

Sun, Sea, Sand and Social Purpose!

In late August my Team Leader sent me a panic-inducing email about the opportunity of a residential course in Devon. My initial, "I'm not sure I'll have the time then..." was met with a read-between-the-lines, "I really think it would be good for you...". Imagine happily minding your own business at work when all of a sudden you are on your way to the wild west of Devon to stay in a hostel with other 'Aspiring Leaders' from the world of housing. With my kit list carefully checked off (walking boots?!) and all ready to help cook and chip in with housekeeping I set off down the M5 from Cheltenham with more than a mild sense of trepidation.

How wrong I had been... Course leaders Mike, Jill, Sarah and Paul (and assorted helpers!) made sure we had a warm welcome and my dozen or so new housemates and I quickly settled in. We were soon listening to some top speakers on a variety of topics and enjoying a cream tea, the Devonian way of course. Each guest speaker had time to chat less formally with us and provide excellent advice. We also had the opportunity to experience the delights of Ilfracombe as part of a (very) competitive team building session. Team Dolphin and Team Shark ran up cliffs and down harbours following a treasure trail around the town. With dinner cooked and eaten there was time to relax with new friends and check out the Ilfracombe nightlife.

Day two started with a hearty breakfast and more engaging speakers before a trip to the beach. A picnic and a paddle in the rockpools was followed by more team building with half the groups sent off on a cliff path hike and the others stretched mentally with a testing quiz. Another delicious dinner rounded the day off nicely with a post-pub acoustic guitar set by Mike a special reward for those who hadn't yet retired for the night for some well earned sleep.

The Aspiring Leaders course aimed to 'stimulate team work and develop leadership skills' and we had plenty of opportunities to do that over the 3 days. For me the best part of the course was the chance to speak with like-minded housing professionals about all manner of things particularly career progression. Away from the usual day job concerns, having even just a short time to reflect and get some advice was very useful. The course leaders were leaders in housing themselves and not just there to facilitate but genuinely invested in helping us develop through CIH.

I would encourage people to take advantage of what CIH have to offer and definitely recommend the Aspiring Leaders course in whatever form it may take for 2019!

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