

# Going Places with Geography

**Royal  
Geographical  
Society**

with IBG

Advancing geography  
and geographical learning



- Supporting further study and careers through geography



“Geography is the spatial science; helping us all to better understand the world’s people, places and environments and the interactions between them – whether at the local, national or global scales.”

Dr Rita Gardner CBE, Director of the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)

“Geographic information is critical to promote economic development, improve our stewardship of natural resources and protect the environment.”

Bill Clinton, former President of the USA. Executive Order 12906

“There is a growing recognition amongst both governments and the private sector that an understanding of location and place is a vital component of effective decision-making.”

United Nations initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management 2013

#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> National Student Survey. Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2013

<sup>2</sup> International Benchmarking Review of UK Human Geography. Economic and Society Research Council, Arts and Humanities Research Council, and Royal geographical Society (with IBG). 2012

<sup>3</sup> What do Graduates do? Higher Education Careers Service Unit and Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services. 2013

<sup>4</sup> The Global Skills Gap. Think Global, British Council. 2011

# Welcome to Going Places with Geography

The skills and knowledge you gain from studying geography at GCSE, A Level or university, are relevant to almost all jobs and workplaces.

This guide showcases the wide range of careers that are opened up to those who study geography, and you will hear from geography graduates about the varied, exciting and rewarding jobs they have gone on to do.

**There has never been a better time to be a geographer, with rising numbers of students choosing to take the subject above the compulsory stages.**

The value of geography has been recognised in the following ways:

- The Department for Education has included geography within the family of approved 'academic' English Baccalaureate GCSE subjects;
- The Russell Group of universities has selected it as one of their preferred 'facilitating' A Level subjects to support an application to their degree courses;
- Geography graduates report some of the highest levels of satisfaction with their undergraduate courses<sup>1</sup>;
- An international review ranked human geography in British universities as 'first in the world'<sup>2</sup>;
- Graduate geographers experience relatively low levels of graduate unemployment<sup>3</sup>.




As Michael Palin, the Immediate Past President of the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG), says, “Geography is not only up-to-date and relevant, it is one of the most exciting, adventurous and valuable subjects to study today. So many of the world’s current problems boil down to geography, and need the geographers of the future to help us understand them.

You will find geographers working in a wide range of jobs, from the City to planning, working in the environment to travel and tourism, or in international charities and retail. Studying geography can help young people achieve careers that are professionally and financially rewarding and also enjoyable.

Geography illustrates the past, explains the present and prepares us for the future ... what could be more important than that?”

## What will you gain from studying Geography?

**GCSE:** At GCSE you will learn how human and physical processes bring about change and interact at different scales. you will study the UK and other places, geomorphic processes and landscapes; weather and climate; global ecosystems and biodiversity; resources and their management; and cities and global economic development. You will use geographical skills including the use of maps, Geographical Information Systems (GIS), data collection, statistics and fieldwork.



**A Level:** For A Level you will deepen your understanding of geography with a more intensive study of key elements which will extend your geographical understanding beyond the topics studied at GCSE. This will include the study of different types of landscapes; key processes such as the carbon and water cycles; how places change; global perspectives and a wide range of other topics. You will undertake fieldwork and more extended pieces of work which may include an individual research project.

**University:** With about 80 universities offering geography degrees across the UK, there is a wide range of choice. Universities generally provide courses in both physical (BSc) and human (BA) geography. Most first year courses will be a mixture of human, physical and integrated geography and during your second and third year you might select mainly physical, human or integrated options or a mixture of them.

**Human geography** explores the world through a social science perspective examining how and why human societies change and develop. Modules on your courses may include cultural geography, historical geography, international relations, planning, politics, society, tourism, transport and urbanisation.

**Physical geography** draws on a physical science perspective and explores physical processes and how they bring about change in our world. Modules could include climate change, coastal management, conservation, ecology, geo-hazards, geomorphology, glaciation, physical environments and sea-level change.

Whether the course is mainly physical, human or integrated, or a mixture of all, it will explore the inter-relatedness and connection of physical and social processes in a spatial context; other inter-disciplinary approaches; use a range of quantitative and qualitative techniques and skills and include fieldwork.

