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Growing apprentices at Thanet Earth



Thanet Earth, one of the largest employers in the Thanet area, is marking this year's National Apprenticeship Week (5 – 9 March) by recognising the achievements of their 36 apprentices.



The apprentices, drawn from many parts of the business including production, distribution and quality assurance, are the first major cohort that Thanet Earth have supported to take level 2 and level 3 apprenticeship qualifications. It was a cautious start for the business with one apprenticeship offered in Catering back in 2016. Initial success meant that from April 2017 the company embarked on a much expanded programme, creating the opportunity for other members of staff to upskill and progress professionally.

Emma Bullock, HR Manager at Thanet Earth, said, "We have been supporting our staff to take apprenticeships which lead to them achieving nationally recognised qualifications in English, Maths, Food Industry Skills and Food Manufacturing Excellence.

Training and the professional development of skills is an essential part of what makes Thanet Earth the UK's leading supplier of tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers. The reciprocal benefits of apprenticeship programmes are huge. We have a diverse workforce and it is important that our staff know that they are highly valued and that we recognise the benefits for both themselves and the business by investing in them.

Apprenticeships are a great way of demonstrating this to our workforce, plus they gain qualifications that have a very practical impact on our business. We are very proud of all our team members who take on the extra work and responsibility to complete them. We are supporting 34 staff through this particular programme now and see it as a pivotal part of our staff development plan."

Violeta Vaitkeviciene, Line Leader has worked at Thanet Earth since it first opened, nine years ago and has nearly completed her level 2 apprenticeship. She said, “I started the course having not done any formal learning for a long time. I have learnt a lot about English and grammar and I quickly realised I didn’t remember any mathematics from school! It’s been a great experience; the trainers are fantastic and have helped us so much. I’m really glad I started – but will also be glad to finish! It has helped me with my work and it has been good to meet and work with colleagues I wouldn’t usually get to work with.”

Last week, in true ‘The Apprentice’ style, three apprentices presented their cost reduction ideas to Des Kingsley, Managing Director and other key stakeholders in the boardroom. Each of them identified significant financial savings, proving that given the opportunity, everybody has more to give.

Alina Voicu, Transport Clerk commented: “I was so nervous to stand up and present my work, but I really want to progress, so I knew that I had to take the opportunity. It went really well and my project has been implemented. I am so glad I did it. My confidence has really grown.”

Thanet Earth has also recently recruited 30 new staff for its packing warehouse, and often recruits new staff across the business. For further information and the latest vacancies visit www.thanetearth.com

-ENDS-

Notes to editors: Thanet Earth employs around 600 staff, with a mix of permanent and temporary positions.

About Thanet Earth

Making the most of the coastal setting and amazing natural light in Thanet is a development of greenhouses near Birchington. Inside these immense glass structures, expert growers are producing delicious speciality tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers for sale to the public through the UK’s multiple retailers.

Thanet Earth is the UK’s newest and largest facility of its kind. Not just a grower and packer of salad crops, the site is also a power station, housing Combined Heat and Power technology that’s generating electricity for

homes in Thanet every day. An environmentally-friendly site that makes use of rainwater harvesting, water recycling and natural pest control, Thanet Earth has a very low carbon footprint.

The site currently houses 6 greenhouses, having begun production in 2009. The site will eventually be extended to a total of 7 greenhouses, all growing either tomatoes, peppers or cucumbers.

Tomatoes are grown all year round, using lights in the winter months to aid plant growth. Cucumbers and peppers are produced for 10 months of the year, from February to November. Cucumber production is also assisted by sodium lighting in the winter months to help extend the growing season.

More information from www.thanetearth.com and our education website for schools: www.discoverthanetearth.com

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