



# 'Spotlight on...' equality, diversity and inclusion

## M6 J13-15 smart motorway project – How we came together

### Summary

Our people working on the M6 J13-15 smart motorway project in Stafford want to make a positive impact on their working environment. We recognise that a diverse team helps to drive forward business performance and encourages innovation and creativity.

The project has delivered a range of initiatives to encourage and support this ethos. In 2019, we came together to celebrate and support several initiatives and festivities, confirming that we have more in common than what divides us.

### Why?

M6 J13-15 smart motorway project is an equal opportunities employer and is committed to promoting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. We want to ensure that all employees are treated fairly irrespective of their age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race and religion or belief, as protected within the Equality Act 2010.

The workforce on the M6 J13-15 smart motorway project is immensely diverse and there is no generic approach that would lead to our people being treated equally and feeling included.

During Inclusion week each year we ask employees to provide us with some anonymous information about Inclusion, Health and Wellbeing.

The information from the questionnaire is used to support our commitment to Inclusion and Respect within Kier Highways. We aim to create workplaces where everyone can bring their whole selves to work.

The data has been used to:

- Track workforce demographics and review the progress we have made within the last 12 months
- Get a good understanding of the initiatives our people would like to see in the workplace
- Feed our ED&I strategy and action plan for the coming year so we know where to commit resources
- Feed our Health and Wellbeing Strategy for the coming 12 months
- Help us check that current policies and practices, such as recruitment, flexible working and development, are effectively supporting all our employees.
- Review feedback and help us to improve.

The questionnaire is sent out to both Kier employees and sub-contractors.



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## What and How?

To deliver EDI on M6 J13-15, the project has developed and is delivering an Inclusion Action Plan. The EDI champions meet monthly at the project's Health & Wellbeing forum to discuss key initiatives and how to roll them out successfully with maximum coverage.

In addition, the project receives feedback from employees through observation cards, which are then distributed to the Health & Safety team, occupational health and EDI champions.

A 'you said, we did' system has been implemented to address this feedback and responses are displayed on a large whiteboard in the induction room.

The EDI champions also attend the quarterly Highways England EDI action group to feedback on best practice. In addition, all recruiting and senior managers have attended a workshop on inclusive recruitment giving them the skills to recruit objectively and inclusively. A manager's toolkit for inclusive recruitment has also been produced.

As a result of our findings through the annual EDI survey, observation cards and health & wellbeing forum, the project has rolled out several EDI key initiatives.

This case study focuses on the events we organised, the effect they have had on our people and how the M6 junctions 13 to 15 smart motorway project really came together.

## Pride

Colleagues came together to celebrate LGBT rights and show humanity to individuals who struggle with their identities, either in the workplace or at home. We wanted to make our event a celebration of all the diverse cultures we support here on the project.

We baked rainbow cakes, wore vibrant colours and took time out of our busy schedules to simply talk. We really wanted to highlight the reason why we take part in Pride and displayed pictures of one of our fellow engineers, Alan Turing, mathematician, computer scientist and war hero who was persecuted for his homosexuality in the 1950s. 28 June 2019 also marks 50 years since the Stonewall riots in New York.





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## Eid Mubarak everyone

In June, employees got together to take part in the annual Eid celebrations. Eid marks the important religious holiday celebrated by Muslims worldwide, which symbolises the end of the religious fast, Ramadan.

To help celebrate, colleagues feasted on chicken, vegetable samosas and spring rolls kindly provided by the project's recruitment supplier, Fortel. In addition, desserts and other culinary delights were donated by the project team and Eid Mubarak (Happy holiday) balloons and banners were displayed around the office.



### *Richard French, Project Director, said:*

*"Marking Eid was a fantastic opportunity to celebrate different cultures and show what a diverse workforce we have here at M6 J13 - 15. It's great to see teams coming together in the same room enjoying the finer things in life. I'd like to thank everybody who took part and entered into the spirit of the celebration".*

## Time to Talk

In February, the project took part in mental health awareness day, Time to Talk, by holding an M6 bake off competition. Colleagues were encouraged to drop into the canteen and have a chat over a cake and brew. There were lots of magnificent cakes baked and employees were encouraged to get to know each other better by voting for the best cake.

To reach teams out on site, the project's Occupational Health Nurse and her team of mental health first aiders visited the network with cakes and Time to Talk leaflets. Colleagues were encouraged to chat to each other and given advice on what to do if they recognise any unusual change to their colleagues and friend's behaviour.

The project has seven mental health first aiders who are available for employees to speak to. In addition, the project's occupational health nurse offers separate confidential appointments alongside a GP referral if required.





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## International Day of Friendship

The project took part in July's International Day of Friendship. The day promotes the role that friendship plays in promoting peace in many cultures.

We celebrated by recognising everyone, their different backgrounds, countries and cultures. We displayed our nationalities on a large map on the wall and ate foods from around the world.



