



RTPI South West
Royal Town Planning Institute

Branchout **NEWS**

www.rtpi.org.uk/southwest

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Strategic planning - what is the point?... pg. 13

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SPRING 2023 ed.189





Cover Image
Clifton Suspension
Bridge in early
morning light,
Bristol

This Branchout is a members e-magazine issued three times of year. Its purpose is to not only report on local RTPI activity but also a forum for RTPI member updates, local interest articles and practical guidance on a variety of planning issues.

Branchout is put together by Editor Alexis Edwards, RTPI South West Senior Vice Chair and Charlotte Daborn, RTPI South West Regional Coordinator plus the support of many RTPI volunteers in reporting on their activities.

If you would like to prepare an article or provide feedback on what you would like to see in future editions, please contact southwest@rtpi.org.uk

The articles contained in this and past editions of Branchout are made available for educational purposes only. The views expressed in it are those of the authors. The authors or RTPI accept no responsibility for the accuracy of the contents. Readers are encouraged to undertake additional research on the themes explored for the latest updates.

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RTPI South West
Royal Town Planning Institute

Could you be an RTPI Ambassador?

We are looking for RTPI Members who can represent the planning profession at a range of careers fairs and school visits throughout the South West.

If you are willing to relate planning to interesting and everyday issues, and are confident to talk engagingly about your job to young people then please contact southwest@rtpi.org.uk



“Time to behave, so when Artificial Intelligence becomes our overlord, we’ve reduced the reasons for it to exterminate us all.”

Neil deGrasse Tyson

>Welcome to our first issue of Branchout for 2023 and we are already three months gone. This marks my year as chair and as I noted in my brief piece in the last Branchout magazine, design is my topic for this year. We will be taking in design in many of our CPD events and this includes a design day in Plymouth in May, I look forward to seeing many of you there. I am keen to hear about projects that you may be involved in that are exemplar or innovative in terms of design so please do get in touch if you would like to share some of your work here in Branchout or at a CPD event. There’s so much going on at the moment with the NPPF consultation (RTPI response can be read [here](#)); the welfare of planners and the value they have (a concern of RTPI President Sue Bridge) and the ongoing issue of resourcing.

It was this resourcing issue that got me pondering on how the role of a planner has changed since I began my career in 1999, yes, the last millennium. It’s easy to get misty eyed about the good old days where we used paper and the internet had limited use but progress happens whether we like it or are dragged kicking and screaming into it. Something that I have read a lot about recently is the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in planning and how it could be used. The quote I opened with sets out what many think of when considering AI; The Terminator or other intelligence wishing to take over the human race rather than helping and improving what we do. I wondered what it could do for us; how could it fit into what we do, well this is what I discovered.

One of the most significant benefits of AI is the ability to process large amounts of data efficiently. Town planners can use AI to analyse huge amounts of data about urban development trends, land use, and social and economic indicators in real-time. This allows for the creation of more accurate and comprehensive planning strategies. With AI, urban planning can be more responsive, flexible, and adaptable to changes in the environment and society.

Another way AI is used in town planning is in the design and construction of buildings. Architects and engineers are using AI tools to design more sustainable buildings that use less energy, water, and materials. AI systems can simulate the building’s energy consumption and identify potential energy-saving opportunities before construction begins.

AI is also being used to create more efficient and cost-effective processes within the town planning system. For instance, AI-powered chatbots can be designed to provide instant and 24/7 customer service. Chatbots can answer frequently asked questions about planning policies or urban development projects, reducing the burden on human planners to respond to inquiries. The implementation of AI-powered chatbots in the town planning system can enable a seamless customer experience and reduce administrative costs.

This is all food for thought and I for one have been sceptical about what use AI has for us. I would also like to apologise now for the three paragraphs above. I did not write these; I asked AI to write something about AI in the UK planning system. A cheap move but one that demonstrates that AI at a consumer level has come on leaps and bounds and if results like this can be produced now then the place for chatbots within Local Authority’s, for example, becomes greater. The debate will no doubt roll on but when time for the average planner is so precious, if we can have a little help with the simpler questions and tasks; should we not embrace it?

If you are interest in reading more about the Government approach to AI then a white paper has just been released which can be read [here](#).

Until next time, continue to innovate and remember the words of Sue Bridge “The planner’s role in development of place is one in which we hold and wield great power” and never forget the words of Uncle Ben to Peter Parker “with great power comes great responsibility.” The work you do impacts on so many and really has the ability to change lives; make that difference.

Ian Perry RTPI

Principal Planning Officer at Teignbridge District Council
Chair of RTPI South West 2023



New year, new you, and yet another new planning minister (shurely shome mishtake?), it must be time for a new issue of branchout.

Spring has finally sprung with the long winter of government consultations and policy announcements now firmly in the distance past, we can look forward with this first Branchout of 2023 and welcome our new Chair Ian Perry. Ian has a passion for design and has made this the focus of his year. Beauty may be in the eye of the beholder but what makes good design? How can we as planners strive to achieve good design in the face of efficiency savings and value engineering? We would love to hear your views on the subject.

Our planners across the region have been active as ever. We welcome new members, congratulations to you all on becoming chartered, thank others for their long-standing service, reflect back on the activities our younger members have been up to, and get to know some of our committee members. In parallel the region's students continue to develop the planning knowledge base with an intriguing article on the value of the designated Local Green Space in Neighbourhood Plans.

The region has I'm pleased to report has continued its pioneering mentoring programme. I would strongly recommend getting involved in mentoring whether you're just starting out in planning or an experienced practitioner looking to support the next generation of planners.

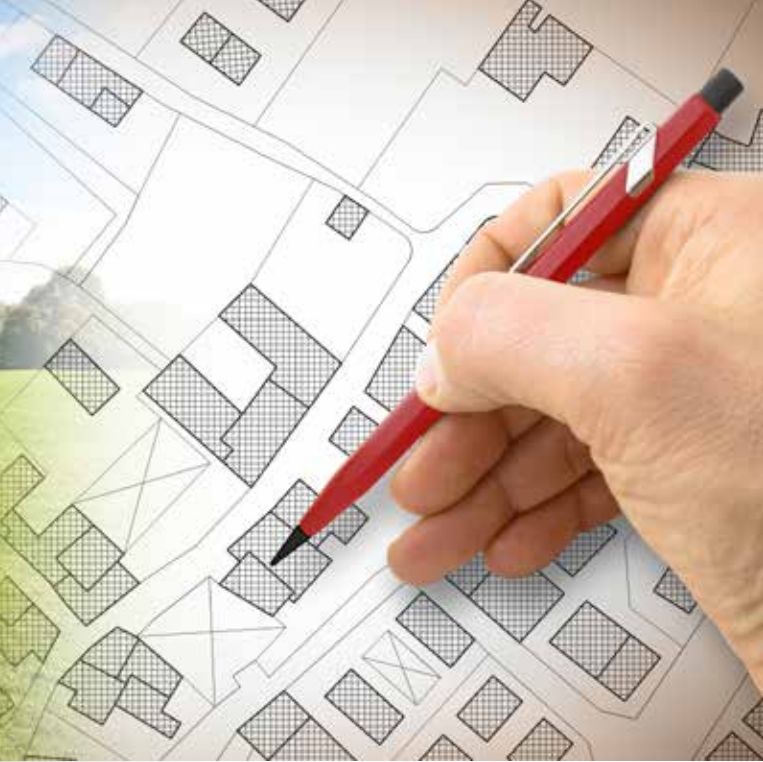
We have a spotlight article on the prettiest LPA in the region, Bath and North East Somerset. The drive and enthusiasm of the team in tackling the big planning challenges is a heart-warming tale. Their approach to sustainability and housing delivery is a lesson for other authorities.

For those of you old enough to remember the days of structure plans and regional spatial strategies (come back GOSW all is forgiven) we have an article banging the drum for strategic planning. With the region already the host of multiple joint Core Strategies/Local Plans the need for bigger than local strategies and plans continues to grow.



Planning is a tricky subject. Something may look great on a plan but fail to work in practice. Those pesky humans failing to use the space exactly as the designer intended. This is where intuitive design is critical to achieve the outcomes expected, and provision new play facilities is no exception. In something of an eye-opening article, we explore how to design spaces for girls to play, a subject sorely neglected to date to our professional shame. The city may be gendered male, but we can work to create inclusive places for all.

In a particularly personal piece our Honorary Secretary talks about his and the professions challenges with mental health, and office vs virtual working. In my view whilst the 9 to 5 office based world of pre-covid may be long gone, the hyper virtual world of back-to-back Teams meetings many of us experience now doesn't have to be the future. As the profession struggles with recruitment and retention issues both employers and employees should be working together to find the right balance that keep us happy, healthy, and ultimately performing to our best whatever stage we are in our planning careers. You've had my two pence on the subject but do please send us your thoughts on the subject.



We have our usual roundup of Regional Activities Committee and Regional Management Board meetings, and a profile on two of the committee members. If you are interested in joining a working group or just learning more about what we do, please get in touch. Finally, we close the issue with the list of up coming CPD events so get booking if you haven't already! I'm looking forward in particular to the Summer Reception.

Alexis Edwards

Transport Development Manager at BCP Council
RTPI SW Senior Vice Chair 2023



03

Celebrating members in the South West

Thank you to Kevin Phillips

On 10th April 2023, Kevin Phillips retired after nearly 35 years of local government service. Kevin has been at the forefront of minerals and waste planning practice working mostly within Gloucestershire and before that, the former county of Avon. Arriving at Shire Hall, Gloucester in the mid-nineties, he has been an 'ever-present' within the Council's mineral and waste planning unit. Kevin was a central figure in setting up the fledgling minerals and waste policy service; led the preparation of Gloucestershire's first-ever comprehensive minerals and waste local plans; and supported their subsequent reviews. In the past decade, he has also skilfully managed the County Council's development management and enforcement team through challenging times for resources.

