



Lower Thames Crossing

Building skills, shaping futures

Our plans and progress on
delivering a lasting skills legacy

September 2025



Table of contents

Forewords	4	Creating local jobs	18
Introduction	6	Promoting business growth	20
Meet our Delivery Partners	8	Our ambitions and targets	22
Workforce and roles	10		
Inspiring future opportunities	12		
Delivering training and developing skills	16		

About the Lower Thames Crossing

The Lower Thames Crossing is the UK’s most ambitious road project in over 35 years.

It will double road capacity across the River Thames to the east of London, bringing communities closer together and giving millions of people more flexibility around where they live, work, and learn.



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 future where anyone can work in the industry and build long-term careers.

Since publishing our first strategy we've made real progress: securing development consent, bringing our Delivery Partners on board, and forging strong partnerships with Local Authorities, education institutions, industry leaders, and communities across the Thames Estuary.

We are pleased to have appointed Lord Blunkett as our Skills Advisor,

and he will also chair our newly established Skills Taskforce.

Firstly, we will focus on delivering the skills needed for the project, providing local jobs for local people. This will help to close the gap on the construction industry's national skills shortage. We will also develop emerging skills to decarbonise a global construction industry and support a net zero future.

This strategy is about delivering a lasting skills legacy, working with the wider industry, supply chain, and education partners to adopt best practice and collectively raise the bar.

Matt Palmer
National Highways Executive Director,
Lower Thames Crossing



Skills are the foundation of a thriving economy. 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.

Large infrastructure projects 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 opportunities for people from all walks of life.

This strategy is our blueprint for doing exactly that: embedding

The Rt Hon. Lord Blunkett
Skills Advisor and Chair of Skills Taskforce,
Lower Thames Crossing

practical, accessible pathways into the heart of the project and offering training and apprenticeship routes into secure and purposeful work.

To help drive this forward, I am pleased to serve as Skills Advisor and to chair the Skills Taskforce. This independent group will hold the project to account, test our progress, and challenge us to go further.

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.



Introduction to the 2025 Skills, Education & Employment Strategy

We face several challenges in delivering a skilled workforce for the Lower Thames Crossing.

Locally, there is a shortage of skilled workers, pockets of high unemployment and areas of deprivation. Nationally, there are not enough people working in construction to deliver the existing pipeline of infrastructure projects and the industry is struggling to attract and retain people.

As a significant contributor to the UK's CO2 emissions, construction must reduce its impact on the environment and requires people with the right skills to do so. Our strategy is focused on addressing these challenges, and in doing so making the Lower Thames Crossing a catalyst for change in how we deliver a skills legacy in the industry.

Our ambitions are:

- 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

Since our first Skills Strategy was published in 2022, we have made real progress. Our Delivery Partners have joined us and adopted our skills targets and ambitions, providing further detail on how they will achieve them.

We have partnered, and meet regularly with, key local and national stakeholders, including the Department for Work & Pensions, Skills England, and the Construction Industry Training Board, to identify and address skills shortages. These organisations amongst others will support and challenge us to meaningfully deliver the targets in this strategy. We have engaged with other major infrastructure projects to adopt best practice within the supply chain and identified where we can go further.



To achieve our ambitions, we are focusing our efforts around four key areas:

