

Local Labour Recruitment and Business Engagement Strategy

June 2024

Condition 58 Planning Permission P2021/0327 NPTCBC

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Global Centre of Rail Excellence (GCRE) will be a 'one stop shop' for testing new rolling stock and supporting world class research, development and certification of new rail infrastructure, technologies, processes and skills – something that currently doesn't exist on a single site in either the UK or in Europe.
- 1.2 Operational up to 24 hours a day, seven days a week, the facility will include two electrified test loops, one a high-speed rolling stock track and the other a track for heavy infrastructure testing.
- 1.3 GCRE will become the UK's first ever net zero railway, supporting the innovation needed to aid the UK's path to net zero and, crucially, helping lower the costs of major rail infrastructure projects.
- 1.4 Located on a former open cast mine in the Dulais Valley, it will create long-term, high-quality jobs in an area of multiple deprivation and become a magnet for other, high-quality investments and R&D funding as part of an active industrial policy.
- 1.5 As part of the requirements of the Planning Permission for GCRE it is necessary for a Labour Recruitment Strategy to be developed.
- 1.6 Condition 58 of Neath Port Talbot Planning Permission P2021/0327 states that:-

“No less than three months prior to commencement of the development hereby permitted, full details of a Labour Recruitment Strategy, to include measures aimed at facilitating best available access for local people to the opportunities for employment arising from the construction and operation of the Global Centre of Rail Excellence, and identifying how the project can deliver benefits to Wales and to local communities through targeted recruitment and training, and supply chain initiatives, shall have been submitted to the Local Planning Authority for its approval in writing. The Strategy, which shall include a timetable for its implementation, shall thereafter be implemented as approved. Reason: To ensure that the developer undertakes best endeavours to facilitate best available access for local people to the opportunities for employment arising from the construction and operation of the GCRE.”

- 1.7 The GCRE project is a diverse project with many different facets that will require different skill sets at different stages of the development. For Example, during Construction the roles will predominantly be fulfilled by Contractors whilst during operations GCRE will be looking to recruit permanent employees. As such it is important to understand how GCRE will aim to manage the strategy for recruiting local employees directly, ensuring that contractors do the same as well as ensuring that the wider local supply chain can benefit also. This document sets out these strategies.

2.0 GCRE General Local Recruitment Strategy

- 2.1 In order for GCRE to manage its recruitment the strategy set out below gives the guiding principles on which GCRE will look to actively manage Local Labour Recruitment. In general the following will be adopted:

3.0 Understand the Local Labour Market.

- 3.1 To enable effective local recruitment, it is important to understand the local labour market. To do this GCRE will look to use various methods to broaden its current understanding. These will include: -
- Conducting a labour market analysis to identify the availability, skills, and qualifications of local workers.
 - Identifying local training institutions and workforce development programs.
 - Collaborating with the Employer Engagement Officer for Neath Port Talbot CBC, local Job Centres and Employment Agencies to gather data on the local workforce.
 - Engage with Regional Learning and Skills Partnerships (LSKIPS) for Southwest Wales and Mid Wales to inform major long-term skills planning.
 - Surveying local residents and potential workers to understand their interest and availability for the various types of work at the site.
 - Engaging with local colleges, vocational schools, and training centres to identify potential partnerships.
 - Engaging with the Tata Transition Board to examine short and long-term impacts of job losses at the Tata Steelworks in Port Talbot

4.0 Partnerships with Local Educational Institutions, Training Providers and Local Authorities.

- 4.1 The next stage will be looking to establish partnerships with local educational institutions, training providers and local authorities so that GCRE can:
- Develop a pipeline of skilled workers through partnerships with educational institutions.
 - Provide training and apprenticeship opportunities to enhance local skills.
 - Play a role in supporting local employability programmes administered by the local authority.
- 4.2 GCRE will look to achieve this by:
- Partner with local colleges and training providers to create training programs and apprenticeships relevant to each stage of the project.
 - Offer on-site training and certification opportunities to local workers.
 - Over time look to establish a scholarship or grant program for local students looking to study relevant disciplines aligned with GCRE's longer term requirements.
 - Working with relevant local authorities to ensure GCRE job and training opportunities complement local employability programmes.

