

Van Elle STEM Ambassadors

As part of our commitment to young people, our community and STEM education, Van Elle has signed up to support the STEM Ambassadors programme.

Inspiring and engaging the next generation in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths is key to the sustainability of our industry, which is packed full of people using these disciplines to craft the future of construction.

In support of our five-year EDI strategy, we are committed to:

- Deliver a minimum of 20 STEM sessions per annum
- Offer two work placements per annum
- Partner with local schools to run 'Introduction to Construction' sessions

Leading the way at Van Elle are Jono and Lewis, who frequently go into schools to talk to young people about engineering and support engineering students at university.

From Minecraft to my craft



**Jono Wright,
Engineering Manager for Strata**

Jono, the Engineering Manager for our ground investigation division Strata Geotechnics, started taking part in Institute of Civil Engineers (ICE) school sessions while at university. His clear passion for engaging with young people about the range of careers engineers can get involved in, led him to become a STEM Ambassador, taking part in the Bridge to Schools sessions.

Since graduating university, Jono has delivered ten primary school sessions across Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire.

In explaining why he volunteers his time to deliver the sessions, Jono said: "Ultimately, we're facing a skills shortage, so we need to get more kids interested and excited about an engineering career.

"I start each session by asking the pupils what they think engineers do and then broaden their understanding by explaining that engineers are

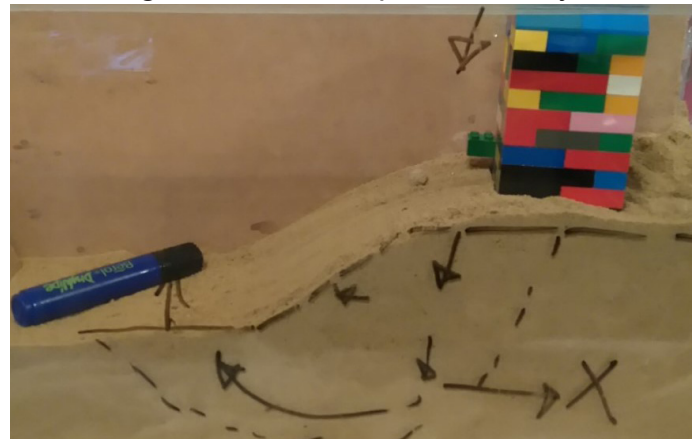
responsible for designing everything from wind turbines to bridges."

In one of his sessions Jono takes his 'fish tank' experiment into school and asks the pupils which Lego house will stay upright in a tank filled with jelly and sand when pressure is applied.

The flat-bottomed house never fairs too well, nor does the short foundation house, but the house with piles attached stands up to the pressure.

By using concepts that appeal to children, like Lego and Minecraft, Jono has successfully engaged

whole classes in the subject and shared the variety of access points to a career in engineering. Jono is particularly keen in helping children from disadvantaged backgrounds know that becoming an engineer is accessible to them. With entry points from apprentices and working on site to degrees, there is a path for everyone.



Jono's 'fish tank' experiment which he takes to primary schools across the two counties

Student mentor scheme

Meanwhile, at the other end of the scale Lewis, a Design Engineer at Van Elle, is signed up to the support the Ground Forum Undergraduate Mentoring Programme.

The programme is designed to match students in higher education with industry professionals to increase their knowledge about their specialist area through a work placement.

Lewis said: “As a student, I took a placement year and it really helped in my studies and confirmed what I wanted out of



**Lewis Yates,
Design Engineer**

my career.

“The purpose of the scheme is to give students a chance to broaden their experience and give them access to professionals who they wouldn’t otherwise meet.

“We’re really excited to be part of the scheme and to support this ‘meeting of minds’ which we hope will foster diversity in our industry and enable us all to be better engineers.”

In August 2021, Lewis will be welcoming a student called Ella for a two-week placement.

ICE training scheme

The accredited ICE training scheme at Van Elle helps newly qualified engineers and those who are yet to secure their chartership to gain the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to complete the initial professional development (IPD) stage to become professionally qualified. Lewis said: “The training scheme at Van Elle is great, I completed my IPD with Van Elle, and the experience I gained with the company was vital to success at review.

“Van Elle have a wealth of experienced engineers across the business, so there is a Delegated Engineer (DE) working close to you to

support your development.

“The great thing about being at a specialist is that the experience is current and your mentor/ DE will likely have faced many of the same technical challenges as you.”

Specialist Piling Director, Dave Warner, is the supervising civil engineer for this scheme.

He says: “This scheme is key to helping newly qualified engineers find their feet and build their experience to become chartered engineers.

“It is also an opportunity for anyone who is qualified but who has not yet gained chartership.”



Jono Wright at one of the Bridge to Schools events