

## **Building London Creating Futures leads the way in tackling the capital's skills gap**

Leading figures from the construction industry met on 2 February 2005 to mark the success and plot the future of an innovative employment scheme for the capital. Set up in 2001, Building London Creating Futures (BLCF) aims to resolve the industry's skills gap while helping central London's long-term unemployed develop long-term careers in construction. At an event at Glaziers Hall, London Bridge, existing and potential partners in the scheme heard what BLCF has achieved since its inception. Plans for extending the scheme across London and beyond were also revealed.

BLCF recently secured additional funding from the London Development Agency for construction training for jobseekers placed through the scheme's Workplace Coordinators. The funding will run until September 2007. BLCF now plans to roll-out its Workplace Coordinator model across the capital to ensure that more local communities benefit from job opportunities on project sites in their areas.

The audience was addressed by Sir Michael Latham, Chairman of CITB - Construction Skills, who gave his full support to the initiative. In addition, speakers from Mace and Bovis Lend Lease told of their enthusiastic adoption of the scheme. Councillor Nicholas Stanton, Leader of the London Borough of Southwark emphasised its social benefits.

Bob White, chairman of Mace, a founding partner of BLCF, said: "BLCF is a unique employment partnership for the construction industry. Investing in local communities in this way is crucial if the construction industry is to resolve its skills issues. The partnership has learnt valuable lessons over the past four years and putting those into practice on a wider scale will bring major benefits to communities across the capital."

Peter Jacobs, board director of Bovis Lend Lease, a founding partner of BLCF, said: "From small beginnings, Building London Creating Futures is now delivering real benefits in central London. A London-wide network is the logical next step. I know other contractors may be doing similar things but I believe if we all work together, the whole industry stands to gain from our joint commitment to this cause."

Councillor Nick Stanton, Leader, Southwark Council said: "Southwark is a borough of extremes. In parts, unemployment is four times the national average, yet in others developers have struggled to deliver major construction projects because of a severe skills shortage. Building London Creating Futures is bridging this gap by providing training to people who need jobs, and staff to employers who need a skilled workforce. We are proud to have played a role in getting the initiative off the ground and, by exploring how it can be adopted as part of our major regeneration schemes and through planning gain agreements, we are committed to ensuring its continuation."

Based on site and employed by developers, contractors and registered social landlords, BLCF's Workplace Coordinators aim to match local people to jobs and support ongoing workforce development. Since the scheme became fully operational in July 2002, nearly 250 people have found jobs through BLCF's Workplace Coordinators. The scheme has also helped 851 people achieve valuable construction qualifications. Over 10% of those who have benefited from BLCF have been women, 329 are young people.

The Building London Creating Futures partnership is funded principally through the European Social Fund's Equal Programme, London Development Agency, Cross River Partnership and London Borough of Southwark.

