

Tom becomes a 'construction ambassador'

At Larkfleet, we are committed to investing in the future of the construction industry and year after year, we take on apprentices to work on our sites and gain the skills and qualifications they need for a career in construction.



One of our apprentices, Tom Rout, has shown just how beneficial a Larkfleet apprenticeship can be as he is now running one of our development sites in Lincolnshire (The Coppice) at only 23 years of age.

Tom Rout joined us in 2010 as a plastering apprentice when he

was struggling to find a carpentry apprenticeship locally. Tom was able to gain his NVQ 2 and 3 in plastering as well as the Diploma in Construction at Level 2 and 3 during his time with us. He also gained extensive on site experience working with various sub contractors.

Tom excelled during his apprenticeship and was selected by Grantham College to represent the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) and the college in the regional heat of SkillBuild, the largest competition in the country for construction trainees and apprentices. He did this for three years in a row, coming in at an overall second in the last year of his apprenticeship.

As well as his work for Larkfleet

Tom is now a construction ambassador for the CITB, raising awareness of the industry and the career opportunities that are available to young people.

In his role as construction ambassador Tom attends activity days, career conventions and other events to provide advice for young people who are thinking about entering the construction industry.

After working at our Oakham site for eight months as assistant site manager, our construction director, Nigel Parsons asked Tom to consider further progression into site management.

Tom said: **It's really tough to study and keep down a job at the same time you have**

to juggle work, college, private study and try and fit in a social life, but it's worth it. I would certainly recommend this route to others considering a career in construction.



Government encourages brownfield housing



Housing and Planning Minister Brandon Lewis has announced the availability of new funding to encourage councils to develop brownfield sites for new housing.

The government has set aside £200 million to help create 10 housing zones on brownfield

land where it will be easier to build new homes quickly. The new zones, which will be outside London, should be large enough to deliver 750 to 2,000 properties.

Mr Lewis said housing zones will help councils boost housebuilding while making the best possible use of previously-developed land so the countryside is safeguarded.

Since 2010 the government has taken steps to ensure brownfield land and existing properties are prioritised for new housing development, including abolishing current regional strategies, which earmark green belt land for new development and selling enough publicly-owned surplus brownfield land for 100,000 new homes by 2015.

Mr Lewis said councils should now follow the government's lead. Across the country there is enough brownfield land to deliver up to 200,000 new homes, and ministers expect to see planning permissions covering 90 per cent of this land to be in place by 2020.

Brandon Lewis said: "We need to build more homes in this country, but it's also vital we protect the countryside that people rightly treasure. That's why the government is offering councils a share of £200 million to prioritise development on brownfield land.

"The new dedicated housing zones will transform disused and derelict land, and ensure the new homes are built quickly in a process that is more straightforward for councils and builders."

Councils who team up with developers to apply for funding will need to demonstrate a commitment to build the new homes quickly, and make the most of innovative building and delivery techniques such as off-site construction and custom-build.

Mr Lewis said he wanted bids to consider using off-site construction techniques to build new high-quality, affordable homes in as little as one day and linking housing zone sites to other government-backed initiatives such as the housing revenue account borrowing programme and the Custom Build Serviced Plots Loan Fund.

In an effort to speed up the development of brownfield sites the government has also introduced local development orders, a flexible option councils can use to grant planning permission so construction can begin as soon as possible, and a separate £5 million funding pot is available to help councils consult on local development orders for brownfield land they identify.

Last week Mr Lewis also launched a £3 million fund to get work started on up to 85 new housing sites where development has already been agreed. Councils will use the funding to tackle outstanding planning issues that can cause delay and prevent builders getting on site and starting work quickly, helping to accelerate as many as 25,000 new homes.

Larkfleet seeks your vote

Larkfleet Group has won a silver award in the International Business Awards – better known as the 'Stevies' (from the Greek word for 'crowned'). They are the world's only international, all-encompassing business awards and they attract nominations from organisations in more than 50 nations and territories each year.

Because Larkfleet was a winner in the 'company of the year (materials and construction)' category it has been automatically put forward for the People's Choice Stevie Awards for Favorite Companies.

The winner of the People's Choice award is determined entirely by public votes. Larkfleet is asking people to go online and cast a vote for Larkfleet using the code L867R.

<http://peopleschoice.stevieawards.com>

Karl is national business awards finalist

Karl Hick, CEO of Larkfleet Group, has been shortlisted in the Smith & Williamson Entrepreneur of the Year category of the 2014 National Business Awards.

The Smith & Williamson Entrepreneur of the Year award recognises enterprising individuals who have achieved the most sustained levels of growth and financial performance through a culture of innovation, market knowledge and talent development.

Karl faced a tough judging process and, with nine other finalists, will now face the next round of the awards process.

The next stage of judging will require Karl to deliver a presentation to a panel of experts. Overall winners will then be announced on Tuesday 11th November at the National Business Awards ceremony in London that will

showcase the best of British business.

Guy Rigby, head of entrepreneurial services at Smith & Williamson and judge for the Smith & Williamson Entrepreneur of the Year category said: 'Karl Hick has grown a privately-owned, award-winning development company which embraces sustainability in all its aspects, providing a springboard for high and profitable growth.'

Karl commented: 'It is an honour to be shortlisted with so many excellent businessmen in this category. I am incredibly proud of my achievements with Larkfleet Group and will continue to lead the company towards continued growth and expansion. I am looking forward to the next round of judging.'

Karl's nomination for the award focused

on his entrepreneurial journey at Larkfleet Group. Under Karl's leadership, Larkfleet has grown to become a highly successful group of businesses that share a common philosophy of 'sustainable development'. From starting the company with a staff of just three in 2002, Karl has led Larkfleet Group to become an award-winning housebuilder and community developer, a major developer of sustainable energy projects and provider of energy-efficiency improvements for new and existing buildings.

