



# Contractors Mechanical Plant Engineers

## NATIONAL NEWSLETTER

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**Welcome to another edition of your National Newsletter.**

### CMPE NATIONAL NEWS

The next CMPE National AGM Weekend has been announced by our National Vice-Chairman, Chairman Elect, Michael Farrington. Please diarise the date. Further information will be forwarded in due course.



**SAVE THE DATE !**



**CMPE NAGM Weekend.**

**20th—22nd June 2025**

**Botleigh Grange Hotel and Spa.**

**SO30 2AF**

**More Details to Follow.**

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## INDUSTRY NEWS

### Isle of Wight showcases speedy building.

The construction of three new homes in a single day at the Three Oaks development on the Isle of Wight has demonstrated the potential of modern methods of construction on the island.



*Above: Gibbs Timber Frame erected three houses in a day at Newport's Three Oaks development*

Sovereign Network Group and construction partner Captiva Homes are building 145 homes in Newport. Called Three Oaks, it is the largest affordable housing development on the Isle of Wight for several years.

To demonstrate how the project is seeking to embrace so-called modern methods of construction (or MMC), the team held an open day on 11th February to show what they could do. Centrepiece of the event was the erection of three homes by island firm Gibbs Timber Frame.

Isle of Wight Council leader Phil Jordan said: “Delivering affordable housing for the Isle of Wight is a major priority for the council. To do so at scale will require ingenuity and close collaboration, and this open day has been an excellent demonstration of both of those qualities. It has also provided a vital platform to discuss optimum ways forward with local

stakeholders and see first-hand the impressive plans SNG and Captiva have for the delivery of Three Oaks.”

Open day attendees observed the staged assembly process; beginning with ground floor panels being lifted into place in the morning, followed by first-floor cassettes, and culminating with the roofing structure in the afternoon, all helped along by favourable weather for the time of year.

SNG regional managing director Joe Marshall said: “This collaborative event has shown how we can address housing shortages while delivering homes that meet the highest environmental and community standards via SNG’s Homes and Place Standard. The pace of construction and commitment to quality on display today has been inspiring, and signals the way forward for housing delivery at scale using MMC both here on the Isle of Wight and across the UK.”

Captiva Homes chief executive Iain Delaney added: “The event has highlighted how partnerships and available technologies can help tackle the island’s housing crisis and underlined how local manufacturers and stakeholders will be at the heart of new homes delivery here. We are grateful to all the talented professionals who have lent their expertise to erect these three homes in a single day, and hope the demonstration serves as inspiration for further projects across the Island and beyond.”



## **Graham confirmed for £332m Didcot roads scheme.**

**Oxfordshire County Council has appointed John Graham Construction as main contractor for its HIF1 Didcot and surrounding areas infrastructure project.**



Confirmation of Graham as main contractor comes nearly two years after it was first brought in by the council on an early contractor involvement (ECI) basis.

The Didcot roads scheme was subject to a public inquiry last year and secured planning approval from the secretary of state in December.

Detailed design is now under way and construction is expected to start on the £332m project in early 2026.

*Above: The project includes the construction of a new road bridge over the Great Western Mainline railway*



The scheme comprises:

- the dualling of the A4130 carriageway (A4130 Widening) from the Milton Gate Junction eastwards, including the construction of three roundabouts
- a road bridge over the Great Western Mainline (Didcot Science Bridge) and realignment of the A4130 north east of the proposed road bridge including the relocation of a lagoon
- construction of a new road between Didcot and Culham (Didcot to Culham River Crossing) including the construction of three roundabouts, a road bridge over the Appleford railway sidings and road bridge over the River Thames
- construction of a new road between the B4015 and A415 (Clifton Hampden bypass), including the provision of one roundabout and associated junctions
- controlled crossings, footways and cycleways, landscaping, lighting, noise barriers and sustainable drainage systems.

Graham was appointed through the Crown Commercial Service's construction works and associated services framework.

Graham contracts director Andrew Henry said: “Graham has been working closely with Oxfordshire County Council and key stakeholders since April 2023 through early contractor involvement.

“This collaborative approach has enabled us to develop the detailed design for these significant infrastructure projects while actively engaging with third-party stakeholders such as Thames Water and Openreach to coordinate necessary utility diversions.”



## M&J Evans loads up with Kobelco.

Groundworks and civil engineering contractors M&J Evans has completed a deal for 56 Kobelco excavators.



M&J Evans has placed an order with Kobelco dealer Molson for 56 Kobelco excavators comprising SK28SR-7, SK50SR-7, SK85MSR-7 and SK130LC-11 models.

The Japanese excavators have been supplied with Miller quick couplers, a range of Strickland buckets and Trackunit vehicle tracking systems.