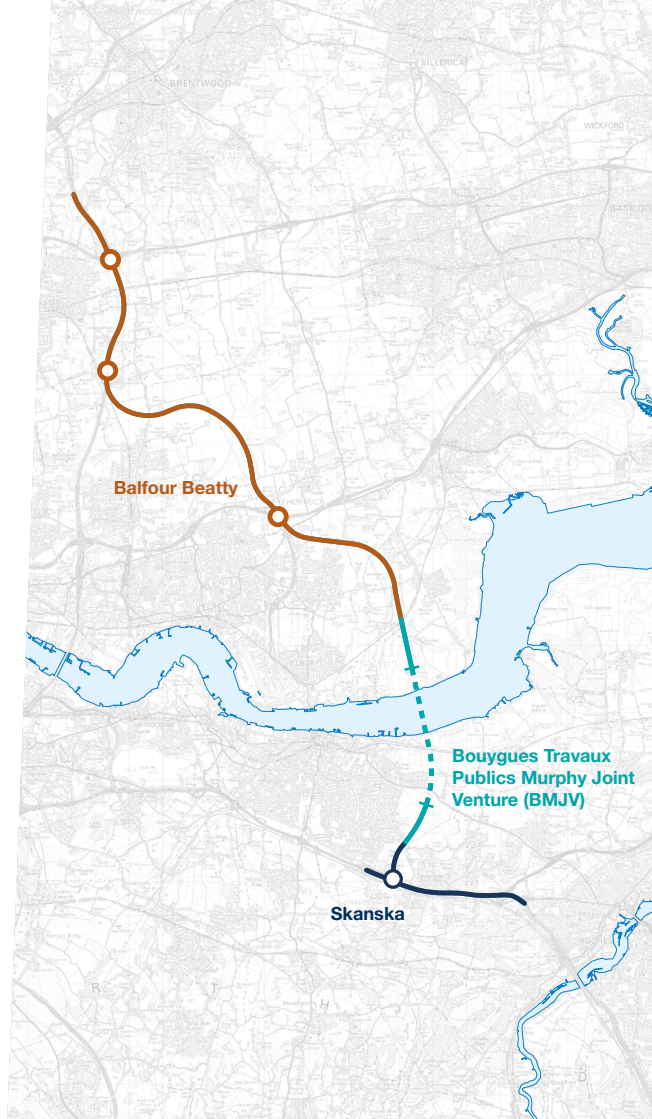
- Inspiring successful opportunities
- Delivering training and developing skills
- Creating local jobs
- Promoting business growth

Meet our Delivery Partners

Our Delivery Partners, Balfour Beatty, Skanska, and Bouygues Travaux Publics Murphy Joint Venture (BMJV), are now on board.

These organisations are not just responsible for building the Lower Thames Crossing, but also for delivering training, jobs and supply chain development opportunities.

They are all large employers within the industry and have extensive experience of delivering skills on major programmes across the UK. As part of their bids, they have made significant commitments to delivering training, apprenticeships and local jobs.



"The Lower Thames Crossing is a landmark project - one that will stimulate local, regional and national economic growth, open up career pathways, and shape new sustainable construction practices for the future of our industry."

Phil Clifton
Divisional Chief Executive Officer,
Balfour Beatty

"It is vital we use the opportunity on Lower Thames Crossing 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."

John Murphy
Chief Executive Officer,
Murphy

"The Lower Thames Crossing provides an opportunity to improve critical highway infrastructure. During construction, we will invest in skills, training and job opportunities that support local people and businesses. We want to bring long-term sustainable benefits that leave a lasting legacy."

