The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has today given approval to £5m funding for a Tunnelling and Underground Construction Academy at Aldersbrook Sidings, Ilford, in the London Boroughs of Redbridge and Newham. The facility is being developed by Crossrail, Europe’s largest transport infrastructure project.

The estimated benefit of Crossrail to the UK economy is at least £36 billion. It will employ over 14,000 people of which 3,500 will be directly linked to the tunnelling and underground construction environment.

The Academy is vital to the success of the overall Crossrail initiative and will provide significant benefits to the London and South-East regions. It will provide access to training and jobs and a path to sustainable employment for some of the most socially excluded areas of London.

This employer-led project is fully supported by the industry through Construction Skills, the British Tunnelling Society and Tunnel Skills who recognise that the Academy will provide the right environment to deliver skills essential to the sector. The Academy will raise standards within the industry and lead to the development of innovative courses and new frameworks for Apprenticeships and other qualifications to address the skills shortage faced by the sector. It will provide training for up to 1,000 learners a year catering for all types of tunnelling, and will be part of the broader economic legacy and regeneration of east London, as it sits alongside the Olympic Village and Park.

This facility will meet the skills needs not only of Crossrail but also National Grid, London Underground, Thames Water, and EDF, among others. It will be able to address the needs of major developments in the UK and across Europe, thus securing the longer term sustainability of the Academy and enabling the UK to become a world leader in a modernising industry.

Kevin Brennan, Minister for Further Education, Skills, Apprenticeships said:

"Now more than ever, we need to develop and invest in training so a new generation is ready to work on major infrastructure projects like Crossrail. A new National Skills
Academy for Tunnelling and Underground Construction will help build a world beating workforce, improving standards and equipping people with skills they can use throughout their working lives."

**Geoff Russell, LSC Chief Executive; Skills Funding Agency Chief Executive Designate, said:**

“The joint investment we are making with Crossrail in the Underground Construction and Tunnelling training academy is testament to the value we all see in training people in economically valuable skills. Part of the role of this academy is to help shape new qualifications, including Apprenticeships that reflect the skills employers need today and in the future. It will represent a huge opportunity for people to gain skills valued by employers across Europe. I welcome this joint investment and expect the facility to become a world centre of excellence for underground construction and tunnelling skills delivery.”

**Terry Morgan, Chairman Crossrail said:**

“We are delighted to receive £5 million in funding from the LSC. This is great news for the project and great news for the tunnelling and underground construction industry. This decision means we can now progress our plans to build this fantastic training facility, which the industry so urgently needs.”

**Notes of editors**

**The project**

The main training centre is approximately 4000 m$^2$ of new build. It will be a minimum of 10m in height and large enough to accommodate a tunnel boring machine. It will create a safe working space, allowing for the re-creation of scenarios that are expected underground.

Crossrail, established by an Act of Parliament is Europe's largest transport infrastructure project and a key driver in London's plan for growth. Its total investment of £15.9bn will contribute to leading the UK out of recession and bring substantial economic benefits to London, the South-East and across the UK.
This facility will offer opportunity to disadvantaged communities throughout the Crossrail project corridor, particularly in the East of London at Whitechapel, Stratford, Canning Town and Woolwich and in the West in areas such as Hounslow, Slough and Hayes.

The Academy will provide and promote training for underground workers; improve and expand the skills of existing and new workers; raise standards within the UK tunnelling industry; and improve safety within the tunnelling industry.

The academy will provide new entrants to the industry with a clear line of sight to all possible roles within the industry from NVQ Level 1 to Level 5 with the majority of training offered being at level 2 or 3 in Underground Construction, Tunnelling Operations or Tunnelling Supervisory Skills. It will also contribute to Crossrail’s overall goal of delivering 400 apprenticeships across the supply chain.

In accordance with LSC supplementary guidance, the Provider Financial Management teams in the London and South East Regions have assessed this capital proposal, to ensure that the following criteria are satisfied;

- Financial Viability
- Financial Affordability
- Value for Money (VFM)
- PFA Audit Results

**Crossrail**

Crossrail is the new high frequency, convenient and accessible railway for London and the South East. From 2017 Crossrail will travel from Maidenhead and Heathrow in the west to Shenfield and Abbey Wood in the east via new twin tunnels under central London. It will link Heathrow Airport, the West End, the City of London and Canary Wharf. Crossrail will:

- make travelling in the region easier and quicker. It will reduce crowding on London's transport network. It will operate with main line size trains, carrying more than 1500 passengers in each train during peak periods.

- deliver substantial economic benefits in London, the South-East and across the UK. The estimated benefit of Crossrail to the UK economy is at least £36 billion (TfL figures, May 2006).

Crossrail Limited is a company controlled by the Greater London Authority. On 5 December 2008 Crossrail Limited became a fully owned subsidiary of Transport for London (TFL). TFL is a statutory corporation regulated under local government finance rules. It is governed by the GLA Act. TFL has been an LSC contract holder delivering across all LSC funding stream but specialising in Apprenticeships and NVQs.


For further information about Crossrail please visit: [http://www.crossrail.co.uk](http://www.crossrail.co.uk) or contact Alick Whitfield Tel: 020 3229 9552 E: alickwhitfield@crossrail.co.uk
Learning and Skills Council:

The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. We are responsible for ensuring the availability of high-quality education and training for everyone. We have a single goal: to improve the skills of England’s young people and adults to world class standards. We work nationally, regionally and locally to deliver this ambition on behalf of learners and employers.

The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 received Royal Assent on 12 November 2009 for the dissolution of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) by 2010 and the transfer of its functions to local authorities and two new agencies; the Skills Funding Agency. And the Young People’s Learning Agency.

Skills Funding Agency

Responsible for channelling funding swiftly, efficiently and securely to further education colleges and other providers, primarily in response to customer (employer and learner) choice on programmes such as Train to Gain. It will operate through customer focused services: National Apprenticeship Service (NAS), Employer Skills Services, Adult Advancement and Careers Service, Learner Skills Services. The Skills Funding Agency will be an agency of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

The Young People’s Learning Agency:

The YPLA will champion young people by providing financial support to young learners, by funding Academies for all their provision and by supporting local authorities’ commissioning of suitable education and training opportunities for all 16-19 year olds. The YPLA will be a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDBP) sponsored by the Department for Childrens, Schools and Families (DCSF).

For more information on this release please contact:

Natasha Groocock, LSC Press Manager, 024 76 82 3515 natasha.groocock@lsc.gov.uk or San Jutla, LSC Press Officer, 024 76 82 5793 san.jutla2@lsc.gov.uk