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No matter what direction you choose within the subject, you will gain a wide range of very employable and transferrable skills and attributes. These include:

- Subject knowledge that is highly relevant to many of the challenges facing society and the environment today;
- Specialist and transferable skills including statistical, spatial and environmental analysis alongside other quantitative and qualitative skills;
- Strong analytical and research skills, critical analysis, ability to judge evidence and work across the social and natural sciences;
- An ability to collect, understand and interpret complex data and communicate it to a variety of audiences;
- Tackling problems and examining big issues at a variety of scales and from different perspectives;
- The experience of working in a team, including through field research;
- An interest in how the world works, contemporary issues and other cultures.

Beyond your undergraduate degree you may wish or need to take a Master's degree, or a PhD, to enhance your expertise in a particular sector, such as for a career in finance, GIS, hydrology environmental consultancy, law, international development or meteorology.

See [www.rgs.org/studygeography](http://www.rgs.org/studygeography) for more details about studying geography at university.

## What do employers want?

The jobmarket has become increasingly competitive and international. Around 75% of businesses think the UK is in danger of being left behind unless young people learn to think more globally<sup>4</sup>.

However, the transferable knowledge and skills developed by studying geography are actively sought out by employers allowing graduate geographers to consistently experience lower than average levels of unemployment. Geography graduates are currently less likely to be unemployed than graduates who have studied other degrees such as English, history, mathematics, finance and accountancy or computer science.

It is a myth that geographers can only do certain types of jobs. In fact there are a wealth of jobs geographers do spanning almost every sector.

Read on to find out about the geographers working in the following sectors:



**Development and Global Issues**



**Society**



**The Business World**



**Travel, Tourism and Leisure**



**The Built Environment**



**Geographical Information Systems**



**The Physical Environment**



**Policy and Government**



## Development and Global Issues

*How can economic growth be promoted?*

*How can the positive steps to rid the world of absolute poverty be continued?*

*How can the migration of people and the movement of goods, finance and ideas be supported and best managed?*

These issues all draw on different dimensions of geography and the subject provides an important global perspective. Consequently, geographers are found working in many different types of roles concerned with global issues such as global finance, law and trade, government policy or international development.

These roles might be working for an international company with operations in many different countries; for government departments such as the Department for International Development or Foreign and Commonwealth Office; the armed forces; non-government organisations such as the British Council or international development charities or bodies such as the European Commission or United Nations.

You might be involved in trade or international supply chains, commodity trading, helping to provide clean water or control diseases, analysing and advising on risk and security, or promoting international cultural links or collaborations.

**“Geography is about interconnectivity and connectedness, and this gives you the skills to work on topics at a global scale.”** Olly Parsons





## Olly Parsons

*Disaster Response Coordinator,  
Mobile for Development, Groupe  
Spéciale Mobile Association  
(GSMA)*

### *How did you get here?*

Geography was always my favourite subject at school. I had a great teacher who was able to bring every topic alive in some way, and continued my interest on to study at Royal Holloway, University of London. During my degree, I completed internships with the Disasters Emergency Committee and led a research team to Kenya to study the potential of technology enabled community mapping on development goals.

This stood me in good stead for my current job which I began in the summer of 2013.

### *What does your role entail?*

The GSMA is the global trade association for the mobile phone industry, and my role as Programme Coordinator, which sits in the Mobile for Development Department, is varied and exciting. We undertake a large range of work, from working specifically with the mobile network operators to increase their resilience, to studying ways in which the mobile phone can be a channel for the delivery of aid during a disaster response, and communications used as a lifesaving tool.

### *How do you use your geographical skills?*

I work in a global industry, and our focus on disaster and





crisis naturally requires me to have an understanding of these issues. At the most basic level, geography gives me an appreciation for global events, both natural and political.

I also need to use skills such as report writing, presentation skills and information analysis. Communication skills are critical when it comes to working with our members and partners around the world, being aware of cultural sensitivities and working with a range of different people at different levels.