Andrew English
Executive Vice President,
Skanska



Workforce and roles

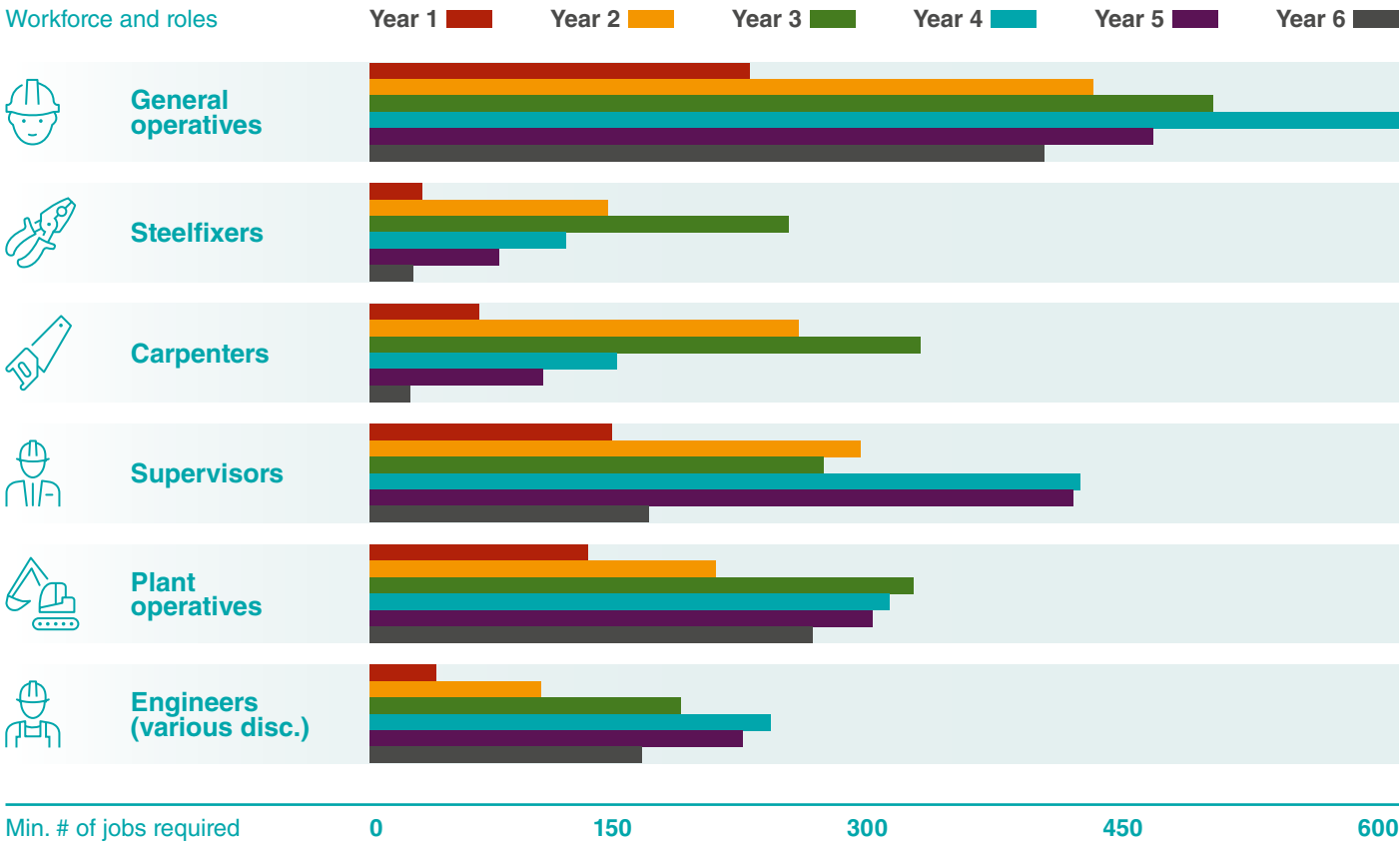
Working with our Delivery Partners, we now have a clearer view of the workforce size and roles needed to deliver the Lower Thames Crossing. Six key roles will form most of our workforce and are outlined in the graph on the next page.

We estimate that over 5,000 people will be needed to construct the Lower Thames Crossing. Our workforce will peak in the third year, at around 3,000 people.

The impact of the Lower Thames Crossing will extend beyond these numbers. Through our supply chain, the project will support thousands more jobs, offering long-term opportunities well beyond the construction site.

Alongside accredited technical training, we will also be supporting our workforce to progress into higher-paid roles, undertaking management and leadership training.

Employability and functional skills courses will be offered through the Skills Hubs. These will support people who are currently unemployed to apply for and retain work.



