

RTPI North East Careers Event RTPI North East Careers Event RTPI North East Careers Event

Andrew Dorrian reports that the first RTPI North East Careers Support Workshop was a resounding success. 20 people attended the seminar at Newcastle University in April, hearing about methods of finding future employment and learning the skills job-seekers should apply.

A mixture of postgraduate students and those looking to diversify their careers heard a presentation by Chris Sheridan, the RTPI's Planners in the Workplace (PiWP) Manager, who introduced the support that the RTPI provide. The RTPI provide a wealth of resources on their website, including advice towards setting up in private practice, alongside links to other organisations including Business Link, to provide information on the financial elements of running a business. The Independent Consultants is a network that can help freelance consultants establish themselves.

Jos Harrison (University Careers Service)

delivered a talk about the skills that planners should have when seeking employment. In the current climate it is important to sell your skills to the employer and let them know why they should employ you and the frequently feared question, why you want to work for that organisation. Presentation is extremely important at all stages of the application process, as employers look to 'weed' out candidates, therefore punctuation and grammar may no longer be minor errors in the process. Further information about CV's and Application Forms alongside all other aspects of applying for jobs can be found on the Newcastle University Careers Service website and at Prospects.ac.uk.

The two presentations were followed by a panel discussion, Chris and Jos were joined by David Stovell (RTPI NE Chair, David Stovell and Millwater), Chris Clarke (RTPI M&PR Officer), Joe Ridgeman (RTPI NE Junior Vice Chair, George F

White) and Scott Gibson (Freelance Consultant and Urban Design student). The insightful discussion hinted that jobs are available but that many are not being advertised. Job-seekers should go that extra mile to find work. Networking is key, join in with the activities of the RTPI in the North East and especially the North East Young Planners.

The seminar provided an appreciated positive outlook on the jobs market. If planners can market their skills, build up a network of contacts, apply directly to certain employers, and find niches in the market where their skills could fit the gap, then they can ultimately boost their chances of finding work. Fortunately we know that at least two people who attended the workshop went on to successfully get work in planning!

A similar workshop was held in Darlington in May. We are particularly grateful to Chris Sheridan for visiting the region twice in such a short time.



After the abolition of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and the axe of Coalition cuts leading to redundancy from the Regional Planning Body, it was disheartening to enter such a bleak job market so soon after completing my Diploma in Town Planning.

The difficulties shared by many of my peers, such as high competition for so few jobs, together with the frustrations of applying for job vacancies that were subsequently pulled could be demoralising. However, I was optimistic that there were still jobs available that, despite not being direct town planning officer roles, were still highly relevant to planning.

Being interested in housing regeneration and sustainable development I continued to widen my search and soon landed a job with Eaga Plc (now Carillion Energy Services) working on the Community Energy Savings Programme (CESP).

CESP is a Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) initiative, monitored by Ofgem to improve energy efficiency standards across England, Scotland and Wales. The intention of the scheme is to drive the installation of multiple measures into a home, covering a high number of properties in an area. CESP is an area based scheme targeting areas with the highest level of low income housing, according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). Any domestic property, regardless of tenure or occupant, in the lowest 10% IMD in England and lowest 15% in Scotland & Wales is eligible.

There are numerous qualifying measures under the CESP scheme, to include but not limited to; replace-

ment of G-rated boilers; cavity wall insulation; loft insulation; district heating systems; solar PV; and double glazing and Carillion Energy Services currently has over £40 million of funding for such schemes.

Despite initial concerns that the role was not a direct or traditional planning role, I am now confident that it is developing my professional skills and knowledge in a range of areas, specifically around sustainable development. Working for a private company to deliver a Government initiative requiring direct contact with Local Authorities (LAs) and Social Housing Providers (SHPs), I am gaining first hand experience of the working relationships between the public and private sectors.

I am also developing skills and knowledge around funding streams available to LAs, and how these can be utilised to improve spaces and areas. Furthermore, my planning policy knowledge has proved useful for the development of CESP projects, such as an understanding of the New Homes Bonus. Here, LAs can realise dual benefits from CESP funding, whereby measures installed using CESP funding to improve housing stock can lead to void properties being brought back into use, and thus the LA can benefit from the New Homes Bonus. Experience within this area will also prove useful for the forthcoming Green Deal.

All in all, I feel that in light of so many public sector cuts, working out of the mainstream of LA planning departments or consultancies can certainly be the silver lining; enabling planners to develop their skills in a wider range of relevant areas that will in no doubt be valuable in a new era of planning.

More information on CESP can be gained from: CESP@carillionplc.com

Looking for a job — a case study by Jennifer Nye