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The Northern Ireland-Pittsburgh Sustainable Leadership programme has seen twelve aspiring leaders in the green economy settle into companies across Pittsburgh, USA.
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Carbon Zero NI Interns settle into life in Pittsburgh

Set up to give 'on-the-job' training to interns from across the six NI Further Education Colleges, the programme gives each of the students the hands on experience they need along with an insight into how another country enhances the use of their green energy technology and the differences in energy consumption.

One of the twelve Interns, Michelle McAteer, has been placed with eCap Network, an Energy Management consulting company based in the Hill District, Western Pennsylvania.

Michelle's aim was to gain experience relating specifically with building energy performance so that on her return to Northern Ireland she would be much more equipped to undertake a post in this field.

Michelle's role at the company is an Energy Analyst Intern and is currently involved with conducting level I and II energy audits to create energy profiles for facilities; creating building energy models to simulate baseline scenarios to allow foresight into suitable application of clean energy technologies; and sourcing appropriate funding to help projects become a reality.

Michelle has a B.Sc. (Hons) in Environmental Science with a Diploma in Area Studies from the University of Ulster, Coleraine and has also completed an M.Sc in Environment and Resource Management at the Vrije University, Amsterdam. Michelle is confident that her time in Pittsburgh has already been beneficial and has been a great opportunity to hone her skills further, hopefully giving her a competitive edge when returning to Northern Ireland.

She already sees the benefits that the increased use of clean energy would have in Northern Ireland, saying, "I've always been interested in climate science and how climate change is impacting our lives. Adopting clean energy technologies and making them more accessible through demonstration and appropriate application is vital if we want the sector to successfully grow and mature. Northern Ireland is abundant with free natural resources that should not only be utilised but they can potentially be extremely lucrative for our economy".

Feedback from eCap has been extremely positive and John Werling, President of the company says that Michelle has been great to work with, willing to pitch in and learn not just

the technical aspects of energy conservation and clean energy, but all the aspects of building a business in an emerging industry.

"Michelle's experience studying energy policy issues such as building codes and building energy rating certification programs which impact industry not just in Ireland, but across Europe has been invaluable and she has been able to provide the team in Pittsburgh with insights from her experiences in Northern Ireland," explains John.

The company, as John explains is really geared not towards being the most knowledgeable at cutting edge technology, but rather at being very effective in accelerating adoption of proven technologies. "Our role is to address the barriers to building owners implementing energy conservation projects. Those often have nothing to do with the technology. To do this you need broad knowledge of what it takes to run a building, make a business case, fund a project and sell the ideas to a varied audience of stakeholders. While we don't design the solutions, we need the technical knowledge to understand what works best and why, and how to bring various solutions together." He hopes that Michelle will gain a holistic understanding of all facets of the industry, and how to execute projects on the front lines.



○ Michelle McAteer



○ CZNI Participants (L-R) Mick O'Reilly, Stephen Wilson, Sarah Mackle, Michael Mageean and Michelle McAteer.

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SUSTAINABLE PITTSBURGH - PERSPECTIVE FROM ECAP PRESIDENT, JOHN WERLING

Pittsburgh has a long history in the energy sector. We have been at the global center of oil and gas, coal and nuclear power since the inception of each technology. During the energy crises in the 1970s investment was made in advanced energy technologies by Pittsburgh based corporations, most notably Westinghouse. Today the fruits of that investment can be seen locally in large and small companies that make everything from nuclear power plants, to smart grid and power distribution equipment to solar panels and LED lights. Of course the downside for a region with abundant and cheap natural resources, not only in energy but also with fresh water, is that historically conservation had not been a priority as it was in places like California. But in the 90's there was a sustainability movement rooted in community development that put Pittsburgh on the leading edge of green building. As a result we have many notable LEED buildings, a progressive design and construction community and a strong and active chapter of the U.S. Green Building Council. In the last half decade, progressive State policy and incentives coupled with rising energy prices have fueled broader market interest. So clean and renewable industries in Pittsburgh are really poised to explode. As an example in the heart of the City, there is a public/private partnership to restore an old technical school to a center for green businesses and green jobs training that will be unique in the Country.

COMPANIES TAKING PART IN THE NORTHERN IRELAND- PITTSBURGH SUSTAINABLE LEADERSHIP

- Epiphany Water Purification
- AMTV/First Link
- ECap Network
- Venture Engineering
- Taggart
- Catalyst Connections
- Green Building Alliance
- Allegheny County Department of Economic Development
- Allegheny County Sanitary Authority (ALCOSAN).
- Vox Energy Solutions
- UPMC Corporate Construction