

College Skills Centre being put to the test with NI construction finals

Skillbuild NI Ltd and South Eastern Regional College (SERC) launched the search for Northern Ireland's most talented construction apprentice.

The Skillbuild NI National Competition, which will be held on April 13 and 14 at SERC's Skills Centre in Newtownards, is a skills competition designed to challenge the best young talent in the construction industry. It has been developed to promote excellence among young craftspeople throughout Northern Ireland.

Providing a unique stage to showcase excellence and talent, Skillbuild NI National Competition is hosted annually each spring and 100 of the top apprentices compete to win coveted titles in 13 different construction craft areas ranging from brickwork to wall and floor tiling.

The Skillbuild NI competition gold medal winners can go forward to compete in the National UK Finals held annually each autumn. Medal success at National level gives the apprentice the opportunity to take part in specialist training and compete in elite competitions for the opportunity to be part of the UK Skills Team representing the UK in WorldSkills. This year WorldSkills comes to London, from 5-8 October and seven local construction apprentices have been selected for Squad UK undertaking rigorous training and practical trials prior to potential selection to Team UK later this summer.

Speaking at the launch David Cooper Chairman of Skillbuild said: "We are delighted that SERC is hosting the Skillbuild NI National Competition this year in their excellent new facilities in Newtownards. Skills competitions are an excellent way to showcase the wealth of opportunity within our industry for young people.

"Recruiting the talent of the future is a challenge our industry must meet if we are to avoid the skills gaps of the past and skills competitions have a great role to play in stimulating interest by showing the public just how exciting, challenging and rewarding a career in construction can be.

"We are hopeful that the province can once again produce medal winning members of Team UK such as Fermanagh apprentice Trevor Woods who won a bronze medal in Carpentry at the last WorldSkills Competition held in Calgary, Canada in 2009."

Showcasing their excellent facilities within the Newtownards Campus and Environmental Skills Centre, SERC are hosting this year's event, highlighting the importance of skills development within the construction sector.

Brian McMullen, Competitions Manager at SERC added: "Our students have seen great success over the years at the Skillbuild NI National Competition and we are proud of our links with them. We currently have three students who are in Squad UK and challenging for a place at the London WorldSkills this October. Luke Hawthorne (Carpentry), Stuart Miller and Bryan Craig (both Refrigeration) are representing SERC and Northern Ireland in the training squad.

"I am sure that the talent that will take part in this year's Skillbuild NI National Competition will continue to impress and we are very much looking forward to welcoming the cream of construction within Northern Ireland to the event."

The competition is open to public viewing, entrance is free and everyone will be most welcome. Further details can be found by logging onto www.skillbuildni.org or by contacting Katherine Pollock 028 9082 4209 or Brian McMullen 07810 378066.



At the launch of the 2011 Skillbuild NI National Competition are previous Skillbuild winners Stuart Millar, Luke Hawthorne and Bryan Craig who all study at South Eastern Regional College.