CAREERS IN CONSTRUCTION
EXPLORING CAREERS WITHIN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT
FULL PROFILES PACK

NoWrongPath
BUILD YOUR FUTURE
These tasks are suggestions of activities you can insert into the classroom using the Build Your Future Careers Profile Pack.

1. Task students to select a profile that they are interested in and identify the skills that the individual uses within their role.

2. Encourage students to choose a profile that they have not considered as a career path, ask them to identify something that surprises them about the information and feedback to the class.

3. Thinking about some of the advice these individuals share within their profiles, encourage young people to consider how they would use the advice to develop themselves in future.

4. Ask students to imagine that they have already begun to advance in their career and they have been asked to complete the profile. Encourage them to think creatively about what they would like to have achieved and the skills they wish to develop and write their own personal profile.

5. Ask students to select the individual they identify with most from their profile. Ask them to feedback why they feel drawn to this individual’s profile. Is it because they are interested in similar subjects and pathways or is it something to do with the personality and characteristics portrayed through their profile?
INNOVATION IN CONSTRUCTION

EXPLORING CAREERS WITHIN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

CAREER PROFILES PACK

NoWrongPath

BUILD YOUR FUTURE
I struggled at school with being dyslexic and identifying my strengths. In my 5th year I finally figured out my style of learning after 4 previous years of failing tests/exams. University/College were the only two paths highlighted when I was leaving school, so I chose to study Event Management straight from school. I thoroughly enjoyed my course and chose it because I worked in hospitality on the weekends while at school and liked organising events.

After University I worked for a large hotel chain within sales and continued to do so for 2 years. I quickly discovered that sales were not for me but appreciated the experience I gained. I moved into operation management where I gained huge amounts of experience from, people management, operational logistics and budget control. After a few years within this role, I needed a new challenge and found the aspects I enjoyed most about my role was the development/training of my team. I was looking for a role which offered the chance to make a difference. The Future skills coordinator position offered both.

My role within the future skills team allows me to work with a variety of likeminded people. I have always been passionate about living more sustainably and playing my part to help support the movement towards net zero. I wanted a role where I could continue to contribute to creating positive environmental change and the role at CSIC allowed me to combine environmental change and skills/training programming.

WHAT DID YOUR CAREER PATH LOOK LIKE?

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WHAT QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE ARE NECESSARY FOR YOUR ROLE?

- Qualification in business, skills, or training
- Experience was more needed, coordinating and delivery of projects, budget management, procuring and managing suppliers and contractors
- Enthusiasm to make a change
The role is very varied and fast paced. Looking for new innovative ways to develop the future workforce and add value to the industry through skills/training. The team and I work on a variety of projects using problem solving skills and team work to come up with the best possible plan. Another exciting part of my role is content development, this consists of designing game-like programmes to help educate students and workers in different areas of construction. This could be anything from video creation to game design. The final part of my role is organising and delivering training to schools/trainers and workers. I enjoy working with a variety of different people and it is great to see the impact some of the training brings to people and organisations.

I am very lucky that I have found a company that support me in my career progression as I am back studying digital learning design, part time, to support the work I do.

I enjoy the mixture of office work and skills/training programmes we run, meaning no day is the same and a complete mixture of desk work and working around Scotland. Personally, having a supportive and fun team makes for a great job and feels less like work, I am very lucky to have found this and know there are many other roles within the built environment that offer this friendly environment too.

What are the best parts of your role?

- The diversity of job roles available
- The different opportunities available into your ideal job, it might just be a different path to others
- The wealth of training available
- The amount of well-paid jobs

Describe a typical day in your working life...

What advice in general would you give to your 15-year-old self about how to succeed in the built environment?

- Don't think you aren't able to achieve a goal/role, there are many pathways into every job, it is about discovering the best one for you
- What you choose to do straight after school doesn't have to be your job for the rest of your life, it is just a stepping stone
- Take advantage of every opportunity that comes your way and always try your best
people were getting laid off so I volunteer at a local Maker-Space. I was lucky that this Space had heavier industrial machines capable of making large structures and proving my worth and potential lead to a job and promotion, also allowing me to be involved in key Built Environment projects and communities.

Looking for new challenges, I returned to Architecture to finish my professional studies. I was involved in diverse projects across the UK, gaining a host of experience. Whilst invaluable and teaching my fantastic skills, I was disillusioned by my idolised profession. Paper-work and bureaucracy made up 95% of my day.

The newly formed CSIC provided a fantastic opportunity to mix design, creative thinking, technical skills and experience in my current role.

WHAT QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE ARE NECESSARY FOR YOUR ROLE?

My role has diverse responsibilities and covers everything from robotic programming to 3D printing and even carpentry and traditional skills. Flexibility is important and a desire to learn new skills. Knowledge and experience of a breadth of software, CAD and CAM packages is of great advantage. This will include design software as well as manufacturing software.

A knowledge of the construction industry is also key. University courses including Architecture, engineering, programming and robotics would all lend themselves well to my role.
A typical day for me is split between deskwork and factory work. I can be involved in sketch designs for a new construction method, drawing ideas on paper or on a computer. I might then join a workshop developing and exploring new solutions for an energy efficient house. Next up, programming an industrial robot to pick up a window and install it into a house wall. Firing nail guns and cutting with a saw included!

The afternoon might find me working in a team to build a house module within the factory – this will involve lifting heavy wood to feed machinery, driving a forklift and climbing scaffolding.

My job is great because there are rarely 2 days the same. Everything is new and exciting. There is great potential to learn new skills and working with new innovative projects leads to gain deeper insights and knowledge of things that most people have only heard of.

I am trusted with personal responsibility to manage my own time and projects. The company I work for are also really flexible. They accommodate a wide variety of working patterns and allow us the freedom to operate as required.

Working across so many fields also allows me to focus in on what I enjoy and what I am good at. Allowing me to specialise in some areas, gain further training and pass on my own knowledge to others.

Don’t be afraid to explore options. It takes time to find out what you want to do. If you are proactive and willing to put in some effort, then you can experience a lot, gain an understanding and choose wisely.

A job doesn’t need to be for life. If you are always improving yourself then your Job options will always be improving with you.
I had particularly good role models in school and university, who helped give me opportunities to enter the built environment sphere. It wasn’t until a few years into my undergraduate degree that I found that it was digital heritage that really sparked my interest. That only came from saying yes to many opportunities that I found interest in and trying things out!

WHEN DID YOU DECIDE THAT YOU WANTED TO WORK WITHIN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND WHAT INFLUENCED THAT DECISION?

I got my MA in Medieval History and Archaeology from the University of St Andrews before moving on to receive an MSc in Digital Heritage from the University of York. In 2018, I got accepted to be an intern on the Digital Innovation team at Historic Environment Scotland, based at the Engine Shed in Stirling.

WHAT DID YOUR CAREER PATH LOOK LIKE?

Currently, I am on the same team as a Digital Project Officer, jointly funded by the National Trust for Scotland, working to digitise the Hill House in Helensburgh.

WHAT QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE ARE NECESSARY FOR YOUR ROLE?

Typically someone in my role should hold an undergraduate degree in archaeology, digital heritage, game design or something similar. Ideally, a relevant masters doesn’t hurt either but isn’t necessary. Any practical experience in digital documentation is also ideal. My team comes from a diverse background of archaeologists, surveyors, and digital design.

FAVOURITE SUBJECTS AT SCHOOL?

History and Science.

DESCRIPTIVE A TYPICAL DAY IN YOUR WORKING LIFE...

It’s difficult to describe a single day as they tend to vary greatly. It could range from fieldwork scanning sites or artefacts from across the country, processing and uploading 3D models for the public to explore, giving talks and writing reports, putting together a 360 virtual tour, photo and video editing, and everything in between. It’s a really fast-moving industry so it keeps me on my toes and always learning!
WHAT ARE THE BEST PARTS OF YOUR ROLE?

My favourite aspect of my role is the people that I get to meet and work with. I enjoy being challenged everyday and given the opportunity to grow every day. There’s a lot of time behind a computer, which I do enjoy - but there’s also plenty of fieldwork around some of the most beautiful places in the country.

WHAT IS SOMETHING THAT HAS SURPRISED YOU ABOUT YOUR JOB IN PARTICULAR?

I am always surprised at the way digital technologies can help tell new stories about old places. When used as a tool, it can bring new perspectives to traditional sites, enhancing our experience of them without replacing it.

WHAT ADVICE IN GENERAL WOULD YOU GIVE TO YOUR 15-YEAR-OLD SELF ABOUT HOW TO SUCCEED IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT?

Follow what interests you, seek out people that you admire and offer to help them out on projects. If you’re approaching the things you are interested in with curiosity and an open mind, there is no such thing as an incorrect direction.
When did you decide that you wanted to work within the built environment and what influenced that decision?

I did not know I wanted to work in the built environment, because at the time I did not appreciate the different opportunities that were available within a business. I wanted a career in IT but thought that had to be with a technology company rather than a company that did infrastructure.

What did your career path look like?

When I left school, I went to college to study computing on a two year HND Computing course. After leaving college with my qualifications, I applied for various jobs mainly in the oil industry but also Robertson. I was very fortunate to get an IT Assistant role with Robertson which was the first step on the ladder. This position was working very close with the IT Manager at the time. I have been at Robertson for 20 years now and went from being an IT Support Assistant to Systems Administrator and then made the step up to IT Manager when my previous manager left the business four years ago.

Describe a typical day in your working life...

With a business of over 3000 employees almost 2400 of which are IT users with a computer, mobile phone or tablet it is a very challenging to work within Robertson IT. We operate an IT Service Desk that people make requests for help. A lot of the day is spent responding to emails or Microsoft Teams meetings, the new way of communicating! When you wake up in the morning you can have your day planned out however something else will come up that requires your input and throws what you have planned away. I also like to catch up with my team and see how things are going as we usually have a couple of projects ongoing as within IT you cannot stand still things need to be kept up to date and modern where you can, and budget allows.
What advice in general would you give to your 15-year-old self about how to succeed in the Built Environment?

My advice would be to at every opportunity learn about your particular job role and more importantly the wider business as this will provide more opportunities if you are driven and want to succeed.

Paul Clarke, Head of IT, Robertson Group

What are the best parts of your role?

There are many different aspects I enjoy about my role, I think in the main part it is still helping people with their IT issues and making a difference to there working environment through the use of technology. Although I try not to get involved day to day with user’s IT issues (not easy!) this can also be achieved in other ways in terms of leading on the IT Strategy for the business and bringing in new technologies or systems that make a difference through efficiencies in process.

Although with Covid-19 it has not been possible recently I have been able to travel and visit different sites and offices over the years working in my role. Lastly, I enjoy working as a team and helping younger team members develop and learn new skills.

