

## Countryside Council for Wales Council Shadowing

### Learning about a major environmental organisation from the inside

Many environmental and heritage organisations wish to be more inclusive in all aspects of their operation including their governing bodies, but are not sure how to go about this. Working with Black Environment Network (BEN) on their Race Equality Action Plan, Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) identified establishing shadowing and placement opportunities as a valuable means of better representing Wales's diverse population within the organisation.

Together, BEN and the Equalities Officer at CCW proposed running a pilot shadowing placement for a young ethnic minority person with one of its Council members, as a step towards improving understanding of the role within this group.

The shadowing placement aimed to:

- Raise awareness of the work of CCW
- Increase opportunities for people of all backgrounds to gain employment in the environment sector
- Promote understanding of equality and diversity amongst CCW staff by working with people from minority groups
- Increase the diversity of CCW's workforce, both voluntary and paid, temporary and permanent

### Making it happen

It was agreed that the shadow placement would give the chance to attend two Council meetings (expenses paid) and accompany the Council member at other events and activities during the period, contributing ideas and joining in discussion, with a view to applying for future membership of the Council.

This was an ideal opportunity for an interested young person to observe Council at work without any concerns about cost or possible lack of confidence. Through attachment to a Council member, the Shadow would be supported to learn from various activities the scope of CCW's work, and have a taste of the issues and processes dealt with by Council members. Prior to meetings, there would be a chance to discuss agenda items and meeting papers so that the Shadow may have an insight into the factors





affecting decision-making and the chance to compare these processes with their own experiences.

The Council member was chosen on the basis of being best placed to fulfil the commitment at the time.

Once the criteria for eligibility were established, the opportunity was advertised and the successful candidate interviewed and selected.

The meetings attended took place over a four month period and were:

- a briefing meeting with a CCW Water Policy Officer
- Council meetings, including site visits, at 2 area offices.

### Feedback

The Shadow found the placement very valuable for illuminating the work of CCW across all its activities as discussed at different Council meetings, and additionally understanding the political context of the work. She did not immediately apply for Council membership as a result, but the experience gained led to her successful application for another placement with one of Wales's national parks. As a consequence of this, she has now found secure employment in the sector, contributing to the diversity of the workforce as the scheme intended.

The Shadow summarised the experience in the following way *"I would recommend this opportunity to any other ethnic minority person working in the environmental sector in Wales. Everyone was very welcoming and I can't imagine a better way of acquiring an insight into the range of environmental issues dealt with by one organisation. The experience has helped me in my career by raising my confidence levels, and by allowing me to foresee myself in employment positions I had not previously considered."*

### The Future

The Council member shadowing pilot was a valuable first exercise in opening out the CCW Council meetings to an interested observer from an under-represented group. The processes will be refined according to the feedback, for forthcoming CCW shadowing and placement schemes, demonstrating the organisation's commitment to Equal Opportunities for Wales's ethnic minorities.

Contact the CCW Language and Equalities Officer if you would like to discuss any aspect of the programme.

### FACTFILE

- **Funder:**  
CCW
- **Partner:**  
CCW
- **Target:**  
Ethnic minority individuals
- **Numbers:**  
By arrangement
- **Key Point:**
  - A learning experience such as a shadowing placement promotes equal opportunity and has a wide range of benefits to the candidates and organisations alike



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