

## *New Volunteers*

### Shreeya Sharma



I am an Architect from Nepal with post-graduate degree in International Planning and Sustainable Development from University of Westminster. My interest for planning was initiated during my undergraduate course and subsequent work experience in Nepal. I received scholarship from Westminster to pursue planning degree. In the current economic climate and job cuts, it is very hard for new graduate to get job opportunities and to apply their theoretical concepts to practical application. I believe PAL is the best platform for new graduate to contribute to the area of planning, and subsequently develop exposures and experiences in the area.

### Shelley Thompson



I am 26 year old environmental planner from New Zealand. I have both an Honours and Masters degree in Environmental Management from the University of Otago and Lincoln University respectively in New Zealand. I have two years experience working as an environmental consultant in New Zealand for environmental and engineering consultancy firm MWH. I left New Zealand in April 2010 to travel through South and Central America on route to the UK. Since arriving in the UK in September 2010, I have been unable to find any planning work so am working as a waitress while I try to travel my way around Europe. I wanted to become a volunteer with Planning Aid for London

to gain experience with the UK planning system, utilise my skills and provide assistance where I can, while I am working out of the planning field.

### Philippa Porteous

I am a government lawyer currently based at the Treasury Solicitor's Department in the Planning Litigation team. The team deals with High Court challenges to appeal decisions made by Planning Inspectors or the Secretary of State. I've been with the team for nearly 2.5 years.

I chose to volunteer with Planning Aid for London because of its excellent reputation in providing planning advice to individuals and groups. I hope assist in guiding others through some of the intricacies of planning law. I hope also to gain a perspective on the way that the planning system and the proposed changes to it are experienced by others. My practice is quite narrow and I would welcome the opportunity to get involved in new areas, such as community planning. I also have an interest in the environmental aspects of planning which I am keen to develop further. I look forward to meeting and working with new people both clients and other volunteers. I am very happy to be working with PAL.

## Interns

### Dean Cracknell

I have just started volunteer work at PAL having recently moved to London from Australia to further develop my career. I was previously a Strategic Planning Coordinator for a local government in Perth, Western Australia, which involved strategic planning, developing new local planning frameworks, placemaking, masterplanning, development control, policy development and community consultation. I volunteered with PAL so I could learn more about the U.K. planning system and help the community whilst I am looking for paid work.

I am really interested creating places for people. Given that humans have been living in towns and cities for thousands of years, you would have thought that we would have perfected making places that are attractive, functional, inclusive and enjoyable for people. I have travelled quite a bit and it seems that there are a lot of places that need serious work. I am inspired by some of the areas that have been transformed into fantastic places that attract people and have positive economic, environmental and social outcomes. Having that focus helps keep me motivated, especially when faced with some of the situations and issues that planners experience every day.

### Reza de Noel



I became interested in Town Planning from an early age, and being brought up in London, I quickly became used to different built environments and large scale developments. This was fascinating to me! I wanted to learn about the history of planning, the current planning process, how it is implemented and what changes need to be made for the future.

PAL, is a great organisation to work for, and can be a stepping stone to experience real life planning, in a city such as London. As there are different aspects of planning work that the organisation undertakes, I would say that the consultancy work is the best place to start. You get an idea of what development control is like, speak to clients from a range of economic and cultural stand points and help develop frameworks for tenders. You learn the importance of Use Classes, Planning Statement Reports, Plans, Designs/Maps and Local Authority Delegated or Committee Reports. The other section is Community Planning – which I personally believe is the most important aspect of planning, in communities that are diverse in terms of culture, race and religion. Encouraging the general public to partake in the planning process, is a hard task; however once people are interested, they usually have opinions on how things should be changed, therefore informing policy and framework changes at a local level. Volunteering for an organisation such as PAL, you learn to multi task, exercise initiative, meet deadlines and to operate under pressure.

### My Advice – Is Town Planning for you?

I would advise anybody interested in Town Planning to speak to the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) first. They have a wealth of information for people interested in Planning and can direct you to the correct organisation if you are specific and know what you want. You may also want to find a practice which deals with planning on a day-to-day basis such as a Consultancy, Land Real Estate Office, Local Authority Planning Team or a Community-led Organisation. Once you find a suitable place to gain work experience, then you can decide if you like it. Experience can give you basic administration skills, confidence to work in an office environment and insight into planning case-work. Many professionals in planning diversify their work and education, so you may find an Architect who has a planning and surveying degree. This is one major plus point for this industry – is that it is very easy to move around because the different areas of planning overlap quite easily. A degree in planning can also set you on the right path; however the work experience and networking with the correct people is just as important.

