

# An interview with TRACY CLARKE

*This month Pro Arb caught up with Tracy Clarke, from Tim Moya Associates, a specialist arboricultural consultancy, to find out about what the company offers, her views on education within the sector and future plans for the business*



## **Tell us about the history of Tim Moya Associates (TMA).**

TMA was started by Tim Moya in 1989, initially as a tree contracting business and he provided consultancy advice alongside this as his knowledge and experience developed.

## **How is the company structured?**

There are three directors, including myself. I am responsible for leading the consultant team and I am one of the principal arborists within it. To help the efficient flow of work and work to people's strengths, the arboricultural team is separated into specialist areas including pre-planning, post-planning and tree risk management. Over the past couple of years we have diversified into ecology consultancy and this is growing well.

## **So who do you do work for?**

We provide professional consultancy services for a range of clients in the private and public sectors including developers, property managers, landowners, local authorities as landowners and as planning authorities.

In 2008 during the recession, we made a conscious decision to diversify our client services to reduce the risk to our business from the construction industry. It has been very hard to do this with the economic climate over the past five years, but I'd say we've done really well.

## **And how did you start in the industry?**

I decided to study arboriculture because I wanted a job that would give me opportunities to make a difference to the environment. I left college in 1996 and was offered a temporary job with a local authority in Sunderland helping to manage the tree stock. From there I worked as a tree and landscape officer at Epping Forest District Council, where I learned a lot about trees and →

## FEATURES

the planning system, which has been invaluable. I've worked for TMA for ten years and been a director for the past three.

### So what does your work involve?

In pre-planning work, we provide tree surveys to assess the quality and value of trees and provide information on design constraints. Our approach is to assess the proposals in relation to trees in the context of the site. We research planning policy and other contextual matters to ensure we can contribute in a way that informs decision makers.

In post-planning work we get involved in detailed design work before a contract is tendered. Our involvement in detailed design is key since it is often the stage where the decisions are made about what goes where, how it is done and what the costs are. We need a presence at this stage to get the best outcome for our clients, both in terms of making sure their planning obligations are met and so that they can safely retain important trees. Our site work involves working with the contractor and overseeing the key activities around trees.

### If a 10 house development was considered for a site with a couple of 200 year old trees, would you find a solution to keep those trees and continue with the build?

Trees are material consideration for any planning proposal. Our job is to assess the trees and advise on their sustainability. Are they worthy of retention? If they are likely to be viewed as important by the local authority, we advise on their retention and offer input to



A TMA Tree Protection Plan

***"The challenge is to develop from being considered as technicians to consultants. We have to earn the recognition and acceptance we think we deserve"***

make the development work around the trees. Sometimes we can achieve retention and sometimes retention is unsustainable. In such circumstances we will try to mitigate tree loss by proposing new trees.

### Do you think it's getting better because developers understand the importance of trees to society?

Yes I do think they see that trees add value to their schemes. There is still a lot of work to be done in raising the profile of arborists in the development and construction industry so that we are accepted as integral members of the professional team alongside architects, structural and civil engineers and landscape architects. For arborists the challenge is to develop from being considered as technicians to consultants. So we have to earn the recognition and acceptance that we think we deserve.

### Do you get involved with the industry associations?

Yes, I've recently been elected onto the Council for the Institute of Chartered Foresters (ICF) and I'm hoping to do some good work for them. I've also been the treasurer for the East Anglian branch of the Arboricultural Association for a number of years. One of the things I am currently involved with for the ICF is reviewing education in the industry at higher levels and providing feedback on skills gaps in arboricultural graduates.

### Do colleges need to push students into finding a specialism within the industry?

Possibly. In our company we have areas of specialism where people focus their interest and skills in different areas. Most arboricultural courses focus on the subject of arboriculture rather than what is needed in a graduate to fit the skills of the jobs available in the industry. For example skills in IT, GIS, marketing, sales, and project management, are invaluable in the work of a consultant.