Not only is Kevin regarded as a highly-skilled and successful minerals and waste specialist planner, but he is also a strong and committed advocate of strategic planning for minerals and waste across the South West of England. He has made longstanding and invaluable contributions to the South West's Regional Aggregate Working Party and Waste Technical Advisory Body. He was also a key figure in the minerals and waste chapters of the South West Regional Spatial Strategy.

In taking time out to acknowledge his retirement, fellow professionals from across the mineral and waste planning sector have commented on his professionalism, steadfastness, even-handed approach and dependableness. Colleagues past and present have remarked on his willingness to support and help others; and have applauded his unrivalled, encyclopaedic knowledge of minerals and waste planning policy practice and site histories throughout Gloucestershire and the West of England area.

Kevin is a keen walker and angler and has made plans to spend time enjoying the chalk streams of southern England. It is fitting therefore, that a lasting legacy of his time in Gloucestershire, are the mineral restoration schemes he has helped bring about. Across the Cotswold Water Park in particular, many former sand and gravel workings have now been transformed into beautiful, nature-rich lacustrine environments that are ideal for a day's coarse and fly fishing!

Good luck in your retirement from all your colleagues at Gloucestershire County Council



Send us your nominations

Would you like to recognise a colleague that perhaps has shown strong leadership, innovation or even mentoring skills to support others into the profession? Nominations could even be for a planner that has been inspirational, they could have successfully navigated a challenging project or plan or even completed their first planning inquiry. Whatever the achievement, we would like to celebrate the amazing work of planners in our region.

Get in touch with southwest@rtpi.org.uk and tell us more.

New Members

Congratulations to the following new Associate and Chartered Members in the South West

Jack Bradley Ridge and Partners

Louisa de Garis States of Guernsey

Sam Grant Bath & North East Somerset Council

Janet Jones Avison Young

Henry Smith Chris Blandford Associates

Jeremy Turner Savills

James Artingstall Tetra Tech

Emily Elliott LRM Planning Ltd

Danielle Milsom

Bath & North East Somerset Council

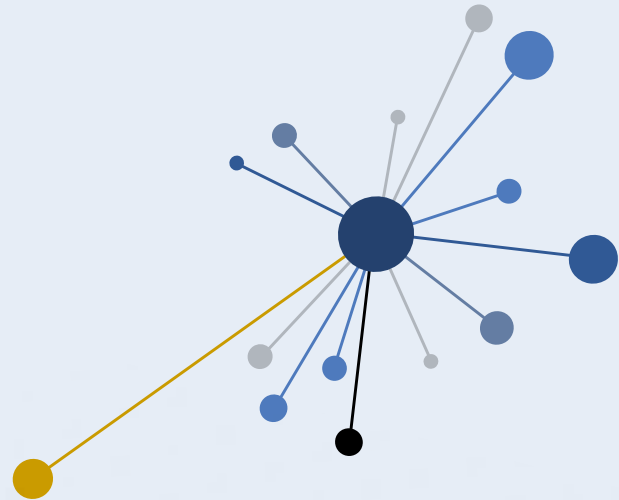
Emma Rawson Ridge and Partners

Guy Robinson Historic England

Lowri Thomas Jones Lang Lasalle

Debbie Turner

London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames



All new members since 2022 are invited to attend the RTPI South West Summer Reception which takes place:-

3rd July

**Somerset County Cricket Ground
Taunton**

[www.rtpi.org.uk/
swsummerreception2023](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/swsummerreception2023)



Photos of new members at the 2022 Summer Reception attended by Victoria Hills RTPI CEO and Tim Crawshaw 2022 RTPI President

05 Young Planners Bristol Region Updates

2022 Reflections

A key objective for the Bristol Region Young Planners in 2022 was to get a sense of momentum again around Young Planner events following the forced pause of in-person events caused by Covid-19. The makeup and attendees of Young Planners changed quite significantly from our last in-person event early 2020 compared to our first in-person event in 2022.

Overall, it was a brilliant and jam-packed year for the group where we organised 8 events, changed our name (previously the West of England Young Planners) and had seven new members join since our first in-person event in 2022. A list of current members and committee roles is set out below:

Michael Downes, Bristol City Council - Chair
Natalie Atkinson, YTL Developments - Treasurer
Ellen Fortt, Pegasus - Social Media
Laura Eimermann, Turley
Harrison Moore, Arup
Luke Atherton, Mott MacDonald
Callam Pearce, WSP
James Tarpy, Alder King Property Consultants
Alex Veitch, Walsingham Planning
Laurie Appleyard, LDA Design
Aamina Khan, UWE

The group is an excellent mix of new and actively involved members who all contribute towards events and planning for the year. We'd love to welcome any planners who work in the public sector onto the committee and ask that anyone who may be interested please contact charlotte.daborn@rtpi.org.uk for further details.

New Members

The Bristol Region Young Planners had three new members join earlier this year: Alex Veitch, Laurie Appleyard and Aamina Khan. We're excited to have them on board to help the group have a successful 2023! Two members stood down from the committee earlier this year. We'd like to thank Laura Luis and Isabelle Krabbe for their help during their time on the committee.

Report on previous activity

Winter Social Scavenger Hunt - November 2022

Bristol Region Young Planners were delighted to organise the return of the Winter Social Scavenger Hunt. This event was a fun networking event, bringing together like-minded Young Planners to take part and complete several challenges whilst exploring some well-known sites and pubs in the City Centre. Despite the weather, participants had a great time taking part in the scavenger hunt before going to Bambalan for food and drinks after.

We'd like to say a big thank you to our sponsor Beech Baker for contributing towards making this event such a success.

Nominated Charity - 'Caring in Bristol'

We will be supporting Caring in Bristol this year as our nominated charity. Caring in Bristol work in imaginative and creative ways with people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, with the public and community partners to bring about lasting change in Bristol and beyond. Further detail about Caring in Bristol can be found on their website Home - Caring in Bristol. The Bristol Region Young Planners will support Caring in Bristol by fundraising at certain events during the year, raising awareness of the excellent work the charity are doing and providing additional support where possible to the Caring in Bristol's aims and outcomes.

RTPI Young Planners Chairs Meeting - March 2023

Our Chair Michael Downes attended the first in-person Young Planners Chairs meeting of the year in the RTPI London office on the 3rd March. It was a great opportunity to meet fellow RTPI Young Planner Chairs throughout the UK and discuss shared learning, knowledge and experience across the different regions. Attendees learnt about the excellent work the RTPI International team are doing to strengthen networks on a global scale and take part in a public speaking workshop led by Constanze Bell Barrister at Kings Chamber.

Sponsorship Packages

We will have a host of sponsorship opportunities available soon to anyone in the Bristol Region to support Young Planner events. The packages will be a great opportunity for organisations to support grassroots events, raise awareness of the work they're doing in the planning world through official RTPI channels and benefit from the growing wider network that the Bristol Region Young Planners are a part of.

Please contact Chair Michael Downes for further details Michael.downes@bristol.gov.uk.



Getting to know the Committee

This month in our “getting to know the committee” section we have our Treasurer Natalie Atkinson.

Name: Natalie Atkinson

Current Position: Senior Planning Executive at YTL Developments.



How long have you been part of the committee:

Since July 2021. Treasurer since August 2022.

Where did you study: Cardiff University

(Undergraduate) and UWE part-time (Masters)

Why did you become a planner?: When I went to the London Olympics in 2012, I remember reading about how the Olympic Village would be transformed into a sustainable new community after the Games had finished. Ever since I have been keen to play a role in shaping places, and creating sustainable and vibrant communities. I am lucky enough to now be able to do that daily in my current role.

What do you think the biggest challenges are for planning in the future?:

I think the biggest challenge for planning in the future is appropriate housing delivery, over the last few years talks of changing legislation could mean that housing isn't delivered at the pace required. We are facing a housing crisis, yet there seems to be an increasing amount of bureaucracy preventing much needed homes being delivered. The government talks about simplifying the planning system, yet we aren't seeing much evidence of this!

Why are the biggest opportunities for planning in the future?:

I think the biggest opportunity for planning is delivering differently, there are various emerging building techniques which are quicker and more sustainable than traditional methods of construction which could allow us to build the homes we all so desperately need in a more environmentally friendly and timely manner. I think it also important to consider where development takes place, increasing densities on sustainable well-connected sites could reduce the need to develop greenfield sites.

Finally, where is top of your bucket list: I would love to go to Brazil, specifically Rio de Janeiro - hopefully I will get there in the next few years!

FUTURE EVENTS

We are planning events this year that will allow for further development of professional networks in informal settings but also more with a CPD focus. This includes two key note events that we're planning for late spring and autumn this year. Please keep an eye on official RTPI channels for future details very soon!

The following events have been identified for 2023. Some 2022 photo highlights for some of the events.

25 April - A Hard Hat Tour of Clifton Suspension Bridge Vaults, Bristol

www.rtpi.org.uk/ypclifton2023

4 May - Young Professionals in the Built and Natural Environment – Networking Drinks, Bristol

www.rtpi.org.uk/ypnetworkingdrinks2023

11 May - Jane's Walks - The greening of our city, Bristol

www.rtpi.org.uk/janejacobs2023

31 May - Biodiversity Net Gain in the Urban Environment, Bristol

www.rtpi.org.uk/ypbngmay2023

Dates for your diary with details to be published soon:

15 June, Boat Social, Bristol

July, Solar Farm Visit, Bristol

September, Scavenger Hunt, Bristol

October, Energy NSIP Seminar, Bristol

November, Pub Quiz, Bristol



06 Young Planners Dorset Region Updates

Steering Group Update

An especially eventful few months for the planning profession has been met by the steadfast enthusiasm of the Dorset Young Planner Steering Group, who have an eventful year lined up with a host of exciting CPD events for 2023.