*Advice to someone thinking of taking geography further?*

Network. Get your own work out there and show you're serious about your topic. Make yourself relevant to the area you want to work in, and at the end of the day, the most important thing is that you enjoy it.

*Other geographers working in this sector include:*

Assistant Consultant, International Development Division  
at Ecorys UK

Catastrophe and Exposure Manager, Mitsui Sumitomo  
Insurance Group

Catastrophe Risk Analysis, Willis RE

Development and Flood Risk Technical Specialist,  
Environment Agency

Head of Education and Youth, Oxfam

Head of Polar Territories, Foreign and Commonwealth  
Office

HM Armed Forces

Social Development Advisor, Department for International  
Development



## Society



*What are the implications of an ageing population?  
How can organisations plan and provide services  
to people?*

*What are the challenges facing different places and  
communities?*

Geography, and human geography in particular, helps you understand how societies are composed, and how they work and change at different scales, from the local to national and international scales. This can help prepare you for many different roles working within businesses, social enterprises, not-for-profit organisations, and parts of national and local government – all of which provide goods, services and support for people in different ways. You will need to be able to relate to and understand the needs of different types of people in different situations and develop effective responses.

From consumer research to advertising and public relations, community work to working for the police or a local authority, or as a teacher or in government, there are a multitude of roles available to geographers within this sector.

**“The great thing about geography is its  
diversity; from geophysics to human-  
environment interactions to geopolitics.”**

Thomas Davidson





## Thomas Davidson

*Business Development Manager, Certitude*

I studied geography at GCSE, A Level and through to BA Geography at Plymouth University. At university I ended up focusing on the social aspects of geography, especially socio-economics and urban demographics which have helped in my current job. I've always loved travelling and after a year working abroad I settled in London and started this position in January 2014.

### *What does your role entail?*

Certitude is a charity that supports people with mental health problems and learning disabilities across London. I work closely with caregivers and our frontline staff to write concise, effective proposals for new contracts and funding opportunities to further our work as a social care charity. These applications form the bulk of my work and to ensure the quality of these I regularly meet the people we support to explore how they experience our care, finding out what they like or don't like about our services so we can improve. I also volunteer with my charity, taking our service users cycling twice a month and organising social events. Helping people is really important to me and it's really satisfying when work that I've done has a positive impact on the lives of others.

### *How does geography help you in your everyday work?*

Geography teaches you so many skills that are relevant in the professional workplace. Analytical research, report writing, understanding connections – geography provides a great opportunity to learn these.

For me, understanding and creating connections between



varying pieces of information is really important. For example, how does the care the person receives in a care home in East London relate to a football course for young people with learning disabilities in central London? I have to be able to create links and discuss them effectively as this is a core attribute of geography.

*Advice to someone thinking of taking geography further*

The great thing about geography is its diversity. The skills you gain from a geography degree are transferrable to just about any role you can imagine. Regardless of whether you enjoy humanities, 'hard' sciences or more theoretical subjects, geography will have something for you.

*Other geographers working in this sector include:*

Advanced Skills Teacher

Chief Executive, Lake District National Park

Fundraising Officer, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

Her Majesty's Prison Service

Livelihoods Project Officer, Save the Children

New Business Officer, Macmillan Cancer Support

UN Strategy Branch, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Women's Outreach Worker, Together Women Project


## The Business World

*Where is the best location for a new company?  
How can you use limited resources effectively in  
a business?*

*What are the risks for a new business start-up?*

A geographer's skills of being able to work with statistics and quantitative approaches, synthesise information and hold a broader understanding of society can be very beneficial in the business world. This can be further developed if you undertake specialist training after your initial degree in geography, such as in financial services, accountancy or law. So whether working in risk analysis, financial services, auditing, as a lawyer for a commercial enterprise, a commercial location analysis, or running your own company geographers have the capacity to excel in all areas of business. You will find them in all parts of business life from the Square Mile to new start-ups, international corporations to small enterprises and business consultancy.

