



Name: Helen Batt

Job title: River Don Park Coordinator

Employer: Groundwork Sheffield, <http://www.groundwork-sheffield.org.uk/>



Starting your career

What attracted you to a career working in Sheffield's environment?

A belief in the benefits of green spaces for individual wellbeing and pride in communities, love of the outdoors

How did you find out about the career opportunities that were available?

By talking to people already in the environment sector, and by doing voluntary work.

How did you get your career started?

I worked as a volunteer for BTCV whilst at University and for a year after I graduated. I then went on to do a Post Graduate Diploma in Conservation Management. My first job was developing Wildlife Watch groups for Yorkshire Wildlife Trust.

Your career path

How long have you been working in the industry?

8 years

What jobs have you done and how did you progress?

River Don Park Coordinator, Groundwork Sheffield, September 2004 - ongoing

Developing and managing a strategic programme of projects to enhance the environmental standard of a large industrial area of Sheffield, the Lower Don Valley. Responsible for strategic direction, spatial planning, identifying and developing projects, engaging partners for the statutory, business and community sectors, and securing investment.

FOGC Project Manager, Friends of the General Cemetery, Sheffield, Sept 1999 – Aug 2004

Developing and managing projects for the Friends to restore and promote the General Cemetery and its buildings. Managing volunteers and an ILM worker, running the office, establishing and maintaining partnerships, consulting and involving the local community, working with consultants, securing and managing funds, reporting to a management committee and board of trustees.

Watch Development Officer, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, York, Jan 1999 – Dec 1999

Setting up new Watch groups across South Yorkshire whilst supporting and training the voluntary leaders of existing groups.



Part Time Project Assistant, Hinchingsbrooke Country Park, Huntingdon, June 1994 – Sep 1994

Giving talks and leading activities during one day educational events for school children and the general public. Setting up displays.

Training and skills

What qualifications did you achieve before entering your career?

Post Graduate Diploma in Conservation Management

What job-specific skills training and development have you undertaken since starting your career?

National Proficiency Training Council qualifications in Brushcutter Use, and Pesticides. First Aid at Work Certificate. Training in working with volunteers, child protection, funding, training, management skills.

What have you gained from your training and development?

Some technical skills, confidence and skills in management and funding.

Your working day

What is a typical day for you?

I am now office based. I spend most of my time developing projects to improve the environment in Sheffield, particularly the waterways. This involves meeting partners to develop ideas and gather support. Projects need funding to get off the ground, so I also spend a lot of time writing bids to various funders, and budgets/business plans to work out how much projects are going to cost and where the money is going to come from. Once projects are underway there can be jobs such as organising events, managing staff and volunteers, and writing reports on the progress of the project.

What takes up most of your time?

Researching and writing funding bids.

What is the best bit about your job?

Getting funding which enables me to move a project from a business plan, to see real improvements on the ground.

The future

What are your aspirations for your career?

This is a very difficult question to answer. The opportunities in the environment sector are very dependent on the funding available at any one time, so do change quite a lot. I have only worked in pretty small teams, which I have enjoyed as you have to be flexible and be willing to try/take on different roles. I enjoy the variety this provides. The environment sector does not really offer a strong career structure, so envisaging career progression is difficult.



How would you like to develop your skills further in the future?

Involving communities in their greenspaces interests me. How to tackle the barriers which stop people using their local greenspaces and the countryside further afield.

Who has been an inspiration or influence on your career?

I had an inspirational manager in one of my first jobs who was a great role model for me. She was very effective in getting things done, seeing through complex problems and influencing others – being assertive.

If you had to “sell” a career in Sheffield’s environment in one sentence, what would you say?

People in Sheffield are very passionate about their greenspaces and want to improve and protect them. They are great people to work with – committed and knowledgeable. Sheffield also has a varied and high quality environmental resource – you could work on historic parks, ancient woodlands, nature reserves and rivers all within the city boundaries. Finally, there are a lot of environmental organisations in Sheffield, and so a good source of job opportunities.