

File name: NAW - Laurie and Jeff_mixdown.mp3

Moderator questions in Bold, Respondents in Regular text.

KEY: Unable to decipher = (inaudible + timecode), **Phonetic spelling** (ph) + timecode), **Missed word** = (mw + timecode), **Talking over each other** = (talking over each other + timecode).

(TC: 00:00:05)

Jeff: Hey everyone thanks for joining us today, we're here with a YFF podcast. I'm Jeff, I'm currently part of the Youth Futures group youth panel and I'm part of the creating opportunities group but also here with Lauren.

(TC: 00:00:22)

Lauren: I'm Lauren I'm also a Future Voices group member and we're today to talk about apprenticeships. I myself am currently midway through a level six degree apprenticeship working as an environmental consultant within a construction company.

(TC: 00:00:37)

Jeff: Sweet. So yes, Lauren is our apprenticeship expert, I'm currently on a graduate scheme so don't have much experience of apprenticeships but I'll be, sort of, facilitating the interview. So cool let's get stuck, I think the first question I probably wanna ask is how did you become aware that apprenticeships are even an option? I think a lot of people aren't even aware that they can do an apprenticeship, so, like, any info around that would be really cool.

(TC: 00:01:05)

Lauren: So there's kind of two ways that I knew about apprenticeships, first of all, they were mentioned although kind of off-hand in kind of careers assemblies in my sixth form and I knew some people who had done kind of your NVQs and things like that at level four so leaving full time at sixteen and doing an apprenticeship instead of your A Levels. And then a member of my family actually did an apprenticeship as a mature student, so my aunt got her business management apprenticeship which was paid for by her work when she was looking to upskill herself within her industry. So that's kind of how I found out about them and yes, kind of decided that was maybe something I'd like to do.

(TC: 00:02:03)

Jeff: Okay, cool, that's really cool and I guess it's a double kicker that, so you found out about it

from, sort of, school and family but in terms of I guess what made you choose an apprenticeship over, sort of, university or other career options what was that, sort of, full process, how did you make that final decision?

(TC: 00:02:22)

Lauren: Yes, so I think I've always kind of not struggled but maybe not as enjoyed as much kind of being in a classroom setting, so I did geography at GCSE and A Level and very much enjoyed our kind of practical elements of that, things that weren't kind of sit and listen essentially. And I kind of quite enjoyed going out and finding out things for myself so doing kind of additional reading. So the way an apprenticeship kind of brought itself to me was through being able to do more of that basically whilst of course being able to support myself independently, getting paid and also within kind of the industry I've chosen to go into construction I think it's incredibly beneficial. After I'd done some work experience placements quite a lot of people I'd spoken to were, like, 'Getting out on-site is the most important thing to kind of progressing yourself.' So being actually where the action is and the way that the apprenticeships were kind of advertised to me once I started looking for the, on companies' websites and on the gov.uk find an apprenticeship website. I think the way the job descriptions were written really appealed to me.

(TC: 00:03:45)

Jeff: Okay, nice, nice. And then you mentioned at the start just then, that you're in the construction industry, I think that's a cool industry to be in, I guess, what inspired you to pursue that career in construction number one and number two especially as a female? I'm assuming it's a male dominated industry but correct me if I'm wrong.

(TC: 00:04:10)

Lauren: It's definitely getting better but, yes, I think we would still say it's, yes, traditionally a male environment that I work in. So I've always, kind of, been a big environmental advocate, I'm really interested in how the spaces we live in are designed and how that affects how we ourselves live. So a really good example of that, that I, kind of, use, is the ULEZ zoning in London. That has been designed and it's been put in place and all the infrastructure around that has been done to support people living a lower-carbon lifestyle with lower-emission cars. So things like that, they're in place, some of them you wouldn't even notice, kind of, walking round, how your pavement's designed to make you safe and make you walk more, always really interested me. So I applied to quite a few apprenticeships, kind of, within the construction industry just to see what it was like and be able to talk to professionals. The way my role specifically that I'm working in now really appealed to me was the fact it's an environment and sustainability apprenticeship, so as well as managing kind of environmental compliance within my company, making sure we're not breaking kind of any environmental law we also do a lot of social value work which is engaging with the local community. I know I've done things - we've done tree planting, we do beach cleans as a company to kind of give back because I'm sure everyone they think, 'Oh roadworks.' And it's not necessarily a positive view that they then have so we really try as an industry to kind of help the people that we may be inconveniencing through our work. In terms of kind of females in construction, Women in

Construction and Engineering's a really good group that does a lot of work around that if anyone wants to check it out.

