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New Hire Controller Apprenticeship

The CPA has launched the new Hire Controller Trailblazer Apprenticeship, following its approval by the Institute for Apprenticeships (IfA). The launch follows several years work by an employer-led Trailblazer working group which determined that a Hire Controller apprenticeship was critical to attract new recruits into the construction equipment industry, as well as upskilling existing staff into a new role. Hire controllers employ a wide range of skills and play a key role within rental companies.

The Trailblazer Working Group was chaired by Kirsty Archbold-Laming, director of Southern Hoists, with representatives from a wide range of rental companies including A-Plant, AP Webb, Ainscough Cranes, Camfauds, Clee Hill Plant, GAP Group, Lavendon, MGF, Nationwide, Selwood and Speedy Services.

The CPA has provided managerial and administrative support throughout the process, while IPAF and the HAE have also been involved in the development of the new apprenticeship which is supported by the CITB. This means that it is recognised and

accepted by all primary trade bodies and industry federations in the equipment rental market, while CPA, IPAF and HAE members will all be able to make use of the new pathway into the rental and powered access rental industry.

The launch event was hosted by CPA technical development manager Peter Brown and the CITB's Neil Hartis and was attended by CPA chief executive Kevin Minton along with representatives from CITB, IPAF, HAE, members of the Trailblazer Working Group, employers and organisations who will be delivering the new scheme such as Askham Bryan College. The programme also has the support from several training providers including Reaseheath College, West Nottinghamshire College and Stephenson College.

The new apprenticeship has been set by the group at level two and will take between 12 and 18 months to complete with 20 percent of that time to be devoted to 'off the job' training. The IfA has placed it in funding band eight, which equates to £5,000 that can be spent or claimed by employers, regardless if they pay the apprenticeship levy or not.



In developing the standard the Working Group defined the required duties of a Hire Controller for the training syllabus including the provision of technical information to customers in helping them select and use suitable equipment for planned activities, ensuring the equipment being hired is compliant with Health and Safety requirements, completing contract documentation at both on and off hire stages, processing payments including calculating rental charges, damage charges, fraud prevention measures and insurance payments and handling customer technical enquiries and complaints.

The apprenticeship process aims to develop certain behaviours including forming positive relationships with

customers, working both within a team and independently, developing a 'Health and Safety first attitude', while being self-motivated to meet operational targets, remaining respectful of equality and diversity and committed to continual personal and professional development.

The standard containing the skills, knowledge and behaviours for the apprenticeship, as well as the assessment plan, can be downloaded from: www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/hire-controller-plant-tools-and-equipment/



Skills strategy

The CPA is currently drafting plans for a skills strategy that will help the rental industry take charge of recruiting the next generation of operators and mechanics, as well as looking what it can do to help and retain existing members of staff and those who have left the sector.

The UK construction industry is set to grow substantially in the coming years as a large number of major infrastructure programmes

are developed including HS2, the most ambitious railway building programme in the UK for more than 100 years. Highways England plans a major upgrade of the UK's motorway network, while Heathrow's third runway has reached the planning phase.

The CITB's business plan states there will be 169,000 new jobs

needing to be filled in construction over the coming years, in addition to replacements for natural wastage and retirements. There are currently 45,000 people in further education studying a construction related topic yet CITB's research suggests that only 9,000 of them will choose a career in construction. It also suggests that an additional 1,900 equipment operators and mechanics a year will be required for HS2 alone. The CPA is to launch its strategy and create a working group later this year and wants the industry to take charge and tackle the skills shortages it faces.

The industry needs not only to reach out to schools and colleges, but

also focus on employee retention, mentoring schemes and opening up recruitment opportunities for former members of the military and ex-offenders. This is a long-term challenge that will not be solved overnight, the strategy will not suddenly create a highly skilled workforce, but it is a start.

