

Bradford College officially opens STEM Building after £6.9m refurb

2 months ago



Guests from education, construction, and regional employers joined staff and students for the official opening of Bradford College's Garden Mills building.

A multimillion-pound renovation project has transformed the derelict mill on Thornton Road into a flexible digital, science, and allied health training facility for higher-level students.

The 1900s five-storey building opened after months of construction work supported by £5.8 million in funding from The Office for Students (OfS) Higher Education Capital Fund and a £1.1 million College contribution.

The site is now Bradford College's dedicated building for HNC, HND, and degree programmes in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), including digital and ophthalmic courses. The site supplements the extensive STEM facilities established across other College campuses.

Contractors Tilbury Douglas led the Garden Mills project and installation of industry-standard equipment, including six digital IT labs, an ophthalmic dispensing suite, a prep room, a clinical suite, a real-life work environment with consulting and testing booths, a collaboration area, and academic teaching spaces.

Bradford College Director of People Services, Sarah Cooper, addressed invited guests, which included employers from digital and ophthalmic industries such as Specsavers and the Association of British Dispensing Opticians, as well as representatives from Bradford Council and the West & North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce. Sarah said:

"We are thrilled that this incredible new learning environment is now open to our staff and students, and

I'm sure you'll agree it is a wonderful new addition to both Bradford College's estate and the resources available to the local community.

"We're delighted that Garden Mills is now ready for staff and students. It is an essential part of our estates strategy and perfectly demonstrates our ambition of opening up pioneering student careers that support regional growth."

After speeches, guests enjoyed a tour of the new cutting-edge Garden Mills facilities which concluded with a ribbon-cutting ceremony led by Bradford College CEO & Principal, Chris Webb.

Garden Mills is one of several current Bradford College capital developments. Over the last two years, Bradford College secured nearly £32 million in funding, which is being used to enhance, refurbish, and build aspirational new facilities in the heart of Bradford.

Other construction projects include newly completed vocational T Level facilities in the College's David Hockney Building, overseen by Sewell Construction and funded by £3.5 million from the Department for Education (T Level Capital Fund - Wave 5). New facilities include a commercial barbering salon, nail bar, collaborative lecture spaces, TV studio, media editing and recording studios, and a remodel of The Grove training restaurant.

Work on the College's purpose-built Future Technologies Centre is also well underway with Phase 2 of the scheme led by contractor Morgan Sindall. This new site will support the growth of technology and low-carbon skills capability within West Yorkshire and be the home of modern automotive and digital engineering curricula, such as electric/hybrid vehicles and advanced manufacturing.

The College's Automotive, Digital and Engineering Department will relocate to the new premises once completed in 2026. Students will use industry-relevant facilities to gain skills in new technologies for careers in a fast-moving sector. The project was made possible by a £15 million investment from the Department for Education's Further Education Capital Transformation Fund (FECTF), boosted by a £2m College contribution.

The Future Technologies Centre, Garden Mills, and T Level facilities all form part of Bradford College's ambitious estates strategy. The capital masterplan centres around building facilities that open up pioneering student careers and support regional economic growth.

Find out more about the Garden Mills project and other ongoing capital projects: www.bradfordcollege.ac.uk/capitalprojects