Dorset Young Planners have been subject to lots of change in the past few months. We have sadly said goodbye to Dorset Young Planner founding member Hayley Richardson and Richard Mears, who have both contributed a huge amount of their time, enthusiasm and experience to the group, making Dorset Young Planners what it is today. We don't plan on letting them go too far and will be requesting lots of updates from them and look forward to seeing them both at upcoming CPD events.

We would like to say a special heartfelt thank you to Frances Summers who has resigned as co-chair of Dorset Young Planners. Frances was a fantastic co-chair, always inspiring and welcoming new members of the Dorset Young Planner Steering group. Frances' dedication and commitment will be missed. Frances is continuing to inspire others by lecturing at UWE University in Bristol and we wish her all the best!

We are proud to have Amelia Rose move into the role of Chair of the RTPI SW Dorset Young Planners. Previously commended as RTPI SW Young Planner of the Year, we are in safe hands.

Lucy Morgan and Poppy O'Flanagan are the newest members of the DYP Steering group and have already been huge assets to the team! Find out more about Lucy and Poppy later...

Steering group members

Amelia Rose, Freelance Planner - Chair

Philip Saunders, Savills

Poppy O'Flanagan, Stantec

Jack Higson, Terence O'Rourke

Simon Ible, Terence O'Rourke

Lucy Morgan, Savills

Phillippa Gatehouse, Chapman Lily Planning

List of events

FEBRUARY 2023: The Dorset Young Planner's kick started some CPD goals by taking a trip to the Terence O'Rourke Offices in Bournemouth on the 23rd February for a practical CPD on heritage and the planning process. We would like to say a huge thank you to the speakers, including Ruth Povey and Kalina from BCP Council, Natalie Aldrich from Savills and John Tehy from Terence O'Rourke. It was a brilliant, informative evening jam packed with discussions on 'assessing heritage impact of planning applications', 'weighing up harm against the public benefit' and 'the positive application of heritage assessment within the masterplan process'. A fantastic turn out and free pizza after the speakers gave everyone a chance to socialise. Thank you to Terence O'Rourke for sponsoring and hosting the event.

DECEMBER 2022: The Dorset Young Planners Christmas Social and famous quiz (courtesy of quizmaster Rob McDonald) and games night was brilliant as ever, with lots of prosecco and good food courtesy of Brewhouse Kitchen. It was great to see some new faces, and some competitive team building games definitely broke the ice and got everyone in the Christmas spirit. Congratulations to Chair Millie (and team) who remain reigning champions. A huge thank you to Chapman Lily Planning and Carrington West who sponsored the evening and to chair Millie and former co-chair Frances. We could not have done it without you.



Getting to know the Committee

Name: Lucy Morgan

Company: Savills

My name is Lucy and I am a Graduate Planner working for the Savills Central South Planning team (based in Wimborne). I grew up in Kent and studied for my Geography undergraduate degree in Durham before moving to Dorset in September 2021. I am now undertaking a town planning degree apprenticeship, meaning that I study part time (with London South Bank University) alongside my job. I am also working towards my APC and chartership too! I am particularly interested in the environmental aspects of planning and through my dissertation I am investigating the option of 20% biodiversity net gain. In my spare time I love being outdoors and I intend to make the most of living in such a beautiful county. My evenings and weekends usually consist of kayaking, sailing or walking the coast or forest. Through joining the Dorset Young Planners team I hope to expand my network and meet some interesting and like-minded early career professionals and planners. I look forward to getting to know everybody and getting involved in all the upcoming events!



Name: Poppy O'Flanagan

Company: Stantec

I am a Senior Planner and have been in the planning industry for over 6 years. I completed my undergraduate degree in Human Geography at Cardiff University in 2017, before completing my masters in Spatial Planning at UCL in 2019. I currently work for Barton Willmore, now Stantec and have been with them for almost four years. Although I am based in their London office, I moved back to down to Dorset at the end of 2021 after spending 6 years in London. I am lucky enough to work on a huge range of projects from major urban regeneration schemes to greenfield developments, with a focus on mixed-use and residential schemes - a sector that I am particularly interested in!



I am eager to get involved with the Dorset Young Planners and am looking forward to making connections with planners in the local area. I can't wait to hear about all the exciting development happening in and around Dorset and hope to offer a different perspective given my experience in London.

Name: Jack Higson

Company: Terence O'Rourke

I currently work as a Planner at Terence O'Rourke Planning and Design consultancy in Bournemouth. Originally from the Northwest of England I completed an undergraduate degree in Geography at the University of Salford before going on to complete a Planning MSc at the University of Newcastle. Both the third year of my undergrad and my MSc were during the pandemic, with my MSc being completely online – something that I'm sure many other recent graduates can commiserate with. In fact, despite living in the North East for a year, the first time I ever actually went to the Newcastle University campus was for my graduation ceremony in 2021!



I moved down to Bournemouth in September 2021 to start my career in planning and have since passed through TOR's graduate programme. At first, I found the move from Newcastle to Bournemouth quite a culture shock. The combination of moving from student to working full time combined with the differences between living in the North to the South definitely made the last bit of 2021 a challenge, however 18 months later I'm still here and having a great time!

cont next page...

Got your 2023 diary yet?

Make sure these events are firmly in your calendar;

29 June 4-8pm - An Interactive Tour of Canford SANG
www.rtpi.org.uk/dorsetypcanfordsang

August 6pm til late - We're all going on a summer boat cruise (social)

4 October 12 - 1pm - Career check, what's next?

2 November 6 til 10pm - planning day of the dead: CPD and social

7 December 6pm til late - Christmas quiz night extravaganza.

06 Young Planners Dorset Region Updates

Here at TOR we have a variety of different disciplines, including Planning, Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and Urban Design. Working in close proximity to experts in all these fields, listening to the office dialogue between them and working on a huge variety of projects across multiple sectors has really helped my professional development. Personally, I have worked on Film Studios, Solar Farms, numerous Housing schemes and various other projects in my just over 18 months here, and I can't wait to see the variety of projects that I get involved with in the future. When I'm not busy planning I enjoy getting out and exploring the South coast – living so close to Bournemouth beach is still a novelty to me. I'm still a massive Blackburn Rovers F.C. fan and enjoy going to games on the occasions that I'm home in rainy Lancashire.

Looking to the future I can't wait to take part in more events with the Dorset Young Planners, who've been nothing by welcoming to be since I moved down. Whilst career wise, I'm excited to continue with my professional L-APC and become a chartered member of the RTPI.

Call for members

The Dorset Young Planners (DYPs) Steering Group are looking for some new members to join their team to help in organising CPD events and exciting socials for planners across Dorset and beyond. Seeking enthusiastic planners who have under 10 years experience post qualification to join our fun and active team!

10 SECOND CASE STUDY Canford Meadow SANG Change of Use to Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace [SANG] in north Poole.

“ I am delighted to have been part of the Chapman Lily Planning team that secured planning permission for the Meadow SANG in north Poole. It has been great both in terms of my professional development, having been part of the project team from inception, but also from a personal and academic perspective as I have particular interest in Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace and their multiple benefits. I am a huge advocate for connecting people with nature.

The Meadow SANG not only helps to provide easy access to a range of walks, reducing recreational pressure on sensitive habitats, but also is another step towards realising BCP Council and Dorset Council's vision for the Stour Valley Park. The Meadow SANG which has a site area of 43ha, is addition to the 44ha Riverside SANG to the west. Phase 1 of the Riverside SANG is already open and has proved extremely popular with local residents and visitors from further afield.

Dorset Young Planners will be holding a CPD event for all those interested in the purpose of SANGs, securing SANGs through the planning process and why SANGs have strategic importance. We look forward to seeing you there!”

Phillippa Gatehouse, Chapman Lily Planning



Steering group members

Jozie Bannister, Devonshire Homes - Chair
Elliot Dommett, Stantec
Liam Fisher, East Devon District Council
Faye Stewart, Bailey Partnership
Mary-Ellen Whalley, Torridge District Council
Nadine Alnajjab - LDA Consulting Ltd

Call for members

The Devon, Cornwall and Somerset Young Planners Steering Group would be delighted for new members to join and help lead with organising of a couple of events this year. Being part of the steering group is a great way of meeting like minded planners but also developing skills in project management and leadership.

Future events in the planning

Exeter Underground Passage tour
Exe Estuary Trail Cycle and talk on Active Travel.
NFU Farm Visit and talk.
Appeals webinar.



Exe Estuary Trail Cycle



Who are we?



Wiltshire Young Planners are a newly established group of Young Planning Professionals with a variety of different backgrounds. We are hoping to run a number of events throughout the year, both social and CPD to provide a space for Young Planners across Wiltshire to network and build connections. Our group is made up of the following people, we are always welcoming of new ideas and faces so please get in touch if you want to be part of the team, or simply have an idea for an event!

Hollie Sturgess Chair

I am a Senior Town Planner at Master Land and Planning, based near Salisbury although I live in Swindon.