**“I also apply my knowledge to my work; for example health geographies or flooding are useful when working with life or property based insurance clients.”** Katherine Holdstock



## Katherine Holdstock

*Audit Associate, Insurance Department, EY*


Throughout school I decided to study the subjects I enjoyed the most, taking geography, history, law and maths for A Level. I really enjoyed geography at this level and this prompted my application for a BA in Geography at the University of Durham. I loved my degree and studied a good mixture of physical and human modules, including furthering my knowledge of hazards and risks, and also exploring new topics such as health geographies.

After university I went to work at Walt Disney World Resort in Florida as part of their cultural representative programme. This was an amazing experience, where I got to live and work with people from across the world. Once I returned home I decided to apply for graduate schemes and had been attracted to accounting and finance positions, which is what led me to EY, previously known as Ernst & Young.

### *What does your role entail?*

As an auditor I work on statutory audits, a requirement of most UK companies. This involves being out at the client's offices or factory, requesting information and gaining an understanding of the business and their financial statements, preparing a report as to whether the business's accounts show a 'true and fair' view of their financial position. I'm in the insurance department which is risk-based. A geographer is ideally suited to work in this department as their knowledge of processes and contexts allow a unique insight.





My role offers me the opportunity to study the ICAS (Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland) qualification which means that after I complete it I will gain a lot of options both in and out of my current firm.

*Advice to someone thinking of taking geography further*

Many people think that to work in business and finance you need to have a related degree. This is a myth. Most companies will employ people from a whole range of backgrounds and then train them up into a particular role. It's the soft skills that companies are looking for, and that's why geography can give you the edge. Within the subject, especially at university, you will develop team working skills, learn how to interview, use statistics and be able to write and report coherently and concisely.

*Other geographers working in this sector include:*

Chairman, Dotted Eyes Ltd

Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability Manager, Camelot

National Accounts Manager, Danone

Resource Manager, Personal Finance Education Group

Sales Manager, Jutexpo Ltd.

Senior Associate, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC)

Strategic Relations Manager, Shell International



*Running your own business*

Geography graduates are also highly successful at starting their own businesses, which span smaller ‘Dragons’ Den’ investments to larger multimillion pound businesses.

Examples include:

**Harrison Woods:** a geography student at Manchester University who won investment when he pitched his Primal Parking business on Dragons’ Den.

**Michael Acton Smith:** co-founder of firebox.com the online gift website and Mind Candy, the company behind the Moshi Monsters brand. He studied geography at the University of Birmingham.

**Richard Reed:** co-founder of Innocent Drinks with its range of smoothies, juices and veg-pots. He studied geography at St. John’s College at the University of Cambridge.

**Wayne Hemingway:** one of the founders of the fashion brand Red or Dead who studied geography and town planning at University College London and through Hemingway Design is involved in fashion and design including designing affordable housing.



## Travel, Tourism and Leisure

*Where is the best destination for a holiday and how can I help people choose?*

*How can you share knowledge of people and places with others?*

*Where are the new markets for international tourism?*

Turn a geographer's love for travel and experiencing the uniqueness of different places into a career with a role in the travel, tourism and leisure sector. This might span working within airlines or travel companies, running educational fieldwork and expeditions, working overseas or helping run a wide range of leisure activities and services.

A geographer's natural curiosity and knowledge about different parts of the world, as well as an enthusiasm for helping people and good interpersonal skills will help you succeed in this area of work.

*“My fieldwork and travel experiences and the people I've met have had a profound effect on my life and I knew that I wanted to work in a job with a travel aspect.”* Jill Kennedy



### Jill Kennedy

Assistant Supervisor, Trailfinders

I've always had a fascination with the world around me, from reading as a child and discovering far-off wonders and different cultures and ways of life.

I studied geography throughout school and then went on to study a BSc in

Geography at Queens University in Belfast.

I studied both physical and human geography and the latter is where my interest really lay. A big part of the attraction of a geography degree was the fieldtrips and being already interested in travelling abroad, this appealed to me greatly.

I also travelled when I was in school and university to Kenya, America, India and Canada.

