

Victoria Chater-Lea

Environmental Advisor

**Royal
Geographical
Society**

with IBG

Advancing geography
and geographical learning



Job title: Environmental Advisor

Organisation: Ferrovial Agroman

Location: London, UK

How did you get to where you are now?

I went to the University of York where I studied Environmental Geography and completed an integrated Masters in Corporate Social Responsibility. I worked at Cyient doing GIS for 11 months, before working at Kier as an Environmental Technician for nearly a year and a half on their highways maintenance projects. Recently I started working as an Environmental Advisor for Ferrovial, based at Heathrow.

Was there anything particularly useful that helped you get into this role?

My experience at Kier in construction certainly helped, and having a Masters put me ahead. Also, having a general knowledge of climate change and other relevant environmental principles is useful.

What do you do as part of your role?

I oversee the environmental aspects of major civil engineering projects, which means I am

responsible for permits, management plans, processes, innovations, carbon savings, material approvals, and site inspections. I work alongside other project teams as this role is heavily collaboration focused, and I am also involved in various Heathrow sustainability working groups such as Clean Vehicle partnership and Carbon Trust meetings.

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

Communication and teamwork are essential in my role, as I have to know what is happening on site especially when any issues arise. Critical thinking is important too as I have an element of decision making in my role, and innovation is always at the forefront of our processes.

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

I would say that geography is highly important in my work because airports are all about connecting people. I am working on improving Heathrow in an environmentally friendly manner, and so environmental and sustainability principles are fundamental. I wouldn't be able to do my role now without having studied geography.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

I enjoy how varied my job is - no two days are the same. My job forces me to think and continue to develop - you are rarely bored and there is always something to do. It's interesting watching a project develop and attending all the progress meetings.

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

The next step up for me would be Senior

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Environmental Advisor and then Environmental Manager. I see myself moving up the career ladder, at least to a senior role, if not a manager. Also with the expansion at Heathrow, I'm sure my role will dramatically change and I will take on a lot more responsibility.

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

Try and complete as many internships and work experiences as you can. I found that I had graduated university with no real relevant experience and struggled to get an environmental role. It's really competitive out there, but once you are in, you are in! And lastly keep pursuing your passion - you will end up in the role one day. I graduated July 2016 and in November 2017 I landed my first proper environmental role, and now I've managed to become an Environmental Advisor (although I'm on a very steep learning curve!). There is also an element of luck of looking in the right place at the right time.

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

I chose geography because of my love of travel, other cultures, the outdoors, the environment and sustainability. I followed my passion for it to study a degree and I can't imagine studying anything else. I grasped the concepts fairly easily as I always had an interest and now I've managed to go into a relevant career which I'm really happy about.