I have a background in working on a wide range of residential schemes across southern England as well as supporting a number of Neighbourhood Planning Groups in Wiltshire with the preparation of their plans. I started my planning career in 2018 while completing my MSc in Spatial Planning and Development at the University of Reading. I have been in the private sector for most of this time however have had recent experience in Swindon Borough Council Policy team, working on the preparation of evidence to support the emerging Local Plan. I am currently working towards completing my APC and am looking forward to helping build a support network for others like me across Wiltshire.



Fern Lynch Vice Chair

I obtained an MSc in Urban Planning in 2017 from the University of the West of England (UWE) having also completed a BSc in Geography with Environmental Management at UWE in 2013. My

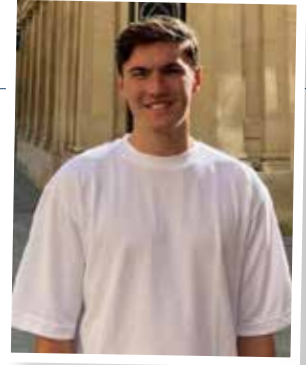
Planning career originated within local government as a development management planner until April 2021 when I made the switch to the private sector. I now specialises in achieving consent for major residential



sites within the south west of England on behalf of major housing developer, Persimmon Homes. I recently joined the Steering Group to increase my engagement with the RTPi and encourage other young planners make the most of the Institute!

Stefan Galyas

I work in an LPA as part of their development management department and have worked in this position for around six months now. I have enjoyed the challenges of adapting to a new job as well as a new place. I have certainly learnt a lot during these first few months! Plenty of site visits have helped me build up my mental map of Wiltshire and the various characteristics of different places. One of my key interests throughout my studies in Urban Planning and Development, up north in Sheffield, was the historic environment. From market towns to small hamlets, it has struck me just how prevalent the historic environment is in Wiltshire, making the county very interesting to work in. I look forward to learning more as my time in Wiltshire progresses!



Hennie Cole

I have recently joined the planning sector, and at the very least, it has been so eye opening to see the built environment in a different way and seeing how it develops. I started out my career in architecture, completing my part 1 degree at the University of Plymouth, and then going on to work in a small firm for my placement year which then attracted me into planning. I am currently working part time in a private consultancy in Swindon while I complete my master's in Urban Planning at UWE. I work with both the planners and the architects which allows me to utilize my design skills within my planner role as well as developing my knowledge as a planner to help become chartered in the near future. I am especially interested in health and sustainability implementations within development. Outside of work and university, I am a keen runner and also have a love for the gym, cycling and spending as much time outdoors with my dog as I can!



Christopher Howells

My name is Christopher and I'm part of the new Local Plan team at Swindon Borough Council. My current focus is on developing new spatial strategy options for the Borough and developing a portfolio of site allocations to meet the Council's needs over at least the next 20 year period. Prior to joining Swindon, I was part of the Planning Policy and Placemaking team at London Borough of Bexley and lead on a number of estate regeneration schemes and masterplanning projects within the Bexley Riverside Opportunity Area. I am a graduate of Oxford Brookes University and have a Masters of Planning in Spatial Planning.



Future Events

5 July Heritage Action Zones, Swindon

September Cotswold Waterpark tour and activity



Cotswold Waterpark

Who are we?

We are a diverse group of built environment professionals based in Gloucestershire. We're forming a steering group to provide networking, career support and CPD opportunities for young planners in our area.

Our events will likely be a mixture of in person and online and we hope to host some of these alongside other property and planning professionals from across the South West.

We cover Gloucester, Cheltenham, Tewkesbury, Stroud, the Forest of Dean and the Cotswolds. If you are from any of these areas and you are starting out on your planning journey or you completed your planning degree less than 10 years ago and would like to get involved, please get in touch. We welcome anyone studying or working in planning (in public or private practice).

We hope to hold our first event in May/June 2023. To find out more, please sign up for email alerts at <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/join-young-planners-south-west/> and keep an eye on your inbox.

We welcome you to join us for the upcoming year and get involved in our 2023 events.

Liz Shield
Harrison Clark Rickerbys
(co-chair)

"My favourite thing about planning is the fact that no day is the same. I enjoy it when things get really technical and you have to problem solve. There is no one-size fits all approach and you have to be prepared to think on your feet"



Kimberley Dix
Freelance Town Planner
(co-chair)

"I am passionate about planning and the built environment. Planning is an important part of creating the world around us and finding solutions to complex issues. The work we do ensures a healthy future for our communities, the economy and the environment".



Claudia Jones
Ridge and Partners LLP

"The way in which places evolve has always interested me, from studying buildings as part of my Art GCSE at school to pursuing a degree in Planning at the University of Birmingham following an inspiring lecture on the socio-economics of development. Having now been in my planning career for nearly six years my interests are continuously evolving, and I enjoy the dynamics of each project which varies my day-to-day work."



Carl Ranscombe
West Waddy Archadia

I'm fascinated by the power of place in our lives, I like problem-solving and working with people. So, I think those interests cut across multiple aspects of planning. I'm inspired by the opportunities to address the poly-crisis the world faces in a place-based, outcomes-focused way.



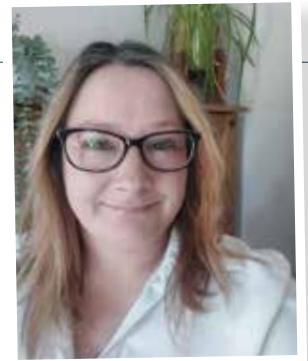
Daniel Jones
Evans Jones

“I switched career paths to Town Planning due to my interest in the built environment and its effect on communities. I believe regeneration and development can positively impact neighbourhoods, and I am eager to contribute to this process.”



Frances Summers

“I love that I can combine my passion for planning with inspiring the next generation of planners with half my week spent in practice and the other half lecturing. I’m a Chartered Town Planner with experience in policy and development management, I am particularly interested in social equity and how planning can be shaped to change society.”



Emily Downing
Habitat First Group

Originally from a design background, a shift into planning became a natural progression for me. I have always been drawn to the planning process and the influence this has on the environments in which we live. Through my employer I am fortunate to have the opportunity to undertake the Chartered Town Planner Apprenticeship, for which I am still in the early stages.



Future Events

13 June - Ecology and BNG in practice breakfast seminar, Cheltenham
www.rtpi.org.uk/ypecologyandbng2023

July - Gloucester Walking Tour of Regeneration sites

September - Cotswold Waterpark tour and activity

Aidan Xuezi
Zhang SF Planning

“I enjoy traveling and exploring various cities around the world in my free time. My travels have given me a unique perspective on planning practices worldwide and have broadened my understanding of the cultural and social contexts that shape the built environment. This has also allowed me to develop a deep appreciation for the impact of planning on communities and people’s daily lives.”



Narrow boats in Gloucester Docks

Evaluating the value of the designated Local Green Space in Neighbourhood Development Plans for local communities in rural areas

What was the planning issue and research question that you addressed in your dissertation research?

The Local Green Space (LGS) designation in Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) was introduced by the Localism Act 2011 and has been included in the NPPF since 2012, but has not been subject to much research. In my dissertation, I evaluated the importance of the LGS designation to local rural communities who have a 'made' NDP or who are in the process of preparing one. My research aimed to examine the effectiveness of the designation of the LGS in NDPs for preventing inappropriate development and providing rural amenities to residents through a case study of rural parishes in the South Hams, Devon.

How did you set about investigating this issue (methods and study area)?

To assess the characteristics of LGS, a desk-based study of 'made' neighbourhood plans in South Hams was conducted to assess the characteristics of designated LGS. These data were compared against data from an audit of open spaces in South Hams carried out by South Hams District Council. A questionnaire survey was then sent to all parish councils in the South Hams to gauge their views. Finally, interviews were conducted with steering group members and parish councillors in three case study parishes with NDPs. I also interviewed a green infrastructure officer in South Hams District Council.

What were your main findings?

The research findings suggest that LGS designation is significant for local people to protect green spaces that are important to the community from development. The designated green spaces ranged from very small remnants of historic spaces (such as remnant village greens) to parks, playing fields and play areas as well as agricultural fields without public access. LGS designation provides local people with reassurance that locally valued spaces will be protected. However, it is not sufficient in itself to improve the quality or management of these spaces. LGS designation does not necessarily clarify questions over ownership and

management of green spaces where they are not in public or charitable ownership. Neither does LGS designation unlock any financial resources to enhance their amenity value. A few parishes have not included LGS in their NDP. Finally, as it is a local designation, the amount of LGS can vary significantly from one parish to another, and it is unclear whether there is a planning mechanism to address shortfalls in amenity green space in some parishes. As LGS is a relatively new planning policy, it is important to monitor the benefits and outcomes over a longer timescale.

What implications do your results have for planning practice and policy?

One finding was that many parishes rely on advice from planning professionals in the preparation of their NDP, but advice is in short supply. Parishes with LGS in their NDP could support other parishes which are in the process of preparing an NDP to share advice and experience. Many (40%) of the designated LGS was owned by parish councils, representing an important opportunity to manage and enhance LGS, but without funding parish councils will struggle to achieve LGS benefits. Finally, the research identified a continuing role for the District Council to support parishes with LGS designation and to monitor the LGS designations to have an overview of provision across the parishes. There is also an important role for the District Council to protect local green spaces in villages without a NDP or designated LGS.

research findings suggest that LGS designation is significant for local people to protect green spaces



Name: Mariko Fukunaga
Degree programme: MSc Planning
University: University of Plymouth
Employer: Policy Officer
(Neighbourhood Planning)
in the Planning Policy Team
at Bassetlaw District Council,
North Nottinghamshire.

After a successful initial pilot in 2022, RTPI South West will be continuing its mentoring programme into 2023.