#### *What does your role entail?*

Trailfinders is a multi-award winning independent travel company that specialises in tailor-made holidays. To date we have arranged travel for more than 12.5 million people. My role involves talking with people about their travel plans and helping them turn their ideas into reality; it feels like getting paid to do my hobby!

I started in our worldwide department in our Belfast travel centre and then moved to join our specialist Bespoke Touring Department. As an Assistant Supervisor the majority of my day is spent with clients assisting them with their travel plans but I also run training and development with my colleagues as well as doing admin to ensure everything runs smoothly. Of course there's the toughest part of the job where I have to go to our destinations and inspect our hotels!





*How does geography help you in your everyday work?*

A good geographical knowledge is useful in my job to ensure trips are planned in a logistically sensible way. My extensive experience of overseas geography and my resulting knowledge, enthusiasm and passion for travel and different parts of the world is always appreciated by clients. The love for travel and geography tend to go hand in hand and the organisational and analytical skills you learn during a geography degree will certainly be put to good use in a career in travel.

*Other geographers working in this sector include*

Conservation Projects Coordinator, Zoological Society of London, Indonesia

Educational Travel Consultant

Expedition Manager, Wilderness Expertise

Head of Centre, Field Studies Council

Incident Response Manager, World Challenge

Managing Director, MyDestination Galicia

Travel Writer and Broadcaster



## The Built Environment



*Where should we build new homes and businesses?  
How can regeneration improve the quality of life in our neighbourhoods ?  
How can utilities and infrastructure be developed effectively?*

The places we live in, where we study and work, where we spend our leisure time, and how we move around them are the settings for the interplay of many different human and physical processes. Geographers can understand these different perspectives and their approach can be an invaluable tool in helping to plan new neighbourhoods, and protect or regenerate existing ones. From a small scale housing consultant to an international construction company, from a planning department to landscape management, transport planning to environmental consultancy, you could develop a career focused on where and how people live.

*“I love knowing how the world works, why it works the way it does, how people influence it and how everything around you happens for a reason.”* Anup Patel





### **Anup Patel**

*Programme Manager for Europe, Middle East, Africa and Russia, CBRE*

I studied BSc Geography with Economics at London School of Economics, and then to further enhance my skills studied a Masters in Project and Enterprise at University College London.

My specific area of interest in geography has always been urban economics, how cities develop/decline and the role economics theory plays in this. Prior to my current job I worked for Mace, an international construction and consultancy company working on the London Olympic Games and primary school expansion projects.

#### *What does your role entail?*

CBRE are a global real estate services adviser and I work for a global technology client who occupies office space around the world. As their business changes, their office needs change. Once they know they need to vacate, expand or acquire a new office, we get involved to manage the process for them.

A typical day for me involves travelling the world from my base in London. I have regular calls with project teams in Rome, Madrid, Dubai, Paris, and Riyadh to name a few. My role is to make sure our local teams are following the client's process, provide guidance for when there are issues they cannot resolve, report to the client on progress, risks and costs, and finally and most importantly enable the client to make quick informed decisions on a global portfolio of projects.



*How does geography help you in your everyday work?*

Working across countries, with people from all over the world presents many challenges, ranging from scheduling meetings in different time zones and being mindful of national/religious holidays, to more complex legal and tax issues, and having an understanding of the world certainly helps. It has allowed me to be empathetic to the different cultures I'm working with and allows me to be strategic when looking at the global needs of clients and how we compliment them.

*Advice to someone thinking of taking geography further*

There are many geographers in the built environment industry (construction and real estate) and many have jobs similar to mine in project management or surveying. Many firms take geographers on and train them in-house, or even pay for you to complete a further Master's degree. We can analyse information and provide reasoned conclusions and solutions when required, and can work in all parts of a team effectively. Being a good project manager is a rarity and geographers are some of the best.