What is something that has surprised you about your job in particular?

Having working in IT nothing surprises me... In fact, I had something quite funny the other day when helping a user. I was connected remotely and talking to him over the phone. I was quite surprised when he said to me to hang on 5 minutes whilst he “opened the window to let the internet in”.. very amusing. There are many opportunities within the Built Environment and especially a diverse Group of businesses such as Robertson.

From the outside I did not appreciate that as when you are young you do not think or all the staff and employees that work in head or regional offices of companies you just see the end product, that could mean a building or housing development in the case of Robertson.

What advice in general would you give to your 15-year-old self about how to succeed in the Built Environment?

My advice would be to at every opportunity learn about your particular job role and more importantly the wider business as this will provide more opportunities if you are driven and want to succeed.
TRADES & MODERN APPRENTICESHIPS IN CONSTRUCTION

EXPLORING CAREERS WITHIN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

CAREER PROFILES PACK

NoWrongPath

BUILD YOUR FUTURE
WHEN DID YOU DECIDE THAT YOU WANTED TO WORK WITHIN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND WHAT INFLUENCED THAT DECISION?

My 4th year work experience was with an architect as I was interested in a career in building design. I then secured some weekend work with the architect looking after his estate and maintenance of the grounds. The architect was lucky enough to own a small castle in Angus which sparked my interest in Historic Architecture and Stonemasonry.

WHAT DID YOUR CAREER PATH LOOK LIKE?

Whilst still at School and ready to start 5th year, a local vacancy for a stonemason apprentice was advertised and I realised this was my opportunity. I quickly found out the apprenticeship involved training at college, training on site, employment and an opportunity to work on some fantastic historic buildings and I would be involved in their repair. At 16-year-old, this excited me and without hesitation applied and was successful. The apprenticeship is 4 years, you get paid for the whole duration and for this particular apprenticeship I had to attend college in Edinburgh where I would stay over for 3-4 weeks at time on block release. Edinburgh was also a fantastic experience as a late teenager! I met some great people at college and still stay in touch with them 20 years later.

WHAT QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE ARE NECESSARY FOR YOUR ROLE?

As a stonemason it’s essential to have good hand skills, communication, a creative mind and reliability…oh, and no fear of heights!
I now help design construction craft qualifications and training for young trainees but as stonemason my days were much more exciting.

A typical day as a stonemason would be:

Getting up early, 6am! Cycle or drive to work, I had a depot we had to meet at every morning, we would have a quick drink, (tea/coffee or juice!) then set of to the site we would be working at.

When we got there, we would open the site up and make a start on our daily work. As a stonemason this could be anything from, preparing walls for repair, repairing damaged walls, drawing templets or taking measurements, carving a new stone, installing a new stone or even mixing mortars to exact specifications.

As the day comes to an end around 3-4pm we always have to protect the work we do from the weather and then head home.

**WHAT ARE THE BEST PARTS OF YOUR ROLE?**

Good pay, good banter, always learning and working on some amazing sites and fantastic buildings which I have helped repair. Exploring parts of castle’s, the public don’t get to see is a bonus too. I have worked on historic castles, churches, abbeys, bridges, towers, tunnels and many wall’s, big and small. I have worked in Scotland, England, Ireland and even managed to carve a stone for The White House in the USA which was an amazing experience I will never forget.

**WHAT ADVICE IN GENERAL WOULD YOU GIVE TO YOUR 15-YEAR-OLD SELF ABOUT HOW TO SUCCEED IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT?**

Construction craft apprenticeship opportunities can be very competitive. Keep trying and always give 100%. If you really want to achieve something, you will.
G E O R G I E  B R A I T H W A I T E

APPRENTICE WOOD MACHINIST,
BILL PITT MANUFACTURING JOINERY LTD,
FORTH VALLEY COLLEGE

WHEN DID YOU DECIDE THAT YOU WANTED TO WORK WITHIN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND WHAT INFLUENCED THAT DECISION?

I’ve always had an interest in wood, I did some woodturning at school and was encouraged to look into a career in construction. I’m a hands on type of person and sitting at a desk or a computer didn’t interest me.

WHAT DID YOUR CAREER PATH LOOK LIKE?

I’m currently a 4th year apprentice wood machinist at Forth Valley College.

FAVOURITE SUBJECTS AT SCHOOL?
Graphic Communication, Design and Manufacture, Wood Work and Physics

WHAT QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE ARE NECESSARY FOR YOUR ROLE?
Wood machining is the type of job where you learn as you go and gain experience over time. You have to be competent working with numbers and have a genuine interest in the job.

WHAT ADVICE IN GENERAL WOULD YOU GIVE TO YOUR 15-YEAR-OLD SELF ABOUT HOW TO SUCCEED IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT?
I would suggest coming into this industry with an open mind, to work hard and enjoy your work.

WHAT ARE THE BEST PARTS OF YOUR ROLE?
One of the best parts of my job is seeing a project from the beginning to the end when it gets fitted, being a part of the whole process. It’s great when we get a chance to work as a complete team and create amazing pieces for clients.

WHAT IS SOMETHING THAT HAS SURPRISED YOU ABOUT YOUR JOB IN PARTICULAR?
I was surprised how quickly I was accepted into the industry and the amazing opportunities you get. You also get great satisfaction from my job as a wood machinist.

FUTURE BUILD YOUR FUTURE
Exploring careers within the Built Environment

Georgie Braithwaite
I had decided from an early age that I wanted to work in construction. My dad works in this industry, I saw what he did and how much he seemed to enjoy his job. I decided that I wanted to follow in his footsteps and started with a bricklaying apprenticeship.

I left school and began an apprenticeship in bricklaying. On completing this, I was offered the opportunity to study further and completed my advanced craft in bricklaying. I worked as a bricklayer for three years, working on a wide variety of projects gaining invaluable experience.

My company offered me the opportunity to take on a supervisor’s responsibilities and I undertook training to equip me for this role. Two years later, I was offered further development and stepped up to managing small projects, and again received further industry recognised training. I was delighted when I was offered the opportunity to undertake a graduate apprenticeship; completing a work-based qualification fits perfectly with my style of learning and means I can continue to work and gain valuable experience alongside an industry recognised qualification.

Qualifications have been important to my job role but gaining experience in the construction industry has been by far the most beneficial part of my career.

Being on different projects and working with different people has built my now vast experience of construction and where I have learned my skills.

As I have progressed in our company, I have come to understand the complexity of the job. I had no idea how much goes on before the construction works actually start on site and how much detailed planning is required. As I began working as a supervisor, I gained an appreciation for how other job roles interact and work together to ensure that projects go from inception to completion, it gave me a greater appreciation for the wider opportunities available in the built environment and how effectively everyone needs to work together to achieve the end goal.
DESCRIPT A TYPICAL DAY IN YOUR WORKING LIFE...

My days vary, and I would say that there is no typical day in my job. I enjoy the variety and the challenge that this gives me. I start most days by meeting with my site team to discuss the tasks for the day and to delegate works. Ensuring that tasks are well briefed is important in ensuring everyone knows what they have to complete by the end of the day. I supervise works and deal with any issues that arise, liaising with main contractor site managers and our own contracts managers.

My tasks often include arranging deliveries of plant and equipment, ordering materials, and coordinating these to ensure that works are completed on time and on programme. At the end of each day, I recap on tasks complete and planned works for the following day to ensure that we are well prepared for the tasks due to be carried out. Much of my role is problem solving, but with my experience and good communication, I can usually find a solution to whatever comes up each day.

WHAT ARE THE BEST PARTS OF YOUR ROLE?

The best part of my role is supporting apprentices. I enjoy helping them as they learn and build their skills. Having the opportunity to help our apprentices gain qualifications and experience is a very rewarding part of my job.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO YOUR 15-YEAR-OLD SELF ABOUT HOW TO SUCCEED IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT?

If I had to offer advice to my 15-year-old self, I would say work experience is invaluable. Being in a construction environment and learning what that involves offers such an insight into what job roles are available, what pathways are possible and would have inspired me to begin my apprenticeship journey earlier than I did. Being a trade apprentice opened up so many opportunities for me, but it gave me a solid foundation to progress in construction.

I think my 15-year-old self would be pretty proud of how far I’ve come!
WHAT DID YOUR CAREER PATH LOOK LIKE?

Up until 4th year I didn’t know what I wanted to do; I was considering leaving school at 16 to enrol in a built environment programme which would have taken me down the path of learning a trade. However, I stayed put with my studies and completed my exams.

During my final year in school I applied for courses at university, to hopefully get me a place to in a BSc Quantity Surveying course. I applied to 3 universities to which I received 2 conditional and 1 unconditional offer; I firmly accepted a conditional offer. I then attended a career fair after I accepted my place in university, the fair was specifically for careers in construction, by chance I got speaking to ISG, we spoke about various matters after speaking to employers I then began to look at what apprenticeships were available this was hard as there wasn’t many advertised. I applied for 3 companies, my first application I sent was unsuccessful, however my 2 other applications I got interviews, my first interview was with ISG, at the end of my 2nd interview I was offered the job, I then had a dilemma as I hadn’t heard back from ISG yet, I was then given time to decide if I was going to take the job, I eventually declined the offer still unaware if I was successful with ISG, a week after I then got a call from ISG offering me the job.

WHAT QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE ARE NECESSARY FOR YOUR ROLE?

Depending on the path you take will determine that qualification you need, however it is always best to gain as much qualifications as possible as for university you will need 4/5 Highers. The entry requirements I had to meet where AABB, ABBC in my Higher exams.

Experience isn’t necessary considering the role being an ‘early career’ we all have to begin our journey somewhere, however I think it is beneficial if you carry out relevant work experience and learn about what you want to, in my case, quantity surveying before you make a decision that is the career you going to start moulding into do.
A typical day for is traveling into Edinburgh in the morning, once I in work I’ll open up my laptop and I’ll check my unread emails and respond to them when appropriate.

I’ll then usually put my personal protective equipment (PPE) on and head up to site, I usually spend an hour max on site walking round the job and looking at the progression, at the end of the month I’ll receive payment valuation from the subcontractors on the site, it is then my job to check this over and make my assessment on what they should be paid. Every day is different I always find myself working on something new, but it always relates to the commercial aspect of the job and trying to increase margins and keeping the job on track especially on the finical side.

Construction is a great industry for progression weather its operational staff or commercial staff there’s always a route upwards.

How even though there may be 20 different companies on the one construction project, everyone works together/ is friendly as if it were the one big company, everyone will help everyone as it is a collective effort to complete a job not just the Main contractors.

I would say be patient, the built environment covers a lot fields in the construction industry, you won’t learn everything in a day so just do your best to learn as much as you can and ask questions, the only stupid question is the one you keep in your head.