5.0 Community Engagement and Outreach

5.1 To ensure local people are aware of the possible opportunities on site it is necessary to be engaged with the local community. GCRE has already established a Regional Committee and a Local Liaison Group to allow effective communication to elected representatives and the local community on project progress and impacts. The next phase will be to look to employ a community outreach officer. As part of their role, they will:

- Raise awareness about employment opportunities within the local community.
- Build a positive relationship with the community to encourage local hiring.
- Support the deeper, longer-term development of a pipeline of local skills for the project, for example such as through the [GCRE Primary Engineer programme](#).

5.2 GCRE will also look to:

- Organise job fairs and community meetings to inform local residents about job opportunities and the benefits of working on the project.
- Use local media channels, such as newspapers, radio, and social media, to advertise job openings.
- Collaborate with community organisations, local councils, and employment charities to reach a broader audience.
- Undertake visits to local schools and colleges to promote appropriate skills training and long-term job opportunities.

6.0 Incentives and Benefits

6.1 In order to attract and retain local talent it is important that GCRE ensure that as well as GCRE, its Contractors also are committed to the same goals and outcomes in terms of employment and fair work. For example, a commitment to the Real Living Wage. The main objectives are to:

- Attract and retain local talent by offering competitive benefits.
- Demonstrate a commitment to the well-being and development of local workers.

6.2 This will be achieved by:

- Providing competitive wages and benefits, (GCRE is committed to the Real Living Wage).
- Implement a career development program with clear pathways for advancement and skill enhancement.

7.0 Streamlined Recruitment Process

7.1 To meet the objectives of the planning condition it is important that the recruitment process is efficient and transparent and that GCRE make it as easy as possible for local workers to apply and be considered for roles. GCRE will look to: -

- Simplify the application process with online and offline application options.
- Set up a dedicated recruitment team to handle local applications and provide timely feedback.
- Use local employment agencies and Jobcentres to assist with the recruitment process where necessary.

- Work with the local authority to ensure complementarity with, and support for, local employability programmes.

8.0 Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives

8.1 GCRE as an employer recognises that everyone should have an equal chance to live, learn and work free from discrimination, harassment, victimisation and prejudice and is committed to delivering a high standard of client care and ensuring all its clients receive quality services to meet their needs. GCRE recognise the importance of social and financial inclusion and that in addition to the protected characteristics, our clients may face social and financial disadvantage.

8.2 GCRE will:

- Promote diversity and inclusion within the workforce.
- Ensure equal opportunities for all local residents.
- Ensure that equality and diversity are at the heart of everything we do.
- Commit to ensuring that all employees are treated with dignity and respect.
- Commit to equality and diversity and recognise the nine protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010.
- Comply with all legal, statutory and regulatory requirements.
- Ensure that no one we employ will suffer unfair or unequal treatment from other employees, or from bodies or individuals with whom GCRE work with or provide services to.

8.3 As an employer we will:

- Seek to establish a workforce that reflects the local population in which we work. We will adopt recruitment, support and retention practices (for example flexible working procedures) to support this aim. We will also look to implement policies to promote the hiring of underrepresented groups, including women, ethnic minorities, and people with disabilities.
- Assist staff to realise their potential ensuring fair consideration of their training and career development needs are identified through the People Review.
- Provide a safe, supportive and accessible working environment.
- Monitor our employment policies and practices to ensure they are fair and demonstrate our commitment to diversity.
- Ensure that staff understand how valuing diversity can improve our ability to deliver better quality services and so reduce inequality.
- Ensure all staff are aware of the policy through induction training. Further updates or training specific to an employee's role and service area will be undertaken when required, focussing on legal and good practice including providing diversity training for hiring managers and staff.
- Monitor and report on diversity metrics to ensure continuous improvement.