Background and Context

It is widely commented within the media that a lack of planning staff is compounding the industry's ability to process applications, engage in best practice within planning negotiations and deliver development on the ground. This staffing crisis is being experienced across the sector, but is perhaps most acutely felt within local planning authorities, where high caseloads are reducing time for continuing professional development activities and the opportunity for mentoring of junior colleagues. The consequence is significantly affecting the careers of new planners. Senior colleagues, who already have high caseloads or are simply not in post means that finding support and time to mentor more junior colleagues becomes very difficult.

Whilst resourcing is an issue, there remains a keen aspiration to share learning and best practice amongst planning professionals.

To compliment the RTPI NUTURE programme RTPI South West are facilitating a programme to match mentors and mentees, so that planners have a dedicated place to find the support that they need to get the best out of their first few years in work.



Benefit

Mentoring has significant benefits for both mentor and mentees:

- Having a mentor can improve your chances of APC success, particularly if the mentors have recent experience of the process.
- Provides an opportunity to engage with planners that you may not have worked with before and network with their wider connections.
- Mentoring can encourage recruitment opportunities through increased networking.
- Provides opportunities for like-minded planners to discuss projects and, indeed, for those with different backgrounds to also consider each other's perspective.
- There are potential mental health benefits, simply just by talking issues through with other professionals, but also by having a space outside of your employment to discuss planning-related matters and professional development.
- Mentoring can boost the confidence of both the mentor and mentee.
- Broadens and improves experience for inclusion on a CV.
- Matching mentors and mentees will encourage skill sharing and could identify new ways of problem solving by discussing work issues. In the long-term, and if widespread, this scheme could see planning processes improved as professionals work together.

Having a mentor has been a fantastic opportunity for me to think about my future practice as a town planner. Having a guide and mentor to help me grow and reflect has been a big part of my progression professionally this year and my mentor is closely aligned to my current experience. With the support of my mentor I have also decided to submit my MRTPI application in 2023 something, I would not have done without her encouragement and support.

As a mentor I've also found it useful and interesting to share professional experiences outside of the APC discussions to aid with knowledge sharing, so it certainly doesn't feel like a one way discussion. I always find our discussions enjoyable and its nice to step away from the 'day job' and reflect more widely on our careers.

Mentee requirements

This pilot mentorship scheme is specifically aimed at planners at the start of their career (between 1-5 years following graduation), including those that are considering or actively preparing from their upcoming L-APC or DA-APC submission.

Mentor requirements

In general, planners who have recently passed their APC or Chartered members that have 5+ years' experience will be considered for mentor roles. However, these conditions can be flexible depending on circumstances and feedback from respondents.

We are looking for individuals from all parts of the planning sector. Whilst some mentee candidates may have very specific requirements in terms of background experience or time commitments from their prospective mentor, mentorship can be provided by like-minded planners or indeed those from a very different planning background, who can equally contribute to the start of a planner's career.

The skills and resources required to mentor a junior planner will vary significantly from person to person. That is why it is important to develop a programme which matches individuals based on their specific skills set and development needs. There will be opportunities to mentor with monthly or fortnightly virtual catch-ups or email exchanges right through to face-to-face meeting and review of APC submissions. The key is to enable a flexible programme to meet individuals' needs and for those involved to be realistic about the resource that they are able to give.

“ As a mentor I've also found it useful and interesting to share professional experiences outside of the APC discussions to aid with knowledge sharing, so it certainly doesn't feel like a one way discussion. I always find our discussions enjoyable and its nice to step away from the 'day job' and reflect more widely on our careers.

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How to apply

Mentee applications - [complete this form](#)

Mentor applications - [complete this form](#)

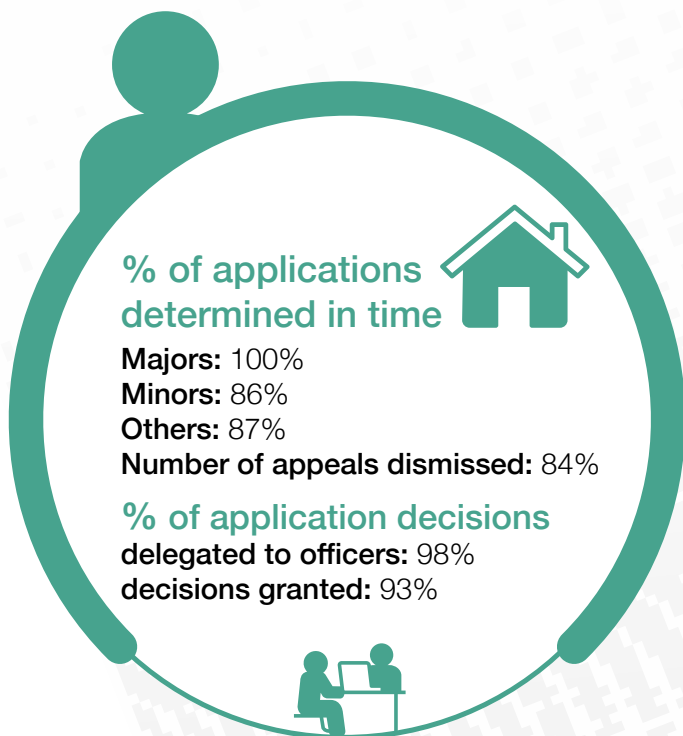
12 LPA Spotlight - BANES

Bath and North East Somerset is a unitary authority that covers 351 km² and serves a population of 196,000. It is bordered by 5 other authorities and has close links with the West of England Authorities (Bristol, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset).

The council covers a rural and urban district which comprises the city of Bath along with the surrounding rural areas and market towns including Keynsham and the Somer Valley. The planning service comprises passionate individuals committed to the Council's priority to 'Improving People's Lives', and deliver an effective service for residents and customers.

Development Management

The council's Development Management team provide a high level of service meeting the required targets for dealing with applications.



Despite the challenging financial circumstances facing local government, the team has used Planning Performance Agreements, its relationship with an external design review panel, Design West, and a Development Team approach (which brings together a multidisciplinary team of experts from across the Council to review schemes) to engage with developers of major projects across the district and to raise the standards of design, particularly in respect of sustainable construction, Biodiversity Net Gain and the promotion of active travel.

Quarterly agents' forums are held with open invitations sent to all regular planning agents in the district. This is used to provide updates on the latest information from the planning team and to give an opportunity for feedback about the implementation of policies, customer service and performance issues. This has proved to be an invaluable means for engaging with the development industry and providing the team with clear feedback on which it can act to ensure that it is responsive to the concerns of customers.

This commitment to sustainable development extends to the B&NES planning enforcement team who, in a period of unprecedented demand and ever-increasing expectations from the public following the lockdowns of 2020/21, have produced an updated Local Enforcement Plan to provide a clear set of expectations and priorities to ensure that their work is undertaken with consistency, proportionality and openness.

Local Plan Partial Update (LPPU)

In 2019 B&NES Council declared climate and ecological emergencies, with the ambition of the District being carbon neutral by 2030. Planning, driven by plan-making, must play a fundamental part in helping to meet this ambition.

The B&NES Local Plan (comprising Core Strategy, adopted in 2014 and Placemaking Plan, adopted in 2017) needed to be reviewed. However, preparation of a full new Local Plan was delayed due to uncertainties around sub-regional strategic planning.

There was a need to update the policy framework urgently to help address the climate and ecological emergencies, as well as housing supply issues. The Core Strategy and Placemaking Plan have been successful in significantly increasing housing delivery, but over supply within the plan period meant there would be a slow down in delivery at the end of the plan period that could have resulted in the loss of a 5 Year Housing Land Supply and likely inability to meet the Housing Delivery Test later in the plan period.

Therefore, it was decided to prepare a Partial Update to the Local Plan (LPPU). Not many partial updates are progressed, but this innovative solution fitted the circumstances and predicament B&NES found itself in. The production of the LPPU was a creative and innovative way to keep our Local Plan up-to-date in the face of the changing sub-regional planning landscape. Preparation of the LPPU was undertaken swiftly and smoothly, whilst also involving communities/other



12 LPA Spotlight - BANES

stakeholders in the unusual times of the pandemic, and ensuring cross-party political support throughout the process. The LPPU was launched in April 2020 and was submitted for examination less than two years later, in December 2021. The Inspector's Report was received in December 2022 confirming the LPPU is sound, subject to some main modifications. It was adopted in January 2023.

The LPPU was launched in April 2020, just after the first COVID-19 lockdown came into force. Its preparation encompassed all three of the lockdowns, and throughout this time, it was not possible to carry out any face-to-face engagement with communities. Up until the pandemic, a typical approach to engagement with communities and stakeholders comprised in-person community consultation events and workshops. However, as this was not an option, the strategy for engagement was swiftly amended, taking it all online such as Webinars.

Feedback from some participants indicated that moving engagement online had a positive effect on reaching a wider demographic, as for many it was easier to log into a webinar than travel to an in-person event.

The LPPU addresses urgent issues in B&NES - it includes nationally leading policies in relation to mitigating and adapting to climate change; early introduction of BNG requirement; replenishing housing supply in a planned manner; and facilitating the delivery of economic development, especially in the south of B&NES, an area experiencing the difficulties of economic restructuring. In preparing the LPPU the opportunity was also taken to address other issues and to improve existing policies making them clearer and easier to implement.

Alongside and in order to help facilitate implementation of the key LPPU policies a number of SPDs and guidance notes have also been prepared, consulted on and adopted in parallel. The supplementary documents ensure both Development Management and applicants have the necessary tools for implementation - ensuring the LPPU policies make a real difference.

Officers from the policy team have worked closely with colleagues in Development Management prior to adoption to train officers on the new policies to ensure that they were able to implement the policies soon after adoption.

