinating deliveries and traffic management with contractor BAM Nuttall, which was working on Tower Bridge at the same time. Naturally, we completed the project on time and on budget.



With hard work and our support Barbara will achieve her goals

VGC has always had a culture of developing people and promoting from within, as demonstrated by the many people who have risen through the ranks.

We encourage people to improve their skills, and we also help them to achieve recognised academic and industry qualifications.

Support takes different forms, from placing people on apprenticeship programmes to financial contributions towards courses of study that lead to relevant qualifications. Among the most recent employees to benefit from the latter is Glasgow-based Barbara Kovacs.

Barbara arrived in Scotland from her native Hungary in 2015. With limited English, but well educated, she started with VGC as a cleaner, working for the Network Rail Edinburgh to Glasgow Improvement Programme (EGIP). This is a pattern often seen with migrants entering the UK.

The ambitious 24-year-old proved herself hard-working and determined to succeed, so VGC funded an English course, which she passed with flying colours. That was the first step towards achieving her career goals. "I was always interested in finance and administration, so I was delighted when the opportunity arose in August 2016 to become a finance assistant working in the Costain EGIP office."

With the encouragement of Scottish area manager Sean Dempsey, Barbara has progressed and will undertake an accountancy course starting this September, her first step on the road to achieving a UK professional qualification.

"Learning English and gaining experience in finance has been hard work," says Barbara, "but it has been worthwhile. I'm very thankful to VGC for its support to date and to its commitment to contribute to the fees for my accounting course. Without VGC's help, I could not have undertaken the course."

An optimist by nature, Barbara is encouraged by her progress to date and hopes to advance within the finance field. "When we see drive and ambition in people, we are keen to develop that, and Barbara is a good example of someone whose potential we recognised," said Graham Piggott, director.



Construction industry chooses VGC

VGC has framework contracts for supplying all levels of construction personnel to fourteen of the UK's largest infrastructure contractors.

Supplying people for major projects involves much more than simply providing the appropriate numbers of personnel. Health and safety legislation, right to work in UK requirements and validating competencies dictate a far higher level of assurance than was necessary in the past. Therefore, to become a framework supplier involves a rigorous selection process; company procedures and capacity to deliver and improve are thoroughly scrutinised.

Director Chris Ryan says: "We have been in this business for over forty years and we have all the processes and accreditations to supply the needs of the UK's top infrastructure companies. Our customers want a level of service that few are able to meet, so it's no surprise that we have been so successful in securing these prestigious frameworks.

"Our performance is also endorsed by our clients and the awards we have won. For example, in September 2016 we won the Crossrail sustainability award, and more recently we achieved Costain Blue status at Crossrail's Bond Street project."

It is for these reasons that major players in the construction industry have chosen VGC to meet their site personnel needs.

Apprentices make progress



Our apprentices working on the ATC contract at Crossrail have earned their white hats. At the end of January the green 'probationer' squares were taken off their PTS cards. They are being supported by labour manager Nick Wells (photographed right with the apprentices and Jackie Chapman, director of employability and employer engagement at the College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London).

Awards success

The Supply Chain Sustainability School, of which VGC is a gold level partner, won the Best Practice in Procurement award at the 2016 British Construction Industry Awards. The judges described the school as "genuine collaboration".

Costain Blue status



The VGC team working on Crossrail C412 at Bond Street station has achieved Costain Blue status for three reporting periods in a row. Blue status is awarded for 'inspirational' supply chain performance in areas including quality, safety, people, health and environment.

A second Network Rail star award

Network Rail has presented a second Star award to our Crossrail Anglia team led by site agent Carlos Allca. The team, doing track drainage for client Costain, impressed the assessors with their knowledge of health, safety and environmental practices on the complex worksite.

Well-earned retirement



After 26 years, Mike Buckingham has retired as director of VGC Cole Hire. Nicki Mason, who joined as account manager three years ago, has been promoted to general manager.

Crime-fighters



Costain thanked James Piercy, Mihai Gligor, Jamie Crowe, Joe West and James Byrne of our Crossrail Anglia team. Their quick thinking and bravery detained a man who was being pursued, until the British Transport Police arrested him.

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