

## CASE STUDY: Volker Highways

### James Gunn's story

**I was made aware of the apprenticeship scheme through the Prince's Trust where I obtained my CSCS card. I am currently in my fourth year as an apprentice on the VolkerWessels UK Apprentice Scheme.**

During the first year at VolkerHighways I attended the National Construction College part-time where I received training in highway maintenance work, the health and safety act and was successful in obtaining a New Roads and Street Works Act (NRSWA) ticket, an NVQ Level 2 and a Level 2 Construction Diploma in Highway Maintenance. VolkerHighways was very supportive during this period of learning and development and made sure I had all the equipment and skills to make the most out of the course.



After attending the college I was given the opportunity to work on some of VolkerHighways' projects such as Cutty Sark Gardens, Park House and Hornchurch town centre's major high street scheme. Whilst working on these projects I was able to apply everything I learned at college to work on site; all of the VolkerHighways employees were very helpful and willing to teach me to improve my skills as a ground worker. On every site they made me feel like part of the team right from the start.

During my time working on the Cutty Sark Gardens project I worked with a variety of different professionals including a stone mason and engineers.

Whilst working on the Hornchurch town centre scheme I worked closely with one of the engineers and used this opportunity to ask a lot of questions to gain a more extended knowledge in setting out kerbs, paving, tree pits and lamp columns. Having this role gave me a better understanding of how jobs are started up and what safety measures are put in place before the work begins. It also gave me the chance to study the programme of works and understand what materials to order, when the materials needed to be delivered and at what stage each part of the job would be started and completed.

I was also given other jobs such as filing delivery notes, studying plan drawings and taking stock checks of plant, tools and equipment. This helped me become more confident in myself and in my work and gave me an insight into the business side of the company. The business side appealed to me and I was interested in learning more.

A meeting was set up for all of the apprentices coming up to finishing their second year to meet some of the management team working in departments within the company such as business development and quantity surveying. I was particularly interested in working with the business development team; after inquiring into the possibility I attended a small informal interview and was offered a three month secondment where I learned new skills such as researching for up and coming jobs, preparing tenders and pre-qualification questions.

I am currently doing engineer work on the major enhancement scheme of Catford town centre. As assistant to the engineer I am regularly using the EDM instrument; setting up paving, tree pits and power boxes for the market stalls; as well as doing surveys. Because of my progression through the scheme and the knowledge I have gained, I am now able to undertake more of the tasks required of my role independently.

The whole experience has been amazing and I would recommend it to anyone who is looking to gain varied exposure within the construction industry. Everyone is welcoming, friendly and whether it is on site or at head office there is a great sense of camaraderie. I've enjoyed working with all members of VolkerHighways and feel like I have developed a lot, both in skills and in confidence. The apprenticeship has definitely widened my horizons by taking me to new locations and meeting so many new people.