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LEARNING THE ROPES

AKRAM KHAN, AN APPRENTICE WITH WATES CONSTRUCTION, SPENDS HIS DAYS LEARNING THE TRICKS OF THE TRADE AT THE NEW KINGDOM STREET DEVELOPMENT

15.02.2017



8am - Morning

The sun has barely risen when Akram Khan, 19, starts his day. It's a one-hour journey from his home in east London to the Kingdom Street development in the Paddington Basin where he is an apprentice, working with the Wates Construction commercial team based on the site.

“Work starts at 8am every day, with a 30-minute site walk around where I check up on progress,” says Akram. “I give out directions to sub-contractors, and instruct them to carry out their work for the day. To ensure that all the work has been completed, I go around the site verifying what's been done. I also talk to the sub-contractor's operations team and our managers to make sure everything is up to standard. I specifically manage logistics, access control and street furniture.”

The building at 4 Kingdom Street is part of the Paddington Central campus. Brand new office buildings are already operating a bit further along Kingdom Street. Akram's site is scheduled for completion in early March.

“This is a £62m commercial new build, just off the A40 and opposite the Paddington canal,” Akram explains. “This project includes a green area and sports court on the roof, as well a bar and café. I really like the design of the building, especially the sports courts – that is what makes this building different.”



1pm - Lunch

After dealing with sub-contractors all morning, Akram likes to explore Paddington on his lunch break. “Little Venice is right around the corner and I like going there for little walks. It's very multi-cultural,” he says. “I also like Sheldon Square near the development. British Land have carried out

gardening works, which I think look very good now that it's almost complete."

Sheldon Square is a lively area with food trucks and cafés attracting a lot of workers at lunchtime. "I love the contrast of all the office blocks around, then the nice garden and greenery in the square," says Akram.



2pm - Afternoon

"What I love about construction is that no two days are the same," says Akram. "One day I might be evaluating sub-contractors and the next day I might be briefing them on new ideas and projects that were not included in their original scope. I also go to college for one day a week, where I am studying for my NVQ [National Vocational Qualification]."

Unusually for an apprentice, Akram can also be found rubbing shoulders with royalty. "Last October, Wates won The Queen's Award for Enterprise in the Sustainable Development category, which was presented by Princess Anne," he says. "I was invited along to the ceremony at our headquarters in Leatherhead, Surrey and got to meet the Princess."



After hours

Akram doesn't get much rest these days as he studies for his qualifications. For now, he spends as much time as possible with his family. "Because I work four days on site, in addition to my one day at college, it means I often have coursework to do on weekends," he says. "So when I can, I spend my time with my family in our home in east London. I also love driving!"

Akram has worked hard as an apprentice, and learned the ropes on site at 4 Kingdom Street. In September, he will join Wates as an operations trainee. "I will get more on-the-job training, and more insights into the business," he says. Of his experience in Paddington, Akram has only positive words: "It's been invaluable and very enjoyable!"

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