

Habitat ECan

A bi-monthly update on Environment Canterbury people, activities and opportunities.



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Mid Life Career Challenge

Turning 40 was the catalyst for Darren Leftley's move to the other side of the world. The water scientist was holidaying in Africa with wife Sarah when the eureka moment hit. "I thought I need a change; something different." Returning home, he decided to leave his job at British Waterways where he had worked for 15 years following his MSc. The crux was finding another job and somewhere great to live.

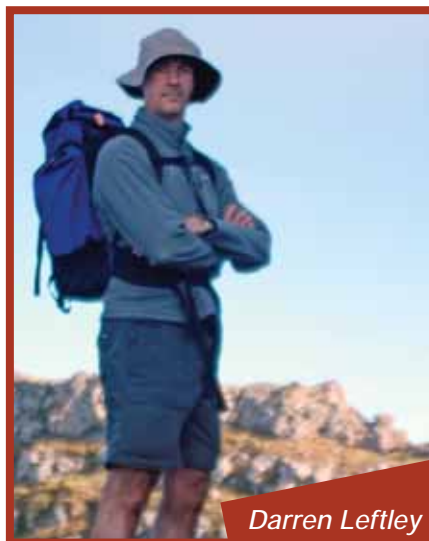
"We had been to New Zealand twice before and Sarah and I had both thought that if we were to live and work anywhere else, it would be Christchurch."

Seeing an Environment Canterbury senior hydrological scientist position advertised was perfect timing. After completing the online forms, Darren was shortlisted and asked to take part in a panel telephone interview. "Not being able to see the interviewers was quite difficult." His next interview via Skype technology was much easier. "It felt more comfortable". Psychometric tests followed and a request for technical reports. After applying for the position in July, Darren was finally offered the job in October. It took the couple until March this year to finalise their arrangements and leave the UK.

Despite the "protracted process" getting his job, Darren is full of praise for Environment Canterbury's handling of his move.

"HR was really good. Any queries I had Jo and Sue responded really promptly. They were really on the ball."

Being able to wait until Sarah, a teacher, had worked out a term's notice was another plus. "Tim (Darren's boss) was



Darren Leftley

really flexible; it would have been too stressful to make the move on my own."

Being picked up at the airport by his new boss and provided with a car while settling in were gestures Darren appreciated. "Those sort of touches made me feel it was the right decision; that we were really wanted here."

Nearly two months in, Darren says he's already feeling comfortable within the organisation.

"So far it's been really positive. Environment Canterbury has given me the impression that they are really professional and also flexible; willing to go that extra bit further. It could have been quite difficult, but they have actually made it work really well and overall it's been surprisingly easy."

Currently renting a house in Mt Pleasant, Darren is enjoying the cycle to work and the couple are looking forward to skiing this winter.

For more information on current vacancies at Environment Canterbury please log on to: www.ecan.govt.nz
If you would like to be taken off our database list, please email habitatecan@ecan.govt.nz
Environment Canterbury, 58 Kilmore Street, Christchurch 8013

Welcome to our new readers!

Nearly 700 university students met with Environment Canterbury staff at our stands at recent Career Fairs at Lincoln, Canterbury and Otago Universities.

We welcome our new readers to Habitat!

This publication aims to give you the inside on what it's like to work at Environment Canterbury. You are welcome to pass the newsletter link onto other students who want to know more about our Regional Council.

We saw an increase in the numbers meeting with us at Otago, and found our Lincoln and Canterbury sites were as popular as ever.

Give us a call if there is anything specific you want to ask. We look forward to considering applications from you in the future for vacancies at Environment Canterbury.

www.ecan.govt.nz/jobs

Trading Places

One of the advantages of working for Environment Canterbury is the option of secondment or “job shadowing” in some positions.

Natasha Sitarz and Melanie Putze are two staff members who have taken advantage of this approach.

Melanie was surprised by an offer to join another section temporarily, while in Natasha’s case she raised the issue of secondment when being interviewed for the job.

Melanie currently works as a Customer Services Advisory Officer, but for the past six weeks has been helping out the Contaminated Sites team. Working as a researcher, she is getting an insight into the issues the Contaminated Sites team faces. “In my position as an advisory officer we get a really wide understanding of the organisation.” But she admits working more closely with one section is yielding further revelations.

“There are benefits for me in understanding their systems, the types of information they gather and what they do in general. It’s also good to build up new relationships with another team.” Melanie’s role has involved researching historical sites that may be contaminated in Christchurch. “I’ve only just broken the surface, trying to find out how best to get further sources of information.”

Melanie is close to the end of her secondment and has no regrets about trading places for a while. “I’ve learnt new skills; basic research skills. It’s a completely different type of job to what I do in Customer Services and the big benefit of being in another team is that it gives you new perspectives and a new understanding of Environment Canterbury.”

She won’t be returning for long however. Melanie takes up a position as a Consents Investigating Officer shortly.

Natasha is into the third week of a three month secondment with the Consents section.

Usually resident within the Policy and Planning section, Natasha actively sought out secondment possibilities when being interviewed for the job. “It was something I thought would be good for me.”



Natasha Sitarz



Melanie Putze

The Regional Planner says spending two weeks with the Operations team within the Consents Section has opened her eyes to how much is involved in processing a consent application.

“They do the receipting of consent applications when they first come in, the administration work around notification, decisions, transfers and managing payments and accounts. I have learned a lot and I’m now reasonably competent in the receipting and decision side of things. It’s been very interesting.”

Natasha’s boss worked with her to find a quiet time to take up the secondment so her normal workload wasn’t affected. “Staff Consents have also made me very welcome and setup a programme to train me.

After working as a planner for four and a half years at Environment Canterbury, Natasha says the beauty of a secondment is that it gives you the opportunity to experience what working in another section of an organisation is like.

She encourages prospective employees looking to work at Environment Canterbury to ask about secondment options when considering a job offer.

“They should definitely ask about it. People are really busy and they may not know that you are interested in a secondment. HR is very supportive; it’s normally just a matter of finding the right time to do it.”