Marine Ecologist

Kevin Linnane - Associate Director

How long have you worked in the industry?

I have worked in environmental consultancy for nearly 15 years.

Which career path did you follow to get to where you are today?

After completing a degree in Biological Sciences at University College Cork in Ireland, I went on to do a PhD at Newcastle University. My PhD was looking at the effect of heavy metal pollution on seaweed and invertebrates. It gave me a sound technical knowledge of marine ecology, statistical analysis and scientific report writing. After my PhD, I wanted to try my hand at consultancy and after a short stint as a terrestrial ecologist, I moved to RPS in 2008 as a marine ecologist. Since then, I've gained lots of experience in the offshore wind sector, working on many interesting projects around the UK, Ireland and further afield.

Over the years I have helped to train and mentor a number of colleagues in marine ecology and the offshore wind industry, which has been a very rewarding part of my job. I am currently responsible for a team of marine ecology and Habitat Regulation Assessments (HRA) specialists within RPS which is continuing to grow to meet the increased demand for offshore wind both in the UK and overseas.

How would you explain your job to people?

My team and I help developers, primarily offshore wind developers, to get their consents and permissions to construct and operate offshore wind farms. Our main role is ensuring that offshore wind farms are built and operated in a manner that is sustainable, helping developers to avoid impacts on marine ecological receptors or, where that's not possible, minimising impacts so that biodiversity and offshore wind can coexist.

What role can your profession play in the fight against climate change? How can your profession make a difference?

It's clear that the offshore wind industry has a significant role to play in decarbonising our energy sector and combatting climate change. It's critical that offshore wind farms are developed sustainably and the work my team and I do ensures that impacts on marine biodiversity are minimised, helping to combat climate change and the biodiversity crisis. That can be by ensuring that impacts on important habitats (like reefs) are avoided through cable routing, or working with engineering teams to reduce the impact of underwater noise on fish and marine mammals. More recently, there is an increasing focus on how offshore wind farms can help to deliver Biodiversity Net Gain in the marine environment, to help restore marine biodiversity while also generating clean energy for future generations.

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