I think I find that it is interesting I think specifically within my company we have a lot of support, so there's development programmes that are specifically tailored for women by women which is really good I've had a good experience with that. And I'm also a fairness, inclusion and respect ambassador within my project and that's a programme that's run by the Supply Chain Sustainability School that I think is really helpful with that. One thing I will say is although I think most people when I say I work in construction they think, like, I'm a bricklayer or I'm kind of doing tarmacking or something like that, and absolutely not to say that those aren't valued professions and we wouldn't be able to build roads without it and I really think manual trades are something that we have a massive skill shortage in at the moment, but all of the other jobs we've seen a lot more interest in, especially among young people. Once they understand that there's actually whatever you're interested in you can do within construction, we have marketing teams, we have videographers, we have digital and some of the things that they're doing on my project with the IT absolutely astound me. So all of our computer science grads that we have come in, I really think constructions a great industry to get started in kind of whoever you are and whatever you're interested in.

(TC: 00:08:02)

Jeff: Okay, cool, nice. I think I'm definitely someone in that last bucket that you mentioned that thought construction was just mainly bricklayer things like that, so yes that's definitely been insightful. I guess just going in with that little bit more you mentioned, sort of, the ULEZ zoning and some of the projects there and then on your projects some of the, sort of, like, digital things people are doing, so I guess for you personally can you tell us a bit about your day to day responsibilities in your role as an apprentice? I think it would be good to like you said to get, like, a different view of what you can actually be doing as an apprentice.

(TC: 00:08:40)

Lauren: Yes, so my apprenticeship is a level six apprenticeship so I'll come out at the end of it hopefully with a BSc in Environmental Science. I study for that one day a week so that's my 20% off-the-job training, which if you're familiar with apprenticeships you'll hear that term a lot. In terms of my other four days I am primarily working in the office at the moment although role-dependent there are definitely work-at-home options which I know, kind of, people are really keen on. I work within a team, so I'm quite well supported I always have someone to go to, like, if I have a question, obviously being newer to the industry, that was really helpful when I was starting out. My day-to-day for my role is definitely-, I would say it's about 60% in the office and about 40%, kind of, outside on-site, so I do a lot of our data collection and reports. We have within infrastructure and highways there is a quarterly reporting procedure where we have to submit our carbon footprint as a site, I help (TC 00:10:00) collect that data and also feed that back to the project teams, so kind of before Christmas I was totting it all up I said, 'Okay, we've used a lot more steel this quarter than we have previously and that's one of our most carbon

intensive materials.' And then I kind of get justifications from the project team, why did we have to use that much, is there any way we could kind of think, design better to use less, things like that.

I also manage some of our community relations, so if you do have a complaint about what we're doing I work with our customer relations team to basically check against the data that we collect for the noise and vibration we're producing on-site and seeing if that is at a high enough level that it's likely to cause concern to nearby residents. So I have kind of a tracker that says, 'Oh, oh no we're being a bit too loud we better check what we're doing to see if we can stop that.' Because no one wants waking up at 8am in the morning with massive dumper coming past their window which is especially because I'm working in a kind of inner city job at the moment is very important. We've also got if you're looking to go kind of into an environmental field we've got things around cultural heritage and archaeology is big in the construction industry because as I've learned you can't build a road over archaeological remains. First of all because they're very interesting to look at and I talk to our archaeologists all the time they're like, 'We've found something really exciting.' And I was like, 'Oh cool.' But also you can't lay a foundation if the ground isn't flat. Ecology again is a massive thing, if you're working on a green field site or near a river, working with the professional body the Environment Agency or SEPA if you're in Scotland and National Resource of Wales to make sure we are kind of compliant and not just compliant but kind of raising the bar within what we're doing as per their guidance and making sure all relevant permits and exemptions are in place. That we're managing our waste, that we're managing our resources and we're managing our people as well.