9.0 Retention and Employee Engagement

9.1 Once we have recruited and trained the workforce, we want to be able to ensure that we retain them as people are our most important asset. Our main objective is to Retain local talent by fostering a supportive and engaging work environment and to Encourage loyalty and long-term employment. To achieve this, we will: -

- Conduct regular employee satisfaction surveys and address any concerns promptly.
- Implement recognition programs to reward outstanding performance and contributions.
- Provide opportunities for continuous learning and professional development.

10. Health and Safety Measures

10.1 A Healthy Workforce is critical to the success of any undertaking and to attracting and retaining employees. GCRE are committed to the Health, Safety and Well-being of all its employees. As an employer we will Ensure a safe working environment for our employees and Comply with all UK health and safety regulations. To ensure everyone is safe GCRE will:

- Conduct regular safety training for all employees and ensure all contractors do the same.
- Provide competency training in relevant disciplines for all employees.
- Implement rigorous health and safety protocols and conduct regular site inspections.
- Provide all necessary safety equipment to all employees.

11.0 GCRE general Local Labour Recruitment Implementation Plan

11.1 An outline of a plan to achieve the successful implementation of the strategy is set out below:

- **Initial Phase:**

- a. Conduct labour market analysis and identify local training institutions.
- b. Establish partnerships with educational institutions and training providers.
- c. Develop outreach materials and launch community engagement initiatives.

- **Recruitment Phase:**

- a. Organise job fairs and community meetings.
- b. Advertise job openings through local media and employment agencies.
- c. Begin the recruitment process with streamlined applications and dedicated recruitment teams.

- **Training and Onboarding Phase:**

- a. Start training programs and apprenticeships in collaboration with partners.
- b. Implement onboarding programs for new hires, focusing on safety and job-specific training.

- **Ongoing Development and Retention (12+ months):**

- a. Continue community engagement and outreach efforts.
- b. Monitor and support employee development and career progression.
- c. Maintain a focus on health and safety, diversity, and inclusion.

- 11.2 By following this strategy, GCRE can successfully recruit and retain local labour, benefiting both the project and the local community.

12.0 Construction Phase

- 12.1 It is estimated that up to 150 jobs will be created during the construction period. These jobs will vary from Labourers and Security Guards through to project managers and engineers. GCRE will be constructed by a number of different contractors specialising in Earthworks, Drainage, Rail Systems, Structures and Buildings. As such they will be responsible for the employment of the majority of those on site during this phase of work. GCRE are committed to ensuring as many local opportunities are available for the employment of local people during each phase of the development and as such are also committed to making sure that its contractors are also encouraged to recruit locally where possible.
- 12.2 GCRE will therefore look to work with Contractors during the project to maximise opportunities for local people. To enable this to be achieved the actions set out below will be put in place.

13.0 Contractual Obligations and Requirements

- 13.1 GCRE are bound by the public sector procurement regulations and as far as they are able to, they will: -
- Ensure contractors are legally bound to recruit a significant percentage of local labour.
 - Establish clear expectations and guidelines.
- 13.2 To achieve this GCRE will look to:
- Include specific clauses in contracts mandating the recruitment of a minimum percentage of local labour.
 - Define “local labour” within the contract to specify the geographic area.

14.0 Pre-qualification and Tendering Process

- 14.1 GCRE will ensure as part of the tendering process that significant weight is given to contractors who are committed to local labour recruitment and as part of the process Evaluate contractors based on their ability and plans to engage local workers.
- 14.2 As part of the PQQ and Tendering Process GCRE will
- Include local labour recruitment criteria in the pre-qualification questionnaire (PQQ) and tender evaluation process.
 - Request local labour recruitment plans as part of the tender submission.
 - Award points in the tender evaluation for robust and realistic local recruitment strategies.

