

PRIVATE INTERNSHIP: INSIGHT AND REWARD

MY TIME WITH A PRIVATE CONSULTANCY ALLOWED ME TO APPLY MY KNOWLEDGE, SAYS STUDENT JENNY WOOD



Wood: experience has helped studies

I began my degree in urban and regional planning at Heriot-Watt University hoping to take up the optional sandwich year placement between my third and fourth years. But as my third year drew to a close, scarce opportunities and keen competition meant that I was unable to secure a placement. This was disheartening, and the prospect of entering the dwindling job market a year early was not a welcome one.

As an alternative to a placement, I pinned my hopes on gaining some practical experience over the summer to enhance my insights of the real world of planning and improve my skills. This too was a tough task, with both public and private employers frustratingly reluctant to recruit summer students. It seemed my persistence was unlikely to pay off.

Finally, however, I secured a six-week planning internship at RFA Development & Planning in Edinburgh. I relished the chance to experience the working world and to gain a perspective of private planning. During my time at the consultancy, I was able to learn more about the role of planners and begin to better understand the interdisciplinary nature of the profession.

On my first day, I was asked to compile research for a large project, and so began assessing various plans, policies, economic studies and even golfing reports. This was a good reminder to me of the broad range of ideas and topics that planners must cover to ensure a holistic and integrated approach to development.

During the internship, I was entrusted with drafting planning statements and representations on local development plans, as well as

researching existing applications and development opportunities. I was also involved in site visits and business development meetings, and received a high level of mentoring, support and advice from those with whom I worked.

What I relished most about my weeks at the consultancy was being able to apply my planning skills and knowledge practically. At university, not only are we often unaware of how much we've learned, but we also often fail to realise how quickly knowledge and expertise can be built up in practice.

In addition, the public sector's role in planning is common knowledge among planning students, but that of private companies is often overlooked. All planning students should appreciate the breadth of the work that consultants carry out and the opportunities available in the private sector. I highly recommend that others seek experience in this sector.

My internship has reinforced to me the value of a career in planning and is proving beneficial in my understanding and motivation during final studies. I am grateful to my employer for accommodating me, and I strongly urge other students to persist in finding opportunities to engage in practical planning experience. It may be tough getting them, but persistence pays off.

Jenny Wood, a student representative of the Scottish young planners network, is in the fourth year of her BSc in urban and regional planning at Heriot-Watt University.

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NEWS

Young planner groups bridge Pennine divide

On Thursday 18 August a momentous occasion took place in Huddersfield. Yes, for the first time in recent history, the North West Young Planners (NWYPs) collaborated with the YORnet group to host a summer soirée in the town famous for the "banana trusses" of the Galpharm Stadium, Kirklees Council and an abundance of Victorian architecture. It's also worth mentioning that both Harold Wilson (Prime Minister in the 1960s and 1970s) and rugby league were born in Huddersfield.

The NWYPs set off from Manchester Piccadilly station and the YORnet group travelled en masse from Leeds station to meet at the grade I listed Huddersfield train station (or should I say the Head of Steam public house) just after 18:15. Well done to the YORnet group for arriving on time!

Our guide for the evening was Tom Barrett, planning policy officer at Kirklees Council, who valiantly led the group of young planners from the statue of Harold Wilson on St George's Square through the New Town to arrive at the town's heart. The tour took in many of the historic yards, which date back to the cloth trade era when Huddersfield played a significant role in textile production. The night concluded with an ale or a G&T back at the Head of Steam.

Big thanks to Tom Barrett for organising and leading the tour. Thanks also to all attendees for making the joint event a towering success.

EVENT

East of England Young Planners Annual APC Event

Date 9 November **Time** 6pm
Venue Orwell Room, Grafton House, Ipswich
Cost Free

East of England Young Planners are holding their annual assessment of professional competence (APC) event next week in the home of Ipswich Borough Council.

This free event run by the Royal Town Planning Institute involves a presentation and Q&A session on the APC process with Philip Woodward, senior membership and database officer from the institute. This is always a popular and useful occasion for licentiates and this year represents an excellent opportunity to gain an understanding of the changes to the APC process. It is therefore highly recommended to all licentiates looking to submit assessments next year. We are particularly fortunate to be one of the first regions to receive an update on the changes to the APC process.

Please note that this event is not exclusive to young planners and – given the changes to the APC process – may also be of particular interest to the line managers and mentors of licentiates. Please contact East of England Young Planners rep Graham Bloomfield at graham.bloomfield@bidwells.co.uk to confirm attendance.

In addition, details are being finalised for the East of England Young Planners Christmas Social. It has become something of an East of England tradition over the last couple of years to avoid the more obvious turkey options and instead enjoy a meal in one of Norwich's curry houses together with a few pints. This year will be no exception. Please keep an eye out for further details on the email circulars and the RTPI website.