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INTERVIEW

JAQUELIN CLAY
JFA ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING

FOUNDER AND MANAGING DIRECTOR OF JFA ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING, **JAQUELIN CLAY**, EXPLAINS HOW THE COMPANY, NOW IN ITS 30TH YEAR, APPROACHES DEVELOPMENT IN A WAY THAT COMBINES AESTHETICS AND ECOLOGICAL SENSITIVITY

How did the company start up?
I started the company in 1989 with one or two permanent staff and sub-contractors. From the beginning, I felt the ideal size was around six staff. The practice started with an emphasis on ecology, but I always felt that aesthetics and design were important, and particularly lacking in ecology, so very early on I incorporated landscape design into the practice.

My original background is in the sciences, particularly botanical and soil science. I initially hired landscape designers, but then I decided to gain a qualification to become a landscape architect in 1993.

How has the company developed since 1989?
At our biggest in 2008, we had 12 staff, and like many practices at the time we were hit by the financial crisis. At that point, I delegated a great deal. But, given the nature of the business and my very clear vision, I was happier to reduce headcount. At the moment, I have six full-time employees, but also have a team of sub-contractors.

I believe this is about right. You've got to keep your headcount down or you're going to lose money, and as the MD I have to keep an eye on the finance side. I looked at our cost basis and changed a number of elements of the practice to improve efficiency, make