Inspiring future opportunities

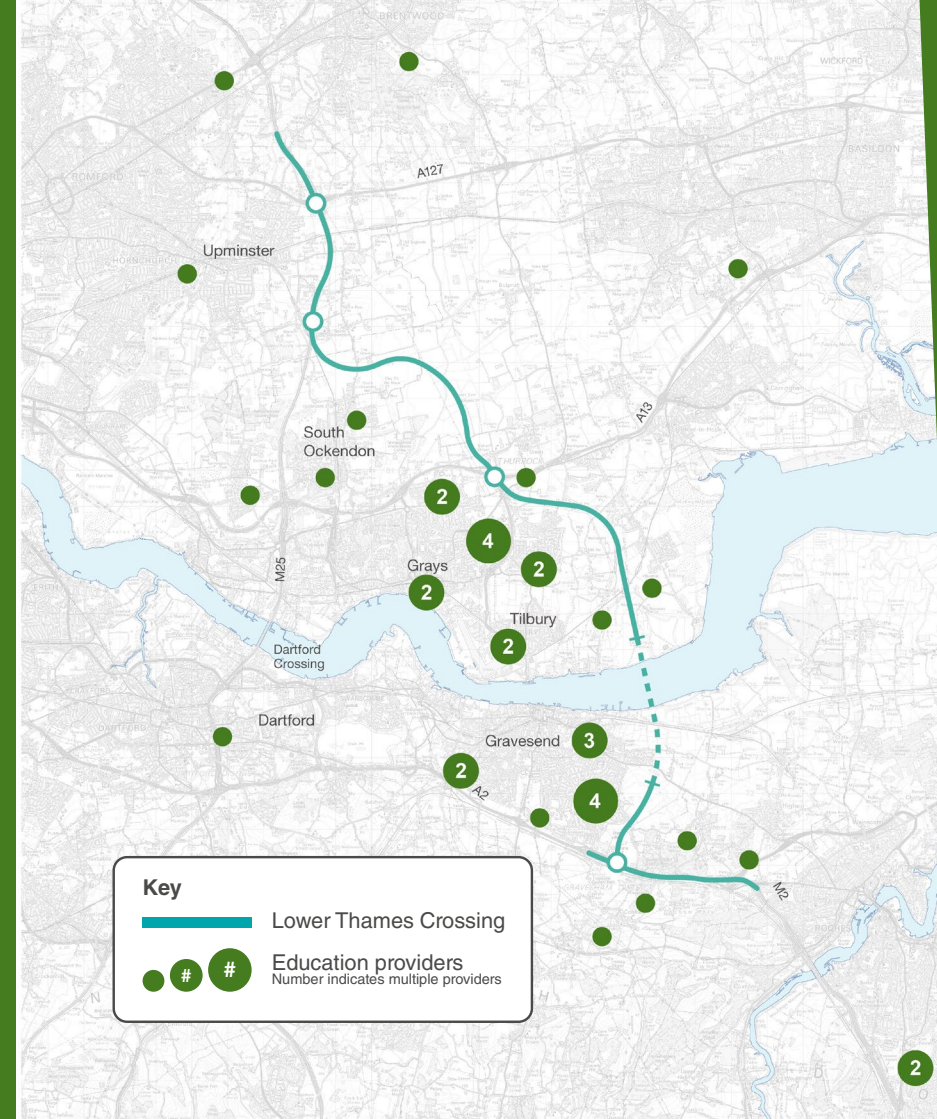
At the Lower Thames Crossing, we believe every young person should have the opportunity to explore a wide array of exciting careers within the industry.

We want to spark the curiosity and ambition of young people across the region by:

- Raising awareness of careers in construction, and providing opportunities to work on one of the lowest carbon infrastructure projects
- Delivering science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) engagement to local schools and colleges
- Creating pathways for young people to gain employment on the Lower Thames Crossing

In Autumn 2024, we launched our STEM programme across our local Priority Schools. This is designed to truly inspire the next generation to pursue a career in the construction industry and play a part in the UK's transition to net zero.

We have already delivered over 600 hours of school engagement and reached over 10,000 young people.



Map of Education Providers

Following our consultation with Local Authorities, the list of Priority Schools has expanded since the 2022 version of the Skills Strategy. As well as schools most impacted by our construction works, our list now includes schools with the highest socio-economic deprivation (based on numbers of students on free school meals).

We are working closely with local education and training providers, including colleges, to support curriculum development and creation of job opportunities.

To see the full list of Priority Schools, please refer to our full Skills Strategy document.

Early career opportunities

We are working closely with local education and training providers to sponsor pre-employment programmes, technical qualifications and early career opportunities.

Our supply chain will also provide hundreds of opportunities for early career roles, including apprenticeships, graduate schemes, work experience placements and internships (including supported internships).

These opportunities will be available to all, from school leavers to adult learners looking to return to work or explore a new career.



Apprenticeships

Qualifications & meaningful work experience



Traineeships

Meaningful work experience & valuable career insights



Graduate

Structured training programme & leadership development



Work experience

Structured placements to develop skills & explore potential career paths

Youth Ambassador Forum

We are not just creating a skills legacy for local young people, but one that has been shaped by them, too. In Autumn 2024, we launched the Lower Thames Crossing Youth Ambassador Forum, a space for local young people to explore a career in construction and have a voice on the project.

Our Youth Ambassadors have already received pre-employment training, mentoring and experience working on our project. They are sharing their views on how the project can best work with local schools and colleges: a STEM Programme designed by young people for young people.

"Being on the Lower Thames Crossing project 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 you want to be and a place where I can shape my future!"