*Other geographers working in this sector include*

Assistant Planner, Turley

Chartered Surveyor, Ministry of Defence

Commercial Assistant, Royal British Legion

Events Executive, Historic Royal Palaces

Graduate Land Surveyor, Kemp Chartered Land and Engineering Surveyors

Property Manager, Foxtons

Regeneration Research Assistant, Aspire Housing Group

Senior Transport Consultant, Mouchel

Sustainability Analyst, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development



## Geographical Information Systems

*Where and how do you locate and build infrastructure?  
Can you understand the economic and social value of  
data about places?*

*How do you develop new business opportunities  
through geographical data?*

It is estimated that 10% of the British economy is reliant on the use of geographic data collected by the Ordnance Survey and the Geographical Information Systems (GIS) company Esri UK is part of a \$1 billion international business based on geo-spatial data. Geography and geographical information is at the heart of decision making; from planning to utilities; emergency services to defence; business and government; planning new sports stadia; and disaster preparedness to environmental planning. Geographical information and its application powers the sat-nav used to deliver your pizza order, the multimillion pound businesses which determine risk and insurance, and the maps available to all of us on our smart phones. This is a growing industry, both in the UK and overseas, which has geography and geographers working at its heart.



The Society's schools work is supported by the Ordnance Survey



The Society's Geography Ambassadors programme is supported by Esri UK





### Alice Duff

*GIS Consultant, Technical Pre-sales,  
Esri UK*

Geography was my favourite subject at school. I decided to study for a BSc in Environmental Science, at the University of East Anglia, which is a more focused physical geography degree. While I was studying I took a couple of GIS modules. I knew

I wanted to pursue GIS so applied to do an MSc in GIS at the University of Edinburgh.

I always knew that I wanted to work for Esri UK and was lucky enough to get a job there after finishing my MSc.

#### *What does your role entail?*

I work in the technical pre-sales department, mainly focusing on public sector engagement and in particular Government. I work within a wider group known as the 'Customer Success Group' which ensures that pre-existing customers are making the best use out of the software they have access to.

#### *How does geography help you in your everyday work?*

My geographical education and technical skills have opened many doors for me. Not just my job at Esri UK, but it has also given me the opportunity to volunteer for MapAction – a non-governmental organisation which provides GIS capability in times of humanitarian emergency, and I was actually deployed to the Philippines last year to assist with the Typhoon Haiyan response.



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*Advice to someone thinking of taking geography further*

Don't be afraid to take a job you're overqualified for if you know you really want to work for a specific organisation. The first position I took at Esri was designed as a placement for students who were currently studying, but I took this position to get my foot in the door at a company I knew I wanted to work at. Having the few months as an intern allowed me to be ahead of the game when it came to the interviews for my current position. It's also important to make sure you have other activities on your CV that will separate you from the many other graduates out there.



**Kieran Ross**

*Technical Specialist in Operations  
Business Change and Innovation,  
Ordnance Survey*

I had an inspirational geography teacher at school that got me hooked on the subject. This led me to taking A Level geography and later studying it and graduating from Plymouth University.

*What does your role entail?*

I support the Ordnance Survey's Technical Consultants to produce software and tools for work areas such as Remote Sensing and Data Enhancement, which will help aid with the capture of geographic data. I aid the creation of capture tools that allow us to collect data which is then integrated into our existing Geographic Information Systems, and other tools that monitor the delivery of the work produced by these areas.



*How does geography help you in your everyday work?*

Working at the national mapping agency for Great Britain, geography underpins everything we do and studying it has given me a fantastic set of skills to draw upon. From the core skills such as data analysis (knowing what makes up various types of geographic data and how it can be used) and GIS, to the softer skills such as problem solving utilising many different perspectives, and being able to clearly communicate, these are all skills I draw upon daily.

*Advice to someone thinking about taking geography further*

Do it! Because of the breadth of the subject you are able to focus on the aspects that you find most interesting. This keeps things fresh while still developing a good skill set that gives you a great base from which to delve into many varied career paths.

