

Press release: Highways England builds bridges on International Women's Day

As part of their GCSE studies, pupils from the Bristol Free School were invited to visit the site by Highways England and construction partners Galliford Try.

The girls were treated to a tour and presentation and also met and spoke to a number of women working on site – from Galliford Try, graduate engineer Palvia Rupalia, site agent Tricia Griggs, document controller Jo-Ann Middleton and communications manager Elisabeth Exton and from contractors MJ Church, quantity surveyor Chantal Griffiths and trainee Lauren Newberry.

Graduate engineer Palvia said:

I wanted to be a civil engineer because I wanted to be a part of creating something that everybody uses, such as roads and bridges.

The misconception of the construction industry is that it's a man's world, which is definitely not the case – and my advice to the pupils was 'don't be afraid to jump in feet first'.

Susan King, Headteacher of Bristol Free School, added:

We promote opportunities for girls in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) at every opportunity, and we are proud of our award-winning STEM days and our female scientists. Our A-Level STEM subjects have 60% female students, and we welcome every opportunity to support our female students in their pursuit of STEM careers. We were thrilled to be invited out on site.

Highways England and contractors Galliford Try are delivering the new junction scheme on the M49 to provide a much-needed connection into the Avonmouth and Severnside Enterprise Area from the motorway network to help promote economic growth in this area of Bristol.

The scheme involves building a new bridge next to the existing bridge at Farm Lane to form a single roundabout spanning the motorway with new access and exit slip roads connecting fully with both northbound and southbound traffic.

Colin Bird, South West Programme Leader for Highways England, said:

One of the main designs of this scheme is the construction of a new bridge and in a way, the school visit is all about building bridges.

At Highways England, we're very focused on inspiring young people to consider engineering as a rewarding career, and this is a nice opportunity to give the pupils an insight into the world of construction and engineering and to meet and speak to female role models working and thriving within the industry.

Highways England is working with partners, including South Gloucestershire Council, Bristol City Council and the West of England Local Enterprise Partnership to deliver the scheme. Main construction work started last year and is due to be completed by spring 2020, and more details can be found on the [scheme web page](#).

Responsible for improving, managing and maintaining England's motorways and major A roads, the company is working with schools and colleges across the country as part of the Government's [Engineering: Take a closer look](#) campaign.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.