Callum, Business Admin Apprentice (Level 3)



Delivering training and developing skills

When the Lower Thames Crossing is complete and open for use, we want to make sure that we leave behind a local, diverse workforce that is ready to build and maintain infrastructure in the region.

Skills Hubs

Partnering with local colleges, we are addressing gaps in existing educational provision by commissioning Skills Hubs in Essex and Kent, which will open their doors from 2025 onwards. They will offer free training and guaranteed job interviews with local suppliers. These hubs will connect local people to local jobs, from entry-level to higher-paid roles such

as plant operators and site supervisors. We will also provide wider pastoral support, including money management guidance and employability skills. This will put local people in the best position to gain employment, progress careers and retain work. Going beyond offering training, we are seeking to improve the lives of people working in our industry.



50+ organisations have signed a pledge to help deliver our skills legacy across the Southeast

Pathway to net zero

Working alongside local colleges and existing provision, we are developing accredited training for low carbon construction. This will equip local people to support global efforts towards decarbonising the industry.

This approach will not only prepare the workforce for the Lower Thames Crossing project, but also empower communities and the wider supply chain to access future opportunities and shape a net zero construction sector for years to come.



Creating local jobs

Over the full six years of construction, the Lower Thames Crossing, through our Delivery Partners, will create thousands of local jobs, and support thousands more through its impact on the wider economy.

Supporting priority groups

We are collaborating with local organisations, many of whom will co-locate in our Skills Hubs. We have gained valuable insights into what is needed alongside accredited skills - whether it's confidence building, addressing mental health challenges or becoming 'work ready'. This will enable us to attract and retain a local, skilled and diverse workforce.

By removing barriers like unnecessary academic requirements, we are opening up opportunities for those furthest from employment. Unemployed individuals will be guided through every stage, from application to training and development - ensuring they have the best chance of long-term employment.



45% of our workforce will live within 20 miles of the project

Local first approach

We are prioritising local talent, helping people in the community to gain access to work, learn new skills, and develop fulfilling careers. This is underpinned by our ambition to ensure at least 45% of our workforce live within 20 miles of the project. At least 20% will also come from the most impacted boroughs of Thurrock, Gravesham, Havering, Brentwood or Medway. We will report workforce figures across these five boroughs.



650+ people trained through our pre-employment programmes



500+ new jobs for people who were previously unemployed

Promoting business growth

We are working with our supply chain, especially SMEs and local businesses, to ensure they are well equipped to access training, win work on the Lower Thames Crossing, and grow their organisations.

Small-to-Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and local businesses

We are supporting local businesses to access and apply for opportunities to work on the Lower Thames Crossing. This involves challenging existing supply chains and opening doors for those who may not previously have worked with our Delivery Partners. To do this, our Delivery Partners are simplifying the process of bidding for work by running targeted engagement and upskilling programmes, with future plans to advertise work centrally on our website. A business' proximity to the scheme is also considered as part of procurement.

We are promoting our Supply Chain Directory at local business networking events and through organisations such as the Essex and Kent Invicta Chambers of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB). Suppliers' details are being shared with our Delivery Partners to inform early market engagement. These engagement events give local businesses visibility into our procurement process and timelines, an understanding of minimum tender requirements and an opportunity to connect with our Delivery Partners.



£1 in every £3
will be spent with SMEs

Business upskilling

We are providing mentoring to develop business growth strategies and dedicated workshops on how to win work on the Lower Thames Crossing.

The Skills Hubs will offer affordable training programmes for local businesses and a pool of skilled people looking for employment.



Approximately
£800m to
be spent with SME
suppliers



1000
businesses upskilled

2025-2026 commitment: 285

Our ambitions and targets

In our 2022 Skills Strategy, we shared minimum targets used in the procurement of the Delivery Partners. These 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 specific commitments for the next 24 months.



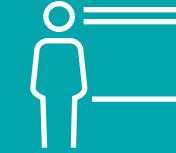
291 graduate or industry placements

2025-2026 commitment: 11



5000 hours of STEM engagement

2025-2026 commitment: 867



2000 hours of support to educators

2025-2026 commitment: 172



437 apprenticeships

2025-2026 commitment: 33



470 work placements

2025-2026 commitment: 180



855 people trained or upskilled

2025-2026 commitment: 86



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