I started on site as a labourer with no construction skills, gained experience in concrete laying and finishing, banking cranes, operating plant, rescue at high, confirmed space entry amongst may other subjects where I achieved several levels of certification. I then went onto supervision, putting others to work and expanded into health and safety as a trainee and studied to achieve my construction certification and my IOSH Diploma.

Once I achieved the required level of training I worked within major projects, at times responsible for several projects at a time. Looking to expand my management skills I then went into a manager’s role and to date this is the point I have achieved.

My father working in construction most of his life. I had attended university and achieved an honours degree in design. I entered construction to make more money.

WHAT DID YOUR CAREER PATH LOOK LIKE?

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WHAT QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE ARE NECESSARY FOR YOUR ROLE?

Your qualification should be relative to the business risk profile. I achieved a National Examination Board Safety & Health, NEBOSH, National Certificate in Construction Health & Safety. I then obtained a NEBOSH National Diploma in Occupational Health & Safety.

WHAT IS SOMETHING THAT HAS SURPRISED YOU ABOUT YOUR JOB?

The biggest surprise is the need to be able to navigate relationships and personalities. This is imperative to create a working relationship that is supportive and allows for communication on any subject at any time.

WHAT ARE THE BEST PARTS OF YOUR ROLE?

With out doubt the best part of my job is seeing examples of positive change in the business and helping the projects and team members to achieve a safe working environment.
FAVOURITE SUBJECTS AT SCHOOL?

My favourite subjects were Art, and Physical Education as they were a chance to be creative and active and I loved being outdoors. I also took History as I’m interested in people and place and journeys. I took them all to Higher grade level and continued my studies in Art with a Painting and Printmaking Degree at Glasgow School of Art.

WHEN DID YOU DECIDE THAT YOU WANTED TO WORK WITHIN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND WHAT INFLUENCED THAT DECISION?

I’ve family members who worked in construction but my mum was definitely my biggest influence in terms of teaching me to get stuck in with all things practical! I had been volunteering on outdoor grounds maintenance works with the National Trust, got speaking to a stonemason about the work and thought it was maybe an interesting direction to go in.

WHAT DID YOUR CAREER PATH LOOK LIKE?

Definitely varied!

After school I wanted to train in something that had a guaranteed employment, so I initially began training to be a midwife. A rewarding experience but I didn’t enjoy working in a hospital environment so much! I left after a year of training and instead applied to Glasgow Art School to do a Painting and Printmaking degree.

After graduation I took on a temporary admin job until I figured out my next move. It was in facilities management and it became a 3 year permanent position, where I learnt a lot about managing properties. It was an excellent grounding for my current job role! I stumbled into stonemasonry while volunteering then applied for an apprenticeship with Historic Environment Scotland (HES) and worked my way up to works manager. It’s the perfect combination of working outdoors, in a practical role on something that I really care about which is Scotland’s built heritage.
I've 13 monuments to look after so I need to be organised! They all have different requirements and things going on with them so I plan out my tasks for the day as far in advance as I can.

My day is varied. I can be organising resource and materials for jobs, having a team meeting with various colleagues like architects and surveyors, communicating project works with my squad letting them know what's happening on site and who's doing what or writing up and delivering risk assessments and other admin. I might have to induct a visiting contractor to site, like a tree surgeon or an electrician, or show an apprentice how to carry out a task like pointing repairs on a wall. I also get to drive about the countryside, (which I love) checking on all the sites for any health and safety issues like loose stonework. Speaking to the public and visitors and liaising with the visitor operations team is also part of my job so overall I'm never bored only busy! I end my day writing up my diary to keep a track of everything that's happened as I often need to refer to it later for paperwork.

WHAT ARE THE BEST PARTS OF YOUR ROLE?

Variety definitely. In the balance of working outdoors, on site and office based work, the types of people I meet and get to work with and the types of projects I get to work on.

HES encourage career progression and I have definitely benefitted from that. They are an organisation that looks after their employees and I find my team and the whole organisation in general are always on hand for support and advice. The pay is better in the private sector but you don’t go into conservation for the money, plus the hours are much better!

WHAT IS SOMETHING THAT HAS SURPRISED YOU ABOUT YOUR JOB IN PARTICULAR?

There’s so much to learn! You have this idea when you are at school that you learn how to do a job and then that’s it, but you never really stop learning. Conservation is quite traditional by nature but there’s always new technology, approaches and innovation coming through.

WHAT ADVICE IN GENERAL WOULD YOU GIVE TO YOUR 15-YEAR-OLD SELF ABOUT HOW TO SUCCEED IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT?

I would say if you want to work in the built environment go out and explore as much of it as you can. Speak to people who work in it and try and get some work experience as early on as you can there’s so many areas to choose from!
WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION
EXPLORING CAREERS WITHIN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT
CAREER PROFILES PACK
WHEN DID YOU DECIDE THAT YOU WANTED TO WORK WITHIN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND WHAT INFLUENCED THAT DECISION?

I loved history at school, so picked that to study at uni. As I studied for my undergrad I loved history more and more, and by my third year I had decided I wanted to work in the heritage/museum sector.

I am very aware that we spend most of our lives working, so I wanted to do something that I was passionate about, that paid well, and that made a difference somehow.

WHAT DID YOUR CAREER PATH LOOK LIKE?

I studied Medieval and Early Modern History at the University of Glasgow, and followed that up by doing an MSc in Museum Studies and Dress & Textile Histories/Conservation. I chose my Master’s as it was vocational and practical as well as academic and offered a graded internship for all students as part of the course.

My first job in the heritage industry, with Glasgow City Heritage Trust (GCHT). After two years with GCHT I applied for a PhD Scholarship at Glasgow School of Art where I was part of the team working on the restoration of the Mackintosh Building from 2016-2019. I passed my Viva in October 2020 and I have been working as the Grants & Outreach Officer for Stirling City Heritage Trust since January 2020.

WHAT ARE THE BEST PARTS OF YOUR ROLE?

I really enjoy the variety and creativity of my role. I’m always meeting new people and working on new projects. I enjoy site visits, and I will climb a scaffold at any available opportunity! I get to constantly educate myself through attending conferences and lectures, and I love conducting historical research. The pay and holidays are good, and the heritage industry offers a lot of scope for career development. I’m always working on something new, and I’m never bored, which is very important to me!
I'm usually also working on a research or outreach project or two, at the moment I'm curating and researching an exhibition and I write blog posts for our website. I also work with partners like Developing the Young Workforce (DYW), as well as local schools and places like the Engine Shed and the Scottish Traditional Building Forum to organise/create outreach projects.

I usually check-in on our social media channels once a day and interact/post, and I always have a few emails to reply to! My day is very varied, and that's exactly how I like it, I prefer to work on lots of projects at once.

WHAT ADVICE IN GENERAL WOULD YOU GIVE TO YOUR 15-YEAR-OLD SELF ABOUT HOW TO SUCCEED IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT?

- That loving history will lead to a fulfilling career.
- To stop worrying about what everyone else is doing, comparing yourself to others is never a good idea.
- That at 30 I still won't know ‘what I want to be’, and that's absolutely fine, don’t let anyone pressure you into thinking otherwise.
I leverage my knowledge in construction and building conservation to connect people and organisations with opportunities to save old buildings. The most beneficial experience I’ve found is being able to connect with people, listen to what they need, and help them find solutions. That takes curiosity, compassion, and problem-solving.

My love for buildings started at a very young age, but I didn’t initially consider working in the Built Environment. I was training to be a fighter pilot, but when a disability diagnosis derailed those dreams, I had to start over. It wasn’t until a chance encounter after university that I realised I could turn my passion into a career. It took a leap of faith and never looked back.

I went to university for Political Science and International Policy and was training to be a fighter pilot in the military.

Following my disability diagnosis, I completed my studies and moved to Los Angeles to work in politics but realised that wasn’t where I wanted to be. In the meantime, I was helping a friend who worked at a large construction company and really enjoyed it.

The head of the company valued my knowledge and contributions and decided to bring me on the team. From there I studied on the job and after-hours; within a year was managing multiple projects, including the construction of a multi-billion-pound resort. A few years later, I combined my love of construction and history and moved into building conservation.

After eleven years in practice, I returned to university and obtained my MSc in Architectural Conservation where I have been working ever since.
The advice that I would give my fifteen-year-old self is to be open to possibilities, know your value, and trust your instincts. You have to take chances to follow your passion and for me, those chances led to an incredibly rewarding career in an industry that I love.

What I love most about my job is there is no ‘typical’ day. My role is well balanced between office and field work and it shifts based on whatever we’re working on at the moment. I can do anything from meeting with members of parliament, hosting events in front of thousands of people, or even putting my wellies to good use in the field helping to develop a building’s conservation plan.

No matter what projects are in the works, however, I am regularly working with organisations and people across the country and the world to help develop solutions for the challenges that old buildings face.

I am a mentor to young women and pupils interested in construction and often participate in the development of outreach and educational programmes to raise awareness and opportunities in the Built Environment.

Some days I’m in a suit and working to develop policies to influence national change, others I’m in a 4x4 studying the most interesting and beautiful buildings in the world amidst the most incredible scenery imaginable.

It doesn’t hurt that I can do most things with my golden retriever at my side, either. I truly look forward to work every day.

WHAT IS SOMETHING THAT HAS SURPRISED YOU ABOUT YOUR JOB IN PARTICULAR?

The one thing that surprised me the most about working in the Built Environment is how supportive the sector is. When I started fourteen years ago, I’ll admit that imagined many more challenges due to my gender, however my experience has been such an overwhelmingly positive and supportive one.

WHAT ADVICE IN GENERAL WOULD YOU GIVE TO YOUR 15-YEAR-OLD SELF ABOUT HOW TO SUCCEED IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT?

The advice that I would give my fifteen-year-old self is to be open to possibilities, know your value, and trust your instincts. You have to take chances to follow your passion and for me, those chances led to an incredibly rewarding career in an industry that I love.

WHAT ARE THE BEST PARTS OF YOUR ROLE?

The best part of my job is absolutely loving what I do. It is a healthy balance of collaborating with others, site work, and creative thinking that is incredibly rewarding.

I am supported in my role in a way that allows me to work with a wide range of professionals and crafts, which ultimately leads to some incredible projects.

The pay is good, but the work environment and team support allow me to utilise my passions and talent to make a significant difference in our industry. The people are great, the buildings are beautiful, what more could you ask for?
Art and Design & Technology by a long way!

I followed a traditional career path at first, then took time to gain experience before finally becoming an architect. From an early age I knew I wanted to create things for a living. My school teachers encouraged me to look at architecture courses and I was enraptured by the creativity of the studio environment and the flexibility of the undergraduate degree. Through the course I became inspired by the socio-economics and challenges of the built environment and continued with my studies to become an Architect.

