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Britain's brickies build a fortune

By Lucy Jones BBC News Online Thursday, 22 April, 2004, 07:20 GMT 08:20 UK
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At the age of 17, Jonathan Hill from Middlesex is eyeing a salary of at least £55,000 a year.

He is not a stock broker, brain surgeon or lawyer. But he is **learning** a skill which is just as **lucrative** in today's market - bricklaying.

Qualified construction workers are in huge demand in Britain. In the south-east, where the building of Terminal 5 at Heathrow airport is **attracting** builders from across the world, they are almost impossible to find for a reasonable price.



Jonathan Hill hopes to get work at Terminal 5

As with computer programmers amid the millennium bug worries in the run up to 31 December 2000, the most highly-skilled builders are demanding bumper salaries.

"With the building of Terminal 5, the **prospects** are really good," Mr Hill admits. "I've always had an interest in the construction industry. My dad earns a fair bit from it."

Job creation

Terminal 5 - to cost \$6bn - is one of the biggest construction projects in Europe. It will boast 110 aircraft stands, 40,000 car parking spaces, 18 conveyor belts, the tallest control tower in the country and hundreds of shops by the time it is completed in 2011.

New roads and rail links will serve the terminal which is set to house British Airways' **entire** Heathrow operation.

In the process, more than 50,000 people will have been provided with well-paid jobs for the best part of a **decade**. But at present there is an **expertise** shortage.



Construction at the terminal is well underway

This has led BAA, the company that operates Heathrow, to join the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) - a government body - to set up the Heathrow Construction Centre to train young people carpentry, joinery and bricklaying.

Onsite training

The centre, which officially opens on Thursday, has would-be recruits knocking on the doors: more than 250 people applied for 50 places last year

There are now 80 16-to-18-year-olds training at the centre, which plans to expand. Young people see there is good money, if they've got the right skills," says David Boyer from the LSC. "Many 16-year-olds look around and don't see anything they want to do and so are falling out of education.

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"The key is finding something that young people want to do but that employees will pay for." Construction fits the bill perfectly, he says.

Although students do have to attend lectures, most of their learning takes place in a workshop. "It's not like being in school... there's a level of **maturity**," says Mr Hill.



The apprentices like being outside the classroom

Caravan sites

The Terminal 5 project has its **critics**. Local people fear extra noise and pollution from the aeroplanes flying overhead, although the jobs the project is **generating** locally is widely seen as a pay-off.

But news of the riches to be made at Terminal 5 is spreading quickly. Caravan sites housing the builders who have come from as far away as Russia and Finland have sprung up near the terminal site.



Workers from far away live in caravans

The conditions are basic and cold in winter: the toilets and showers are located in cabins outside. But the Mercedes and BMW cars parked outside the caravans are evidence of why people are coming.

"It's definitely worth it - even unskilled workers are getting between £700 and £1,000 a week," said one resident of the Wiggin's site who left behind her house and children in Essex to join her husband, a builder on Terminal 5.

"The aeroplanes **interfere** with the television and a few people have had their caravans nicked but I'm happy."

The airport authorities are taking steps ensure Terminal 5 employs locals. Many students at the Heathrow Construction Centre live nearby.

“ I've talked to a lot of the kids here... they all have a game plan. They want to set up their own businesses with the money they earn from working on Terminal 5 ”

Mick Temple, Heathrow Airport

"Clearly the more Terminal 5 benefits the local community, the better," says Mick Temple, managing director of Heathrow Airport. "They don't want to see that there are benefits but they are going to someone else."

There is hope the project could benefit the area for many years to come. "I've talked to a lot of the kids here... they all have a game plan. They want to set up their own businesses with the money they earn from working on Terminal 5."

That may mean more builders in future but in the short-term bricklayers are going to be increasingly hard to come by.

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Read the article on pages 1 and 2

Now answer the following questions

1. What type of text is this?
2. How much is Terminal 5 set to cost?
3. List six things that Terminal 5 will have?
4. How many people would have been provided with well-paid jobs in Terminal 5?
5. Which two companies are setting up a training centre at Heathrow; and what type of training do they intend to provide?
6. What phrase tells us what Jonathan Hill thinks about the training centre?
7. What do the local people think about Terminal 5?
8. What are the caravan sites used for and where do the people come from?
9. What is the average salary for unskilled workers?
10. The airport authorities are working with the locals to provide what? Which phrase tells us this?

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The words in bold (on the left) are all from the text. Match them up with a word on the right that can replace them in the text. Use a dictionary to check the meanings of unfamiliar words.

Example

Learning → Knowledge

Now try these

Lucrative Development

Attracting Skill

Prospects Intervene

Entire Opponent

Decade Profitable

Expertise Producing

Maturity Whole

Critics Forecast

Generating Draw

Interfere Ten years

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A

1. Descriptive text
2. \$6bn
3. The 6 things are:
 - a. 110 aircrafts
 - b. 40,000 car parking spaces
 - c. 18 conveyor belts
 - d. Tallest control tower
 - e. Hundreds of shops
 - f. New roads and rail links
4. 50,000 would have been provided with well-paid jobs
5. The BAA and Learning Skills Council (LSC). They intend to provide training for young people in carpentry, joinery and bricklaying.
6. Jonathan Hill thinks the training centre is " not like being in school....there's a level of maturity"
7. The local people fear noise and pollution from the aeroplanes flying overhead.
8. The caravan sites are used to house the builders, who have come from far away as Russia and Finland
9. The average salary is between £700 and £1000
10. The airport authorities are working with the locals to provide employment.
"Clearly the more terminal 5 benefits the local community, the better"

B

Lucrative	Profitable
Attracting	Draw
Prospects	Forecast
Entire	Whole
Decade	Ten Years
Expertise	Skill
Maturity	Development
Critics	Opponent
Generating	Producing
Interfere	Intervene