Finding work experience in the environmental, regeneration and sustainability sector

Why do work experience?

Work experience demonstrates your commitment to and your awareness of the realities of your career choice. Prospects can provide general information on the benefits of work experience: www.prospects.ac.uk/work_experience.htm

The TUC’s campaign Rights for Interns provides information on your rights and responsibilities on an internship programme: www.rightsforinterns.org.uk

Although environmental roles have multiplied in recent years, securing a graduate job in the fields of conservation, regeneration and sustainability can be competitive with those able to offer work related skills as well as their degree subject gaining an obvious advantage. Many opportunities to gain relevant skills are of a voluntary nature and do not necessarily require graduate level qualifications, however they can be a useful means of developing employability skills, networking with others and gaining an insight into environmental organisations.

Drivers of change in the sector

Some of the key drivers of employment and skills change in the sector include the following:

- **The Low Carbon Industrial Strategy** - focuses on alternative sources of renewable energy, carbon capture and storage and green manufacturing technologies. (For example the Wind and Nuclear energy sectors are both anticipating a huge demand for additional workers to meet renewable energy targets in the next 10 years).

- **Low Carbon Economic Growth** - established to ensure skills gaps are filled before they become a barrier to job creation.

- **Brexit** - there is uncertainty as to what disassociation from Europe may mean for European environmental policy and hence career opportunities.

- **Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy** - has taken over UK energy policy and other duties from the now abolished Department for Energy & Climate Change - the effects of this on career opportunities will become clearer over time.

- **Natural Capital Protocol** - introduced to offer a standardised framework for businesses to be more efficient and make better environmental decisions, and may increase opportunities in the sector.

- **Climate Change** - risks associated with climate change are influencing the development of opportunities in sectors including risk assessment and insurance, and also emergency planning.

- The need to replenish an ageing workforce particularly in the energy and utilities sector.
The following report from the Aldersgate Group makes useful reading to gain an insight into the likely future skills requirements of the sector: "Mind the Gap"

See also the Energy and Utility Sector Skills Assessment from the UK Commission for Employment and Skills

Some of the key higher level skills likely to be required in the sector include:

- **Specialist skills and knowledge** to support industry and commerce to improve and maintain their social and environmental responsibilities (some examples include, good understanding of environmental legislation, surveying and reporting skills, knowledge of ecological assessments)

- **Specialist skills and knowledge** to adapt to new environmental technologies (for example in transport, construction and energy) as well as new business models including carbon auditing, energy efficiency and carbon trading.

- **Leadership and management skills** including: project and planning management, workforce development and training, communication and presentation skills and IT knowledge.

- **Business skills and commercial awareness, enterprise and entrepreneurial skills**

**Finding vacancies**

You can search Careers Network’s ‘Careers Connect’ vacancy database for relevant work experience opportunities, and visit the Jobs, Skills and Volunteering department at the Guild for details of part time jobs whilst you study. You can also use social media (Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn) to source opportunities.

- Volunteering for work with University projects and societies can be a useful first step towards gaining employment skills, such as:
  - University Conservation Volunteers [www.facebook.com/groups/bucv.guild/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/bucv.guild/)
  - Groundwork UK [www.groundwork.org.uk/default.aspx](http://www.groundwork.org.uk/default.aspx)

- According to **LANTRA** an estimated 200,000 people are working voluntarily in the UK on conservation projects. The websites following websites advertise volunteering opportunities including environmental and conservation projects:
  - [www.vinspired.com](http://www.vinspired.com)
  - [https://volunteeringmatters.org.uk/](http://https://volunteeringmatters.org.uk/)
  - [www.bvsc.org](http://www.bvsc.org)
Naturenet and Ethical Careers both have useful career links pages:  
www.naturenet.net/people/careers.html  
www.ethicalcareers.org/environment-renewables

IEMA is the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, providing skills advice and hosting a jobs and opportunities website: http://jobs.environmentalistonline.com/

MADE is dedicated to improving the quality of towns, cities and villages: www.made.org.uk

Sustainability West Midlands is a sustainability advisory body working with members in the business, public and voluntary sectors. The organisation provides advice for students and graduates:  
www.sustainabilitywestmidlands.org.uk/careers-service

Change Agents is able to place those who have graduated within the last three years into the environment and sustainability sector including in business, local authority and community organisations:  
www.changeagents.org.uk

The ENDS directory provides a list of UK environmental consultants and eco-service providers which can prove useful for targeting speculative enquiries: www.endsdirectory.com

Northfield Eco Centre offers ideas and advice on how to live a greener lifestyle and create a greener home or business. The centre is a registered charity and takes on volunteers in a number of roles, as well as offering internships: www.northfielddecocentre.com

Saltscape offer practical work days and volunteering opportunities in central Cheshire as part of the Saltscape Landscape Partnership Scheme: www.saltscape.co.uk/get-involved/volunteering

The Countryside Jobs Service produces information about vacancies in the countryside including available placements. You can also subscribe to free daily email updates: www.countryside-jobs.com

Bright Green Placements is a resource promoting paid placement opportunities within the environmental sector: www.brightgreenplacements.org.uk/bg_student_information.php

Green Impact works in over 50 further and higher education institutions across the UK, the programme ‘brings together students and staff to green campuses, curriculums and communities’:  
http://sustainability.nus.org.uk/green-impact

LEMUR (Learning Environments in Marine, Urban and Rural areas project) is an accredited training scheme that offers a fast track route to developing the necessary skills and competency required to gain a professional post in nature conservation: www.projectlemur.org

SHAP (Sustainable Housing Action Partnership) promotes research and disseminates best practice in the Environmental, Social and Economic Aspects of Sustainable Housing: www.shap.uk.com

Environmentjob.co.uk is a resource pulling together environment and sustainability jobs, volunteering and work experience: www.environmentjob.co.uk
Climate KiK is Europe’s largest public-private innovation partnership focused on climate change, consisting of dynamic companies, the best academic institutions and the public sector: www.climate-kic.org

Goeco provides volunteering and internship opportunities for students of geography and environmental sciences. Please note you do have to pay for these: www.goeco.org

The Energy Institute is the professional body for the energy industry, delivering good practice and professionalism across the depth and breadth of the sector: https://knowledge.energyinst.org

Birmingham City Council Planning and Regeneration Department offers summer placement opportunities:
www.birmingham.gov.uk/planningdirect
www.birmingham.gov.uk/workexperience

The Geologists Directory A useful tool to source companies in relation to geology:
www.thegeologistsdirectory.com

EDIE Live an annual event hosted at the NEC for sustainable businesses, use the Participants List to source employers of interest: http://exhibition.edie.net/exhibitor-list-2017

For more careers information tailored to GEES students see our Geography, Earth and Environmental Careers Canvas course.