When did you decide that you wanted to work within the Built Environment and what influenced that decision?

From an early age I knew I wanted to create things for a living. My school teachers encouraged me to look at architecture courses and I was enraptured by the creativity of the studio environment and the flexibility of the under graduate degree. Through the course I became inspired by the socio-economics and challenges of the built environment and continued with my studies to become an Architect.

What did your career path look like?

I followed a traditional career path at first, then took time to gain experience before finally becoming an architect.

- GCSE’s & A-Levels
- BA(Hons) degree in Architecture – University of Sheffield (known as Part 1)
- Year in training in London & Newcastle
- Master of Architecture degree – University of Edinburgh (known as Part 2)

I graduated straight into a recession. There were no positions available for a trainee architect at the time. I made ends meet doing freelance graphic and web work whilst searching for a job. After about six months I somehow landed a job in Paris to join a French team on a French project, without speaking a word of French! This also opened the door to work in New York before returning to Edinburgh to study for my professional qualification, known as Part 3. I then became an Architect and have worked in Edinburgh ever since.

What are the best parts of your role?

My favourite part of the role is seeing the end users/clients enjoying a building and the difference it makes to their daily lives. The role of an architect is also quite varied, working on projects at different stages, and being out ‘on-site’ breaks things up. The opportunity to be creative and work as part of a team is also very rewarding.
What advice in general would you give to your 15-year-old self about how to succeed in the Built Environment?

My advice would be to follow your heart and do what you enjoy. Be true to yourself in identifying what you are good at and what kind of career you want. No job is perfect but if it's rooted in something you enjoy it will make a big difference.

Christina Gaiger, Architect, Helen Lucas Architects Ltd & President of The Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland (RIAS).

Describe a typical day in your working life...

Every day practising architecture I learn something new. Each project, design and client are different. A typical day would involve a stage of developing a client's brief to make it a reality. Working on smaller scale and residential projects this can involve many things:

- Meetings with clients, communities and people with an interest in the building.
- Drawings by hand, on the computer or in 3D to bring the idea to life.
- Working on planning applications and statutory consents to ensure the design complies with legislation.
- Being continually conscious of the impact of the built environment in terms of the climate emergency and how the design can have maximum architectural value with minimal environmental harm.
- Collaboration and coordination with other parties for example structural engineers, contractors, quantity surveyors and building services.
- Visiting projects which are on site to review the works as they progress and administer the building contract between the contractor and the client.
- Working as a team with the office to critique and test initial designs and collectively problem solve.

Describe a typical day in your working life...

Meetings with clients, communities and people with an interest in the building.

Drawings by hand, on the computer or in 3D to bring the idea to life.

Working on planning applications and statutory consents to ensure the design complies with legislation.

Being continually conscious of the impact of the built environment in terms of the climate emergency and how the design can have maximum architectural value with minimal environmental harm.

Collaboration and coordination with other parties for example structural engineers, contractors, quantity surveyors and building services.

Visiting projects which are on site to review the works as they progress and administer the building contract between the contractor and the client.

Working as a team with the office to critique and test initial designs and collectively problem solve.

What is something that has surprised you about your job in particular?

A surprise early on in my career was understanding the day-to-day impact that the built environment has on society and the environment. For example, 50.7% of all waste in Scotland in 2018 was from the construction and demolition sector. Something we need to dramatically improve on!

My advice would be to follow your heart and do what you enjoy. Be true to yourself in identifying what you are good at and what kind of career you want. No job is perfect but if it’s rooted in something you enjoy it will make a big difference.
Information about careers was really limited when I was at school and, having discounted becoming an architect as I couldn’t draw, I didn’t know what other options there were to work with buildings so followed a different path. I therefore studied for a degree in Psychology and a Masters in Marketing, working in marketing for a few years before becoming disillusioned with the industry I was in. Deciding upon a career change in my late twenties, I found a postgraduate course in Architectural Conservation, signed up and haven’t looked back since! I volunteered with a building preservation trust while studying, going on to become a Project Officer with them, researching and writing feasibility studies, engagement plans and funding applications – my marketing skills came in handy!

I left there to move to Historic Environment Scotland, working in a business planning role before moving into Education and Outreach around nine years ago.

FAVOURITE SUBJECTS AT SCHOOL?

I was definitely better at English and languages than science and maths, but overall my favourite subject was geography - I loved learning about how our environment was shaped and getting out and about on field trips.

WHAT QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE ARE NECESSARY FOR YOUR ROLE?

That’s a really tricky question as I think people from different backgrounds would bring a different focus to the role. A degree can open doors but I think project management skills and a creative outlook are the most useful tools to have.
What advice in general would you give to your 15-year-old self about how to succeed in The Built Environment?

Follow your dreams! I think it’s important to work in an area you are passionate about and believe in. I believe our work makes a difference to the built environment and how it is viewed by others, which in turn will ensure many of our cherished buildings, streets, towns and cities are here for future generations to enjoy and be inspired by.

What are the best parts of your role?

I like having the opportunity to think strategically about our work and how we engage people with the built environment. I love researching and developing projects and even if I’m not leading on an area, enjoy being involved in the creative process working through options and assessing the best way forward for a project.

I’m also lucky that working at the Engine Shed I can try my hand at the workshops we run (I’m really rubbish at stonemasonry!) and attend many of the events we deliver. There is always something new to learn about our built environment, so I’m never bored!

Describe a typical day in your working life...

One of the things I love about my job is that no two days are the same. Pre-Covid the team and I were based at the Engine Shed in Stirling where we created a programme of activity to help people learn about and be inspired by the buildings that surround them. This involved running events and exhibitions, welcoming visitors, community and school groups and running workshops to let people try some traditional skills like stonemasonry, earth building or sign writing. We also manage our social media and online content which involves a range of skills from video production to blog writing and editing.

Since moving into lockdown we’ve moved much of our activity online, developing new teaching resources on traditional materials and developing online courses and exhibitions.

We always have a lot going on, so much of my time is spent discussing the these projects with the team, helping to develop ideas, shaping projects as they evolve finally agreeing the output; signing off a blog or exhibition, or agreeing a programme of events and workshops which we will deliver.

What is something that has surprised you about your job in particular?

I’m always amazed by the passion of people working in this sector.

Although it covers a huge range of interests from stonemasonry to conservation science, town centre regeneration to the rural economy, generally people share a common goal of maintaining and promoting our built heritage and that creates a really positive working environment.

What advice in general would you give to your 15-year-old self about how to succeed in The Built Environment?

Follow your dreams! I think it’s important to work in an area you are passionate about and believe in. I believe our work makes a difference to the built environment and how it is viewed by others, which in turn will ensure many of our cherished buildings, streets, towns and cities are here for future generations to enjoy and be inspired by.
When did you decide that you wanted to work within the built environment and what influenced that decision?

I studied Fine Art and Art History at Aberystwyth University. My dissertation focussed on the relocation and restoration of a medieval church to an open air museum in Wales and it was during this project that I realised the built environment was something I wanted to be involved in.

What did your career path look like?

After studying a degree at Aberystwyth I went on to do a foundation degree at Weymouth College in Stone Conservation. This led me to work as a stone conservator for a private company in Edinburgh for 4 years. This job took me to so many fascinating historic places but eventually I missed being creative and was lucky enough to gain funding from Historic Environment Scotland to become an apprentice to Michelle de Bruin at Hutton Stone. This was for two years and I’ve never left! I now work alongside Michelle in our purpose built workshop at Hutton Stone.

Describe a typical day in your working life...

There’s not really such a thing as a ‘typical day’ as a stone carver at Hutton Stone! Everyday and project is always so different which is one of the things I really love about my job. Our work varies from sculpture, lettering, memorials and architectural masonry/carving in both the studio and on site so one day I could be carving a puffin and the next, up a scaffold measuring medieval gargoyles!
WHAT ARE THE BEST PARTS OF YOUR ROLE?

I love that everyday is different and that I have so much creative freedom within my work. I also love the fact that I am part of a team at Hutton and work alongside Michelle who is great company and support.

WHAT IS SOMETHING THAT HAS SURPRISED YOU ABOUT YOUR JOB IN PARTICULAR?

The community that I have found myself in has really surprised me. There aren’t too many stone carvers around but everyone I have met has always been so helpful and enthusiastic about their craft and willing to help and support each other.

WHAT ADVICE IN GENERAL WOULD YOU GIVE TO YOUR 15-YEAR-OLD SELF ABOUT HOW TO SUCCEED IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT?

- Keep drawing! It really is the best way to improve and explore creative ideas.
- Be patient. It takes a lot of practice and repetition to get to a professional standard in stone carving...but it’s worth it!
- Don’t be afraid to experiment with ideas, materials and tools...even if it doesn’t turn out how you expected it - it doesn’t matter- it’s just as important to find out what doesn’t work as what does!

JOSEPHINE CROSSLAND, STONE CARVER, FREELANCE AT HUTTON STONE
ASHLEY STEWART
FRAMEWORK MANAGER/DEVELOPMENT LEAD, MORRISON CONSTRUCTION

FAVOURITE SUBJECTS AT SCHOOL?
Graphic Communication, Art and English.

WHAT ARE THE BEST PARTS OF YOUR ROLE?
I like the variety, no two projects are ever the same, they are always different in terms of size, scale, cost, client, location and project teams, so I don’t ever get bored.

I work with people from lots of different backgrounds – designers, financial, lawyers and even teachers and pupils.

Construction is one of the better paying industries and there is more and more women moving into it, which is something I like to champion and encourage. The spectrum of people it takes to deliver a single building is so vast that there is something for everyone.

WHEN DID YOU DECIDE THAT YOU WANTED TO WORK WITHIN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND WHAT INFLUENCED THAT DECISION?
I always enjoyed the drawing subjects so had been interested in Architecture, but was too impatient for the 7 year university course so stumbled on Construction Project Management in the prospectus. I’d like to say it was more researched than that, but it really was not!

WHAT DID YOUR CAREER PATH LOOK LIKE?
I started as Trainee Site Manager, aged 18, through an under-graduate programme with Balfour Beatty at the end of 1st year of University. I worked with them for 5 years, then spent a year in Australia working ‘Client-side’ on really interesting projects (one putting a wind farm on top of a sky-scraper!). I came home in the middle of 2009 recession and tirelessly tried to get into the Commonwealth Games Construction Department. I did two major sporting events, in Glasgow 2014 and then Toronto, Canada in 2015, before moving to Morrison’s in 2015 where I wanted to get back to traditional construction.

I have been with Morrison for over 5 years now and work with clients and designers to develop large scale projects, mostly in education. I really enjoy being part of a team that moves school pupils of all ages into new, modern education facilities which they want to spend time in.

