

"I am making a difference in how the landscape of Cornwall is shaped in the future and that is very important to me"

Introduction

I have been a landscape architect for 24 years and have had a varied and interesting career so far covering design and build schemes, project management, writing strategic landscape policy, character assessment, and assessing the landscape impact of development applications. I work part time within Cornwall Council in the Public Space Team of the Environment Service with two other part time landscape architects, an ecologist and two open space officers



Image: **Kath Statham**, Landscape Officer – Cornwall Council

How did you get started in your career?

I loved art and design at school, and was also interested in physical geography. At a sixth form careers night I was excited to discover landscape architecture as a degree which suited both of these interests, and I qualified from Cheltenham and Gloucester with a BA Hons degree and a Diploma in landscape architecture in 1992. After having worked as a landscape architect for 6 years I undertook the Pathway to Chartership and became a chartered member of the Landscape Institute in 1998.

Can you outline a typical work day?

We cover all things landscape! We are working each day to positively manage the unique and diverse landscape of Cornwall to meet the needs for today and for the future. I work in towns,

on farmland, and along the coast, to integrate development within the landscape which is of a design and scale suitable for Cornwall. We are very lucky to have such a stunning and diverse landscape in which to work and I am there to ensure that it develops correctly. The great thing about being a landscape architect is that each day is different. When new developments are proposed, I have to undertake site visits to assess the potential environmental impact. This can take me to dramatic cliff tops, wooded valleys full of bluebells or to windswept moorlands. We advise and provide guidance to Council Officers, Parish and Town Councils, developers and members of the public, as well as getting involved in the enhancement of Council owned land.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

I love Cornwall and am passionate about keeping it a special place for future generations to experience and enjoy. The work I do is very diverse, and gives me a chance to make a difference, making sure the distinct Cornish local character and sense of place is not eroded and lost. The pressure for new development is huge and it is the consideration we landscape architects bring to the design and layout and setting of a scheme which creates a high quality development, which adds value to Cornwall.

What skills are important for anyone wishing to start in your profession?

A career in landscape architecture is great for anyone with a passion for the environment along with an interest in design, ecology, sociology and more! A qualification in landscape architecture is essential, but there are a number of ways you can achieve this. You can choose to study landscape architecture from an undergraduate entry route, like I did,

A qualification in landscape architecture is essential, but there are a number of ways you can achieve this. You can choose to study landscape architecture from an undergraduate entry route, like I did, which usually involves an undergraduate degree plus a one-year postgraduate diploma. Universities also offer two-year accredited conversion master's programmes if you have already gained a degree in a different subject, or are looking for a career change. Ensuring the course is accredited by the Landscape Institute is very important too, as only industry recognised qualifications enable you to follow a formal route through to becoming fully qualified. You'll find a full list of accredited undergraduate courses to choose from, with links to each of the universities that run them at www.beandscapearchitect.com/courses

What main personal attributes do you think is important for your type of job?

I would say in this office a mixture of passion for the environment, flexibility, ability to work as part of a team, good communication skills and good humour are important. As well as an ability to make good soup as we have an office Soup Club on a Wednesday and take it turns to feed the office— a great way to build morale and strengthen team work!

Do you have any tips or suggestions on how young people and adults can enter your industry?

While it is essential that you undertake a degree in landscape architecture there are many things you can do before hand to decide whether the landscape profession is for you. Work experience is a fantastic way to experience first-hand what it's like to work in the landscape profession. Most landscape practices welcome enquiries for work experience and they can be found all across the UK.

What career progression opportunities are available in your business/sector?

Cornwall Council currently has limited roles for landscape officers, and in our team there are only two full time landscape architect posts which are covered by three officers each working part time. However, there are many opportunities in the private sector and with other local authorities.

Why is it important for your sector to attract and train young people and new entrants?

Landscape architecture offers a different way of thinking about the problems we face now and seem likely to face in the future. Young people have the opportunity to shape the places we live, making them better places for future generations so it is important that the landscape profession has a diverse workforce.

What trends do you predict for your industry within the next 10 years? E.g. is it a growing market requiring more young entrants

Landscape architects are engaged in tackling the most pressing issues of our time. Population growth and mass urbanisation are raising questions about food security and water scarcity which is in turn putting pressure on housing, transport and energy infrastructure. Over-development also threatens the health and future of plant and animal life.

General words of advice

I work in a profession I feel passionate about. I appreciate the landscape I live and work in and want to make sure that my children can also experience the unique and special qualities of Cornwall. I am making a difference in how the landscape of Cornwall is shaped in the future and that is very important to me, and this could be you too.

Further contact/information

Further information about landscape architecture can be found on the Landscape Institute's web site www.landscapeinstitute.org and specific details of a career in the profession are available at www.beandscapearchitect.com