15.0 Collaboration with Local Job Centres and Employment Agencies

- 15.1 Through liaison with the contractor GCRE will look to help Facilitate the recruitment process for contractors and ensure a steady pipeline of local candidates.

15.2 This will be achieved by

- Partnering with the Local Authorities, local Jobcentres and employment agencies to identify and refer suitable candidates to contractors.
- Provide contractors with access to local job fairs and employment events as well as encouraging them to hold their own.
- Establish a centralised recruitment portal that contractors can use to advertise vacancies to local job seekers.

16.0 Monitoring and Reporting Mechanisms

16.1 To ensure that contractors have met the requirements that have been set for the recruitment of local labour it is crucial that GCRE Track contractors' performance in recruiting local labour and Ensure accountability and transparency.

16.2 Therefore GCRE will:

- Require contractors to submit regular reports detailing their local labour recruitment efforts and outcomes.
- Conduct periodic audits and site visits to verify compliance.
- Develop a centralised database to monitor local labour engagement across all contractors.

17.0 Incentives and Support for Contractors

17.1 Whilst it will be a condition of Contract award where relevant, it is important that GCRE, encourage contractors to prioritise local labour recruitment and Provide resources and support to facilitate compliance.

17.2 This will be achieved through:

- Providing training and workshops for contractors on best practices in local recruitment and workforce development.
- Offering access to resources such as local labour market data and potential partnership opportunities with local training providers.

18.0 Community Engagement and Outreach

18.1 It is important as that GCRE Builds community trust and support for the project and a large part of this is employment, we therefore need to ensure local residents are aware of job opportunities.

18.2 Our Contractors will be a big part of this and GCRE will:

- Require contractors to participate in community outreach activities, such as job fairs and informational meetings.
- Mandate contractors to work with local community organisations to promote job openings and recruitment events.

- Encourage contractors to sponsor local events and initiatives to demonstrate their commitment to the community.

19.0 Training and Apprenticeship Programs

19.1 A large scheme of this nature offers many opportunities for Training and Apprenticeships. Giving young people and those people looking to change career the skills and experience to develop in another industry is a major part of the social value that GCRE can contribute to the local and Welsh economy. We are looking to facilitate the enhancement of skills in the local workforce and ensure a steady supply of qualified local workers.

19.2 As part of our contractual arrangements with Contractors we will:

- Require contractors to establish or participate in apprenticeship programs aimed at local residents.
- Partner with local colleges and training providers to offer on-the-job training and certification programs.
- Set targets for the number of apprenticeships and training placements to be filled by local candidates.

20.0 Retention and Employee Engagement

20.1 Once the workforce is trained and employed it is important that where possible that those jobs are retained, and further opportunities are available as careers progress. GCRE are looking to Ensure local labour is retained throughout the project duration and that Contractors Foster a positive and inclusive working environment.

20.2 As part of the Strategy for ensuring Contractors Employ Local People GCRE will look to:

- Mandate contractors to implement retention strategies such as competitive wages, benefits, and career development opportunities.
- Require contractors to conduct regular employee satisfaction surveys and address any issues promptly.
- Encourage contractors to recognise and reward outstanding performance among local workers.

21.0 GCRE Contractors Local Labour Recruitment Implementation Plan

To ensure that the strategy set out above is implemented, outlined below are the steps to be taken to ensure that GCRE's contractors effectively include the strategy set out above within their recruitment process.

- **Preparation Phase:**
 - a. Draft and finalise contractual clauses related to local labour recruitment.
 - b. Develop pre-qualification and tender evaluation criteria focused on local labour.
 - c. Establish partnerships with Local Authorities, local Jobcentres, employment agencies, and training providers.

- **Tendering and Award Phase:**

- a. Launch the tender process incorporating local labour requirements.
- b. Evaluate and select contractors based on their local recruitment plans and commitments.
- c. Formalise contracts with selected contractors, including local labour clauses.