WHAT QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE ARE NECESSARY FOR YOUR ROLE?
A background in construction with an associated degree or work experience. Good communication and organisation skills are essential as there are so many people and tasks involved before a project can get anywhere near starting on-site.
Most of my days involve a lot of talking! My role is to know where everything is across a project, from design development, to budgets, programmes and overall progress.

I work Tuesday to Friday as I have a 3-year old, so Tuesdays are very busy. I catch up on emails in the morning, then have a series of meetings. Firstly with Design Teams to update and review key areas of design for technical and budget perspective. Then with the project client to review any specific areas which require their input and/or agreement. I also have separate catch ups with client teams to update on progress and any key issues which need to be resolved to allow the project to progress.

Most often the rest of my day will be chasing up information, setting out next tasks, completing reports and generally organising.

Pre-covid, I would usually spend a day at a client's office, a day in a designer's office and 2 days in my employer's office, so there is always variety and no two days are ever the same.

That no one is an expert in everything, it is impossible in this industry and most especially now as building technology is advancing so quickly. You must be able to know when to recognise that someone knows more about something than you do, or you set up to fail.

What advice in general would you give to your 15-year-old self about how to succeed in the built environment?

Work hard, stay interested and keep going – no one expects you to know everything, because they don’t either! It can be an intimidating environment to walk into, but attitudes have changed a lot in the 15 years I have been in construction and are continuing to change.

The best is yet to come.
WHEN DID YOU DECIDE THAT YOU WANTED TO WORK WITHIN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND WHAT INFLUENCED THAT DECISION?

I decided when I was about 14 that careers in the built environment was something that I would be interested in learning more about. My dad is also a Quantity Surveyor, so I was lucky enough to visit some of the sites he was working on. Those visits plus my love of maths and numbers further fuelled my intrigue in the industry.

WHAT DID YOUR CAREER PATH LOOK LIKE?

I went to Heriot-Watt University straight from my last year of high school to study Quantity Surveying. I chose Heriot-Watt as their built environment school has a great reputation with employers and having a course directly related to the job role I wanted was key. My first job when leaving university was with Robertson Civil Engineering, which gave me a good understanding of civil works.

I then worked for Allenbuild under Places for People, working on private and affordable housing units. I joined ISG in January 2020 and am enjoying being able to experience a variety of projects for a main contractor.

WHAT ARE THE BEST PARTS OF YOUR ROLE?

One thing that really pulled me towards being in the industry was the variety that it provided. Projects tend to be around 2 years, some less, like the project I am on just now being a 16-week office fit-out. Every time a new project starts there’s a new client team, design team and internal team which keeps things exciting and I learn something new every time.

I love feeling part of a team as well as having the support of others. I also enjoy the flexibility of working on site, in the office and now at home too.

FAVOURITE SUBJECTS AT SCHOOL?

Maths, Biology, Geography

WHAT QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE ARE NECESSARY FOR YOUR ROLE?

Most employers look for a Quantity Surveying degree or similar and experience working in the industry. Most students manage to gain experience through summer jobs with construction companies. Good communication and team-work skills are crucial, as well as being organised with workload.

Shakira Caird
Assistant Quantity Surveyor, ISG Construction Scotland
Describe a typical day in your working life...

At the moment, due to the pandemic, working life consists of being at home a lot. Being a surveyor, a lot of the work we do can be done from home or discussed over the phone or Teams videos calls. Day-to-day can vary, I could have no meetings scheduled or meetings that take up most of the day. This could be internal team meetings or external meetings with clients or contractors.

The mixed days and weeks mean having to be very organised with workload and prioritising urgent or important work. Most of my days are spent working on spreadsheets, preparing documents for orders and processing contractor payments.

I also have to have good communication with the site team and the commercial team as it’s crucial to all be on the same page with projects.

Right now I am finishing up with one project and a new project is just starting. It’s a lot of work to juggle but I love being busy and it gives me a varied workload.

What advice would you give to your 15-year-old self about how to succeed in the built environment?

- Don’t worry about other people’s grades and subject choices at school
- Choose a course or job that you think you would enjoy and find fulfilling – don’t chase money or fancy titles
- Be open to learning new skills

What is something that has surprised you about your job in particular?

No two days are the same, probably sounds pretty obvious when it comes to this industry but it really keeps me engaged.
History and Graphic Communications.

I left school unsure about what I wanted to do but I was accepted for a place at university to study Events Management. However, the location and course were not right for me, so I moved back home following first year and reapplied to do History at a local university. During my time studying I had various part time jobs which gave me confidence and work experience. One of those roles was with Robertson whom on completion of my degree I carried out their summer internship programme. Following the internship, Robertson asked me to stay with them and allowed me to study for a construction related degree part time. For the next 2 years I worked as an Assistant Project Manager and studied a Master’s in Construction Project Management. Prior to finishing my MSc I moved in to my current role as Operations Manager which I thoroughly enjoy.

FUTURE BUILD YOUR FUTURE

WHEN DID YOU DECIDE THAT YOU WANTED TO WORK WITHIN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND WHAT INFLUENCED THAT DECISION?

I had a part time position with Robertson whilst studying at university. It was through this role that I learnt more about the Built Environment and the job opportunities available. I had the opportunity to complete a summer internship with Robertson which allowed me to experience what a role in the Built Environment would entail. My mum also worked in the Built Environment sector which inspired me to pursue a career in this area.

WHAT QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE ARE NECESSARY FOR YOUR ROLE?

A relevant degree in the built environment would be beneficial. It is also useful to have experience in construction project contracts and operational requirements of public sector projects. I had limited experience when I started my role and have had guidance from my line manager and colleagues to gain experience.

WHAT IS SOMETHING THAT HAS SURPRISED YOU ABOUT YOUR JOB IN PARTICULAR?

The variety of roles in the Built Environment is huge and every job role is key to the success of a project and to achieve client aspirations.
What advice in general would you give to your 15-year-old self about how to succeed in The Built Environment?

I would tell myself to absorb all the information you hear around you as those more experienced can provide vital learning. I would also tell myself to seize the opportunities that are given to you as you never know where they will lead!

Describe a typical day in your working life...

I do not tend to have a typical day, but my main role is to monitor the projects contracts which has a monthly cyclical nature. In the first week of the month I receive all our reports which are to be reviewed over the next week before issuing to clients. This involves contract requirements to be met, documents to be reviewed and often correspondence back and forth until the reports are ready to be submitted. In the final two weeks of the month we have our client meetings which are all currently conducted via Microsoft Teams. In these meetings we discuss the monthly report, financial penalties and any other project issues or areas of concern. There is often action required following these meetings which can involve contacting the building contractor or finding out contractual information. Out with these monthly tasks there is general contract administration, internal meetings and auditing of documents which requires to take place.

What are the best parts of your role?

I enjoy how each month there are certain aspects of my role that happen repetitively e.g. monthly reports and client meetings. This allows you to prepare and ensure the reports or minute actions are conducted to your best ability.

However, I also enjoy when an unexpected contractual issue arises on a project and you must consult contracts and legal documents to establish the resolution. This keeps my role varied as well as my confidence and experience evolving in my current position.

What advice in general would you give to your 15-year-old self about how to succeed in the Built Environment?

I would tell myself to absorb all the information you hear around you as those more experienced can provide vital learning. I would also tell myself to seize the opportunities that are given to you as you never know where they will lead!
In my part one, I would begin the day by making tea or coffee for everyone at my table, chat and catch up for a bit. If it was a Monday we had Monday morning forums, which was a presentation by a few people in the company updating us all on projects, holidays, personal development opportunities and lots of other things. They were fantastic for getting to know everyone and seeing what the company was all about.

After that I would get on with the work of the day. Most often I was helping to create diagrams, views and plans for large masterplans, or creating 3D’s for cinemas. I would join in with client meetings and present bits and pieces of my work, then we would have team meetings to discuss the breakdown of who did what and when our deadline was. It was always fast pace and exciting work.

Depending on the day we often held events at night and I would be asked to join, there I met various people from other construction disciplines and got to chat about what each of us did. That would mark the end of the day.

Art, History and English

I hadn’t thought about my career at all until I was asked to fill out the UCAS forms and read down the list of options, landing on architecture, I liked the fact it combined art and a real world application. After that I did a week’s experience in an architectural office and loved it.

I applied to a few universities and was fortunate to be accepted at Strathclyde, I completed three years of university and then applied for a part one in an architectural studio. Again I was lucky as I got accepted at my first interview. I worked with them for a year and learned so much more than I had expected, I have now returned to university to complete my undergraduate course.

When did you decide that you wanted to work within the Built Environment and what influenced that decision?

I hadn’t thought about my career at all until I was asked to fill out the UCAS forms and read down the list of options, landing on architecture, I liked the fact it combined art and a real world application. After that I did a week’s experience in an architectural office and loved it.

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Depending on the day we often held events at night and I would be asked to join, there I met various people from other construction disciplines and got to chat about what each of us did. That would mark the end of the day.
WHAT ADVICE IN GENERAL WOULD YOU GIVE TO YOUR 15-YEAR-OLD SELF ABOUT HOW TO SUCCEED IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT?

Don’t be shy, and always stand up for the concept or point your making. And as my parents have always told me: “If you always do your best, then there’s nothing else you can do and you’ll never be disappointed.” A very good moto to live by.

WHAT ARE THE BEST PARTS OF YOUR ROLE?

It’s extremely rewarding being in a team and creating new spaces that you hope people will love. Depending on who you work with, the hours can be more flexible and you always have opportunities to learn more with CPD’s.

WHAT IS SOMETHING THAT HAS SURPRISED YOU ABOUT YOUR JOB IN PARTICULAR?

How much I learned. It wasn’t just architecture, it was how the business worked and how important the team work was, and all the great stories each of my colleagues had to tell about life and funny or annoying things that could happen in projects.

Fiona Ferguson, Architectural student, STRATHCLYDE UNIVERSITY
WHEN DID YOU DECIDE THAT YOU WANTED TO WORK WITHIN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND WHAT INFLUENCED THAT DECISION?

When I was picking higher subjects in 4th year, I was drawn to design as I enjoyed combining creativity and logic in order to solve problems. Architecture in particular appealed as it’s practical and allows you to make a real difference to people’s lives. Before applying to university courses, I did a week of work experience in architectural practice which helped confirm my decision.

WHAT DID YOUR CAREER PATH LOOK LIKE?

A career in architecture allows you to study and work all over the world. I did my undergraduate degree in Glasgow with a semester in Berlin, before working for two years, and then doing my Master of Architecture in Cardiff.

