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Sally Hadley

Graduate Environmental Consultant

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**Royal
Geographical
Society**

with IBG

Advancing geography
and geographical learning



Job title: Graduate Environmental Consultant

Location: Manchester, UK

How did you get to where you are now?

I had an interest in the environment covering a range of topics including climate change, cities and sustainable building design, resource management and pollution, glaciers, and the weather. I explored a range of degrees which could incorporate all my interests and found that geography was the one!

I completed a BSc in Geography at the University of Manchester before completing an MSc in Environmental Impact Assessment and Management here too. Throughout my time at university I was part of a mentoring scheme with a multidisciplinary engineering consultancy in environment and sustainability consulting and I was a Geography Ambassador for the RGS-IBG. I also undertook work experience at an environmental marketing consultancy, as a secondary school geography teacher, and I attended a number of environmental conferences. During my masters I also completed work experience at a multidisciplinary engineering consultancy in environmental assessment,

W: www.rgs.org/iamageographer

management and town planning, and I am now a Graduate Environment Consultant here.

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

I found it very useful undertaking a range of different types of work experience during college and university. There are lots of different roles within the field of environmental consulting; such as ecologists, landscape architects, archaeologists and environmental town planners, so work experience can assist with finding out what is interesting to you and exploring where a career in geography can take you.

What do you do as part of your role?

My day involves different tasks in and out of the office. Each week is very different, so based on the current projects I am working on, my week includes: site visits to undertake an assessment for a new overhead powerline; reviewing engineering drawings for a new railway line; and research to investigate the community surrounding an airport. This will involve me using large sets of data, producing maps and referring to relevant legislation to assess socio-economic impacts of a new road to the airport on the surrounding community and travellers. I will also attend environmental engineering design meetings to discuss environmental features for a new road and review the stakeholder comments on a new airport masterplan.

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

The skills you will learn from a geography degree are highly transferable to a range of careers. For my role, communication and problem solving skills are important as I often act as a coordinator between a range of environmental teams and engineers to produce comprehensive

environmental reports. Analytical skills are also key when producing these reports as they require reviewing large datasets and a range of reports and design drawings.

Most of all though being enthusiastic! Designing for the future comes with its challenges, but geography fuelled my creativity to explore new approaches and provided me with the opportunity to work as an environmental consultant, in a collaborative team, to make these happen.

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

I apply the skills I learnt throughout my geography degree every day. An environmental impact assessment includes a range of different geographical topics including biodiversity, air quality, hydrology, geology and climate change. Geography provides a well-rounded, overarching knowledge of all these topics, which allows me to understand each of these areas when assessing environmental impacts and work with and coordinate teams effectively.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

Each day in my job is different, so it's always a new challenge. I enjoy working in a range of different engineering sectors such as aviation and energy. Working behind the scenes on some of the UK's largest infrastructure projects, understanding the legislation, the complexities of the design, the environmental impacts, how it's going to be constructed and how it's going to be operated is also really interesting. It's rewarding to see projects I've worked on in the real world!

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

A career as an environmental consultant can take a variety of paths. I hope to progress higher through the consultant grades to leading assessments and to develop my skills, knowledge and level of influence over larger projects or teams in environmental impact assessments and town planning.

I also hope to have the opportunity to learn a specialism and to work with other environmental teams, such as the climate change team, to

further develop my knowledge and skills in climate change resilience and microclimates in our cities.

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

I recommend you explore LinkedIn to find a range of environmental consultants and read about the projects they are working on; and to get work experience. Research the different roles in environmental consultancy and work experience opportunities, these are often advertised on companies' websites, however meeting them at careers events may also be useful.

How do you maintain your knowledge and interest in geography outside of work?

Geography is fantastic because what you study is all around us. What I learnt throughout my geography degree can be developed in daily life. I have a love for travel, so I take every opportunity to explore new countries.

I also attend conferences and listen to webinars on interesting environmental topics. I recommend becoming a member of an environmental professional institute because they often host a range of environmental events and produce magazines with the latest environmental news.

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

I would argue geography is the best subject. My degree has educated me about the world, I have explored a range of countries and there is a diverse choice of topics to study. It has helped me to understand global challenges and how we can work together to solve them. Geography at university provided me with the skills and knowledge to begin my career doing exactly what I wanted so I can have a meaningful impact.