

For immediate release

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## **MHA launches first highways training academy**

**\*\*\*photo opportunity\*\*\***

Hundreds of public and private sector highways and construction staff from across the midlands are set to benefit from a new training initiative from Friday.

The Midlands Highway Alliance (MHA) is launching the National Skills Academy for Construction (NSAfC) on 15 October. The Academy will be the first highways-based Skills Academy in the UK.

The National Skills Academy programme is a government initiative led by the Skills Funding Agency. Skills Academies aims to drive up the standard of industry training, improve productivity and tackle skills shortages across the UK.

According to the Construction Skills Network report released earlier this year, the East Midlands' construction industry is predicted to be among the best performing in the UK with projected growth well above the national average\*.

However one in six construction workers have no formal qualifications and two thirds of employers report problems finding sufficiently skilled and experienced staff.

The MHA Skills Academy initiative will be vital in helping to meet the region's construction and highways needs. Over the next 4 years, it will act as a vehicle for delivering training throughout the supply chain.

The training is aimed at all levels - from apprenticeships and site-based operatives to managers and professionals within the businesses, large and small. Local people will be given opportunities to be trained into jobs in the industry, to ensure this project benefits the local area.

Opportunities for work experience will also be offered to students from local schools and to undergraduates on the Construction Skills 'Inspire Scholarship' programme\*\*.

Matthew Lugg, Chair of the MHA said "We are delighted to be the first highways-based skills academy in the country.

"We firmly believe the Academy will expose staff in our authorities and contractor partners to a wealth of new learning and development opportunities. This will not

- 1 -

only benefit employees just beginning their career in this industry but also existing highway staff.

“It is important that local authorities seek to work collaboratively to continually develop their employees to maintain a highly skilled work force which is at the forefront of the highways industry

“We fully appreciate in the current climate that starting a new academy is likely to be a big challenge, but we recognise that we need to be prepared and address the growing skills shortage in the construction industry, so that when recovery comes we are ready for it”.

Amanda Sergeant, East Midlands Regional Strategy Advisor at ConstructionSkills said: “By its very nature, construction tends to be a hugely fragmented industry and the only place that everyone comes together is on a live construction site.

“Focussed, on-site, employer-led training through NSAfCs like this are therefore a highly effective way of delivering training to local people and ensuring that the right skills can be deployed in the right place in the future.”

For more information visit [www.cskills.org.uk](http://www.cskills.org.uk) or [www.leics.gov.uk/mha](http://www.leics.gov.uk/mha). Alternatively, contact MHA Manager, Peter Barclay on 0116 305 5681 [peter.barclay@leics.gov.uk](mailto:peter.barclay@leics.gov.uk)

### **\*\*\*Photo opportunity\*\*\***

**The MHA National Skills Academy for Construction (NSAfC) will be launched on Friday 15 October at the National Space Centre, Exploration Drive, Leicester, LE4 5NS (map/direction attached)**

**There will be a series of presentations starting at 11.00am followed by an opportunity for photos / interviews at approx.12.30pm**

Please contact Sally Kowal, Communications & PR Officer (Leicestershire County Council) for more details. 0116 305 5959 / [sally.kowal@leics.gov.uk](mailto:sally.kowal@leics.gov.uk)

### **Notes to editors**

\* Predicted construction industry growth in the East Midlands: 2.6% over the next five years. National average: 1.7%. This growth will be driven by infrastructure projects as well as a return to moderate growth in private housing development.

\*\* The Inspire Scholarship Scheme is organised by [ConstructionSkills](http://www.cskills.org.uk) and was created to address recruiting problems within the industry due to a lack of suitably skilled and qualified staff. The scheme aims to match motivated students with employers who appreciate the benefits of engaging staff at an early stage of their career. Applications are accessed on merit and matched with suitable employers who make the final selection.

For more information visit: [www.cskills.org.uk](http://www.cskills.org.uk)

## **MHA**

The MHA formed in 2007 and is a collaboration of 13 Midlands-based Local Authorities plus the Highways Agency, who joined together to make efficiency savings in the procurement of contractors and highway commodities.

The partnership comprises the following authorities:

- Derby City Council
- Derbyshire County Council
- Leicester City Council
- Leicestershire County Council
- Lincolnshire County Council
- Milton Keynes Council
- Northamptonshire County Council
- Nottingham City Council
- Nottinghamshire County Council
- Peterborough City Council
- Rutland County Council
- Staffordshire County Council
- South Derbyshire District Council
- The Highways Agency

[www.leics.gov.uk/mha](http://www.leics.gov.uk/mha)