After graduating I found a job in Edinburgh, but my post was made redundant during the credit crunch recession. A working holiday visa allowed me to find temporary architectural work in Melbourne, Australia. Following this I moved to London where I did a specialist masters degree, before starting work as an environmental design consultant advising on low carbon buildings.

Coming full circle, I then moved back to Scotland where I completed my professional architectural exams. I now work in the public sector, where I’m developing a climate action strategy looking at how sites like Stirling Castle can reduce their carbon footprint and adapt to climate change.

WHAT ARE THE BEST PARTS OF YOUR ROLE?

I really enjoy getting out on site, it’s a privilege to get up close to such special buildings and discuss their conservation with skilled craftspeople. Seeing projects completed is another rewarding part of the job, day-to-day frustrations are made worthwhile by knowing that you’ve contributed to creating spaces, opening up access, or conserving an important site for the future.
Describe a typical day in your working life...

One of the things I enjoy about my job is the variety. My days range from: surveying the condition of historic ruins; to researching past works; developing conservation strategies; drawing up designs; doing risk assessment; administering building contracts; inspecting work on site; discussions with craftspeople including joiners and stonemasons; commenting on grant applications; as well as attending workshops and meetings.

Due to the pandemic I’m currently working from home. Some things haven’t changed much – my employer is very supportive of training so I listen to webinars most weeks and there are still lots of emails! Unfortunately we haven’t been able to get out on site as much as I’d like, but this has allowed us the opportunity to focus on developing strategy. I’m in a few online meetings most days, which allow colleagues across the country to collaborate more – a shift I hope will continue.

What is something that has surprised you about your job in particular?

There are far more ways to be an architect than I realised, and whilst I hadn’t expected the job market to be as volatile as it has been, my current role has lots of opportunities to apply the diverse experience I’ve gained.

What advice would you give to your 15-year-old self about how to succeed in the built environment?

Try to get practical experience of building. After being intimidated by this for a long time, I found it really empowering... I’m by no means skilled at any trade, but by better understanding materials and the craftsmanship needed to use them well, I’ve become a better architect.
WHEN DID YOU DECIDE THAT YOU WANTED TO WORK WITHIN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND WHAT INFLUENCED THAT DECISION?

I always loved the historic built environment—old buildings really, but it never occurred to me that looking after it would end up being my job. I came to construction by accident, a temporary job supporting the project team for the new Scottish Parliament Building, and I discovered that construction was a lot more interesting than it looked.

WHAT DID YOUR CAREER PATH LOOK LIKE?

Once I realised that old buildings fascinated me and that I cared about conserving them I undertook a postgraduate degree in Building Conservation and got a job as a design and conservation officer for a local authority. I loved the job but I soon discovered that I preferred the technical side of things rather than the town planning element, so I went on to do a further diploma in Building Surveying.

I was lucky enough to get a job at Historic Environment Scotland and worked in the technical conservation team where I was able to qualify as a Chartered Building Surveyor.

Progressing through my professional qualification while working and becoming a mother was demanding but gave me a huge sense of achievement, and it enabled me to progress to my current job, where I am lucky enough to work with a great team, and look after some of the most fantastic historic monuments in Scotland.

WHAT ARE THE BEST PARTS OF YOUR ROLE?

Getting out on site in the fresh air, being paid to look after castles and historic buildings in Scotland's most beautiful places. Working with a diverse and supportive team. Learning! Always learning new skills and discovering interesting things. I enjoy the diversity of the job, and the mixture of on site inspection, and desk based report writing and design. It is satisfying to see proposals through from ideas to being realised on site, and I feel proud to play a part in making monuments more resilient and more accessible for the next generation.
I work with a team to look after Properties in Care of Scottish Ministers across the central west region of Scotland. This ranges from castles in Stirlingshire and Fort William across to standing stones and hill forts on Arran and Islay, so I get to travel a lot in beautiful parts of Scotland.

In a typical week I might visit a site to undertake a condition assessment or meet with the Works Manager to look at work that is required or planned, or inspect work under way – this week it is a new septic tank for a visitor centre - it’s not always glamorous, but it’s always interesting and scenic! I might prepare sketch proposals and mark up drawings, or speak with the Planning Department or Scheduled Monument Team to consider permissions that are required. I might meet a contractor on site to discuss how works are going to be undertaken and consider how we can ensure work is carried out safely.

What I was capable of! I always thought of myself as a bookish type, not practical or particularly technical, more a thinker than a doer - but I have surprised myself at the skills I have developed and what I have been able to achieve and the things I have enjoyed doing. It has helped me grow in confidence.

I have been surprised at how relevant my humanities and literature background has helped in my appreciation of the historic buildings we care for and understanding the wider context of the built and natural environment we all enjoy.

Work hard at all subjects – you never know when they might be useful and knowledge gives you power!

Take things step by step – look at those whose jobs look appealing, not just the salary potential, and work out how you can get there! Don’t be put off by hard work or the time it might take – a job is a lifestyle, or can be, and it can take many years to ‘make it’ but each step in the right direction is an achievement.

Seek opportunities to get involved and get your hands dirty. Its fun and rewarding.
Favourite Subjects at School?

English, Mathematics, Science & Geography.

When did you decide that you wanted to work within the built environment and what influenced that decision?

When I wanted to start having children, I wanted a job where I could go home every night and spend time with my family. I also wanted a job which was more secured and pays ok. My love for architecture and having an accounting background, made me decide to study Quantity Surveying after seeking advice from my brother who is a Valuation Surveyor.

What did your career path look like?

I have done all sorts of jobs in my lifetime. From being a care assistant, warehouse operative, office admin, call centre jobs as well as being a soldier in the British army. In 2008, I was deployed on a 6-month tour of duty in Afghanistan. Whilst there, I came across a Quantity Surveyor, who also gave me an insight on what his job entailed. Two years from then, I decided to pursue my studies and went to university where I was offered a place as a matured student. In the 1st year of my Quantity Surveying studies, I was awarded a Top Student Prize. Following that, Lendlease Construction Ltd, who sponsored the award, offered me a Commercial Assistant role after completing a 4 weeks job shadowing at their premises. I used to work full time and studied part time at Glasgow Caledonian University, I graduated in 2015.

What qualifications & experience are necessary for your role?

I hold an Honours Degree in Quantity Surveying. You need to possess self-discipline in time management, prioritising workloads - as you have to meet a lot of deadlines. Attention to detail is also very important that you shouldn’t get the numbers horribly wrong. You also need to be good at working as a team in addition to working independently.

What are the best parts of your role?

From all the jobs that I have done, I really enjoy working as a Quantity Surveyor. In my personal life, I am always about numbers and attention to detail (even my husband can testify!). I practice this in my job on a daily basis. Working Mon-Fri is an ideal situation for me whereby I get to spend more time with my family during the weekends.

Everyone likes good things in life. This job helps me to enjoy lovely times with my family because the pay is not bad. I also enjoy visiting sites to see technical side of things such as offsite manufactured timber frame erection, concrete pouring and so on. It is so fascinating to see an idea which was penned on a piece of paper (drawing), is developed into a physical building. Being part of the team, which has built schools or houses, is a very satisfying experience.
The good thing about my job is that every day is different. You get allocated a number of projects and every project is different, even though the fundamentals are the same.

Main day to day tasks involves a number of things. Once a job has been handed over to you from the pre-contract team, you are required to start the procurement process. This involves issuing enquiries to sub-contractors for different packages to obtain the prices to carry out the works. Among others, packages include groundworkers, landscaping, painting & decorations & roofing. Once the returned quotes are obtained, you then prepare a subcontractors comparison sheet. This exercise involves reviewing and analysing the quotes to see why there is a difference in values/quantities. You evaluate to see whether they have priced according to the specification. I also do measurements to check if the quantities in the bills are correct or when ordering some joinery or builder materials.

Once reviewed, sub-contract orders are then placed accordingly. We also prepare monthly reports to see where the project stands financially. As a Quantity Surveyor, our job is to look after the company’s money. We need to report how the projects stands financially and project how it will be reported once complete. I also have meetings with different stakeholders such as clients, site team, architects, client representatives and engineers. I do also visit site to see building progress as well as having monthly progress reviews with the site team.

I really thought it was going to be a very boring and difficult job! I was surprised to see that every day had a different challenge which makes you to be proactive and exercise your creativity and decision making! Working with different stakeholders helps you gain more knowledge and have a great insight of the built environment.

There are many careers in the Built Environment. Try to pursue the one that suits what you like on a daily basis. You are still young and have got the whole life in front of you. Grab the opportunities at hand. Once you have started a course or a job, feel like it's not for you, you can still change. Remember there is no wrong path. You will eventually find the career you enjoy. There is no harm in trying!
WHEN DID YOU DECIDE THAT YOU WANTED TO WORK WITHIN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND WHAT INFLUENCED THAT DECISION?

I was very young when I knew I wanted to do Civil Engineering. I was always interested in how large structures were built such as bridges and dams. My Grandad was also a civil engineer and used to tell me about his experiences which made me even more interested.

WHAT DID YOUR CAREER PATH LOOK LIKE?

Because I knew what I wanted to do I was able to pick subjects that related to engineering. In 5th and 6th year I decided to do a Civil Engineering Foundation Apprenticeship which really helped me gain more experience with practical, theoretical, and actual on-site experience with a placement one day a week. During 6th Year I applied for several apprenticeships and applied for university. I had one unsuccessful interview before getting the job with Morrison. Over the past year at Morrison I have been on three sites and have gained a wide variety of experience. I have also been studying at Strathclyde and I am one year into gaining my degree.

DESCRIBE A TYPICAL DAY IN YOUR WORKING LIFE...

My working day can be different depending what site I am on. I am currently in a more managerial role so this mean a lot of my job is based on health and safety. Every day I will walk around site to make sure all the operatives are carrying out their work safely. I like to have a conversation with the operatives and ask them what they are up to that day. I will then complete a daily diary which records what is happening on site and where the works are taking place. After this, I usually do quality check sheets on the works that are taking place to make sure it is getting carried out to the highest standard possible. Every day on site we encounter small problems that have to be solved with different people on site. Discussions take place with me and my colleagues to see how we can tackle these. Throughout the day I will also record progress by marking up drawings and taking photos. At the end of the day I complete my own learning diary which helps me keep track of my own development.
What are the best parts of your role?

I can gain a degree and get paid for it! This means that I do not have to worry about things such as student loans which is a massive bonus. Another good thing is that I get a massive variety of experience meaning that I will be a lot more qualified than a typical university graduate.

What is something that has surprised you about your job in particular?

I was surprised about how many different parts there is to a site and how important they all are to the operation of a site. Every person on a building site has their own role and can have a large impact on the site.

What advice would you give to your 15-year-old self about how to succeed in the built environment?

