



EDGE exemplifies the benefits that public-private sector collaboration can bring. By including the developers of Alconbury Weald, Urban&Civic, the EDGE partnership has created a model that has longevity and isn't reliant on short-term funding schemes: Alconbury's development will be 25 years in the making."

**JONATHAN DJANOGLY**

MP for Huntingdon

The rationale for EDGE – sharper skills for enterprise – emerged from the Enterprise Zone Skills Group which Urban&Civic set up with local partners to support the development of Alconbury Weald. After developing a skills strategy and action plan to maximise the benefit of the Enterprise Zone, it became apparent that there was an abundance of activity and support available, but this lacked co-ordination of provision and easy access by those in need. From the desire to create a public and private sector partnership delivering a truly joined up service, the EDGE concept was born in late 2014.

This new one-stop shop service brings together a range of existing public sector bodies such as the Local Enterprise Partnership, Huntingdonshire District Council, Huntingdonshire Regional College, Cambridgeshire County Council, DWP Jobcentre Plus, the Skills Funding Agency and HASP alongside Urban&Civic to facilitate a better match of people and skills to the employment opportunities available both now and in the near future on the Enterprise Zone and across Huntingdonshire.

The founding partners have a formal agreement to pool human and certain financial resources and crucially share data to support people looking for work, needing to retrain or upskill and businesses finding people with the right skills to help them grow. The group is also informed by its ongoing engagement with Huntingdonshire and St Neots Manufacturing Club, the Chamber of Commerce, the environmental charity Groundwork as well as other business networks and events.

Operating from Alconbury Weald's base in Huntingdon town centre, as well as from partner locations around Huntingdonshire, the EDGE service offers:

- an apprenticeship matching service
- work experience scheduling
- Enterprise Zone job brokerage/matching service
- economic development business support
- independent advice and guidance support to jobseekers
- co-ordination of business education engagement activity; and
- joint event organisation.



The scheme has already achieved a number of early successes including:

- an event which saw 700 pupils from seven local schools engage with 85 companies about career opportunities and options in the local area with a second event planned for 2016 which will include a focus on employment requirements for the delivery of the A14
- an apprenticeship promotion event at which 47 new participants were signed up
- supporting Thames Labs, a local company, to become one of a number of new Trailblazers: groups of companies approved by government to develop new apprenticeships specific to their industry
- five local long-term unemployed people on work trials with contractors delivering Alconbury Weald
- supporting civils contractors at Alconbury to work through the apprenticeship system working with the new Highways Academy through West Anglia Training Association; and
- supporting Groundworks/Grassroots projects in deprived communities which have generated 29 new jobs, 40 new qualifications and 14 people being provided with further training, education or work experience.