Sustainability

One key aim of the LPPU was to use planning policy to help address the climate and nature emergency. The ambition was to adopt a trailblazing new housing policy that creates truly net zero homes and subsequently has a major significant impact on pushing new build energy standards to new, unprecedented heights. For new build residential properties an approach of setting strict standards on energy use and space heating has been followed. Where targets could not be met then off setting to match total energy use is accepted. If offsetting is found to be acceptable, funds will be used to install solar PV on low-income households and social housing through working with both the leading housing provider and community energy group in B&NES. The policy approach was worked up alongside and in liaison with Cornwall Council, sharing best practice and evidence work.

The implementation and delivery of the policy will further be improved as a result of securing a 6-month funded partnership with the University of Bath. University academics will support policy compliance assessments in detail and look to develop the monitoring and reporting framework to maximise efficacy. In the longer-term, the academics will produce highly insightful reports on the positive impacts the policy has had on reducing the performance gap on energy performance, addressing the cost-of-living and energy crises, and improving people's lives. There is currently no data generation at-scale of widespread net zero home delivery across a local authority area. Therefore, the production of such a study will be of national significance to drive future policy development.

pushing new
build energy
standards to new,
unprecedented
heights

The council has also worked with our colleagues in Bristol, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset to commission an evidence base on Embodied Carbon Assessments. Through this work the council have been able to adopt a policy requiring embodied carbon assessments on new build properties. It is envisaged that through the monitoring of this policy stricter standards can be adopted in the New Local Plan.



Written by

Richard Daone

Alice Barnes

Kaoru Jacques

Alex McCann

Samantha Mason

Christopher Griggs-Trevarthen

Alice Nunn

13 Strategic planning - what is the point?

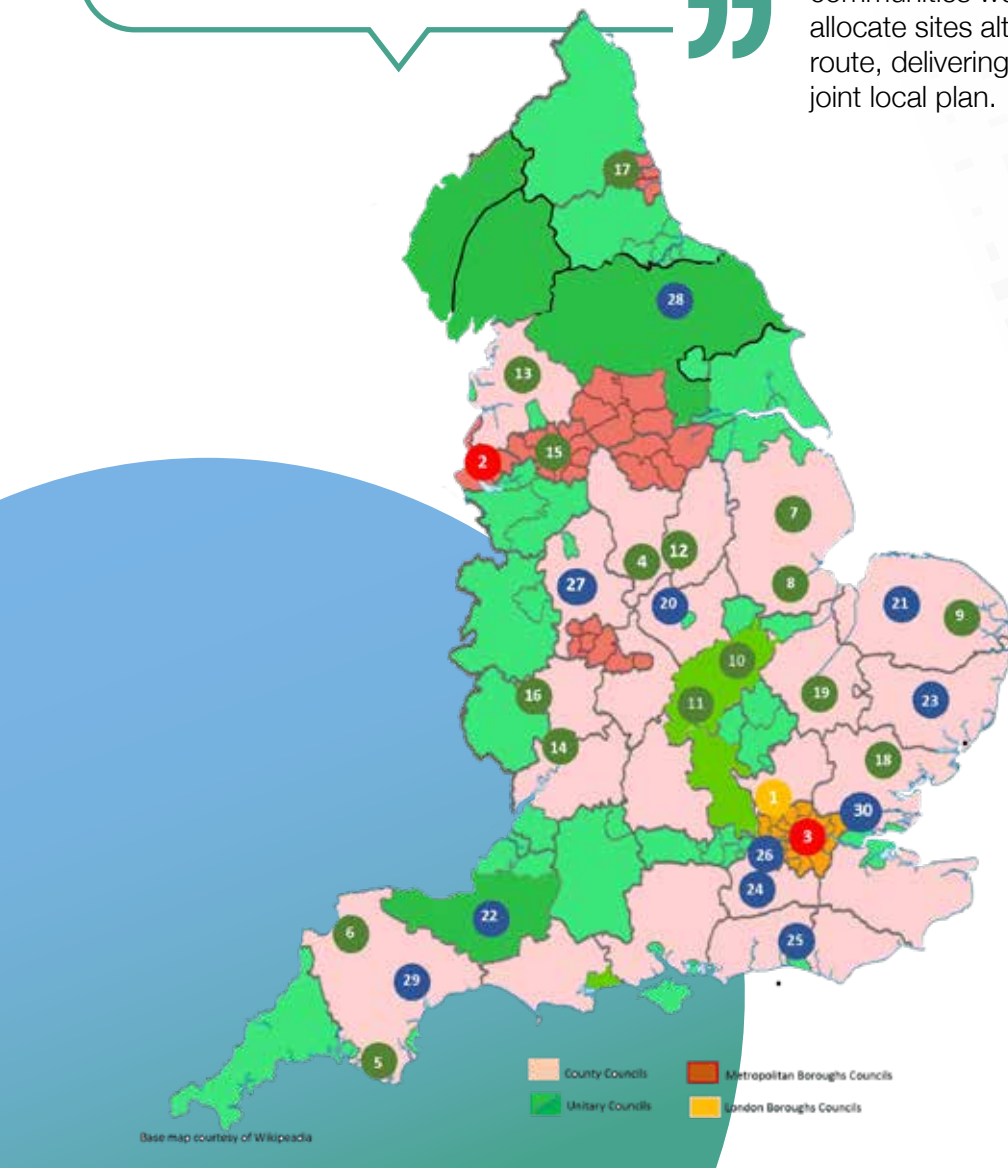
I bang on about strategic planning constantly and use every opportunity to talk about how important it is. The need to do better at it is the one thing that (most of) the development industry, planning profession and increasingly, local communities involved in planning, agree about. So why is so hard?

There are probably three main reasons why we have not mastered the art since regional planning was abolished in 2010 and Secretary of State, Eric Pickles, famously declared that

“Regional Strategies built nothing but resentment - we want to build houses. So instead we will introduce powerful new incentives for local people so they support the construction of new homes in the right places and receive direct rewards from the proceeds of growth to improve their local area.”

In 2010, there was a complete lack of understanding within the Coalition Government, which was immersed in its new venture into Localism, of what strategic planning is and its true value. This has got progressively worse over the years since then, mainly due to the fact that, despite some brave efforts from local authorities (see map below), few have been successful. As a result, we have lost a whole generation of strategic planners and with them, the essential ringmaster role they performed across local authorities and other partners.

A strategic plan is not a 'big local plan'. It is best looked at as a strategic investment framework across a number of local authority areas that aligns long term infrastructure, economic and environmental priorities on a spatial basis. For decades these frameworks managed important decisions like the scale of new homes needed, the general extent of Green Belt, cross boundary environmental assets, and strategic infrastructure and major regeneration and growth priorities (including whether new or expanded communities were needed). Generally they do not allocate sites although some have ventured down this route, delivering their strategic framework through a joint local plan.



Statutory Joint Strategic Plans (statutory)

- 1. South West Herts Joint Strategic Plan*

Spatial Development Strategies (statutory)**

- 2. Liverpool City Region Spatial Development Strategy*
- 3. The London Plan

Joint LPs and Joint/Aligned Strategies (statutory)***

- 4. Greater Derby Aligned Core Strategies
- 5. Plymouth and SW Devon Joint Local Plan
- 6. North Devon & Torridge Joint Local Plan
- 7. Central Lincolnshire Joint Local plan
- 8. South East Lincolnshire Joint Local Plan
- 9. Greater Norwich Joint Local Plan
- 10. North Northants Joint Core Strategy
- 11. West Northants Joint Core Strategy
- 12. Greater Nottingham Aligned Core Strategies
- 13. Central Lancashire Joint Local Plan*
- 14. Gloucester, Tewksbury & Cheltenham Joint Core Strategy
- 15. Greater Manchester Joint Plan*
- 16. South Worcestershire Development Plan
- 17. Newcastle and Gateshead Core Strategy
- 18. North Essex Aligned Strategies*
- 19. Greater Cambridge Plan

Strategic planning and/ or Growth Frameworks (non-statutory)

- 20. Leicester & Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan
- 21. Norfolk Strategic Planning Framework
- 22. Somerset Growth Plan
- 23. Suffolk Growth Framework
- 24. Surrey 2050 Place Ambition
- 25. West Sussex & Greater Brighton Local Strategic Statement
- 26. Heathrow Strategic Planning Framework*
- 27. Staffordshire Strategic Infrastructure Plan
- 28. York, North Yorkshire, East Riding and Hull Spatial Framework
- 29. East Devon, Exeter, Mid Devon and Teignbridge Joint Strategy*
- 30. South Essex Joint Strategic Framework*

* Emerging plans/ frameworks (or under review)

** Subject to their own defined legislation & Regulations i.e. not development plan documents

*** Does not include all joint local plans – only those considered to be strategic in nature

The second reason why we are where we are is that too often there is an automatic assumption that strategic planning can only be done at the regional scale and regional planning still has too much baggage associated with it. Since the 1960s strategic planning was managed at both the regional and sub-regional levels. Critically it has to be managed at a scale that is big enough to give effect to national priorities and policies but small enough to reflect local character and context. In my experience this is usually best implemented at the sub-regional scale but a high level vision-led regional framework in the way that regional planning guidance (RPG) used to operate pre 2004, does add value.

The final reason for the lack of effective strategic planning is around the weaknesses in decision-making and governance structures. I have written about this many times and have firmly come to the conclusion that unless there is a single person or body/ committee with a majority voting system of governance for making strategic decisions, most strategic planning partnerships will remain fragile. This is even harder in areas where there are two-tiers of local government, with county councils having a number of roles that impact on spatial planning but with no statutory spatial planning responsibilities. England is littered with failed attempts based on a consensus model of decision-making, most recently in Oxfordshire and the Black Country, but including the West of England and Greater Exeter.

