

# Career Sheet: Nature-Based Landscape Architect



## Roisin Byrne - Nature-Based Landscape Architect

I am Roisin Byrne, a Nature-Based Landscape Architect. I currently work in Roisin Byrne, Nature-Based Landscape Architecture based in Cork, Ireland, providing consultancy services. Besides, I am Ambassador for Connecting Nature Urban Landscapes, funded by the Horizon 2020 Framework Programme of the European Union. My design and implementation of Nature-Based Solutions are highly collaborative. I design landscapes for Nature Play Areas, nature reserves, corporate, public, NGO, and private landscapes with an emphasis on research and artistic approach inspired by nature.

Regarding my studies, I have a bachelor's in Landscape Architecture from the University College Dublin, and a certificate in Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Enterprise from the University College Dublin as well.



## OVERVIEW OF THE JOB

I provide Nature-Based Landscape Architecture consultancy services. My ethos is that nature is at the core of the practice which blends scientific understanding and artistic sensitivity to respond to local design problems in the context of the global climate and biodiversity challenges of our times. So, I aim in the design solutions for a net benefit for nature and ideally a co-creative design process. The co-creative process is shown to lead to better stewardship and long-term viability of place projects. I am currently also working with the Trinity college led Connecting Nature project as co-ambassador for our Urban Landscapes community of NBEs. Nature based economy is an emerging market which the European Commission is nurturing to grow the sector from niche to norm. So, it is a very exciting time to be in.



## WHAT INSPIRED YOU

I have always loved nature and wild nature, and I could respond to it artistically. I played collaboratively in nature as a child and worked in organic farms along with studying architecture. I soon found I was happiest outside and was glad to be accepted in the University College Dublin Landscape Architecture. There we all gained a greater understanding of the Earth as an interconnected system, in terms of climate and biodiversity. I began to understand the critical moment we are in in human history and sought a way to contribute to our transition to harmony with natural systems.



## TYPICAL WORKING DAY

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It depends, but if I am in studio I like to begin artistically responding to nature. We live on a nature reserve we are creating here in Cork. There is always an abundance of life to respond to and that grounds my practice. Then its collaborative correspondence or meetings before getting into project work. The projects can be at different stages, research, design, co-creative processes, tender, construction and handover phases. It is all highly collaborative, and each project is unique. If out on site, there is a stage of understanding the existing and potential ecological matrix, what can we do here to make it good for nature and people? What are the co-benefit opportunities? We know vibrant nature solutions are often best for peoples well being too. After a gathering a true understanding of the available data. It is important to allow space for an artistic response, not only to the ecologies of the site but to the stakeholder's /client brief. Ideally a co-creative process is created, where the stakeholders are contributing to design outcomes in a very meaningful way. We know this helps the long-term stewardship and viability of the design. It also contributes to agency building in people who want to 'do something' locally to contribute to a healthy planet. My work with Connecting Nature links the local intervention of nature-based solutions of our different enterprises with a globally emerging field of NBS research, development, collaboration and implementation. Many of the EU, national, and regional policies are complex to implement, requiring a breaking down of silos. Landscape Architects are well placed to create documentation and drawings to illustrate the multiple benefits of working together to implement nature-based solutions.



## STUDY & CAREER PATH

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I have a bachelor's in Landscape Architecture from the University College Dublin, and a certificate in Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Enterprise from the University College Dublin as well.

I think working on organic farms informed my understanding of the importance of elements journey. For example, how some element form nature comes from its source, and is processed by us, until we use it, until it disintegrates. What impact on nature is that journey making? So, in my practice I am seeking materials with nature positive impact ideally. In the UCD Landscape Architecture Degree I was encouraged to push artistic boundaries and yet understand earth systems, and the many complex stages of design. Interning was important to ground and develop these many skills collaboratively in multidisciplinary teams and with stakeholders. I always leaned towards working in collaboration with UCD and Trinity College to contribute to global sustainable harmony. The only thing I would really change is to have learned to trust my instinct faster and network better with fellow practitioners and entrepreneurs. Nature-Based innovation is emerging as a field, we have found for entrepreneurs it can be isolating, so it is good to connect with organisations in your field and related fields. My colleagues from university have mostly joined large global practices, most emigrated from my class actually.



## KEY SKILLS

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**Research:** It is necessary a deep understanding and research of the project you are going to tackle, especially in terms of ecological understanding and potential. Once you gather the knowledge of a particular place, then you jump into the artistic process.

**Creativity:** Nature-Based Landscape Architects need to be creative once they have gathered the required information about the area they are working on. They need to understand its natural elements and how to integrate them into the projects. I push artistic boundaries and yet understand earth systems and the many complex stages of design.

**Commitment:** The goal of a Nature-Based Landscape Architect is to tackle climate change by improving society. So, it is necessary to commit yourself to your values to fight climate change and protect biodiversity, as well as a commitment to the area you are working on to improve it and adapt it to its ecological needs.

**Presentation:** As a Nature-Based Landscape Architect, it is essential to present and show the project plans to stakeholders and how they are going to be developed. Therefore, feeling at ease when speaking to the public and being able to express yourself fluidly will contribute to the goals' achievement.

**Collaboration:** In our process, we must be highly collaborative, since we have to work with people, stakeholders, as close as possible, because ultimately the long-term viability of the place depends on this collaboration. Besides, we are trying to emphasise the collaboration with the authorities of the place.

**Willingness to Integrate:** Being a Nature-Based Landscape Architect entrepreneur requires networking with fellow practitioners and entrepreneurs. "Nature-Based innovation is emerging as a field, we have found for entrepreneurs can be isolating, so it is good to connect with organisations in your field and related fields".



## CAREER PROSPECT

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The jobs and industry sectors I can work with my skills are Landscape Architecture consultancy and research, and teaching.



## CHALLENGES

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The main challenge in my job is communicating and creating consensus on the value of NBS which give net benefit to nature.



## YOUR ADVICE TO STUDENTS

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My advice to students is that Landscape Architecture is a deeply diverse field of study and work. Framing your work to bring co-benefits to people and planet, putting nature at the core of what you do, makes your practice nature-based. If you find you are naturally passionate about our earths systems and the impact we are making, landscape architecture is a very rewarding way to contribute and respond. My advice is to do not be afraid to plant with your communities and see the impact of different plants in real time and not as an abstract concept.



## YOUR ADVICE TO TEACHERS AND PARENTS

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Support curiosity and love of nature. Artistic children will find ways to make a living from their art if supported, and it might be as a landscape architect! Field trips and access to wild nature and Nature based solutions. Encourage bravery and a world without limits on human endeavors. Encourage discussion and watch for gender balance in team presentation. You would be surprised.



## LEARN MORE

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Here you can share links to the external resources (YouTube, Twitter, etc.) / webpages related to the career profile.

Roisin website:

[www.roisinbyrnelandscapearchitect.ie](http://www.roisinbyrnelandscapearchitect.ie)

Connecting Nature Enterprise Platform website:

<https://connectingnature.eu/cnep>

Landscape Architecture Course University College Dublin:

<https://www.myucd.ie/courses/architecture/landscape-architecture/>