

Inspiring the next generation

EDGE is the jobs and skills partnership that works with Alconbury Enterprise Campus and businesses across the region to help them find the staff they need and give local people the skills to fill those vacancies.

EDGE also provides tangible links between education and employment and works with secondary schools and education providers to develop projects that help young people make the transition from education to employment.

To help inspire the next generation, EDGE partner Urban&Civic organised a work experience pilot in July 2018 to give local secondary school students an insight into the construction industry and the wide variety of skills required to develop a new community like Alconbury Weald.

Victoria Denny-Morley, Skills Lead at Urban&Civic, explained: “We are committed to working with schools and local partners to help address skills shortages in the construction industry and, through our work experience pilot, we were able to dispel myths about the construction industry, broaden horizons and raise aspirations about the types of careers that are available locally and how to access them.”

The week-long programme brought together ten Year 10 and Year 12 students from St Ivo, St Peter’s and Hinchingsbrooke for a range of theoretical and practical experience from Urban& Civic and its contractors, consultants and housebuilders to help show them the many job options and careers paths available in the area.



Following a talk on health and safety in the construction industry and an introduction to Urban&Civic’s Master Developer role at Alconbury Weald, the students found out more about civil engineering at the Breheny compound. They gained hands-on experience of plant machinery and were shown the importance of maths whilst conducting practical engineering tasks such as measuring surface areas.

Over the course of the week, the students experienced a range of sessions covering structural engineering, planning, design, geo-environmental engineering, archaeological and historical considerations as well as the design, installation and maintenance of different landscapes.

Students were also given advice about careers in construction and development and the various routes into industry, including apprenticeship schemes being run by contractors at Alconbury Weald and in the wider area.

As a result of the work experience, one of the students – Georgia Dutton from St Peter’s School – was offered a place on the Peter Brett Associates (PBA) summer work experience scheme in recognition of her interest and enthusiasm for a career in the industry.

Robin Clarke, Principal Engineer at PBA, said: "It was great to be involved with the work experience pilot at Alconbury Weald. We used a variety of activities to challenge the students, including a transport planning exercise with a cost analysis so they could plan the best solution.

"Georgia really stood out as she was genuinely interested and engaged. She argued her case effectively to a group of her peers and went beyond the exercise to adopt a more strategic approach, thinking outside the box to come up with other solutions."

When Georgia approached PBA about a work placement in the summer the course was full, however, they found a space for her and she was subsequently offered her a degree apprenticeship with PBA subject to achieving the required grades in her A-levels.

Georgia said: "I heard about the EDGE work experience through school and I thought it would be interesting. I was the only girl in the group, which was a bit daunting, but the work experience

was really interesting and surpassed my expectations. It really sparked my interest in working in the construction industry and the different roles available.

"The work placement with PBA civils team was fascinating. We used AutoCad to create basic sketches for a live project and were shown how to design foul and water storage/drains and calculate units and diameter before spending time with a geologist to look at hydrology and waterflows.

"I really appreciate the opportunity to explore different disciplines and these experiences have made me realise I want to work in civil engineering. I'm very excited to see what the future holds."

Georgia successfully passed her A-levels in Physics, Chemistry and Maths and has decided to enroll on a five years master's degree in civil engineering at the University of South Wales and is looking forward to a future in the construction industry.

