

ON THE BLOG

THE ROAD TO CHARTERSHIP

A series of blogs by Jack Machin, ChPP MAPM



“Aim for the sky and you’ll reach the ceiling. Aim for the ceiling and you’ll stay on the floor.” - Bill Shankly

I knew I wanted to become chartered ever since I first heard about it in the early stages of my career. Perhaps, more than anything, to prove to myself that I am good enough and to quieten the feeling of ‘imposter syndrome’ that I sometimes experience. I am my own biggest critic.

In many ways, my route into the profession has been unconventional. What I mean by that is that normally people in my line of work start with gaining the civil engineering and construction knowledge and then ‘move upstairs’ into a management position and learn the Project Management theory later. I have done it the other way around - I learned the PM theory first and have picked up the technical knowledge as I go, learning by osmosis.

Having got a good grasp of what it takes to be a PM, in February 2022, I joined Wilde Consulting Engineers as an Assistant Project Manager with the prospect of building up my civils know-how and site experience. Here, I provided project management support to multiple Local Authority clients (including Manchester City and St Helens Councils) as well as our internal design teams. The Chartership application requires that you provide evidence from projects that you are working on, and these two initiatives would form the basis of my submission.

Firstly, our PM team was commissioned to deliver the Southern Gateway CYCLOPS (Cycle Optimised Protected Signals) junction in St Helens, which was the first of its kind in Merseyside. This was my first real taste of providing a supervision function and working closely with the Principal Contractor, Huyton Asphalt. I was responsible for dealing with site issues, keeping accurate records, and reporting progress back to the client. Secondly, I managed the ‘Small Bridge Repairs’ programme, which was a suite of structural remedial works that aimed to improve the Council's overall bridge stock. It was particularly challenging to define the scope of work for structures in confined spaces that had not been accessed for long periods, and conflicting priorities and a limited budget made prioritisation difficult.

Depending on your credentials and level of experience there are various ‘routes’ you need to consider which determines how you are assessed by the chartership assessors. Ubique helped to guide me in the right direction with this, and my mentor Kate Farnell and I decided that the experiential route, which required a minimum of 5 years’ experience, would be most suitable for me. Ubique helped me develop a structured plan for drawing up my application.

Stage 1 of the process was the written submission, whereby I would be required to cover 12 of APM's competencies (9 core competencies and 3 supplementary). In my written piece, it was important for me to be specific about how I added value to my projects, but in a way that was concise and to the point. In April 2023, I received confirmation that I had passed the first stage and would now be eligible to advance to Stage 2, a 2-hour professional discussion. I secured a date for the interview, and the preparation began. In the discussion, I would be asked to speak at length about my experience to validate my written submission. I found that the best way to prepare was to do mock interviews with Kate, and she didn’t hold back in grilling me! The time I spent practising speaking aloud what I was going to say was so valuable, and I am grateful to Kate for spending countless hours out of her evenings to support me. I was a little nervous before the interview, but I knew I couldn’t have done any more in terms of preparation.

Meanwhile, back in the office, I must’ve been doing something right as in the summer of 2023 I was approached by senior managers in St Helens Councils Highways department about an opportunity to join their internal team. Shortly after handing in my notice at Wildes, I got some news... on 26th July 2023 I received confirmation that I had successfully met the ChPP standard! A huge relief. I was sitting beside my colleague and close friend Steve Clarkson at the time of the email appearing on my phone, and he was even more excited for me than I was - a great moment. Sat across from me at the time, one of my colleagues (who will remain unnamed) had a more pessimistic view of my achievement. “Well, that’s you paying an annual subscription for the rest of your career then.” But that didn’t phase me. I celebrated back home in Congleton with a few drinks with family and friends.



In my new role in the Council’s Strategic Maintenance Team, I would oversee the delivery of some of their capital and revenue-funded projects. A relatively small team given the scale of the highway network they were responsible for. The variety of work on offer really appealed to me, and I had the chance to lead various maintenance and structure projects from conception through to completion. These projects were not without their challenges, as the Council often had limited budgets and conflicting priorities. I spent 14 months with St Helens and made some great friends along the way – including Ubique’s talented Assistant PM, Chloe Page.

Whilst this was a milestone moment for me that I am proud of, I recognise that this is only the beginning for me in my development, and the learning starts now. I didn’t include Shankly’s quote at the top of the page just because I’m a devoted Liverpool fan. I know it is important for me to be aware that I have not reached my ‘ceiling’, and I must identify ways to continually improve. Charterhip has certainly given me confidence that was lacking, and I have since progressed into a senior position at Ubique, where I have had the opportunity to mentor up-and-coming graduates and apprentices, which has been really rewarding.

Ubique are proud to be in the somewhat privileged position that many of our Project Managers (both our in-house team and contract staff) have achieved ChPP status. This provides our clients with confidence that their projects are being well managed, and this sets us apart from the others when tendering for work. If you have read this blog and have any questions about the application process, I would be happy to assist. Please feel free to drop me a message or email me at jack@ubiqueteam.co.uk.