(TC: 00:12:34)

Jeff: Okay, nice. It seems like your plate's quite full, there's a lot of different stuff to do I guess, so before we go to our last question I guess just on that you mentioned, sort of, 20% of your time is studying the rest is working how have you found, sort of, balancing that, is it hard, is it easy?

(TC: 00:12:52)

Lauren: Yes, it's definitely something you do want to think about, I always say, 'People sometimes see an apprenticeship as, kind of, an easy route out and it's not.' Anyone who thinks that I want to dispute you of that notion immediately, it is a lot of work and I think that if you do manage your time and get support-, I get really good support from both my university lecturers and, kind of, my team on-site to make sure I'm not overworking myself, that I'm getting everything done, that I'm meeting my deadlines. I do think that's really important, but yes, we've got on-site quite a few apprentices as well, aside from me, and we, kind of, support each other, so we've got people within our QS and finance teams who are on apprenticeships at the moment as well as in our materials labs and within our engineering team. So you're, kind of, put in together to help each other out.

(TC: 00:13:57)

Jeff: Yes, I think having that kind of that, sort of, community aspect is super important especially where you're, sort of, like, a young person going into, sort of, like, a working environment where there may be a lot of older people that you may not relate to in that sense, so yes, having that community could be really helpful.

(TC: 00:14:13)

Lauren: Yes, and I think one of the beauties of an apprenticeship is that you can, kind of, choose what you're doing within the workplace. I mean, if I have a question, as long as it's within my role, I've spent time with the engineering team and I've been like, 'Okay, for my role I need to know how you do this, this and this.' And I basically get to do quite a few shadowing placements which maybe you might do if you're at university and you come for a summer placement or industrial placement. But getting to do those within my role and actually finding out how everyone else works in relation to myself has been really helpful and that's how I've been able to, kind of, meet and build relationships with a lot of people within the industry.

(TC: 00:15:00)

Jeff: Yes, that makes sense. You've definitely sold apprenticeships to me, I'm going to be forwarding this interview to a couple of my younger cousins, get them, sort of, plugged in.

(TC: 00:15:12)

Lauren: It's never too late.

(TC: 00:15:12)

Jeff: Yes. So our final question, I mean we've spoken a lot about apprenticeships some of the roles, like, all the context but I think it would be good to get a few tips, so, sort of, I guess what would be your three top tips for someone that's considering an apprenticeship?

(TC: 00:15:31)

Lauren: Definitely you need to restructure your opinions towards rejection, apprenticeships are incredibly competitive before I got this role I applied to 30 or 35 apprenticeships within kind of my last year of A Levels. Some of those I got interviews, for some of them I didn't to basically finally get a role that I wanted. I definitely think something that did help in my applications is that I'd had a job previously and even though it kind of wasn't in anyway related, I used to be a barista. It wasn't really related to construction but I could prove the soft skills that I had the teamwork elements, things like meeting deadlines, punctuality, making sure that you actually have concrete examples of how you can demonstrate any skills that are asked for and has been really helpful, And yes, those come from either placements

you've done, extracurriculars or specific things you've done within education, just always making sure you have examples for questions I feel really helped me. And then I think the last one would just be choose what you love, if you know that you want to go to uni, you want that learning environment, you want the university experience do that, there's nothing wrong with doing that. If you want to start working I mean I've got friends that I've met who are within the service industry, they have worked their way up working at a supermarket and that's what they enjoy doing. And it's just I feel like right now there's a lot of pressure on young people to have, like, the perfect career and that doesn't exist, so choose what kind of you know and choose what you like because even though I am an apprentice and I spend all of my time working, studying in do that because I like it. So definitely yes, do what you want.

(TC: 00:17:58)

Jeff: Cool, yes, I definitely agree with that last point you've definitely got to do what you enjoy. There's a lot of pressure right now so yes, if you can find something you like definitely go for it. Alright, cool, I think that wraps up our interview, thanks so much for joining us Lauren.

(TC: 00:18:14)

Lauren: No, no it's absolutely fine.

(TC: 00:18:16)

Jeff: I think stay tuned for some more Youth Futures podcasts coming soon. Thank you Lauren.

(TC: 00:18:21)

Lauren: Absolutely, thank you.