

Sarah Foster



Foster: community and landscape goals crucial in team leader role at national park

Sarah Foster began working life as a geography teacher at Bromsgrove School, Worcestershire, in 1999. Although the teaching profession didn't allow her to fulfil her interest in the built environment, the experience gave her an excellent foundation in empathising with people and communicating clearly.

Foster took her geography degree and certificate in secondary education at the University of Nottingham. She qualified as a master of town planning with distinction from the University of Manchester in 2003. Her first planning job at Austin-Smith:Lord in Warrington helped her understand the wider development process, masterplanning and urban design.

Subsequent posts as a development control officer at Manchester City Council and a senior planner at Turley Associates showed her the spatial planning process from both public and private perspectives. She loved the interaction with communities at the city council and used that experience to advise on planning strategy for major private sector clients at Turleys.

Foster took up her "dream job" as a planning manager at the Peak District National Park Authority in September 2009, heading up a development management team of four officers. She uses her private sector experience to ensure efficiency, her communication skills to actively engage with applicants and stakeholders and her design background

to ensure that approvals provide the best possible outcomes for communities and landscapes.

Her RTPI involvement began as a member of the Young Planners Network Steering Group and the North West Regional Activities Committee. In 2008 she became one of the youngest ever chairs of the RTPI North West. She has also designed and delivered a series of Planning Aid workshops, devising fun activities to explain the planning system in plain English. Her hobbies are running, walking and her allotment.

Foster has always endeavoured to promote the planning profession and planning careers as widely as possible and to change outdated perceptions of planners. "I have been able to do this via my RTPI chair and Planning Aid. I aim to build on this experience by meeting and presenting to organisations or groups who want to understand more about planning in an entertaining and easily understood way," she promises.

"Sarah Foster exemplifies what a young planner should be," says North West Planning Aid manager Jan Beaumont. "Her passion for the profession is evidenced by her achievements and career advancement. She devotes time to numerous RTPI activities, including promoting planning as a career to young people. She is a valued Planning Aid member, volunteering time and skills to benefit people."

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SHORTLISTED CANDIDATES



James Bompas is a senior planning officer with strategic and development management experience at Thurrock Thames Gateway Development Corporation. He currently chairs the RTPI London Region.



Zoë McClelland is a senior planning consultant at URS Scott Wilson, where her role centres on project managing major infrastructure schemes. She is incoming chair of the Scottish Young Planners Network.



Lucie Taylor has a key role in co-ordinating community involvement as planning policy liaison officer at Newport City Council. She has worked at Planning Aid Wales and chaired RTPI Cymru.

The winner was decided by a ballot of RTPI members. The shortlist was compiled by: **Ann Skippers** MRTPI, 2010 RTPI president **Bryan Johnston**, editor, *Planning* **Andrew Taylor** MRTPI, development manager, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council