As a Chartered Town Planner I was already increasingly involved in environmental sustainability issues and had given some thought to working towards a diploma or masters in environmental studies, but couldn't imagine how I could do this and continue in full-time employment. I then discovered that the University of Strathclyde provided a unique opportunity - it was the only Scottish university that offered the opportunity to study towards an environmental studies masters through open access, enabling me to remain in full-time employment while undertaking two or three MSc modules a year.

The modular nature of the course meant that my employer was relaxed that I could undertake a course of study that supported my work responsibilities while equipping me to meet future challenges, and not detracting from the responsibilities of my "day job"! The course has driven my professional development over the past four years and has helped me progress from Principal Officer to Team Leader level within my organisation, enabling me to meet a long-standing ambition to move into a role more strongly related to environmental sustainability.

The course attracts students from all sorts of different backgrounds and the interaction between those who already work in environmentally-based jobs and those new to this sphere benefits all of us. In my case, I enjoyed the fresh perspectives brought to the course by those new to the environmental sphere, learned a lot from others who had experience in areas new to me, and had an opportunity to share with others my own experiences from twenty years in the land use planning profession. This type of interaction is extremely important preparation for vocational life after DLCS and is undoubtedly one of the main reasons graduates are so successful in finding work quickly after graduation.

From Day One I found the Centre and its staff - particularly Peter, Elsa and Morag - to be extremely supportive and friendly. I've had the added benefit of enjoying being part of the student community for not only one year but four, meeting new friends and having lots of new and enriching experiences along the way. I couldn't have guessed that a chance decision to do a short course would have ended up transforming my outlook on life and re-invigorating my career so dramatically! However you undertake this course - by open access, part time or full time - I hope you enjoy the challenge as much as I have!

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"The course has driven my personal development... I hope you enjoy the challenge as much as I have"