*Others working in this sector include*

Analyst, Defence Geographic Centre

Crime and Disorder Advisor, MAPCITE

Data Collector, Ordnance Survey

Geographic Information Analyst, Metropolitan Police

GIS Analyst, Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency

Hydrologist, WS Atkins

Hydrometry and Telemetry Officer, Environment Agency

Land Requirements Geospatial Officer, Ministry of Defence

Training and Education Services Manager, Esri UK



## The Physical Environment

*How can homes, businesses and livelihoods be protected from flooding and natural hazards?*

*How do accurate weather forecasts help farmers, businesses and tourism?*

*What are the opportunities and challenges in our landscapes and how can we manage them?*

Geography has a unique role in helping people understand, prepare for and respond to events in the physical world be it winter snows; flooding or tectonic processes. Geography's whole system approach links across the landscape, atmosphere, oceans and biosphere and how they shape, support and at times threaten our welfare. Whether working in hydrology, meteorology, conservation, ecology, environmental engineering, surveying, hazard response and management, or agriculture, there are a wealth of career opportunities at the interface between people and their environment.

**“I have always had a fascination with the world around me and studying geography helped me to develop a wider understanding of physical environments and the people who inhabit them.”** Rebecca Shewry



## Rebecca Shewry

*Weather Producer, Sky News*

I really enjoyed studying geography at school and my teachers encouraged me to continue through A Level to university. I had a particular interest and flare for weather, geomorphology and glaciology and so studied a BSc Physical Geography course at the University of Reading.

Throughout my course I developed a real love for all things weather and climate and this led me to do a Masters in Applied Meteorology and Climatology at the University of Birmingham.

I was very fortunate to get my first job in weather at the Met Office where I worked as a Meteorologist for 7 years producing weather forecasts for a variety of customers. From here I moved to my current role as a Weather Producer for Sky News.

### *What does your role entail?*

My job requires me to analyse weather data from all over the world and produce forecasts that can be broadcast on Sky television. I take complex weather information and make it accessible, so that the viewing public know how the weather will affect their daily lives. This may be as simple as reminding people to take an umbrella out in times of wet weather, but it's particularly important in times of severe weather. For example, when heavy snow is forecast, I warn people of the risks, allowing them to make informed decisions as to whether journeys are completely necessary, or whether the safest option is to stay at home.



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*How does geography help you in your everyday work?*

Studying geography has given me a broad range of transferable skills, which I use every day. I use observational and analytical skills to interpret weather data on both a local and global scale. I then communicate that information to the general public ensuring it is at a suitable level for the intended audience.

*Advice to someone thinking of taking geography further*

Geography will give you a fantastic understanding of the world around you. It also provides a wide range of transferable skills, such as team-working and problem-solving, which will make you very desirable to a future employer.

*Others in this sector include*

Air Pollution Specialist, Local Authority

Australia Oil and Gas Team Manager, Deloitte

Catastrophe Risk Analyst, Faber

Costal Technical Specialist, Environment Agency

Coastal Technical Specialist, Golder Associates Ltd (UK)

Scientist, Rivers and Coastal Environments, Atkins

Soil Mechanics Scientist, GNS Science

Technical Specialist: Groundwater and Contaminated Land,  
Environment Agency

*Where is the evidence that underpins political decision making?*

*What are the geographical impacts of economic or social change?*

*What will the long-term implications be of changes to our economy, society and environment?*

Geographers' understanding of complex global relationships makes them perfectly suited for working in all areas of government, both within the UK and overseas.

If you have an interest in working on issues within and between different communities at a variety of scales then working within government will offer many important challenges. These challenges include deprivation, accessibility, sustainability, waste and resource management, and service provision. In addition, many academic geographers are working alongside government so that their research can help policy makers better understand issues spanning disasters and risk, migration and environmental change, the future of manufacturing, flooding and coastal defences and implications of climate change.

“Geography is everyday life. It covers such a broad spectrum of issues on a local to a global scale. There are so many linkages between topics and it keeps me on my toes as the world is constantly changing.” Briony Coulson





## **Briony Coulson**

*Senior Policy Advisor, EU Climate Mitigation, Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC)*

I studied Geography at GCSE and A Level and went onto graduate in 2007 with a 2.1 in Geography with Ecology (BSc Hons) from Sussex University.


After university I secured a placement as a Policy Intern with the British Ecological Society after I graduated. This led to me securing my first paid job with the RSPB as a Conservation Officer.