Karl's successful shortlisting in the National Business Awards comes only weeks after he was named as a regional winner of the 'master entrepreneur' category in the national Ernst and Young Entrepreneur Awards.

Lark Energy connects first 'plug & play' rooftop

The UK's electricity system was originally conceived and built around large centralised power stations, mainly in the industrial heartlands of the country, sending power across the regions along high voltage networks terminating in large regional sub-stations. Industrial and domestic customers are then fed power from the sub-stations through lower voltage networks in the local area. Renewable energy has provided a significant challenge to the conventional system by generating electricity in smaller, local power stations and requiring power to travel in the opposite direction through the transmission lines.

Lark Energy, as a major solar developer, is working closely with the distribution network operators (DNOs) to address these challenges and its project at G's provides an example of an innovative solution to local grid constraints, resulting in the UK's first 'Flexible Plug & Play' scheme through UK Power Networks (UKPN).

G's have been growing, packing and marketing fresh vegetables for over 60 years. They are an intensive energy user but take their commitment to the environment seriously. They are committed to a 30%

reduction in carbon emissions by 2020. In 2013, the Ramsey site won the prestigious Marks and Spencer Plan A environment award.

They have been implementing energy efficiency and renewable energy measures for some time and in 2013 they awarded Lark Energy a contract to install solar panels on their cold store.

On the face of it this was a straight forward roof-top installation on a site with a large, incoming high voltage grid connection. However, due to local generation and grid constraints UKPN, the local electricity network operator, refused to provide a conventional connection fearing adverse impacts on the network. This was despite the fact that the cold store operates 365 days a year and all the energy generated by the solar system will be used within the cold store rather than exported to the grid.

Instead, UKPN proposed to replace the existing sub-stations to enable connection at a cost of nearly £70,000 which would have involved extensive trenching across the entire frontage of the site. This solution was not financially viable to G's and the proposed

disruption was unacceptable.

Fortuitously, UKPN had just launched a government-funded pilot project designed to find new ways of connecting renewable energy in areas of constrained grid. The 'Flexible Plug and Play' pilot scheme seeks to overcome these constraints by allowing the DNO to remotely manage exported energy to the grid. It aims to enable cheaper and faster integration of distributed generation, such as solar, into the electricity distribution network.

Lark Energy suggested that G's installation would be a good candidate for the pilot. However, as the first project of its type in the UK, Lark Energy had to navigate extensive design and contract requirements to even have the project accepted. Once accepted, Lark Energy then had to come up with the appropriate technical solutions required by UKPN, including limiting the size to 250kWp, and designing and installing specialist active network monitoring and power management systems.

Once the solar system was installed, it took many weeks for the monitoring and management system to be perfected so that

all data could be accessed remotely in real time and connection could be controlled by UKPN. It is now, however, fully functioning and providing significant clean power to G's cold store.

The project will feed into research that will be shared with all DNOs in the UK who face the challenge of connecting high levels of renewable generation over the coming years. It will enable them to explore cheaper 'interruptible' connections using new control and monitoring smart technologies to improve the utilisation of existing networks instead of incurring expensive reinforcements.

Jonathan Selwyn, Lark Energy's Managing Director, stated that 'we were delighted to work with such a forward thinking company as G's on this innovative project. They needed to be extremely patient and understanding whilst we worked with UKPN to come up with the appropriate solution that suited all parties. We hope it can be the first of many such trial projects that eventually opens up the electricity network to a much greater volume of renewable energy generation.'

Local company giving rural home owners FREE boilers

A local company is launching a campaign to give away free central heating boilers to rural home owners – helping to reduce the energy bills of homes not connected to mains gas.

Larkfleet Renewables – part of the Larkfleet Group, based in Bourne, Lincolnshire – is an accredited Green Deal Provider and Green Deal Installer.

Subject to the results of an energy survey it can offer many homes that have no connection to the mains gas supply a totally free biomass boiler to replace one running on oil, LPG or electricity. Not only does the household get a new boiler it also saves hundreds of pounds each year in fuel bills.

The money to pay for the boilers is coming from the government's Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI).

Martin Ardron of Larkfleet Renewables explained: "As part of international efforts to reduce global warming, the UK aims to reduce carbon emissions from burning fuels such as coal, oil and gas. To achieve this, we need to reduce home energy consumption through improving insulation and switching to 'renewable energy'.

"In April 2014 the government launched the RHI – a grant to reward householders who use renewable energy to heat their homes. It means qualifying homes could get a biomass boiler absolutely free."

However, the grant money is limited and homeowners who wish to have a free boiler must act quickly. Martin Ardron added:

"In the past few weeks we have seen the government end the Green Deal Home Improvement Fund which was paying for free insulation for some homes. The RHI is likely to go the same way, so it is vital to apply early to get the grant."

A biomass boiler burns natural fuel such as wood pellets. The system is 'carbon neutral' because all the carbon released by burning the fuel is absorbed by new growing plants grown locally.

The radiators and pipes of your existing central heating system do not need to be altered if you install a biomass boiler. Your heating will work exactly as it does now, giving heating and hot water to suit your individual requirements.

The system can be fully automated, with a fuel feed system that is topped up (like an oil tank) with bulk deliveries of pellets. Depending upon the make and model of biomass boiler installed it requires little more attention than an oil-fired boiler in day-to-day use.

At current fuel prices, switching to a biomass boiler will save around £360 per year in fuel bills for a typical house compared with heating oil – and even more compared with LPG or electricity. Larger-than-average homes and older homes (which tend to be less energy-efficient) will save even more because they use more energy.

Full details of the RHI scheme are on the Larkfleet Renewables website at www.LarkfleetRenewables.co.uk.