

2011 RTPI YOUNG PLANNERS' CONFERENCE

Conference Review

Sophie Bladen

University of Birmingham student competition winner

“Few children, when asked what they want to do when they grow up, say they want to be a Planner. However, the concept of making a physical difference to one’s environment has always fascinated me greatly. When the opportunity arose for me to attend the planning conference, through a competition run by the University of Birmingham, I was very interested to learn more about a career in planning and whether, discovering first hand what a career in planning entails, would cement my interest.

Whilst attending, I was surprised to discover how enthusiastic I was regarding the speakers’ topics. As I have been raised in the Birmingham area, I was particularly interested in the speech from Waheed Nazir from Birmingham City Council on developments planned for the city and also learning about situated planning by Les Greenwood, in the form of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon. It was also interesting for me to learn about planning schemes which I had not previously known about or even considered in a planning context, for example the National Grid and planning for the UK’s energy infrastructure.

The study tours on the final day of the conference were particularly interesting as we were able to receive a guided visit around Birmingham, where we were informed about present and future planning schemes intended for the city centre, notably the new city centre library and past successful planning projects such as the Cube and Brindley Place. The tour I took part in was the city centre walking tour, led by Nicki Schiessel and Nick Morton from Birmingham City University.

The passion expressed by the speakers on their chosen career in planning was particularly inspiring and reinforced my belief that planning is where my future lies. Whilst many industries have been affected by the recent economic crisis, and planning is unfortunately no exception, it is important to allow my passion to prevail and work to pursue a career in planning, as it is my belief that while there are still jobs out there, one should not give up on their goal.

Many of the other conference members I had spoken to who were already employed in a planning role had graduated relatively recently and the fact that they had gained employment in their chosen sector was reassuring and encouraging for me.”