

Press Release

Kingsteignton, 11th February 2026

Sibelco welcomes new apprentices as it builds the next generation of clay mining skills in South Devon



Sibelco has welcomed a new intake of apprentices to its South Devon operations, building on the success of recent apprenticeship programmes and reinforcing the clay mining company's long-term commitment to local jobs, skills and training.

The announcement comes as [National Apprenticeship Week](#) shines a spotlight on the value of apprenticeships in supporting careers and communities across the UK.

Six new apprentices have joined the business this year, bringing the total number recruited over the past three years to 16, the majority of whom remain with the company, building careers across a range of technical and operational roles.

Sibelco is a leader in Devon's traditional clay mining industry, with China Clay operations at Cornwood and world-renowned ceramics and sanitaryware-grade Ball Clay operations centred on Torrington and Newton Abbot.

The latest batch of apprentices will be training in a range of disciplines including electrical and mechanical engineering, laboratory services and site operations. Programmes range from Level 2 to Level 3 qualifications and combine classroom-based learning with hands-on experience and mentoring in a working industrial environment.

Graham Hole, Business Partner HR (UK) at Sibelco, said: “We are incredibly proud of our apprenticeship programme and of the young people joining us from the local area to build long-term careers in this historic Devon industry.

“Apprenticeships play a vital role in the future of our business and the wider minerals sector and we are committed to offering well-paid, skilled roles that provide a genuine career path, not just a qualification.

“We want Sibelco to be seen as a great place to start and build a career in the South West, which is why we invest properly in training, support and pay from day one.”

As part of its approach, Sibelco pays apprentices significantly above the national minimum wage for apprentices, reflecting both the value of the roles and the company’s ambition to attract and retain talent in a competitive skills market.

Training is delivered through a mix of providers, including the National Skills and Safety Park, Exeter College and specialist independent training schemes. Apprentices are supported through a combination of day-release and block-release learning, tailored to the requirements of each role.

Vicky Harrison, Training Manager - Funded Education, at the National Skills and Safety Park, which works closely with Sibelco on the design and delivery of its apprenticeship programme, said: “Our partnership has enabled us to create truly bespoke, clay specific learning materials in preparation for Sibelco’s apprentices joining the Professional Operator Development Programme.

“We are passionate about creating meaningful opportunities for people to grow, develop capability and realise what they’re truly capable of.”

Sibelco has operated in South Devon for many decades - with the company’s roots going back to 1860 and the Devon clay industry itself to the 17th Century. It remains a major employer in the area, supporting direct jobs, contractors and local supply chains.

Apprentice spotlight: Harley Bovey

Seventeen-year-old **Harley Bovey**, from Newton Abbot, is among the latest apprentices to join Sibelco’s South Devon operations. Harley was just 14 when he first came into contact with the company, meeting Graham Hole, **Business Partner HR (UK) for Sibelco**, as he supported a careers day at Harley’s school, Coombeshead Academy, not far from Sibelco’s Newton Abbot sites.



After speaking with the team, Harley went on to apply for and complete a period of work experience with the business, which stood him in good stead to secure a place on the company's latest apprenticeship intake.

With the encouragement of his family and support from the Sibelco team, Harley is now working at the company's Preston Manor works, where he is helping to run the weighbridge while completing his on-the-job and classroom-based training.

Looking ahead, Harley's ambition is to progress to a senior site operative role, operating some of the heavy machinery and plant used across Sibelco's mining operations. For now, though, there's one important milestone to tick off first.

"At the moment I'm focused on learning the job properly and passing my driving test," Harley said. "Once that's done, I can start thinking about the bigger machines."

"It's great to be part of the team here and everyone has been really supportive since I started. It's good to be learning on site and getting proper experience while working towards my qualifications. I'm looking forward to seeing where it can take me."



Graham Hole, Business Partner HR (UK) at Sibelco, said: "Harley is a great example of why apprenticeships matter and why as a local business we see it as so important to maintain close links with our local schools.

"We met Harley through a school event and were able to give him the chance to gain experience, where he really impressed us and showed real enthusiasm and potential."

He added: "I'm really pleased for him and proud that as a company we have put the processes in place to spot talent locally and support young people to build long-term careers with us."

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Picture Captions:

1. Sibelco apprentices with (centre) Graham Hole, Business Partner HR (UK) for Sibelco, and Vicky Harrison, Training Manager - Funded Education, at the National Skills and Safety Park
2. Harley Bovey pictured at the weighbridge at Sibelco's Preston Manor works
3. Harley Bovey with Graham Hole, Business Partner HR (UK) for Sibelco



About Sibelco

Sibelco is a global leader in material solutions. Sibelco mines, processes, and sells specialty industrial minerals – particularly silica, high purity quartz, clays, feldspathics and olivine – and is a leader in glass recycling. Sibelco's solutions support the progress of modern life and serve industries as diverse as semi-conductors, solar photovoltaic, glass, ceramics, construction, coatings, polymers and water purification. The Sibelco Group has production facilities in more than 30 countries and a team of more than 5,000 people.

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