



Guidance notes on how to use the website in careers talks

Background to the Institute's careers campaign

The Landscape Institute's careers site I Want To Be A Landscape Architect launched in May 2008 with initial funding from CABI Space, one of the Institute's key stakeholders. The Landscape Institute is a member of the CABI Space Advisory Group.

The campaign, run by the Institute's Marketing team with support from the Education team, will develop in the years to come. More resources will be made available to download from the site and in hard copy leaflets and flyers to distribute at events.

The campaign is a direct response to one of the five key objectives in the Institute's 2007 – 2012 Development Plan, which is to grow in size. The careers drive also takes into account the chronically low level of entry onto Landscape Institute accredited university courses and the severe shortages of landscape architects in the labour market. A Landscape Institute survey in 2007 showed that 52% of firms were turning away contracts because of staff shortages and in 2007 research by the Academy for Sustainable Communities, with whom the Institute has a joint commitment, showed that the shortages of landscape architects were set to worsen as demand in the economy increased.

Individual members are encouraged to see involvement in this campaign as a core responsibility to the profession as stipulated by the Code of Conduct. The Institute's mission is 'to build the professional community in the service of the public interest'. Members are the best advocates of the rewards and pleasures of a career in landscape architecture.

The website and these notes are aimed to help members create presentations for talks in schools and elsewhere about careers in the profession. Further help is available from the Institute's Education and Careers Executive on 020 7299 4539 email careers@landscapeinstitute.org. The Institute's 12 branches around the UK, listed on the LI's main site www.landscapeinstitute.org, often respond to requests for careers talks and can also help.

The Landscape Institute's partners in Higher Education are listed on the website and the Heads of landscape schools and other university staff may also be able to help devise suitable presentations and talks for potential course applicants.

Many schools have staff who organise careers talks and fairs who will be able to help you make your talk relevant to their pupils. Do talk to them before your visit. Other resources will be available through your local Connexions service.

Key messages

It is crucial that the key messages for the Institute's careers campaign are consistent but any presentation will have greater impact if it has the personal touch too and in particular lots of your

own visuals. So you are encouraged to use the guidance and key messages in this briefing note along with examples from your own personal and professional experience.

The Landscape Institute's careers strategy revolves around three basic appeals:

- The **aspirational** appeal of landscape architecture – it aims to make things look good by design. The importance of design is increasingly understood, especially by young people who care about style, fashion, product design, graphics and music. This links to the fact that young people depend on public and outdoor spaces like town centres and parks for their lifestyles.
- The **inspirational** appeal of landscape architecture – it is all about making communities and the world a better place, saving civilisation and biodiversity from climate change, environmental degradation and ugliness. This links to the political and campaigning interests of many young people.
- The **vocational** appeal of landscape architecture – it is a profession within which there is no shortage of jobs; it has a clear career path with lots of support mechanisms and it provides for enormous variety because it is diverse and specialised. There are high levels of job satisfaction.

The key message is 'Landscape architecture is a good career choice'. The desired response in anyone receiving this message from a role model who has made a positive case is 'I am going to consider landscape architecture as a career'. Members are asked to encourage teachers, pupils, parents, careers advisers and others who exercise influence over young people to visit the I Want To Be A Landscape Architect site as a first step in choosing landscape architecture.

Associated campaigns

The Landscape Institute formal Communications Plan involves six umbrella themes that encapsulate key messages for the whole organisation. These are:

- Making Landscape Visible (using images to encourage people to think about landscape and realise the impact it has on their everyday life)
- Landscape architects are creating a more sustainable world
- Landscape architects are at the heart of the community
- Landscape architects are agents for regeneration, they are creating the context for development
- Landscape architects are creating places that you want to visit
- Landscape architects are scarce and in demand

These themes can also be used in careers talks to emphasise the profession's aspirational, inspirational and vocational appeals.

The website

It is suggested that when going to give a careers talk you ask for laptop facilities with an internet link connected to loudspeakers so that the website can be projected. Check that the audio is working clearly. Most schools have firewall systems to control internet access. Check in advance with the school that any firewall is switched off so that the sound and video parts of the website work properly. As a precaution it is recommended that you send a link to the school IT department in advance of giving the talk. You will also need a black/whiteboard and/or flip chart.

The site has strong, clear graphics related to the Landscape Institute's house style. The branding is distinct however from the Landscape Institute's corporate branding. Any presentation should be devoted solely to the I Want To Be site which has numerous links through to the corporate website [www.landscapeinstitute.org] and other relevant websites. However do ensure that your audience is given both web addresses so they can follow up later if their interest has been stimulated – write them up on the room's white or blackboard or on a flip chart at the start of the talk along with your own name and the Institute's email address for careers inquiries – careers@landscapeinstitute.org

The Institute has prepared a promotional card for the site. Copies of these are available free of charge from the LI office. Please hand these out to students.

The main challenge when talking about landscape architecture is to communicate its variety without confusing people. The campaign uses the strapline 'the profession that combines art and science, design and the environment' as a way of addressing this.

The website has an explanatory message on its home page and is then organised into three main sections:

Landscape architecture

This contains sub-sections on History and Ideas (from prehistory to the present day), the Genius of Place (covering design and vision, planning the landscape, management and conservation, historic conservation, the science of landscape, cities and towns, and gardens and parks), and the Power to Change (covering climate change, sustainable communities, environment, housing, tackling hunger, and transportation). There are links through to a gallery of examples of landscape architecture from prehistory to the present day.

