### **Megan Blyth**

### **Local and Community Empowerment Project Worker**

### Royal Geographical Society

with IBG

Advancing geography and geographical learning



Job title: Local and Community Empowerment

**Project Worker** 

**Organisation:** Centre for Sustainable Energy

Location: Bristol, UK

### How did you get to where you are now?

I've always been interested in looking at the world from a scientific, humanities and artistic perspective and thought that geography would be the best degree to take that into account. At university in Edinburgh, I started my degree being more interested in physical geography and mostly took modules on topics such as natural hazards, volcanology, and earth systems. But I quickly realised that was not enough for me, and that I wanted to explore our systems through a societal and cultural lens. This eventually led to my interests focusing on climate and environmental change as this involves looking at both physical systems and human's relationship to our planet.

After university, I took an internship with the Centre for Sustainable Energy's (CSE) communities' team. I had a background in energy through my final year dissertation on people's relationship to renewables (which had won the

am today. Was there anything particularly useful that

helped you get into this role?

RGS-IBG "Rural Geography" dissertation prize) and so the role was perfect as it married together my technical knowledge on energy systems with my keen interest in how we as a society relate to energy and how we can transition into a low carbon energy system. My internship then led to a permanent Project Worker role which is where I

Throughout my academic life from GCSE's onwards, I had part time jobs mostly in hospitality and administration. Although not directly relevant for the environmental sector, the fact that I had kept a part time job along my studies showed that I am driven and had good time-management skills, which are desirable qualities when applying for any role.

When I started my role, I had to undertake some training and I received a City and Guilds qualification in Energy Awareness.

#### What do you do as part of your role?

My role in the Local and Community Empowerment team is extremely varied so there is no such thing as a "typical" day. At the moment a lot of my work is in supporting community energy groups. This can range from pointing groups to where they can access funding to run projects and finance new renewable energy generation assets, to helping run workshops to engage their local communities to cut down their energy usage. I've also been heavily involved in marking applications for grants for energy efficiency improvements in community buildings and fuel poverty advice projects.

As quite a separate project, I also mentor young people who have joined our youth environmental leadership programme – Bright Green Future. This involves organising training events, helping them develop a local project and organise a work placement with an environmental organisation.

W: www.rgs.org/iamageographer

# What skills and characteristics do you need for this role, apart from geographical knowledge?

Being a "people person" is important for my role as I am often talking to people either over the phone, face-to-face or engaging large groups of people in a workshop setting. You need to have good communication skills to make the topic of energy engaging and relevant for all, as well as offer useful and empathetic advice for those who are struggling to cope with fuel poverty.

## How does geography feature in your work/ what difference does it make?

I'm still relatively new to the working world and I don't have all the answers from my degree, so I learn a lot as I go along! Geography has equipped me with the curiosity to ask the right questions, make connections where others maybe don't, and look at the world we live in through a critical lens whilst considering multiple perspectives.

#### What do you enjoy most about your job?

I enjoy the friendly working environment I get to be a part and that my role allows me to talk to people all the time and help them make a difference in their own lives in relation to energy. I also love working in the environmental sector because the people you get to meet are very likeminded and inspirational. I feel like I'm surrounded by riveting conversations all the time which empowers me every day with the thought that through my work and the people I engage with, I am part of the change we need for a better future.

#### Do you get to travel for your role?

I do a lot of travelling in the South West and Wales to attend events, workshops and conferences. Every summer, our youth programme takes us to the beautiful and inspiring Centre for Alternative Technology in Wales for a week long summer school which tends to be the highlight of my year!

What are the opportunities for career progression? Where might you be in five years' time?

To be completely honest, I don't know where I will be in five years' time. And that's ok! The great thing about my career and having a geographical background is that my experience working for CSE and in the energy sector is providing me with countless opportunities to build on my already existing variety of transferrable skills, which I originally developed as a geographer. Whether I decide to stay in the energy world or go somewhere else, I will be equipped with the skills need to go almost anywhere.

# What advice would you give to someone wanting to go in to this career?

The energy world is constantly evolving through technological innovations and policy changes, so keeping informed of these changes is important, whether you're working in a more technical role in a renewable energy development company, or for an energy supplier, a charity or at government level.

## Why did you choose geography? Why should others choose geography?

I chose geography because it allowed me to pursue my interests from a range of perspectives and approaches. Geography for me is essentially a degree on the world. It teaches you about everything and in that way it is always exciting. It provides you with the skills to go pretty much anywhere you want to go in your career; it gets you outdoors, always exploring and asking questions with a curious eye. Geography is also, I would argue, the most important degree to tackle the most critical challenge humanity and the natural world has ever faced – climate change. Geographers, we need you!