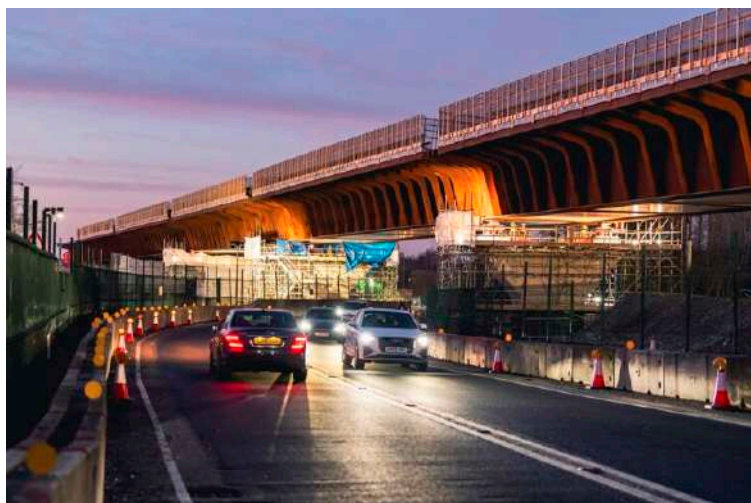
*Above: Some of M&J Evans' new machines*

M&J Evans plant director Paul Allman said: “Integrating these new Kobelco excavators into our fleet is a testament to our ongoing efforts to enhance operational efficiency across all aspects of the business while minimising environmental impact. Kobelco excavators’ high fuel efficiency and reliability will support our sustainability goals in delivering a high-quality and cost-effective service to our clients.”



## EKFB completes 4,500-tonne deck slide for Small Dean viaduct.

HS2 has revealed time-lapse footage showing heaviest and longest single-stage viaduct deck slide on the project so far.



The four-day operation involved sliding a 4,500-tonne deck across a road and railway line near Wendover in Buckinghamshire.

Stretching for 345 metres, the Small Dean viaduct is one of 50 major viaducts on the HS2 line between London and Birmingham.

*Above: The A413 open to traffic after the Small Dean viaduct deck slide  
[Images courtesy SAP Photographie for Eiffage Métal]*

The viaduct's concrete and steel deck was assembled to its full length before the slide began, with most of the precast concrete deck slabs installed in advance of the launch. This increased the weight of the slide but saves time later.

The whole operation was therefore the heaviest and longest slide of a single-stage viaduct deck on the HS2 project so far.

The nearby Wendover Dean viaduct, which was slid into place last year, is longer at 450 metres but lighter at 3,700 tonnes. It was also slid in three sections rather than all at once.

The Small Dean slide began on Thursday 30th January and the A413 was reopened at around 8.30pm on Friday, nine hours ahead of schedule. The whole operation completed on Sunday 2nd February.

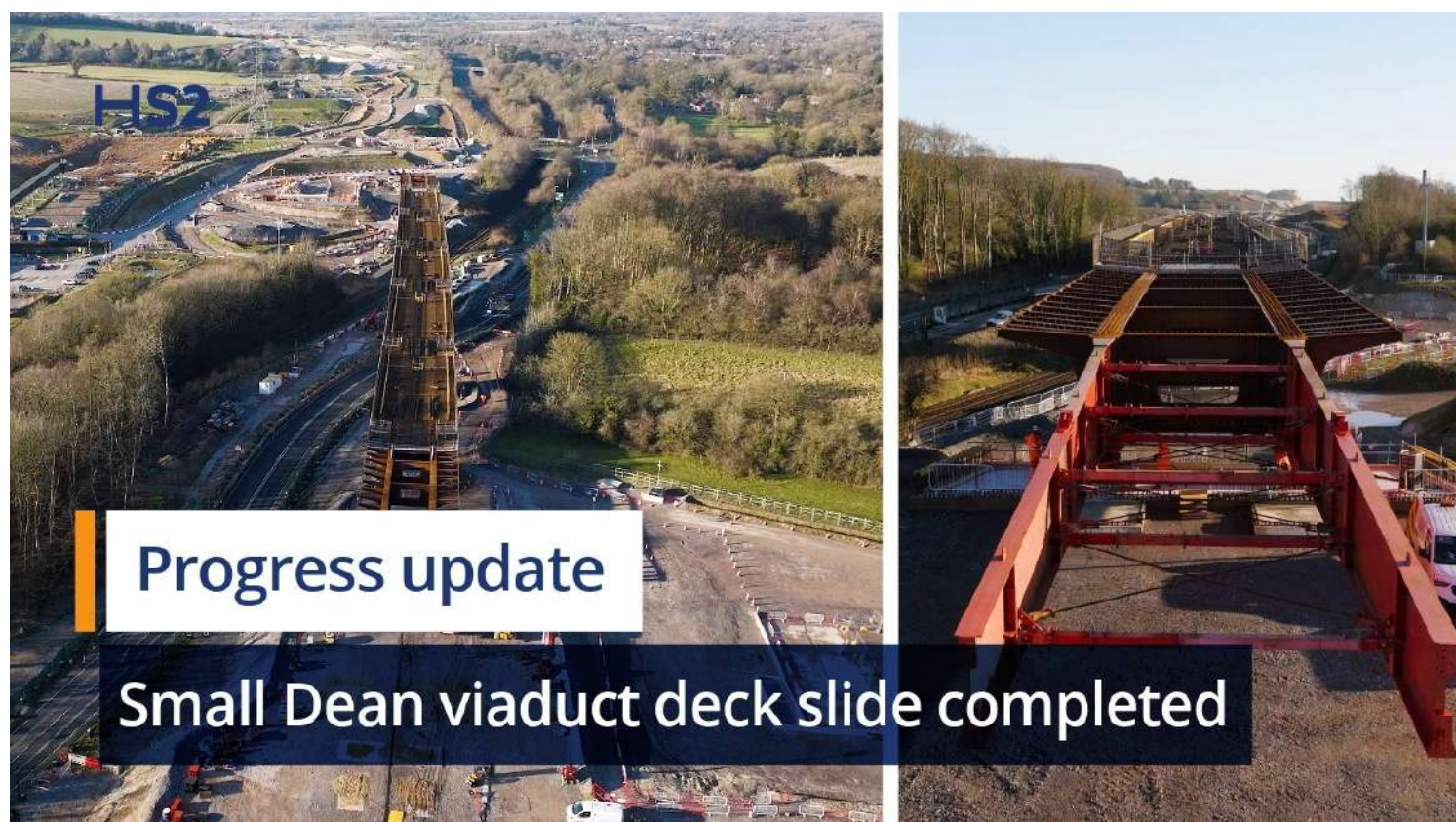
During the slide, pads coated in polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE – or Teflon) minimised friction between the deck and the temporary steel bearings on top of each of the piers. A cable system was used to slide the deck forward at speeds of up to 10 metres per hour.