- Do lots of research on the jobs that you may be interested in.
- Try and get some relevant work experience if you can.
- Ask lots of questions, it shows you are interested and helps you gain as much knowledge as possible.
Served my time as a Trainee Motor Mechanic…. yes that’s how it all started – that went pear shaped due to the company going out of business.

Started as an Apprentice Joiner with the Local Authority for 4 years and after attending Trade College was advised by a lecturer to look at ONC/OND in Building which I did for 2 years.

Became a Trainee Estimator with Hall and Tawse covering all trades from first principles. Progressed to an Estimators position with Amec then became Senior Estimator/Bid Manager with Dawn Construction.

Moved to Lend Lease as a Cost Planner progressing to Head of Cost Planning for Scotland and NE England.

Moved to McLaughlin and Harvey where I started as Head of Estimating and for the last year following promotion working as Estimating Director for the Scottish business in a national role.

Two days are never the same. For example, people may think working on 2 schools, 2 offices or 2 stadia must be boring and repetitive – but it’s not. I come into the office, or work from home and prepare a list of actions for the day. I always leave free time as there are ad-hoc meetings and other people tend to use up your time more than yourself. I engage regularly with our Board as we tender projects and then get involved in post-tender meetings/reviews. I have a team of 12 and I spend part of every day speaking to or working with them to sort out problems and generally guide them to do the right things. I always believe that managers ‘do things right’ but as a leader I have to be ‘doing the right things’ – and there is a key difference.

The longer you are in your position your specialist skills become developed. One of the most important skills you must possess is people management. I deal with a huge number of people on a weekly basis and your people skills must be very good.

WHAT DID YOUR CAREER PATH LOOK LIKE?

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WHEN DID YOU DECIDE THAT YOU WANTED TO WORK WITHIN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND WHAT INFLUENCED THAT DECISION?

After working as a joiner and then going back to College I wanted to pursue a career within Management and having an enjoyment of working with numbers, decided to pursue a career in estimating.

WHAT QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE ARE NECESSARY FOR YOUR ROLE?

The longer you are in your position your specialist skills become developed. One of the most important skills you must possess is people management. I deal with a huge number of people on a weekly basis and your people skills must be very good.

WHAT ARE THE BEST PARTS OF YOUR ROLE?

People are the most important part of any organisation and finding a company who invests in people make it an enjoyable place to work. Career progression is very important to certain individuals but not to others and there is a place in construction for either view.

WHAT ADVICE IN GENERAL WOULD YOU GIVE TO YOUR 15-YEAR-OLD SELF ABOUT HOW TO SUCCEED IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT?

The only thing that separates successful people from others is the willingness to work very hard. It may be a cliché - there are different ways of working hard but the most important advice I would give is if you pick a career you enjoy – it never feels like work.
When did you decide that you wanted to work within the Built Environment and what influenced that decision?

My father and uncles are all hard-working tradesmen who encouraged me to do “better”. I started my working life as a Trainee Accountant but bored quickly. I liked the idea of the fast paced nature of construction and engineering so applied for a role as a Trainee Technician with Scottish Water. At the same time, I applied to university to study Civil Engineering – an offer for both arrived within days but university won.

What did your career path look like?

I left school to be a Trainee Accountant and commenced college part-time to study an AAT Accounting qualification. After 12 months I knew it wasn’t for me and was bored. Encouraged by my parents and after some research, I was intrigued by construction and engineering. I didn’t have all of the qualifications, so secured a place on the Civil Engineering degree course at Abertay University in Dundee following a stint at summer school. After graduating with first class honours in 2005, I worked as a Graduate Engineer both in a design office and on site to gain a varied skillset.

During recessionary times, I gained experience in tendering and business development which led me to a career change as Business Development Manager for a major building contractor. In 2017, I joined Robertson Group as Framework Manager and lead one of Scotland’s largest and most successful construction framework.

What is something that has surprised you about your job in particular?

The number of different opportunities there are. At first, I thought it was all about building but this is a progressive industry where data scientists are now employed! We need builders, accountants, office staff, designers, drone pilots, 3D modellers, quantity surveyors and plant operators all with a varied skillset.
A typical day would see me participating in a team meeting where we update each other on our activities and take the opportunity to ask any questions to help the week ahead. I would then review my monthly financial and project reports which are extremely important for forecasting activities and payments to be made.

Following a brief coffee break, I would participate in a customer meeting to listen to what projects they would like to develop in the future and understand how our framework could help them deliver this. You see, our framework helps customers deliver long lasting legacy through job creation, skill enhancement, providing opportunities for local businesses as well as providing value for money – all very important outcomes for local government. Following some lunchtime exercise, I would plan out what social media activity we would like to release in the week to promote the fantastic work we are doing on our projects. This involves gathering stories, images and quotes from those involved in the project. After catching up on some emails, I would finish my day improving my skills through our in-house e-learning platform. It's very important to ensure your skills are current in our progressive industry.

WHAT ARE THE BEST PARTS OF YOUR ROLE?

Working with some truly great people in a challenging but rewarding industry. My kids are sick of me saying “dad built that” or “dad designed that”! Construction is evolving, the life/work balance is achievable with clear progression opportunities.

WHAT ADVICE IN GENERAL WOULD YOU GIVE TO YOUR 15-YEAR-OLD SELF ABOUT HOW TO SUCCEED IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT?

Be a sponge, take every opportunity you are offered to learn and better yourself, ask questions, be inquisitive, suggest improvements, get qualified / chartered, develop a thick skin and enjoy the ride!
COLLABORATION IN CONSTRUCTION

EXPLORING CAREERS WITHIN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

CAREER PROFILES PACK

NoWrongPath

BUILD YOUR FUTURE
WHEN DID YOU DECIDE THAT YOU WANTED TO WORK WITHIN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND WHAT INFLUENCED THAT DECISION?

I fell into it! I graduated with a degree in Social Sciences with the view of pursuing teaching as a career. When I graduated I worked as a receptionist at Morrison Construction, they then offered me another position and to train me on the job - 5 years later I am still here, learning every day doing a job that really fits my skillset that I didn’t know existed! One part of my job I love is trying to influence young people to consider this industry as its something as a female at school I would have never considered!

DESCRIBE A TYPICAL DAY IN YOUR WORKING LIFE...

No day is a typical day in my job – this is ideal for me as I am not one for routine. Every day is different and every project is different. This keeps the job interesting. A lot of my job is talking and interacting with lots of different groups of people. I work a lot with the schools, colleges universities and the groups in the communities that we work in. I work both in the office and on site. I do a lot of talks and activities to promote our industry and business and help influence people into positive pathways into employment. I can be meeting with other companies to make sure they are sending me the right information for the section of the contract that I look after.

I look after the community impact on 4 big projects so being organised is really important.

WHAT QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE ARE NECESSARY FOR YOUR ROLE?

When I went for my interview I was surprised that my manager was more concerned with my skillset than my qualifications. I understand that now, that communication and organisational skills are so important in my job!
WHAT ARE THE BEST PARTS OF YOUR ROLE?

Variety of projects! Every day being different and working with lots of different people. Working in different environment. Meeting loads of people and learning all the different routes that you can go is existing and shows that this industry is progressive.

I love coming up with ideas on projects and being able to implement them! This for me is one of the best things about the job as it allows you to be creative so they give you a bit of free reign!

WHAT IS SOMETHING THAT HAS SURPRISED YOU ABOUT YOUR JOB IN PARTICULAR?

That my job exists! The amount of females in the industry, the amount of opportunities to upskill and progress.

WHAT ADVICE IN GENERAL WOULD YOU GIVE TO YOUR 15-YEAR-OLD SELF ABOUT HOW TO SUCCEED IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT?

Work hard and always ask questions! It can be an intimidating environment at the start but it won’t always be like this. There is so much to learn and no one expects you to know everything!
WHEN DID YOU DECIDE THAT YOU WANTED TO WORK WITHIN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND WHAT INFLUENCED THAT DECISION?

I started working for a housebuilder as a sales assistant and really enjoyed watching houses being built but working with people was where my passion lay. When the 2008 recession hit, I was successful in securing a role with Robertson as a Document Controller. I loved that role because I learned so much about the different elements of the project and got to work with so many people.

WHAT DID YOUR CAREER PATH LOOK LIKE?

I was an S5 Christmas Leaver and went to college completing 6 month NC followed by an HNC in Business Administration. For me it was the best decision, I loved the different learning environment. I’d already had a few part time jobs working in Customer Service, but my first full time role was with the Assessors Office in Edinburgh as an administrator.

After a few years of earning I wanted to travel and worked hard to save and went to Australia and Thailand. When I returned, I started work for Housebuilder and I loved the variety of that business. During the recession I changed jobs to Robertson and that’s where I’ve been for 12 years.

I’ve worked hard and taken every opportunity to learn that’s been presented to me and I think that’s been part of my success in progressing from Document Controller to Community Impact Director.

WHAT IS SOMETHING THAT HAS SURPRISED YOU ABOUT YOUR JOB IN PARTICULAR?

I love the passion that people have for the industry, there is also no better feeling that driving past a building or development that you have been involved with and pointing it out to a friend or family member, no other industry offers that.

FAVOURITE SUBJECTS AT SCHOOL?
Maths, English and Geography

WHAT QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE ARE NECESSARY FOR YOUR ROLE?

Good customer experience skills and business administration skills which provide rounded knowledge. I’ve completed professional qualifications, including two diplomas’ in Marketing and Leadership and Management. As you grow in a role you should always continue to learn, I try and do a webinar session once a month.
What advice in general would you give to your 15-year-old self about how to succeed in The Built Environment?

Listen, don’t be afraid to ask questions, if someone offers you an opportunity to learn something new or get involved with something different, do it you never know what you might learn, who you might meet or where it might take you.

Describe a typical day in your working life...

My role is to lead my team in adding value to the communities we work in, we engage with education, employability and community stakeholders, understanding our clients and communities needs and developing plans to support them.

A typical day would be to check and reply to any emails I’ve been set, attend meetings and provide support (just now all meetings are virtual), check in with my team and ensure they are on track, responding to any work winning queries. Meeting with partners and planning for how we support them and develop and deliver impactful activities to respond to their individual needs.

Because of the breadth of geography that we cover, some days I can be talking about the west of Scotland, others, Greater Manchester. A lot of my time is spent planning and looking forward, identifying opportunities where we can engage and add value.

What are the best parts of your role?

My role has offered me lots of opportunities and variety. The ability to travel the length of the UK, meeting different people and working with them to achieve a common purpose. The nature of the built environment is that it changes at such a pace and nothing stays the same for long, different projects come along, presenting different opportunities to learn and develop.