Being a landscape architect

This section includes 17 profiles of the diverse range of individuals and skills within the profession. 12 of those featured are also in the gallery of video interviews. There are interviews with each person (the 12 have been selected to present a range of ages, personalities, types of work, and with an attempt to give a balance of gender and diversity). It is worth noting that the landscape profession has an almost 50:50 balance between women and men.

Becoming a landscape architect

This section contains a lot of detail on studying, choosing a course, how to become fully qualified and how to finance it all.

There is a final section 'Other career choices' which contains links to related fields of work.

A typical talk

Write your name, the Institute's careers email address – careers@landscapeinstitute.org - and the web address iwanttobealandscapearchitect.com on the white/blackboard

Log on to the site and project the home page onto a screen that the whole group can see if possible.

After your introductions ask the group what GCSE, AS, A levels or Highers (in Scotland) they are doing and write on the board some of the subjects which you think would be relevant to landscape architecture such as Art, English, Biology, Geography, Technology, IT.

Point out that all of these subjects would help them with a career in landscape architecture.

Ask them what they think landscape architecture is and write some of their suggestions down. If they can't make any suggestions or if they all just think of gardens and nothing else, ask them to think about outdoor places where they go in their spare time or to socialise with their friends or where they liked to play as small children. The answers should include places like the park, the town centre, the shopping area, the football pitch, the playground, the seafront, the riverside, skate park or the woods.

Suggest things at the other end of the scale too. Have any of them ever been to the Eden Project for example? Will any of them go to the Olympics in London in 2012; Have they ever been to a national park like the Lake District or Snowdonia? Point out that all of these places have been/are designed or managed by landscape architects.

Ask them if they think the places they've suggested are nice places to be or if they look good. If the answer is 'no', get them to suggest ways to make them better. A particular example might be the grounds of their own school – get them to look out of the window and suggest ways they could improve what is out there.

Tell them they are beginning to think like landscape architects.

Say that the website has videos of landscape architects talking about what they do and there's a compilation of them all defining landscape architecture which you should now play. This is the compilation 'What is landscape architecture?' which you will find on the mini home-page for the sub-section 'Becoming a landscape architect'.

The final words of this compilation are 'these are very, very exciting times for anyone thinking of coming into the landscape profession'. Click the screen back to the home page as a holding slide while you link to the next section of your talk – where you relate the ideas that have been talked about to your own experience.

Do you have a particular story for why and how you became a landscape architect?

What is the most interesting job you've ever worked on?

Show some slides and talk about it.

What do you like best about your job?

Emphasise the variety, the fact that you are not stuck in the office all day every day, that your job is creative – that you transform places, that you get to travel a lot, sometimes abroad (if that is the case), and how great it is to see people using and enjoying something that you've worked on.

If possible draw their attention to a particular example of a new landscape in their own area/town/city which they might be familiar with – a park that's obviously been improved, a housing estate that's been regenerated, a public square that's become a music or arts venue after a redesign. Ask them what difference it has made and explain what was involved in making it happen.

Talk about how landscape architects care a lot about making the world a better place, improving the look of a town centre for instance, ensuring that people can have access to green spaces, giving pedestrians and cyclists more space on streets and roads, planting more trees, installing fountains, designing playgrounds with a bit of imagination and so on.

And there's the big picture – using the landscape to prevent flooding or to keep cities cool in summer. Tell them landscape architects have a big role to play in dealing with climate change by reshaping and greening the landscape.

We suggest you draw to a close with another video compilation – the one entitled ‘How did you become a landscape architect?’ which you can find on the mini home-page for ‘Being a landscape architect’.

The final couple of minutes of your talk can be devoted to some basic facts (but keep this bit short)

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There are universities and colleges where you can study the subjects related to landscape architecture and the details are on the website. You’ll need ‘A’ levels or Highers (Scotland) – the subjects and grades differ from course to course. There’s a big shortage of landscape architects and businesses are crying out for more people to become qualified so students graduating from university usually walk straight into a job. Starting salaries are around £20,000. Then once you’ve got started you’ll eventually do a further course and take your professional exam with the Landscape Institute to become a chartered landscape architect with letters after your name.

All of this information is on the website I want to be a Landscape Architect.

After a Q and A session and depending on how well you think it has gone ask them if anyone fancies being a landscape architect now. Encourage them to consider work experience with a practice – further information on this can be had from the Careers Executive at the Institute. The main objective of your talk should be to get them looking at the website.

Pupils in Year 7, 8 and 9 should be encouraged to think about landscape architecture in the context of their GCSE choices.

Pupils in Year 10 and 11 should be encouraged to think about their choice of A level subjects.

Pupils in Year 12 (Lower Sixth) should be encouraged to click through to the Institute’s accredited courses which can be found on the website at Becoming a landscape architect/choosing a course/undergraduate courses.

Parents should be reassured that landscape architecture is a chartered profession on a par with architecture, accountancy and surveying and that the demand for landscape architects means that almost everyone qualifying will walk into a job with excellent prospects.

Thank you for your support for this project and if you have time please do let us know how you got on and what more the Institute can do to support you in promoting the profession to this important age group.

If you require further assistance or would like to comment on the website, please contact the Landscape Institute Education and Careers Executive on 020 7299 4539, careers@landscapeinstitute.org.

Landscape Institute

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