- **Mobilisation Phase:**

- a. Provide orientation and training for contractors on local labour recruitment and compliance.
- b. Set up monitoring and reporting systems to track contractor performance.
- c. Organise initial community engagement and outreach events.

- **Execution Phase:**

- a. Continuously monitor and support contractors in their local labour recruitment efforts.
- b. Conduct regular audits and site visits to ensure compliance.
- c. Facilitate ongoing community engagement and local workforce development activities.

21.1 By implementing this strategy, contractors will be incentivised and held accountable for recruiting local labour, ultimately contributing to the project's success and benefiting the local community and Welsh economy as a whole.

23.0 Engagement with the Local Supply Chain

23.1 As well as the recruitment of Local Labour it is important that a project of this nature supports the local supply chain and in particular Local small and medium sized enterprises (SME's). As well as GCRE as an organisation, a significant proportion of work at the site will be carried out by contractors. Set out below is the Strategy for ensuring that GCRE and its contractors, engage with and employ local businesses to benefit both the project and the wider local and Welsh economy.

24.0 Contractual Requirements

24.1 To ensure that SMEs are effectively engaged GCRE will Ensure engagement with local SMEs is included as part of the tender selection process and provide clear guidelines and requirements for contractors in the PQQ and Tender documentation. This will include: -

- Include specific clauses in contracts mandating a minimum percentage of procurement from local SMEs.
- Define "local SMEs" within the contract to specify the geographic area and size criteria.
- Outline any penalties for non-compliance.

25.1 Pre-qualification and Tendering Process

25.1 GCRE are bound by the public sector procurement regulations but as far as is possible we will look to select contractors committed to engaging local SMEs and Evaluate contractors based on their plans to include local SMEs.

25.2 To achieve this we will: -

- Include local SME engagement criteria in the pre-qualification questionnaire (PQQ) and tender evaluation process.
- Request detailed local SME engagement plans as part of the tender submission.
- Award points in the tender evaluation for robust and realistic local SME engagement strategies.

26.0 Partnership with Local Business Organisations.

26.1 In order to ensure that SMEs are both engaged and treated fairly it is essential that GCRE encourage Partnerships between SME's and Contractors. GCRE will look to facilitate connections between contractors and local SMEs so as to ensure a steady pipeline of local SME suppliers and subcontractors. This not only will benefit the contractors but also benefit the project and the wider local and Welsh economy.

26.2 In order to achieve this GCRE and its Contractors will: -

- Partner with local chambers of commerce, business networks, and trade associations to identify and recommend local SMEs.
- Organise networking events and meet-and-greets between contractors and local SMEs.
- Develop a directory of local SMEs that contractors can access and utilise.

27.0 Monitoring and Reporting Mechanisms

27.1 In order to confirm the effectiveness of the strategy GCRE will monitor the performance of both it and its contractors. It will track contractors' performance and GCRE's performance in engaging local SMEs and ensure accountability and transparency through reporting.

27.2 This will be achieved by:

- Requiring contractors to submit regular reports detailing their engagement with local SMEs, including spend and subcontractor details.
- Conduct periodic audits and site visits to verify compliance.
- Develop a centralised database to monitor local SME engagement across all contractors and GCRE.
- Provide a summary report of all engagement activities with SME's.

28.0 Support for Contractors

28.1 In order to encourage contractors to prioritise local SME engagement, GCRE will help to provide resources and support to facilitate compliance. Working with Partners GCRE will: -

- Provide training and workshops for contractors on best practices in local SME engagement and procurement.
- Offer access to resources such as local SME directories, procurement guidelines, and potential partnership opportunities.