I would also encourage any women, disabled or BME who are thinking about becoming planners – to approach the system with an open mind. I feel that there is an under-representation of these specific groups and this can affect the way communities are planned for at both a local, regional or national level.

## Statistics

During the financial year 2010-11 PAL dealt with 707 cases and provided its advice services to over 4000 people. The tables below give a more detailed breakdown and a comparative analysis for financial years 2009-10 and 2010-11.

### Cases

Table1 summarises data by case category and provides a comparison for 2009-10 and 2010-11. Table2 provides information on the nature of the enquiry. While the number of enquiries provides a general indication of PAL's workload, other factors such as the complexity of the issues involved or the time and resources required are also important. For example, some clients often require greater assistance in the actual completion a planning application forms or additional support throughout the planning process.

Table1

Case Category	2009-10	2010-2011
Consultancy	50	77
Volunteer	140	169
Advice Line	27	51
In House Advice	401	280
Refer to External	32	17
Community Projects	123	70
Outreach/Education	45	43
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>818</b>	<b>707</b>

Table2

Issue	2009-10	2010-11
DC/Law	373	420
Enforcement	73	65
Plan. Policy	67	47
Listed Building	7	5
Transport	8	1
Non Planning	32	14
Training	36	26
Planning Procedure	17	4
Clients Appeal	41	16

### Events

Table 3 summarises data by main events and provides a breakdown of all attendees. In 2010-11, 117 events were held and the total number of attendees was 3743.

Table 3

	Adults	BME/Other	Disabled	White	Young People	Total Adults/Young
Comm. Planning Event	818	222	34	626	30	848
Discussion Workshop	25	3	1	22	0	25
Env/Education	304	215	2	341	252	556
Networking	88	15	3	73	0	88
New Comm. Planning Projects	24	5	0	19	0	24
Partnership/Raising Awareness	2083	910	40	1284	111	2194
Volunteer Mentoring	1	0	0	1	0	1
Volunteer Training	7	1	0	6	0	7
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>3350</b>	<b>1371</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>2372</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>3743</b>

## Volunteer Contribution and Membership Status

At the end of financial year 2011 PAL had a network of 154 Volunteers who contributed over 600 hours in undertaking activities on PAL's behalf.

Table 4

RTPI Status	Total
Architect	5
Associate	2
Barrister	10
Fellow	1
Licentiate	14
Member	68
Member-retired	1
Non Member	21
Non-member	8
Retired	1
Solicitor	5
Student	18
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>154</b>

Table 5

Category	2009-10	2010-11
Case	643	482
Event	134	198
Conference	108	
Workshop	103	3
Other	2	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>990</b>	<b>683</b>

## Web Site Usage

Table below provides summary of PAL web site usage. Unique visitors, visitors that were interested in context of the web ; number of visits – includes all visitors to web pages regardless they activity; pages – total number of pages visited; hits – total hits; As PAL's website was under construction until June 2010 records show the data captured during six month period from June to March inclusively.

Table 6	Unique visitors	Number of visits	Pages	Hits
2010-11	8201	11612	58880	561489
2009-10	10560	16337	57553	225799

## Total Calls and Visitors

Table 7

Year	2009-10	2010-11	Difference	%
Calls	4658	3303	-1355	-29
Visitors	414	535	121	29

## *Planning Jokes*

### Whose Profession Came First?

A Doctor, an Engineer, and a Planner are going out golfing. They are trying to decide whose profession came first.

The Doctor says, "My profession came first because when God removed Adam's rib he performed surgery."

The Engineer then says, "No, no, no. When the earth was dark and void God created light. That was engineering."

The Planner says, "You're both wrong."

The doctor and engineer reply, "Oh yeah? What makes you think yours came first?"

The Planner replies, "Who do you think decided to grant the planning permission for the light?"

### Planners and Howitzers

When considering the behaviour of a howitzer:

- A Mathematician will be able to calculate where the shell will land.
- A Physicist will be able to explain how the shell gets there.
- A Planner will stand there to make sure it doesn't land without permission!

[http://homepage.eircom.net/~nobyrne/planning\\_jokes.html](http://homepage.eircom.net/~nobyrne/planning_jokes.html)