Hard work is rewarded and acknowledged. I’ve completed two professional diploma’s while working full time, that was very difficult but it’s been beneficial to my career and supported me in career progression and equipping me with the skills to build and lead my team.

What advice in general would you give to your 15-year-old self about how to succeed in the built environment?

Listen, don’t be afraid to ask questions, if someone offers you an opportunity to learn something new or get involved with something different, do it you never know what you might learn, who you might meet or where it might take you.
On finishing my Post Grad I was unemployed again but did voluntary work for a Building Preservation Trust. This work experience helped me secure my first job working as a Conservation Officer at a small Local Authority in Northumberland. It was a great job. Great people, great projects, working with lots of different disciplines and types of people. It set me up for the rest of my career.

I moved back to Scotland and specialised in project managing grant-aided conservation projects. Then fancying a change, I moved into skills and materials, having realised that this was something that I was interested in and that there were real issues with. I’ve continued in that vein for the last 15 years in the charitable and public sector, moving into more strategic work and senior management responsibilities.

I think having a genuine interest in what is going on around you is as important as a specific qualification. My training and education as a geographer have given me an appreciation of the environment is shaped by us and how we are shaped by the environment. My Post Grad gave me the academic knowledge to understand the specifics of working in the historic environment. However, my early experiences in work reinforced in me the importance of understanding the roles of other disciplines and appreciating the constraints they work under. If you can see that, then you can work with others to make things better.

I couldn’t get a job after leaving university with a Geography degree. After being unemployed for 4 months, I was encouraged by a family friend to apply to do an Urban Conservation Post Grad at Dundee Uni. Within the first week, I knew that this was for me. It brought together geography, history and making things happen and I was hooked.

When did you decide that you wanted to work within the Built Environment and what influenced that decision?

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What did your career path look like?

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What advice in general would you give to your 15-year-old self about how to succeed in The Built Environment?

What is something that has surprised you about your job in particular?

What are the best parts of your role?

Describe a typical day in your working life...

Be interested. If you are interested, people will be happy to share their knowledge and expertise with you.

Don’t be put off. I was unemployed twice early in my career, but I gambled on doing relevant voluntary work to give me the experience that eventually got me that first job. I was very lucky that I was able to do that, but it paid off, the examples of my voluntary work at the BPT I used at that interview, got me the job and a career.
My dad and brother had both worked in the construction industry but I was open to many careers when I was still at school. I decided to do a degree in Civil Engineering after starting a completely different degree.

I didn’t enjoy school as much as I enjoyed university and I ended up with a degree in Civil and Transportation Engineering. After I graduated a started work as a Site Engineer.

After a few years working as a Site Engineer, I progressed to Site Agent and then Commercial Manager. During the economic downturn, after having my third child, I took voluntary redundancy and joined the college sector as a Lecturer in Civil Engineering. I was promoted to Depute Head of the Engineering Department within a year. After several years, I was promoted into to my current position as Head of Learning and Quality at Forth Valley College.

I truly believe that it was the transferable skills and confidence that I had developed working as an Engineer that helped me to get to my current position. I loved being an Engineer but I just took the chance at the right time and it payed off.
Describe a typical day in your working life...

In my role, I lead on the College’s Creative Learning and Teaching Strategy; I oversee the Quality compliance and assurance throughout the College. I also oversee the partnerships that the College has with schools and universities. Typically, I have a number of Teams call each day with different groups of people across the College and like most people have a number of emails to keep on top of.

What are the best parts of your role?

I enjoy making a difference for students in the College to help them have the best opportunities to succeed and get a positive destination. I work with a great team, where we work well together to solve problems and come up with creative ideas.

What is something that has surprised you about your job in particular?

When I was a Site Engineer, I love working outside. I oversaw the construction of three bridges and found it very satisfying to see them being used.

What advice in general would you give to your 15-year-old self about how to succeed in the built environment?

I would recommend work experience for anyone, whether this be in an area that your final career will be linked to or not as this really helps to develop your personal skills and confidence, even when you are at school, college or university.

You don’t need a degree, you could get one down the line. There are so many great paths to get into the sector like a Foundation Apprenticeship or coming to study full time.
The Built Environment was not an industry I immediately pursued. I had gained experience of working with the Public Sector & understood how they procured supplies – these skills were beneficial when I started my role with Jewson Partnership Solution, a division within the Saint-Gobain Group who focus on working with Public Sector Customers as I could understand the benefits of sourcing materials & how to supply solutions that would deliver value for money.

**WHAT DID YOU DECIDE THAT YOU WANTED TO WORK WITHIN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND WHAT INFLUENCED THAT DECISION?**

When did you decide that you wanted to work within the built environment and what influenced that decision?

**WHAT DID YOUR CAREER PATH LOOK LIKE?**

- Left School with 9 ‘O’Grades & 6 Highers
- Joined Sun Alliance Insurance as Data Processor, promoted to Underwriter & worked my way up the ranks to a Manager within their Call Centre.
- Moved to Clydesdale Bank to manager their Call Centre.
- After 2 years, left to set up a European Call Centre for a Company who manufactured Microsoft Software.
- Role was extended to have overall responsibility for the Microsoft Contract & compliance of production in Scotland & the Czech Republic. This role involved a lot of Worldwide travel.
- During this time, I married & started my family
- With knowledge of Tendering, I joined BIP Solutions as a Business Development Manager selling online Tender Software to the Public Sector.
- Promoted to Sales Manager, responsible for Team of BDMs throughout the UK – National Role with little work/life balance.
- Joined TP as a BDM selling Sole Supply Solutions to Public Sector in Scotland & North England
- Joined JPS Dec 2019 – Specific geographical area to manage, build relationships & develop market.

**FAVOURITE SUBJECTS AT SCHOOL?**

Accountancy & History. When I was at school Arithmetic was a separate subject from Maths – I loved working with numbers!

**WHAT QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE ARE NECESSARY FOR YOUR ROLE?**

Good Listening, Presentation (written & oral) & Communication skills. Show your personality so you can build strong relationships with customers. This will help you understand customer needs, deliver an exceptional service, solve problems & Make things happen.
No two days or weeks are ever the same. As a Field Based Account Manager, working from home, I am responsible for planning and managing my own diary. I look after a portfolio of Public Sector Customers based in the East of Scotland. A typical day may include the following:

- On site customer meetings – we hold regular review meetings with our customers to discuss contract KPI’s, Discuss & resolve any issues, new work streams, community benefits
- Onsite meetings with Branches and Suppliers to ensure there are no issues with service and products. Supplier meetings may include discussing new products on the market, forthcoming price changes
- Work with internal stakeholders on forthcoming tenders & the mobilisation of any new contacts
- Review & maintain our commercial offering to customers e.g. product catalogue, terms, supplier support & price increases
- Look to develop any new business opportunities within our territory
- Update internal database, produce customer reports
- Represent JPS & our Company Values

**WHAT ARE THE BEST PARTS OF YOUR ROLE?**

- Flexibility of role – Love being in front of customers, attending network events and getting involved in social value projects
- Healthy Work/Life balance
- Feel Valued – even when working remotely, you feel part of a team!
- Excellent Benefits – salary, pension, Health Insurance
- Opportunities for career progression – loads of online training, annual appraisals

**WHAT IS SOMETHING THAT HAS SURPRISED YOU ABOUT YOUR JOB IN PARTICULAR?**

No two days are the same – I thought that working for a Merchant would mean I would be selling Bricks! I was so wrong, there are so many roles available for people with different skill sets and interests.

**WHAT ADVICE IN GENERAL WOULD YOU GIVE TO YOUR 15-YEAR-OLD SELF ABOUT HOW TO SUCCEED IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT?**

- Work Hard, if you’re show a willingness to learn & have the drive & determination to succeed, you can achieve anything!
- Work out what is important to you. I was very ambitious when I was younger, I learned great skills along the way & worked in roles that offered fantastic opportunities however as my personal life changed, it was important that I prioritised my family.
- Enjoy what you do, Good Luck!
There are a lot of meetings and discussions with people, communication is key in the role. The meetings can range from dealing with problems and finding solutions to trying to negotiate or secure new contracts for the business.

Working as part of the support function we need to respond to the needs of the many regional businesses within Robertson this could involve liaising with potential customers and promoting the Robertson business or finding a contractual way that we could work together. There is also a lot of problem solving that goes on therefore you need to be innovative and have a positive outlook.

WHAT DID YOUR CAREER PATH LOOK LIKE?
- Milk round - Edinburgh
- Paper round - Edinburgh
- Collecting trolleys - Edinburgh
- Concrete Gang Labourer – Central Scotland,
- Tarmac Construction
- Site Engineer – UK wide, Tarmac Major Projects
- Section Engineer – UK wide, Tarmac Major
- Projects
- Sub-agent – UK wide, ERDC
- Site Agent – Scotland, Balfour Beatty
- Project Manager – Scotland, Balfour Beatty
- Project Director – Scotland, Balfour Beatty
- Framework Director – Scotland, Balfour Beatty
- MD Infrastructure – Scotland, Morgan Sindall
- National Frameworks Director – UK wide,
- Robertson Group

FAVOURITE SUBJECTS AT SCHOOL?
PE, Arithmetic and Technical drawing.

WHEN DID YOU DECIDE THAT YOU WANTED TO WORK WITHIN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND WHAT INFLUENCED THAT DECISION?
I always enjoyed making things as I grew up therefore I think it was always going to be a career choice along with the love of being outdoors.

WHAT QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE ARE NECESSARY FOR YOUR ROLE?
I reluctantly went to a Polytechnic (now a University) and got an HND. It was 6 months on and 6 months off for work experience, during the 6 months off I continued in my Concrete Gang Labouring role which I loved.

DESCRIBE A TYPICAL DAY IN YOUR WORKING LIFE...
There are a lot of meetings and discussions with people, communication is key in the role. The meetings can range from dealing with problems and finding solutions to trying to negotiate or secure new contracts for the business.

Working as part of the support function we need to respond to the needs of the many regional businesses within Robertson this could involve liaising with potential customers and promoting the Robertson business or finding a contractual way that we could work together. There is also a lot of problem solving that goes on therefore you need to be innovative and have a positive outlook.

WHAT ARE THE BEST PARTS OF YOUR ROLE?
Working as part of a good team and collectively coming up with solutions or work-arounds that help deliver great projects for great customers.

WHAT IS SOMETHING THAT HAS SURPRISED YOU ABOUT YOUR JOB?
The vast number of different roles and skillsets that there are and each one is as important as the other.

WHAT ADVICE IN GENERAL WOULD YOU GIVE TO YOUR 15-YEAR-OLD SELF ABOUT HOW TO SUCCEED IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT?
Be keen, be respectful, be positive, ask lots and lots of questions, always look for a better way to do something but most importantly enjoy yourself.