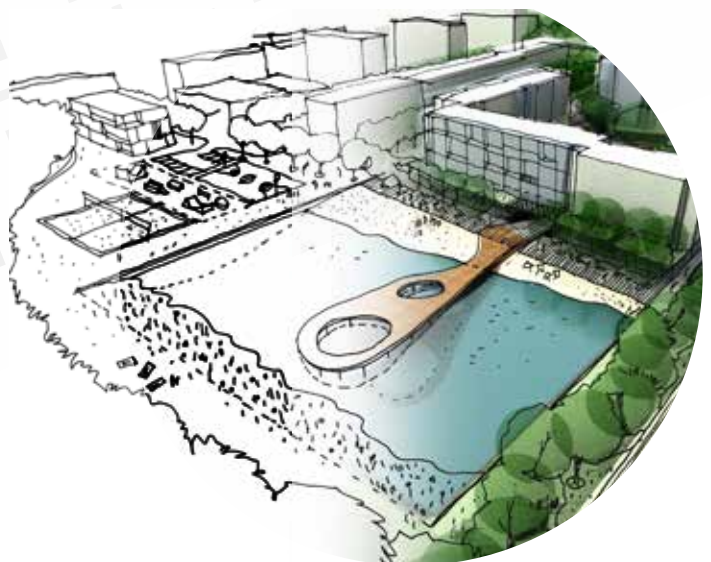
Decision-making through voluntary collaboration is the Government's model of choice and the new joint spatial development strategies proposed in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill will be no different. Like the existing combined authority SDS, they will rely on unanimous support across all partners and it will just need one partner to walk away for it to fall apart.

This is challenging for many local authorities given that they are being asked to make decisions in the interests of the greater good which means inevitably there will be winners and losers. That is a hard ask of any political Leader who is unable to deflect the blame onto someone else and has to take direct responsibility for the decision. Add into the mix the constant debate about local government reorganisation and there is even less of an incentive for individual local authorities to work together.

There appears to be a clear consensus that we need a more effective approach to strategic planning and with the increasing and significant climate, economic, infrastructure and housing challenges we face, this needs to be addressed urgently. But the odds are stacked against it under the current proposed planning reforms. Add into the mix the fact that the Government is expecting the twenty largest towns and cities to do much of the heavy lifting on housing delivery, without any form of mandatory strategic planning support from their neighbours and this is clearly a recipe for disaster. Things may well be different next year, however, following a General Election and a change in Government. Whilst there are few details of how a Labour Government would change things, we have had a hint in the recently published Commission for the Future which stated that "...the development of larger-scale regional planning frameworks along the lines already proposed by both the One Powerhouse Consortium and the UK2070 Commission should be pursued, as is already standard practice in almost all of the UK's densely populated competitor countries." Perhaps then I will be able to stop banging the drum about the need for a more effective approach to strategic planning and will have to find another planning hobby-horse!

Catriona Riddell

Director of Catriona Riddell & Associates



14 Make Space for Girls

A call out for ParkWatch!

Make Space for Girls is a charity focussed on making parks work better for teenage girls. This doesn't mean spaces painted pink or signs saying: No Boys Allowed. It means supporting everyone involved in creating and maintaining parks to think a bit differently.

And it means being led by evidence: not by assumptions about what teenagers want and use. And data is one of the biggest current gaps.

We know that standard provisions for teenagers in parks (skateparks, pitches and multi-use games areas (MUGAs) and BMX/outdoor cycle) are dominated by boys and young men. But there is no hard data on how extensive this is. Are these facilities used 90% by boys and 10% by girls? Or is it more like 70/30? We need this data because without it, the case for change is less robust, and councils won't know whether interventions they make to create more inclusive spaces work.

To address this gap, Make Space for Girls is running a national campaign, called ParkWatch. It will run from 27th May to 29th May 2023. It is a simple idea. We are asking people to go to the park and count how many people are using MUGAs, skateparks and cycle/BMX tracks – and how many of them are girls. It is a quick spot count- taking no more than a couple of minutes. They send the results to us via our website. We analyse the results and produce a report, available to anyone who is interested in creating more inclusive parks.

What are we trying to change?

When it comes to teenagers in parks, the standard provisions are dominated by boys and young men and girls often don't get a look in. This needs to change.

Why does this need to change?

Fairness. Why shouldn't teenage girls have facilities that meet their needs? Feeling welcome in a park is about feeling you belong in the public realm and are part of the community. At the moment we have too many parks that send teenage girls the message: "There is nothing here for you, you might as well go home." Health. We know that inactivity is bad for physical and mental health. And being physically active doesn't have to be about getting sweaty in sports kit. Parks provide a great place for play based activity; walking to, from and in the park; hanging out with friends or



finding some peace and quiet; swinging; trampolining, exploring nature.

The law: Article 31 of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child creates the right to play for all children, up to the age of 18. And the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under the Equality Act 2010 requires councils to proactively consider the need to reduce inequality between certain groups. So where (as is the case in parks) girls are disadvantaged when compared to boys, councils have a legal duty to think about trying to reduce this.

Is change happening?

Things are starting to change. Progressive engagement practices are starting to recognise that parks and similar spaces in the public realm are not gender neutral; and that understanding and tackling the barriers to equal access will not happen unless we actively look at these spaces through a gendered lens. As a result of these sorts of engagement practices, there are areas of green space being commissioned, having been being co-designed with teenage girls and young women. Some of these should be finished by the summer and we can't wait to see these open.

Why are planners so important to this change? At the risk of preaching to the choir, policy and planning documents are fundamental to the design of the public realm. Which means that we are excited to see that some of these documents are starting to recognise the role that gender plays in how young people access and enjoy the public realm and the need to create spaces that work better for teenage girls.

One of the first examples we have seen of the issue being covered in a draft local plan is in the current draft Newham Local Plan (see p230).

Extract from Newham Local Plan

“Gender differences in how spaces are used and experienced should be considered. In addition to skate parks, BMX tracks, football pitches and MUGAs the design of spaces should consider incorporating more diverse elements such as those listed below:

- Provision of gym bars for hanging on, leaning against, sitting on.
- Gym equipment designed to encourage social interaction.
- Robust hammock swings for older teenagers to meet and spend time with friends.
- Dividing up MUGA space so there is not just a pitch but also less prescriptive space, to give more chance for different types of play.
- Seating should be designed into the perimeter of the MUGA. Such spaces allow people to choose how to use the space.
- Social Seating - allowing people to speak, circular designs achieve this well.
- Consider innovative ways to provide shelter from rain and/or heat.
- Stages can provide space for performances both formal and informal.
- Spaces for older children to hang out.”

We are also starting to see the issues being considered in supplementary planning documents. For example, in Hackney the Council's Supplementary Planning document, Growing up in Hackney Child Friendly Places, recognises the importance of the gender mainstreaming work in Vienna to how we think about our public realm today. On a more granular level, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Council have produced a Design Guide including details about what the council's want for future play space and youth provision. The Design Guide states:

“spaces for older children should be designed to appeal to a much wider range of teenagers, of both sexes, and not be easily dominated by one type of user. Elements that could be included in a youth space are wide ranging, such as: swings, hammocks, high bars, outdoor gyms, bouldering structures, more open (less cage like), and divided areas of MUGAs.”

Taking it down to the master planning level, Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole Council's ambitious and inclusive master plan identifies the need for social areas for teenage girls and young women BCP Council Harbourside Development Master Plan.

And it is not just council planning documents that are responding to our campaign. Natural England have highlighted the issue in their Green Infrastructure Planning and Design Guide (p58) and in London, Transport for London's Sustainable Development Framework identifies the importance of a public realm that works for teenage girls in its guidance on Vibrant Places.

We are seeing the beginnings of a real movement for change, to create a public realm where teenage girls are welcome and can thrive; and ParkWatch will help us take that movement to the next stage. It would be fantastic if Branchout readers could be part of this movement and get involved in ParkWatch.



More details of ParkWatch

and how to get involved will be on our website at Home makespaceforgirls.co.uk



@MakeSpaceforGi1



make-space-for-girls



Article written by Imogen Clark

Co-Founder and Trustee for Make Space for Girls



I have been very lucky in my career. I started in 1992 at South Somerset District Council and, since then, have progressed around the UK and Ireland working in both the public and private sectors. Office banter, face to face mentoring, chats in the car on the way to site meetings were ever-present elements of daily life. I took them for granted and, until the coronavirus pandemic hit our shores, I hadn't realised how important they were to my mental and physical wellbeing.

My work has been far from a bed of roses; planning under attack, committee meetings finishing at 2am, submitting planning applications at 11pm at weekends, huge caseloads and job cuts being experiences that I won't forget. However, there was always support, face-to-face. That support continued as I progressed from planning technician to head of planning and building control.

Lockdown changed things for us, in some cases temporarily such as being furloughed. When lockdown was over, things didn't return to normal.

Many younger planners have never experienced that regular face-to-face contact and support. We're all different and there are undoubted benefits from home and hybrid working. For some, including me with family members immunosuppressed, it's been a necessity to shield those we love.

Nevertheless, I'm concerned about our mental health. Significant working at home, alone from peer support and the enrichment that face-to-face contact brings, affects us mentally and physically. It is intrusive, work invading our personal, home space. It increases our time exposed to the infernal glare of 12 inches or so of computer screen. As an aside, I recall many years ago undertaking training as to how to conduct a meeting, where to sit, how to sit; the optimum position certainly wasn't face-on about 2 feet apart as is replicated in a virtual meeting.

