

Makers Construction

Special Jury Award



Makers' apprentices Joe Hardwick and Ben Morris flank Walsall College tutor Andy Stubbs

The realities of an ageing workforce with dying skills and knowledge led to Makers Construction, a company specialising in the refurbishment of car parks, setting about the task of hiring new site managers. The problem was that the pool of talent was very small and Makers struggled over a number of years to find the quality of site manager it needed.

The solution seemed to be train a new generation of parking experts. Over many years Makers had trained white collar professional trainees, working with the education provider to provide a significant proportion on the learning required coupled with some on the job instruction. But there was no formal training programme for site foremen and site agents. The Lichfield-based company addressed this problem by crafting an apprenticeship programme with Walsall College of Further Education.

Simon Lamb, Makers' managing director, says: "Makers has operated as a specialist refurbishment contractor since 1976 and in that time has seen recessions come and go. The last one in 2008 was both prolonged but came on the back of a deep financial depression. The construction industry shed labour quickly and that labour has moved elsewhere, or left the industry completely."

"We realised that we couldn't replace or add to our workforce easily as any introduced personnel just weren't of a high enough calibre. We knew we had an ageing workforce and we needed to pass on that expertise to be the next generation before it was lost to retirement."

Makers thus designed an apprenticeship programme that lasts five years. The company has devised what it calls 'Makers modules' that are reinforced and run in parallel with the college curriculum. "The course provides on-the-job training with further education, an ability to learn, but also supplements with life skill learning and expert contribution and qualifications."

The first pair of apprentices were taken on in 2014 and two each following year.

Makers is funding the training of two apprentices over a year outside the formal government apprenticeship regime because of the five-year length of the course and the company's desire to pay a decent wage.

Lamb says: "Whilst apprenticeships run by the government have been used as a platform to reduce unemployment figures in our youth of today, the majority only run for two years, pay wages of £2.41 and have no real access to further education or career. Instead, we fully fund the programme, paying all fees and costs required to shadow their mentor. We offer apprentices a starting salary of £10,000 a year, with full employment contract benefits, holiday and sick pay. We also offer pegged incremental pay rises against completion stages of each year. Each apprentice is provided with their own vehicle to allow site and college attendance."

The feedback from the apprentices was overwhelmingly positive. Dean Hubbard says: "I'm enjoying the programme. I didn't realise how much was involved in running a site. It has made me more safety aware and more knowledgeable."

Fellow apprentice Mick Stubbs says: "I don't think that I would progress as well through the company if I didn't join the apprentice scheme."

Jury comment

Makers have made a genuine investment in developing the specialist skills required to maintain the UK's parking stock to a high standard. Unlike so many 'apprenticeship' schemes, this represents a long-term commitment to training young people, developing their self-esteem and paying them a decent income while they learn.

The jury

Entries to the British Parking Awards were assessed by a panel of experts drawn from across the worlds of parking, transport, motoring and business.

This year's jury were:

Jo Abbott

Former communications manager, RAC Foundation

Keith Banbury

Independent consultant

David Bardsley

Independent consultant

Natalie Chapman

Head of policy: London, Freight Transport Association (FTA)

John Elliott

Vice chair, transport committee, Local Government Technical Advisors Group (TAG)

Peter Guest

Independent consultant

Mike Macey

Principal, MFM Associates

Anjna Patel

Principal officer, parking and safer and sustainable transport team, Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

Manny Rasores

Principal, MR Parking Consultancy

Kirsty Reeves

Managing director, Parking Associates

Kelvin Reynolds

Director of policy and public affairs, British Parking Association (BPA)

Susan Taylor

Principal, Susan Taylor Consultancy

Chris Whapples

Consultant, Pyle Car Park Consultants

The jury would like to thank the input provided by the regional development managers of the Safer Parking Scheme.

The awards competition is administered and the jury coordinated by Mark Moran, editor of *Parking Review*.

The British Parking Awards were created by *Parking Review* magazine in 2002. The awards lunch is organised by Landor LINKS.

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