*Planning Manager, Mariusz Pawluk, said:*

*"The day was a great opportunity for us all to get to know each other better. The world map was particularly interesting to look at and I'm honoured to work with so many talented individuals from many different countries. Our diverse workforce is something to be proud of."*

## Conquering Snowdon

17 employees managed to make it to the top of Snowdon and raise money for the British Heart Foundation. The conditions were miserable, but spirits were high as all team members reached the summit in under 3 hours.

We've raised over £5000 and exceeded the target figure considerably.



*Richard French, Project Director, proudly said of his team:*

*"Everyone reached the top safely with little to look at but cloud. I'm very proud of the whole team and would like to thank all those who have dug deep for British Heart Foundation, it's such a worthy cause. It was also a great opportunity to get to know each other and find out about our team members on the project. A big round of applause to all who organised and took part, it was a great personal achievement in really grim conditions."*



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## Modesty and maternity workwear

The project buying team has found a supplier of modesty and maternity PPE. The modesty tunic has been designed to ensure the wearer is able to adhere to their religious beliefs whilst staying safe onsite and fully conforming to ISO20471 with featured such as elasticated over-bump band and waist adjustment and the elasticated side seams on the polo shirt, these garments work with the wearer and can be worn all the way from bump to baby.



## Employment of ex-offenders

There are currently four ex-offenders working on site and the EDI team is liaising with local prisons to secure two office work placements through Kiers' Making Ground initiative.

Making Ground is an ongoing initiative, developed and administered solely by Kier to provide practical support for people who find getting back into employment particularly challenging – in this case prisoners.

The programme is open to inmates who are approaching the end of their sentence and eligible for Release on Temporary Licence (RoTL) and ex-offenders who have recently completed their sentence and looking for full-time employment.

## Mental Health First Aiders

Sixteen of our colleagues recently undertook a two-day course to be trained to become Mental Health First Aiders on the project.

The aim of the course was to coach first aiders to find ways to enable everyone to speak about their physical or mental health in a safe and non-judgemental way, and then to help promote recovery through professional or self-help.

We believe that by providing the first aiders with this education and knowledge they can promote this better understanding of mental health and wellbeing. This will create an improved workspace and will increase the overall health benefits for all.





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## Outcomes for the business, workforce and community

There have been several instances of thanks from our workforce following the initiatives that have been put in place. As part of our commitment to EDI, we continually ask for feedback from our colleagues. We've had an excellent response through Inclusion week feedback forms and project observation cards (You said, we did). Suggestions from individuals have been acted on, developed and delivered - not only benefiting the individual who requested positive change but the wider workforce as a whole.

### *Jill Doyle, Stakeholder Manager said:*

*"Since being given the opportunity to stand up at my desk, I've found my back is feeling much better. It's a great idea and is catching on in the office as I've spotted colleagues doing the same. Thanks to Kier health and wellbeing for introducing the idea."*

### *Marco Prata, Graduate Engineer said:*

*"I love how the world map has got people talking in the office. It's interesting to know where my colleagues were born and get a good understanding of their culture by simply talking about it. It's also really inspiring to know that I work with many different people who have come from all over the world to work on this smart motorway project in Stafford."*

### *Shafiq Mohammed, Senior Planner said:*

*"I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to Kier for offering snacks on the occasion of Eid Al Fitr (the Islamic festivity celebrated at the end of Ramadan, the holy month of fasting). I have to be honest and say that this was a first for me as I had not seen a similar kind of offering at M6 J6-19 or any other company I have worked for in the UK since the year 1998. I appreciate and understand that there are less than a handful of Muslims on this tranche and for Kier to extend such a warm and wonderful offering was extraordinary. Considering the current climate of intolerance not only in the UK but all around the world, I feel Kier went above and beyond in demonstrating that everyone and anyone, no matter what their race or religion are part of the Kier family.*

*Another great offering which I take full advantage of is the 'Multi Faith Room', located near the welfare facilities. This space allows me the opportunity to practice my daily prayers in a peaceful and clean surrounding. I use my prayer mat within the confines of the room and spend no more than 5 minutes offering prayers. Although it is a communal facility and open to any faith or group, it means a lot to me that Kier have made this possible.*

*I am grateful and happy that I made the right choice in working for Kier, a company that cares for its employees and considers all as equal partners."*



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**Muhammad Bhajji, Quantity Surveyor said:**

*"I would like to take this opportunity to thank the team for their constant efforts in celebrating the diversity of the work force here at J13-15. As one of a handful of Muslims on a big site it was a great gesture when the team decided to mark the celebration of Eid-UI-Fitr in the office with decorations and ordering food (an important religious holiday that marks the end of Ramadhan). I felt that Jill and Lucy on behalf of Kier went above and beyond as they do for all other occasions of celebration."*

## **What have we learned and what can others take from this?**

We are constantly learning and always open to new ideas. We have learned that the ideas already put in place can be progressed. For example, our decision to teach some Polish and German as a bit of fun over Inclusion Week 2019 will now develop into teaching members of staff English on a regular basis to help improve communication on site. It is vital that management are open to the feedback of their people and to learn from others. It is key to put feedback and sharing mechanisms in place and show staff that if they make suggestions they will be listened to.

All activity in this case study has been delivered to both Kier staff and sub-contractors.