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## StoneTrain Training for the Industry



Partner Mark Priestman

StoneTrain is the training arm of Stone Federation delivering operative and management training. Mark Priestman, along with sector specialist, David Priestman, help drive NVQ delivery at StoneTrain.

Partner Mark Priestman is philosophical about current challenges in the

business world: "While we are definitely undergoing the gloom of an economic cloud, contractors with a survival mentality will be on the look out for that ever present silver lining."

Mark speaks with many sector businesses on a regular basis and notes: "There is one common denominator among those that are thriving: they have retained their skilled workforce during the downturn by focusing on skills training and recognition"

One silver lining for the sector in England has been the availability of Train2Gain funding via ConstructionSkills, which has reduced NVQ delivery costs. Most of the NVQs currently delivered under this funding by StoneTrain are modestly priced or even cost-negligible. There is a need to be alert, though, as opportunity to sign up Level 2 and 3

candidates to benefit from this funding runs out in March. "Register your interest with StoneTrain without delay," is Mark's message to contractors wanting to buck the trend.

Part of StoneTrain remit is to foster the training and development of new starters, to this end, StoneTrain have established three ConstructionSkills specialist apprenticeship programmes. These programmes include Stone Fixer, Facade Cleaner and Facade Restorer. Each apprenticeship leads to the Level 2 NVQ and also facilitates application of the CSCS Skilled Workers Card (blue). At Level 2, StoneTrain is able to assess your workers on-site while they work (OSAT) within the sector disciplines of Banker Mason, Fixer Mason, Stone Floor Fixer, Hard Landscaper, Facade Cleaner and Facade Restorer. Since CSCS and ConstructionSkills are in the business of focusing the industry's employees on their next step of vocational achievement, StoneTrain offers OSAT at Level 3 in Stone Fixer and Banker Mason and for those who missed out on grandfather rights to achieve their Heritage Card it has the Level 3 NVQ in Heritage Stonemasonry. This is also available as a one year advanced apprenticeship through StoneTrain and exploits the learning potential offered at the World Heritage Centre, Fountains Abbey.

Over the past two years, particularly in London, main contractors and clients have demanded that any worker on site who acts in any foreman, supervisor or manager capacity must hold the CSCS Supervisors Card (gold). StoneTrain has progressed almost 50 candidates through the Level 3 Occupational Work Supervision NVQ to facilitate this urgent need.

Attainment of all of these NVQs and their respective CSCS card has not only ensured an up-skilled workforce but has also provided an attractive selling point when negotiating tenders.

Just this year StoneTrain became accredited to deliver the Level 6 NVQ in Construction Site Management (Conservation). This level of qualification is equal to a degree and enables the holder to apply for the sought-after CSCS Managers Card. Again, for contractors who can evidence such a high level of commitment to skills recognition, there is indeed a silver lining to this economic cloud.

Much work is still to be done. Stubbings Business Solutions are building an exciting and attractive menu of management and leadership short courses within StoneTrain to enhance your business opportunities. David Priestman remains deeply involved in the development of framework qualifications for the stonemasonry trade and Mark has recently been using opportunities to promote the concept of a Heritage Card route for stone restorers and stone cleaners.

StoneTrain is passionate about promoting training and qualification recognition in this sector and welcomes your feedback. For details of the NVQs for both apprentices and experienced workers and to benefit from the current funding availability in England, register your interest without delay by calling 01303 856103 or emailing [stonetrain@stonefed.org.uk](mailto:stonetrain@stonefed.org.uk). And if you would like to assist StoneTrain in its vital work for the stone industry by joining the Natural Stone Industry Training Group, the Federation would be delighted to hear to you.