

Women trained in road construction skills

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THE city of Cape Town has introduced the Women-at-Work Programme to train women in the business of small construction skills.

The programme aims to change the mindset that certain jobs are for men only, or that women are incapable of doing what is regarded as physically challenging work.

It also aims to empower women with skills to fix potholes and clear storm-water infrastructure and to apply for employment opportunities at the 18 roads depots across the city.

The training academy works in close collaboration with the city's expanded public works programme (EPWP) which has served as a temporary mechanism to fund the project, valued at R200 000.

The women were sourced from the local subcouncil's job seekers database.

"This project plays a multipurpose role. It addresses the under-representation of women in traditionally male-dominated careers and ensures the inclusion of the women in the economy. Some of the women on the team are sole breadwinners and single parents. Thus, this is a real opportunity for them to get a foot in the employment door," mayoral

committee member for transport and urban development Brett Herron said.

The women undergo on-the-job training which empowers them with skills while gaining valuable experience. The training entails skills in the operation of small construction equipment, on-site safety and best practices in road surfacing as per the requirements of the South African Road Federation.

Kashiefa Beck is one of the women who successfully completed the programme and is now a permanent employee at the roads depot in Heideveld.

"Entering the male-dominated world was a challenge in the beginning. How-

ever, we soon got into the swing of things and learnt to handle the job and the men working in this field. I think we are more consistent, committed and determined to excel. I believe that women can do an even better and more qualitative job.

"We are truly grateful for the permanent employment that we secured in 2016 after being part of this programme. It really had a positive impact and brought stability to our lives. I want to encourage all women to believe that nothing is impossible. You must believe in yourself, be focused and stand firm," Beck said.

news@thenewage.co.za