

OPPORTUNITIES IN . . . CONSTRUCTION

A career built to last

The Olympic Games in London in 2012 will mean opportunities for budding builders, Tosin Sulaiman discovers, while the range of disciplines required is almost endless

WHETHER it's a childhood fascination with Lego that refuses to wane or a desire to be involved in the development of iconic buildings, there are many reasons for considering a career in construction.

It is the UK's largest industry, employing 2.1 million people (1 worker in 14 of the total UK workforce is employed in construction) and is still growing rapidly. CITB ConstructionSkills, which is responsible for recruiting and training Britain's construction workforce, estimates that the industry will need almost half a million new recruits between now and 2010 — that means finding 88,000 new recruits every year for the next five years.

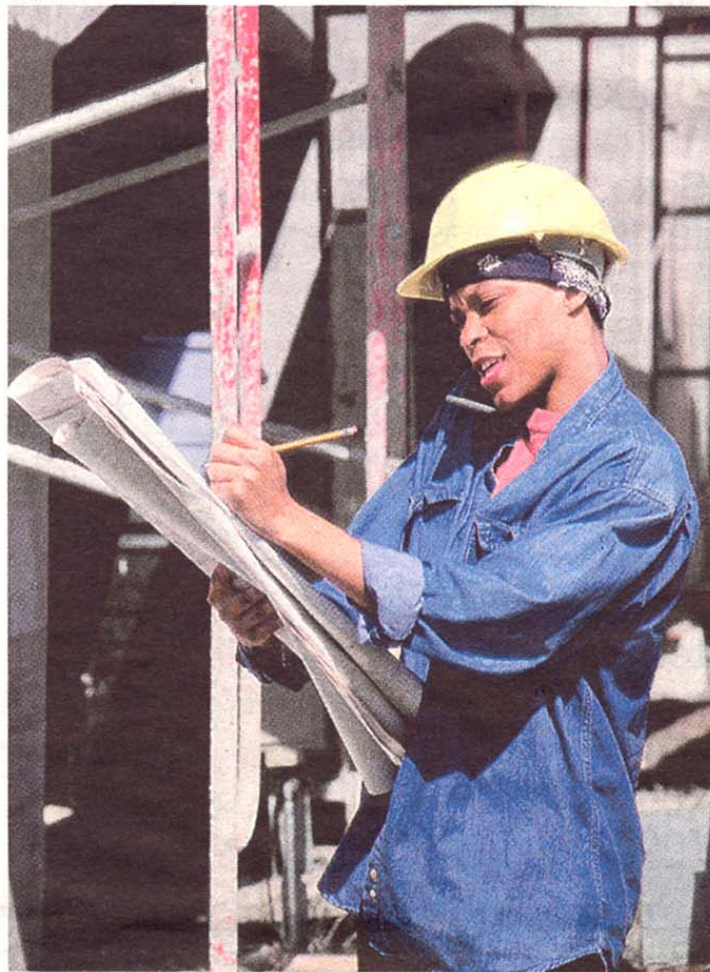
An increasing number of young people, it seems, are taking notice. "One of the things we've been promoting for a long time is a positive image of the industry," says Paul Sykes, the recruitment manager at CITB ConstructionSkills.

"What we have been able to demonstrate is that there are real job opportunities for young people, with real career prospects, and young people are interested in that. The range of opportunities is almost endless, from construction management to civil engineering, from quantity surveying to architecture."

As London prepares to host the 2012 Olympics, there has never been a better time to enter the industry. According to CITB ConstructionSkills, building the Olympic venues will create approximately 33,500 additional jobs between now and 2012, including 6,500 in management or administration, 2,800 in areas such as architecture and surveying, and 24,000 trade or craft roles.

Besides the Olympics, there are many other big projects taking place in the UK, such as the Thames Gateway, the

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Channel Tunnel rail link, Wembley Stadium, the King's Cross redevelopment project and the Government's Building Schools for the Future programme, which will rebuild or refurbish all secondary schools by 2020.

The industry is keen to attract more female and ethnic minority recruits, says Holly Porter, co-founder of Chicks with Bricks, a network for women in construction. She applauds efforts to target girls from an early age but says that they will consider a career in construction only if they have successful role models.

"It's a much more receptive industry than it used to be," she says. "It's all about visibili-

ty. A lot of these women do exist but they are incredibly invisible."

Graduates entering construction have degrees in a range of subjects, including civil engineering, construction management and quantity surveying. But those who have studied other subjects should not rule themselves out. Rachel Blake, Balfour Beatty's graduate recruitment adviser, says that the company also takes maths and language graduates: "We put them on conversion courses if they are interested in quantity surveying and construction management," she says. "There is a huge demand for graduates in civil engineering and quantity surveying."

BUILDING BLOCKS

FIND out more about careers in construction:

■ Construction Skills
www.constructionskills.net

■ Chicks with Bricks
www.chickswithbricks.com
The network brings together women in construction's leading companies and holds networking events.

■ Balfour Beatty
www.balfourbeatty.com/graduates

■ Carillion — which now owns Mowlem Plc, a provider of construction and support services to the public and private sectors — is one of the recruiters attending the National Graduate Recruitment Exhibition in London on June 2 & 3. Register at www.gradjobs.co.uk.

At Carillion, many graduates recruited have no direct experience of construction. "Because opportunities here are so broad, construction experience is not a prerequisite," says Dean Smith, the head of learning and development.

Graduates are typically hired as civil engineers, signalling engineers, construction supervisors, assistant quantity surveyors, graduate buyers, and assistant facilities managers. Once at Carillion, graduates can expect a range of opportunities. "You could find yourself designing, planning, building, maintaining or managing some of the most creative and essential spaces in the world," Smith says.