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## THE THINGS I KNOW



**MARIA FRANCKÉ**  
*Head of planning and  
development,  
Scotland, Drivers  
Jonas*

### **Where did you study planning?**

Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh.

### **What skills did you have when you graduated?**

A good spatial awareness and the knowledge that planning has the ability to influence and direct almost every aspect of our lives.

### **What attracted you to planning?**

A passion for art and geography. To be honest, it was landscape architecture that captivated me. But after my first term of town planning at university, I knew I had made the right choice.

### **What did you learn in your first job?**

Even if you think that a task is beyond your capabilities, overcome your anxiety and have a go. Never be afraid to take on a challenge and learn something new.

### **What skills have you had to learn over your career?**

You're taught the fundamentals of planning at university, but planning is a people business. Listening, negotiation, diplomacy and team management skills are prerequisites.

### **What or who have been the biggest influences on your career?**

I've been fortunate enough to have had first-class mentors at every stage of my career. Many have been senior planning colleagues who have been inspirational role models.

### **What is your career highlight?**

As a young planner, my first big success was while working for the head of a London property company and securing consent for a 20ha mixed-use scheme, which involved negotiating the terms of a thorny section 50 agreement. Recognising

that your advice can shape decisions that are literally worth a fortune — that feeling stays with you forever.

### **What further skills do you aim to obtain or develop?**

The ability to relax and switch off when I leave the office.

### **How important is it to keep abreast of developments in allied professions?**

As Association of Women in Property chairwoman, I am a big supporter of multidisciplinary engagement of professionals. There's no better way to keep in touch with what's going on in the commercial marketplace.