



‘Study something you love’, Scientist and Sligo resident Rosie Morrissey reflects during Science Week 2020

Working in Science was not the original plan for Strandhill resident Rosie Morrissey. She had always considered a career in engineering as the right job for her. So, it was no big surprise to her family and friends when she started her third level education in civil engineering. After completing her primary qualification in Sligo Institute of Technology, Rosie soon left Ireland and moved to London for 2 years to get some practical experience as a site engineer. Rosie travelled to Australia thereafter and spent a year enjoying the sunnier Australian climate, travelling and working in an office, grape picking and being a farm hand.

Although Rosie remembers living and travelling around Australia as great fun; Ireland and the West kept calling her home. Rosie eventually returned to Ireland to be closer to Sligo and was delighted to find a temporary job in Monaghan County Council.

Rosie recalls her first day in Monaghan County Council offices as she looked for the Engineering Department but was shocked to find herself sitting in the Environmental Department. But it was here that Rosie’s love of science and the natural environment was founded. Eight happy years working in Monaghan County Council, being excellently trained and guided by the chemist Bernie O’Flaherty cemented Rosie’s love of the natural environment. Although Monaghan was not Sligo, it wasn’t too far away either and it wasn’t unusual for Rosie to hop into her much loved Nissan car and nip west to walk on the golden sands of Strandhill and swim along its beautiful coastline.

By this stage Rosie knew that a career in science was for her and that her heart was in Sligo; so once again she looked west to fulfil that ambition. The next few years saw Rosie working hard to achieve numerous qualifications from Sligo Institute of Technology including a post Graduate Diploma and a Masters in Environmental Protection.

In 2000 Rosie moved to the Environmental Department in Sligo County Council and over the last 20 years she has worked her way up through the ranks from assistant scientist, executive scientist to her present role as senior executive scientist. Reflecting over the years since leaving secondary school, Rosie believes that it is important for those facing into third level education to simply ‘study something you love’. Although engineering was Rosie’s first career choice it was a career in science

and her love for the natural environment that has brought her most joy in her professional and personal life.

Rosie along with a dedicated team of staff currently manages the monitoring of drinking water, bathing water, rivers and lakes in Sligo. A role which she describes as being diverse, busy and challenging. While Rosie loves to travel, has walked the Camino and skied throughout Europe, Rosie says, 'I have always loved the sea and walking, so being involved in protecting the environment and public health is very fulfilling'.

Rosie's role in drinking water and bathing water compliance is of particular interest working closely with Irish Water. Irish Water is responsible for providing public water services and ensuring drinking water quality meets the standards in the Drinking Water Regulations. Rosie in her work with Sligo County Council is responsible in ensuring that this monitoring is carried out; and that any issues are investigated and fixed; and that drinking water quality results are submitted to the Environmental Protection Agency (the drinking water quality regulator). Rosie in her work with Sligo County Council is also responsible for taking samples of bathing waters just before, and during the bathing water season. In Ireland, the season runs from the 1st June to 15th September each year. This work at times also requires Rosie to closely liaise with Irish Water when investigating pollution events particularly those related to the wastewater network including misconnections, combined sewer overflows and pumping station overflows.

Reflecting on the challenges that 2020 has brought in particular those from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, associated restrictions and working from home Rosie notes that she has found comfort in 'keeping to the same working routine, as if was in the office, going for a walk at lunch time and most importantly taking it one day at a time'.