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I work for Historic Environment Scotland and have been with them for 4 years. I've always been keen on nature and the outdoors. I was a member of a nature club as a wee girl and absolutely loved it and from a young age became interested in the idea of working in conservation. With this in mind, I studied Environmental Science with Biology at University and have been working either as a Ranger or in other related roles since graduating.

Pre-lockdown, the role was always incredibly varied! It's a big part of the reason why I enjoy it so much. I'm based in Holyrood Park but oversee the Ranger Service activities at Linlithgow Loch and Peel – including taking out school groups, leading guided walks, carrying out practical work and wildlife surveys, plus all the behind the scenes planning and paperwork involved in these things, and more! I'm also involved in a large-scale project to improve the water quality in Linlithgow loch, so I regularly get my waders on to go in and collect samples.

Things have been very different for the last few months though, as like everywhere else we've had to massively scale back our work programme. But parks and green spaces are still open, so us Rangers are needed to keep an eye on them! Every morning, 2 of us head into Holyrood Park to carry out patrols and make sure no issues have cropped up. Once a week, myself, and a colleague head out to Linlithgow to do the same – and we collect water samples while we're there. Otherwise, I'm spending a lot of time 'working from home' at the moment. Considering how much of my working day is usually spend outside with groups, this is proving challenging at times!

HES are a great organisation to work for. They supported me really well when I had to take some time off a few years ago and are keeping us all supported and well informed during the lockdown. I really enjoy working with school groups – it's one of my favourite parts of the job. Partly because I'm a big kid myself and I love playing games, but also because I love having the opportunity to pass on my enthusiasm for wildlife and the outdoors. If I've inspired even just one kid to get excited about conservation, then I'll take that as a win!

My advice to any young school leaver looking to take their next career step would be- just get stuck in, in any way you can! For a young person interested in conservation, there are plenty of local groups to get involved with, including the HES Linlithgow Junior Rangers, a group of 11-18-year olds who meet monthly for conservation and wildlife related activities. For anyone older, contact your local Ranger service and ask about volunteering – there are always loads of opportunities to help out with pretty much all aspects of the job.

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