### What is your experience with taking people from college?

We've got some fantastic graduates working for us. However my experience is that graduates vary significantly in their enthusiasm and interest in developing a career in the industry. Many graduates have no knowledge of the work we do.

We employ at any level but we will look at people coming from college because we like to offer them an opportunity to develop their career within TMA. Finding people who are qualified and experienced to carry out a senior level role in our business is very difficult, partly due to the lack of people and project management skills needed to do this level of job. It's rare to find a good employee who fits with the business, can do the job and is enthusiastic about developing their career. But when you do, you want to look after them and hang on to them.

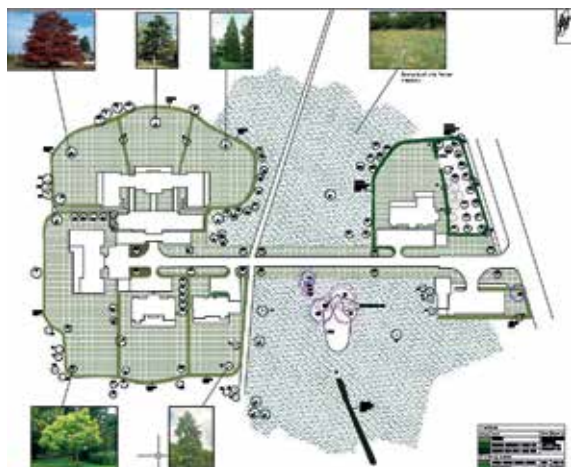
### How do you get your work?

We pride ourselves on quality and providing value for money. We don't employ a marketing person so a lot of the work comes through recommendations and our reputation. We've had some long standing clients who value our



A site where we were preparing a drainage channel underneath a no-dig construction road, using an air spade to remove soil.





A TMA soft landscape scheme proposal



Several examples of tree protection methods we have employed on projects during demolition and construction

approach, which is very rewarding because we can be creative in the work we do for them.

## Is there a tender process?

We do actively search for and submit tenders. We have recently been successful being on the consultant framework providing planning advice for Kent County Council. It is really time consuming and we aren't in the fortunate position of having staff employed directly for that job so it's led by a director and we all contribute detail as required.

## What do you think of the standard of tree care in the industry?

In terms of newly planted trees it's heartbreaking to witness substantial tree

failures in new landscaping schemes. The industry recognises this problem and Keith Sacre of Barchams trees has recently made huge steps to promote improved standards in the quality of plant material, implementation and aftercare. When we get involved in the protection of existing trees on development sites, we have evidence of them surviving very well. Under-resourced local authorities can't get out to monitor every site granted consent for development so I genuinely think if we weren't involved the outcome for tree survival would be far worse.

## Do you take on apprentices at all?

I have considered it since the value apprenticeships can have for individuals

and industry is well known. It is something that TMA would be very interested in exploring further.

## What's next for the company?

We are excited to be developing 3D modelling of trees to enable us to work collaboratively with other professionals in the construction industry. We are transferring the critical dimensions of trees we have surveyed into 3D tree models which can then be delivered as an element of the site model developed by the architects and accessible by all. The organic features of a site is not something that is well developed in 3D modelling software for the construction industry and as a profession we really need to do this if we are to be involved as part of the consultant team in the future. The potential to develop this further for our use in other areas of the work we do is significant.

## What do you like to do in your spare time?

I race BMX nationally and regionally, I love doing crossfit and yoga too. Nothing beats being outside whether it's sports, gardening or walking the dogs.



Tree protection installed on a site as recommended by TMA

## CONTACT

**Tim Moya Associates,**  
**The Barn, Feltimores Park,**  
**Chalk Lane,**  
**Harlow, Essex, CM17 0PF**  
**Tel: 0845 094 3268**  
**Email: [info@tma-consultants.co.uk](mailto:info@tma-consultants.co.uk)**  
**[www.timmoyaassociates.co.uk](http://www.timmoyaassociates.co.uk)**