Whilst I was at the RSPB, the UK created the Climate Change Act. I felt inspired and proud that the UK was the first country in the world to implement a law to reduce carbon emissions. In 2010, I was successful in securing my first job working for DECC on an embryonic climate mitigation technology called Carbon Capture and Storage. I have since been very lucky to have had the privilege of working with countries such as China, South Africa and Mexico to teach them about policy measures to reduce their carbon emissions, in particular about emissions trading schemes, learning from the EU's experience.

### *What does your job entail?*

In 2011, EU leaders agreed an objective to limit a rise in global temperature to below 2°C and that we should reduce our greenhouse gas emissions in the EU by 80-95% by 2050. I currently work on the EU negotiations for the EU's 2030 climate change target where the UK is calling for at least a 40% reduction in domestic greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. This target will be agreed by all EU leaders, including our





Prime Minister, and will also form our contribution to the UN's international climate change negotiations next year.

I specifically lead on the UK's engagement strategy which identifies opportunities to engage with other countries, NGOs and businesses to influence them on the UK's position to secure an ambitious greenhouse gas reduction target for 2030.

What I love about my job is how many other policies are linked to my work from EU energy security, our domestic climate change targets to foreign policy. I also get to work with a lot of fantastic and committed people and engage with others across Europe, including Ministers and other influential people.

*How does geography help you in your everyday work?*

Studying geography has given me a breadth of knowledge and an understanding of a wide number of environmental and global issues which I apply to my job every day. The analytical skills I learnt at university have been invaluable as I am required to digest a lot of complex information, on economic modelling, written statements, and policy papers and turn them into a communication document that is understandable by others. Having a scientific understanding of climate change science from my degree, has given me credibility when communicating with stakeholders. It really helps to know your subject and therefore be able to remind people why we are tackling climate change!

*What advice would you give others?*

Follow your passion and get some experience! My volunteering was invaluable and without it I don't believe I would be where I am today.

Never stop learning. Continuing your development will only help you succeed whether that's learning a second language



or engaging in new topics at evening lectures or seminars or undertaking further education.

Don't give up. I never thought I would be where I am today but I was determined work in a job where I felt I was making a difference and I didn't stop trying. Nothing is impossible.

*Other geographers also working in this sector include*

Assistant Consultant, International Development, Ecorys UK

Civil Servant, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Director of the Mayor's Office of Housing Recovery Operations, City of New York

Flood Incident Management Team Leader, Environment Agency

Head of Flood Hazard Research Centre, University of Middlesex

Property Information Manager, Barrow Borough Council

Public Communications Manager, Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and Economics

Senior Planner, Department of Communities and Local Government

Social Development Advisor, the Department for International Development

UK Location, Engagement and Monitoring Officer, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs



## Further support

The Society is the home of geography and can help and support you throughout your studies and career.

**Join us:** The easiest way to gain the full range of support is to become a Young Geographer (for 14-24 year olds) and remember to include your membership on your UCAS personal statement or CV for a job application.

After your degree you can become a Postgraduate Fellow if you are continuing your studies or join as a Fellow of the Society (21+).

For further details on how to join please see [www.rgs.org/joinus](http://www.rgs.org/joinus).

**Details of undergraduate courses:** For more details of the range of geography courses offered by universities and how you can enhance your application to Higher Education see [www.rgs.org/studygeography](http://www.rgs.org/studygeography).

**Help promote geography to the next generation:** For anyone wanting to get more involved in geography and help inspire the next generation of geographers while studying at university you can become a Geography Ambassador. For more details see [www.rgs.org/ambassadors](http://www.rgs.org/ambassadors).

**Advice and support for fieldwork, overseas expeditions and Gap Year travels:** The Society's Geography Outdoors team provides a wealth of support and advice for individual and groups planning fieldwork, overseas expeditions and gap year travels. For more details see [www.rgs.org/go](http://www.rgs.org/go).



The Royal Geographical Society (with IBG).

We are the learned society and professional body for geography and geographers. Founded in 1830, we are a world centre for geography: supporting research, education, expeditions and fieldwork, and promoting public engagement and informed enjoyment of our world.

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