



WEST MERCIA

## Press Release

For immediate release

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### **Offenders construct prize winning garden**

A group of offenders on community orders helped to construct a prize winning Celtic garden at the Malvern Spring Gardening Show last weekend.

The offenders, from Worcester, worked alongside Paul Graham, garden designer, for three weeks prior to the show to construct the garden from scratch. The hard work paid off when the garden was awarded a bronze prize by the Royal Horticultural Society.

The Celtic garden is made completely from natural materials using traditional Celtic methods. The design combines a pond, lawn, paths, Celtic plants and natural hedging and seating.

The offenders, who are all unemployed, volunteered to take part in the project to gain some practical work experience.

Richard, one of the offenders involved in the project, said,

“I never thought I would do anything like this and it has been an amazing experience. It has been hard work but so good to get up in the morning with a purpose”.

“I have learnt new skills and it has amazed me what you can do in such a short space of time. It was a real accomplishment and great to receive the award at the end of it”.

“Paul has been unbelievable and this has encouraged me to continue to look for work, knowing there are people out there that will give you a chance”.

Chandry Mistry, Employment Development Office at West Mercia Probation set up the project, he said,

“The beauty of this project is the individuals had a focused journey from the start right through to the finished product. They created something of a very high standard in a very short space of time”.

“This project has lifted the confidence of the offenders and taught them new skills, which will help them in their pursuit of work. It really has been a powerful and engaging project where there have been real results which have been rewarded”.

Paul Graham, garden designer from Artesian, a social enterprise organisation that facilitate work therapy through horticulture and personal mentoring, supervised the offenders on the project. He said,

“I have been particularly impressed with the attention to detail shown by the offenders and this will be good for them to carry forward in future jobs. They were task focused and I felt they benefited from the interaction with other people including other gardeners at the show”.

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