29.0 Community Engagement and Outreach

- 29.1 It is important as that GCRE Builds community trust and support for the project and a large part of this is engagement with local businesses, in particular local SME's. It is important that they understand how they can benefit from this scheme, we therefore need to ensure local businesses are aware of the opportunities that are available throughout the project life cycle.
- 29.2 Our Contractors will be a big part of this. The construction phase in particular will be important in establishing good working practices that can be carried on throughout the operation of GCRE. To foster positive engagement GCRE will:
- Require contractors to participate in community outreach activities, such as local business fairs and informational meetings.
 - Mandate contractors to work with local business organisations to promote procurement opportunities.
 - Encourage contractors to sponsor local business events and initiatives to demonstrate their commitment to the community.
 - Look to sponsor local business events and initiatives itself to demonstrate GCRE's commitment to the community.
 - Promote GCRE procurement opportunities where appropriate in the local community.
 - GCRE will participate in Local Job Fairs and Forums to ensure the widest possible opportunities are publicised to local businesses.

30.0 Capacity Building and Development Programs

- 30.1 In order to benefit a project of this size and nature, and to help develop opportunities for local businesses and the wider local and Welsh economy, it will be necessary to build and develop the capabilities of local SMEs so that local SMEs can meet project demands.
- 30.2 As the project progresses GCRE will look to:
- Partner with local business support organisations to offer training and development programs for local SMEs.
 - Provide workshops on topics such as health and safety, quality standards, and financial management.
 - Set targets for the number of local SMEs to be trained and supported.
 - Encourage its Contractors to do the same.

31.0 Retention and Relationship Management

- 31.1 The GCRE project is a long-term proposition that will continue to need the services and skills of SMEs throughout its Construction and Operation it is therefore critical to ensure long-term engagement with local SMEs and Foster positive and collaborative relationships.
- 31.2 In order to retain SME's and provide positive relationship management GCRE will look to: -
- Implement relationship management strategies such as regular meetings and feedback sessions with local SMEs both with itself and its contractors.

- Conduct regular surveys of local SMEs to identify and address any issues.
- Recognise and reward outstanding performance among local SMEs through sponsorship of business awards and other similar programmes.

32.0 GCRE SME and Local Business Engagement Implementation Plan

32.1 The following paragraphs outline a plan to ensure that SME's and Local Business is effectively engaged with so as to benefit the wider local, regional and Welsh economy. The actions will be taken by GCRE:

- **Preparation Phase:**
 - a. Draft and finalise contractual clauses related to local SME engagement.
 - b. Develop pre-qualification and tender evaluation criteria focused on local SMEs.
 - c. Establish partnerships with local business organisations and support agencies.
- **Tendering and Award Phase:**
 - a. Launch the tender process incorporating local SME engagement requirements.
 - b. Attach heavy weighting when evaluating and score contractors based on their local SME engagement plans and commitments.
 - c. Formalise contracts with selected contractors, including local SME clauses.
 - d.
- **Mobilisation Phase:**
 - a. Provide orientation and training for contractors on local SME engagement and compliance.
 - b. Set up monitoring and reporting systems to track contractor performance.
 - c. Organise initial networking and engagement events between contractors and local SMEs.
- **Execution Phase:**
 - a. Continuously monitor and support contractors in their local SME engagement efforts.
 - b. Conduct regular audits and site visits to ensure compliance.
 - c. Facilitate ongoing community engagement and local SME development activities.

32.2 By implementing this strategy, both contractors and GCRE will be incentivised and held accountable for engaging local SMEs, contributing to the project's success and benefiting the local economy.

33.0 Conclusion

33.1 Local Labour Recruitment and the use of local businesses and SME's not only benefits the local, regional and Welsh economy but adds to community cohesion and prevents the 'brain drain' from local communities. It will benefit the scheme by encouraging community buy in and providing best value in terms of goods and services as well as developing relationships that will develop over the life of the project to the benefit of all those involved.

33.2 There will be other benefits such as reduced transport costs for goods, reduced traffic due to local employment and as a result a reduced carbon footprint for the scheme.

- 33.3 The Strategies set out in the above paragraphs will facilitate the best available access for local people to the opportunities for employment arising from the construction and operation of the Global Centre of Rail Excellence and deliver benefits to Wales and to local communities through targeted recruitment and training, and supply chain initiatives.