HS2 Ltd project manager Jason Bicknell said: "Small Dean is the longest continuous deck slide on the project and an amazing engineering achievement. But it would not have been possible without the huge amount of preparatory work put in over the last few years and I'd like to thank everyone involved. Two years ago, we set a target to install the deck in summer 2025 and it's great that we came in ahead of schedule."



Before the slide could begin, the team spent four years preparing the site, diverting utilities, realigning the road, building the abutments and six piers that support the viaduct and assembling the deck.

With the deck now in position, engineers can begin the challenging job of lowering it by 600 mm onto the permanent bearings which will support the full weight of the viaduct. The two-month long operation will see it lowered by 200 mm at a time, pier-by pier, until the whole deck settles into its final position.



*Above: (Click your mouse on the image above to view in YouTube)*

The viaduct is one of only two places in the Chilterns where the HS2 route will be above ground level, with the underside of the viaduct just six metres above the road, supported by the Y-shaped piers.

Like the Wendover Dean viaduct, Small Dean's deck is made from weathering steel, which is expected to age to a dark russet finish to blend in with the surrounding landscape.

Both viaducts have French-style 'double composite' structures, with layers of reinforced concrete on the top and bottom to create a more structurally efficient box-like span, which cuts the amount of material in the design. The side of the Small Dean beam has deck stiffeners that help to manage the structural forces while allowing for a more structurally efficient span.





EKFB senior project manager Martin Gamble said: “The team at Small Dean Viaduct has worked tirelessly over a number of years to prepare for this momentous event. Through careful planning and by implementing time-saving measures, we’ve accelerated the bridge and support construction, bringing the launch date forward.

“The complexity of the interfaces with the road and railway have provided a real challenge which, with the assistance of Network Rail and Buckinghamshire Council, we have risen to and overcome, while keeping disruption to the surrounding area to a minimum.”

The last few months has also seen progress at HS2’s other major viaducts, including the structures that will form the Delta Junction in north Warwickshire and the viaducts taking the railway into Birmingham Curzon Street station.



*Above: Aerial view of Small Dean viaduct deck in final position across road and railway line in Wendover*





## Three Rs requirement for apprentices scrapped.

**Basic education requirements for apprenticeships are being scrapped in a bid to boost uptake.**



Apprentices will no longer be required to complete a level 2 English and maths qualification (equivalent to GCSE) in order to qualify.

According to the Department for Education (DfE), this one stroke of the pen, effectively immediately, could mean as many as 10,000 more apprentices per year now being able to complete their apprenticeships. Many of those are expected to be in construction.

*Above: Education secretary Bridget Phillipson (right) visited Oval Village yesterday to mark National Apprenticeship Week and met apprentices from Lee Marley Brickwork*

“It does not mean that apprentices won’t be assessed on core English and maths skills relevant to their occupation, but it does mean that apprentices will be able to focus more on their paid work,” the DfE said.

The minimum duration of an apprenticeship is also being reduced to eight months, down from the current minimum of 12 months.

Changes to the minimum length of an apprenticeship will be introduced from August 2025 subject to the legislative timetable, with changes to English and maths requirements coming into effect immediately.

Education secretary Bridget Phillipson said: “Businesses have been calling out for change to the apprenticeship system and these reforms show that we are listening. Our new offer of shorter apprenticeships and less red tape strikes the right balance between speed and quality, helping achieve our number one mission to grow the economy.”

Matthew Percival, future of work and skills director at the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) said: “Apprenticeships have an important role to play in building the skills for growth. Greater flexibility on minimum length and on English and Maths requirements will help businesses to offer more workers the opportunity to add to their skills.”





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