



Client: Alan Dick Communications Yellow News
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Skills and safety vital where it matters most

ENGINEERING skills and an absolute focus on safety are the two clear elements that are vital to Alan Dick's future growth.

A major investment in the Billet Lane base is about to be finalised in the new year, as it creates more space for the rapidly-increasing workforce. A key part of it is dedicated training facilities as the company seeks to address a skills gap that is no stranger to

manufacturing and process operations around the Humber.

With rail manufacturing one of Scunthorpe's strengths, the proximity of Doncaster and York as key rail centres, and 25 per cent of the UK's rail freight originating in Immingham, the importance of the industry is clear, but more needs to be done to get the message out, according to Mr Weller.

"One of the issues we have, and the industry as a whole, is there is not enough expertise and we are all

getting older," he said. "It is one of HS2's biggest headaches; how do you get people out of school and university interested and trained up for rail?"

"It is because it is seen as not exciting enough – people still think of Thomas The Tank Engine! But it is hugely exciting, with so much technology. It is a big question for us, how we attract staff, and how we get young people enthused about it."

"We will be training our own people up, that is important. We have had a lot of support from the Regional Growth Fund. It has played a big part in our expansion.

"HS2 is building a new training school in Doncaster, and we will be providing training modules for that, too."

Safety is vital, part of the mantra, with so much work done in

potentially dangerous situations.

"Every engineering decision we make is governed by safety. Any engineer can make a decision not to complete a job, or not to carry out a job, if it is not safe, and I think that is unique," said Mr Weller, who has a surveying background and has scores of employees out on the road every day to situations varying from the remotest of locations with two trains a day, to the capital's bustling underground network.

"When possession of a line is taken – effectively closing it to trains – several contractors working on several tasks may swoop. You try and maximise the time you have got and that makes it a challenging environment, especially as a lot of work is done at night," he said, giving a flavour.

It is a Scunthorpe success story. In three years we have done a lot, each year has been a game changer

Mark Weller



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CONFIDENT FUTURE: Mark Weller, business development director at Alan Dick Communications. Below, an engineer at work in the huge workshop at Scunthorpe.