

Climate change gives NE bright hopes in green student awards

Two of the most enterprising students in the North East have won places in the final of a national environmental competition.

Mark Watson (21), an international management student from Banchory, and Tracey Elrick (35), a sustainable environmental management student from Aberdeen, both qualified for the Scottish final of the Environmental Placement Programme (EPP), organised by the Business Environment Partnership (BEP), after finishing top of the North East heats.

Mark and Tracey each received a cheque for £100 from Stewart Stevenson, Minister for Transport and Climate Change. They will be joined by five students from other Scottish regional heats at the national final in Edinburgh on 10 September when prizes will be presented by First Minister Alex Salmond.

During his eight week placement at Aberdeenshire Council, Mark was tasked with assessing the area's vulnerabilities to climate change and compiled a report that will form the basis of a climate change adaptation strategy for the region.

Peter McRae of Aberdeenshire Council commented: "It was great to see Mark growing into his job and bringing enthusiasm and a sense of enquiry to his role. The EPP project fitted neatly into the Council's adaptation strategy and the support offered by the BEP through the programme was a great incentive to get involved."

Mark added: "I'm very happy to be involved in the project. It has given me a clear line of thinking regarding my future career."

At the same time, Tracey was working with Total Waste Management Alliance to assess the carbon footprint of onshore versus offshore treatment of drill cuttings, discovering that offshore processes have a smaller environmental impact. Treating cuttings at source could create annual savings of £2.8 million.

James Shannon, Environmental Team Leader at TWMA, commented: "My expectations regarding this placement have been far exceeded. This was an exceptionally challenging project and the outcome has been outstanding."

Tracey said: "It was a fantastic opportunity and I'm very surprised to win. I've had huge support from BEP and TWMA throughout the project."

Jo Kissick, Sustainable Development Co-ordinator for Shell U.K. Limited, said: "As a practitioner in sustainable development, I was impressed with both the diversity and content of the environmental projects presented by each of the shortlisted candidates. The range of environmental initiatives implemented by these students will undoubtedly facilitate greater cost

savings and the greening of businesses in Scotland, but they also importantly support the Government's aspirations for managing climate change and sustainable development". The EPP is sponsored by Shell U.K. Limited, the Scottish Government and SEPA.

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