

# How Gary and Anthony got full-time employment

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Alconbury Weald

Two local men, Gary and Anthony, have secured permanent work at Alconbury Weald by signing up to the Grassroots employment project.



Grassroots was run by Groundwork Cambridgeshire & Peterborough throughout 2014 to give unemployed people in Huntingdonshire the confidence and skills they need to gain work in the area. The scheme feeds into a jobs and skills brokerage at the Alconbury Weald development which works with contractors and tenants to place people into employment.

Gary and Anthony were working with Grassroots' Project Manager Rachel Kelly, who secured them places on Green Skills – a six-week part-time employment course run by Groundwork as part of the broader Grassroots programme. The project involved help to expand the Alconbury Weald Community Tree Nursery: creating wooden planting beds, as well as a covered area for sorting seeds and installing a rain water harvesting system.

Green Skills offers participants the chance to gain experience and qualifications to help them find work, particularly in the construction and

landscaping industry. They work towards a construction skills certification scheme (CSCS) card and City & Guilds Employability Skills Award Level 1. As part of the scheme, local companies are involved in mock interview practice and use that to look at people they might want to take on to fill their vacancies.

Alconbury Weald is at the start of a 20 year construction programme to create 5,000 homes, 8,000 jobs through a 150 hectare Enterprise Zone, and a range of transport and community infrastructure. The project will also see 500,000 trees planted in the creation of over 280 hectares of landscape (50% of the site).

With a range of demolition, groundworks, landscaping and construction contractors involved, Alconbury Weald owners and site developers Urban&Civic have been working with local partners from the start to maximise the employment opportunities for local people. They are part of a CITB National Skills Academy Framework which works

with contractors to take on and train up local people.

As part of this framework, J Breheny Contractors agreed to interview some of the successful participants of Green Skills. As a result, J Breheny gave Gary and Anthony a four-week trial at Alconbury Weald, with a view to employing them permanently.

James Stevenson, Contracts Manager for J Breheny, said: "We are delighted to be working alongside Urban&Civic to deliver this exciting new project. As a local company this gives us the opportunity to help in the regeneration of the local area. We have been involved with charities, employment centres and training centres to find locals who have the required skills but maybe little opportunity during the recession to get into work placements. I'm really pleased we have been able to do this with Gary and Anthony.

"During their four week work trial, we monitored their progress and all reports I received from the site management team were of a good working attitude, common sense and good health and safety practice. They both showed plenty of promise and ability to become highly skilled operatives. I'm pleased to say they commenced employment with J Breheny Contractors on 6 Feb 2014 and are continuing to progress well.



## Work at Alconbury Weald

**'It's great to be back in work and doing something. I feel better and now I'm busy all the time I don't get bored. It'll definitely make a difference to me.'**



James Stevenson continued "As J Breheny is committed to the investment and development of its people through training, we have also started a process of a monitored training matrix for Gary and Anthony to give them as much support and opportunity as possible to improve their skill set and progress within the company.

"We will continue to seek personnel with the required skills from the local areas to fill the increasing industry-wide skill shortage, and we look forward to working more with Urban&Civic and Groundwork to find more people like Gary and Anthony."

Gary Taylor said "I found out about the Grassroots Green Skills through the Jobcentre Plus. It sounded like a good course for me – I was unemployed and interested in getting a CSCS card and the health and safety qualification. Green Skills has helped me out no end. I'd recommend Groundwork to anyone who was looking for work. They give you a bit of a push, which is what you need!"

"It was a really good course and I particularly enjoyed building the shelter [at Alconbury Weald's Community Tree Nursery] and working with other people. It was great as it got me back into the habit of working and good timekeeping.

"Once the course finished, Groundwork's Employment Manager, Chris Dungate, got me an interview at J Breheny. It was the first real interview I'd had for a while so the mock interviews we'd done on Green Skills were a great help. They gave me a four week work trial. I spent that time helping other people and generally mucking in. At the end of the trial, they took me on permanently so now I'm a Site Operative for J Breheny at Alconbury Weald. I work with Anthony now and we've been doing a lot of brickwork. It's all good!"

"Green Skills helped me out a lot. When you've been unemployed for a while, getting a job is hard work. This has been a really good step for me and I'm grateful to Groundwork and J Breheny for the opportunities."

Anthony Chard added "I was working in the Co-op warehouse but I got laid off in September. I had to sign on at the Jobcentre Plus and that's when I saw the leaflet for Green Skills. On the first day of the course I travelled up to Alconbury Weald and met Chris [Dungate]. He was a massive help – he'd call us every day, to remind us to do stuff and sort out opportunities.

"Through the Green Skills course I got my CSCS card and then went on to get my forklift licence through the Huntingdonshire Regional College. I'd already done some forklift driving but getting the licence was important.

"After that, Chris helped me get an interview at J Breheny. It went well – working as a team and mingling with other people on Green Skills had really helped. Getting on with other people means it's easier to get on and do your job. J Breheny then offered me a four-week work trial. It went very well but it was the longest four weeks ever – there was a lot to learn!"

"On the Thursday before the end of the trial, Gary and I were told we'd done very well, and we now each have a full-time job. It's great to be back in work and doing something. I feel better and now I'm busy all the time I don't get bored. It'll definitely make a difference to me – it'll keep me out of trouble!"

Rebecca Britton, Head of Communities and Partnerships for Alconbury Weald owners and developers, Urban&Civic said "We hope Anthony and Gary are just the first of many people who can benefit from the opportunities across this 20 year development. The flexible and tailored support that Grassroots provides – and which is Groundwork's strength – is a fundamental part of that. It works well with the existing provision from the Jobcentre, local authorities, local colleges and others, but joins it together to provide a real route into work for people. Chris and Rachel are able to work with all those partners, contractors and the individuals, and just make it happen."

The Grassroots scheme was initially funded by the Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough Local Economic Partnership's Prize Challenge Fund, with match funding contributions from Huntingdonshire District Council and Urban&Civic. It will now form part of the EDGE – a jobs and skills brokerage supporting Alconbury Weald and the surrounding area.