The constant repetition of this type of working takes its toll mentally and physically; I speak from personal experience having broken down in a virtual meeting on more than one occasion during a particularly dark time during the winter of 2020/21. There were other factors, family health issues being among them, but the lack of someone to talk to face to face was an important element that had contributed to my meltdown.

There are implications not only for the mental and physical health of planners, but also the outcomes of the planning process. My opinion is that in-person meetings and site visits add value to the development process; participants appear less adversarial, and solutions better negotiated.

Reductions in the number of offices have been an inevitable consequence of the increase in home working (as well as from the need to save costs). The distance to our employer has, on average, also increased; I personally know of instances of people based in Ireland working for English planning authorities and using the services of a well-known airline owned by Michael O'Leary to get from their home to a site.

However, things need to change. Some planners, due to the lack of experience of face-to-face meetings and pre- and post-meeting peer support are now understandably anxious about meetings in person or undertaking site visits.

We need to find and employers find more ways that we can meet face to face, whether that be within organisations as part of mentoring, or caseload discussions or between applicant teams, local authorities and third parties. It improves mental and physical health, builds trust and understanding between parties and, in my opinion, improves outcomes.

To do this, we need to make more opportunities to meet, whether that be standing in a field, chatting in a coffee shop or increasing the number and geographical spread of spaces available in workplaces. I think this is particularly important for local authorities that cover large geographical areas such as Dorset, Wiltshire and, from April, Somerset. Local hub spaces are vital for employees to meet and "touchdown" as well as for private sector planners to come to talk to local authorities. Proactive discussions around a table looking at a plan always helps in my mind.

I would welcome feedback on this article.

Simon Sharp
Honorary Secretary
RTPI SW Branch



Report from 1 December 2022

The joint committee met for the final 6th meeting of the 2022 committee and the 1st meeting of the 2023 committee took place in Taunton. The meeting was hybrid with a good attendance of both in person and virtual members.

Key items of business and highlights included:

- The 2022 Chair attended the Plymouth University Graduation Service and presented two RTPI SW Student Prizes.
- The results of the 2023 committee elections which saw an increase in the number of new volunteers wishing to join the committee. A vacancy for Junior Vice Chair was noted.
- The forecast for the 2022 budget was very positive due to the uptake of virtual delegates at the piloted hybrid events format.
- A need to focus on supporting the engagement of LPAs with the regional branch.
- The 2023 Chair highlighted that his focus for his year of Chair would be around celebration and recognition of good design and weave this through CPD, engagements and Awards.
- A review of the longstanding Branchout magazine with a need to review readership figures and how the e-magazine is marketed.
- A review of the Annual Dinner which resolved on not to include the Awards presentation or an after-dinner speaker.
- The attending 2022 and 2023 committee members enjoyed a Christmas lunch and quiz.
- Reports were received from a number of working groups which showed positive activity for regional events and Young Planners

Report from 9 February 2023

The joint committee met for the 2nd meeting of the 2023 committee in Taunton.

The meeting was hybrid with a good attendance of both in person and virtual members.

Key items of business and highlights included:

RTPI President's visit for 2023

One of the main agenda items was the President of the RTPI, Sue Bridge's visit to the southwest on 7th and 8th June. The meeting resolved that the focus of Sue's time on the 8th will be South Gloucestershire and/or Bath as she is due to attend our Annual Branch Dinner at the Marriott in Bristol in the evening. Sue's visit to the region will be a good opportunity for her to see design case studies, design being a focus of our Chair, Ian Perry's tenure. It is also hoped that there can be a link, in terms of the choice of visits, with UWE.

RTPI General Assembly

The meeting received a report from Suzanne d'Arcy following her attendance at the RTPI's General Assembly (GA) in London. The Assembly's meetings are now in person with no ability to join virtually. The Assembly heard that there are on ongoing conversations between the RTPI and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities with a reassurance that the RTPI are "in the tent" with both the ministry and shadow ministry. RTPI membership still stands at c27,000 so it is important that we are heard. Speaking of being heard, it was reported at the General Assembly that the biggest current complaint from housebuilders is that they cannot talk to a local government planner because of the large proportion working from home.



RTPI SW Regional Management Board & Activities Committee Reports

Recognition

The meeting also discussed the criteria for RTPI Fellowship membership and the RTPI Outstanding Service award for service to the Institute. We were all encouraged to consider members who may be eligible to apply for this and perhaps could be mentored through the process.

The meeting also considered other ways of recognising achievement in the profession, be that an article in Branchout, invitation to the dinner or the summer reception. There was a discussion about using this as a method to raise the profile of those sectors of the planning profession that are not commonly recognised, especially those who practice planning but are not formally recognised as planners in their job titles. The meeting acknowledged that self-promotion could feel an uncomfortable process for many planners and more signposting by managers and mentors is necessary.

Working Groups

Reports were received and noted from the Social and Networking, Membership Engagement, Careers and Education, Mentoring, and CPD working groups. Of note in these reports was the desire to include mental health and resilience sessions within our CPD events in the region.

A hope was also expressed for more engagement with planners in Wiltshire and Gloucestershire and, if you are in those regions and feel that there are barriers to engagement in the RTPI Southwest's activities, it would be good to hear from you. We will also be reaching out to you as well. Also to note was the formation of two new Young Planners groups for the region - Wiltshire and Gloucestershire.

NPPF Consultation Roundtable

Following the meeting, a roundtable discussion with 25 members representing the public and private sector took place. The discussion considered the key questions around the consultation on the NPPF. A member from the RTPI policy team joined the meeting to take notes of the key items of concern to help feed into the RTPI consultation response.

Next meeting

The next joint meeting of the Regional Management Board and Regional Activities Committee will be on 27th April, again a hybrid event based in Taunton for those attending in person.



Roundtable consultation discussion on the NPPF

RTPI South West Dinner 2023

Network, Reward
& be Inspired by the
RTPI SW Annual Dinner

@Delta Hotels by Marriott,
Bristol City Centre
8 June 2023

Entertainment including the return of the
Gastronomy Guys with their curious food
creations (see picture) and Robert Fox
Mind Reader Plus we are delighted to be
joined by RTPI President Sue Bridge

Tickets £60 +vat
www.rtpi.org.uk/swdinner2023



Over 250
already booked
to attend - will
you be there?



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Tell me a bit about yourself?

I am a Senior Lecturer in urban planning and design at the University of Gloucestershire. I joined in September 2021 after nearly a decade and a half at the UWE Bristol Planning School. I was a planning practitioner originally, working in development management. I worked for Braintree, South Gloucestershire, and Herefordshire Councils; it feels a long time ago now but it shaped the academic I am today. I still consider myself a practice based academic, continue to be a Chartered Member of the Institute, and my teaching and research revolves around the development management space. It defines my approach too; knowledge and understanding, but also competence in our graduates.

I joined UWE Bristol in 2007 and really couldn't have asked for a better experience as part of their Planning School team, but the opportunity at the University of Gloucestershire was an exciting one; being part of the launch of a subject area is a pretty unique chance in planning education to develop and grow something special and different.

Why a career in planning?

From a very early age I was interested in why places are the way they are. What makes a place successful? What is the history of a place? What response in me does a place create and why? Why is a place the way it is? I'm a naturally curious person I think when it comes to places; I'll wander down streets just to see where they go, to see what's around the corner, to see what they're like. My Dad was a Chartered Surveyor before he retired and was always an inspiration when it came to my interests too. I thought about a few different roles within the built and natural environment sectors, as well as considering a teaching career too, but settled on planning in the end. There were a couple of reasons for this; firstly my teaching team at the University of Glamorgan (now University of South Wales) opened my eyes to what planning really is and did, and how impactful it was. They encouraged me to apply for a Masters in City and Regional Planning at Cardiff University. The second reason is because I genuinely want to make the world a better place; it can sound trite but I think most planners do. And there aren't many careers with the potential to achieve this more than planning.

My move into the university sector was because I continued to have ideas around a teaching career once I'd chosen a career in planning. Being a university lecturer means I get to combine planning and teaching together. I feel really lucky to be where I am; teaching is such a rewarding role and I'm able to focus that around my career as a planner.

What does your job involve?

I'm currently focused on five things; teaching and leading our new BSc Urban Planning course, developing planning as a subject area within the university, designing a new MSc in Urban Planning and Design, engaging with the planning sector across Gloucestershire and beyond, and supporting research at the university from a planning perspective. We're still rolling out the BSc course so that's a key focus. We've got two year groups now, so come September this year we'll be delivering across the full three years of undergraduate study. The MSc will launch in September 2024 so there is lots to be done to get that ready. I'm lucky to have a great team around me within the university who bring the diversity and contemporary content a planning course needs now, and the sector locally (public, private, and third) have been incredibly supportive and engaged since we got going.

The University of Gloucestershire takes a particular approach to course delivery; our courses are small, meaning most of our classes are studio, workshop, discussion, and practical exercise based and I'm enjoying working closely with students. We have the structured content too, but we don't use lecture theatres and focus on an engaging and interactive student focused experience. Beyond that, it's the usual mix of meetings, tutorials, research work, site visits/trips, partner engagement and so forth. We also do a lot of outreach work, including in partnership with local industry partners.



above University of Gloucestershire Francis
Close Hall Campus



What are your main research areas?

There is a real diversity to my research work currently, which I'm enjoying a lot. I've just finished a project working alongside Frances Summer at UoG in partnership with Hyas for the Planning Advisory Service looking at pre-application and PPA services. I recently supported a project looking at biodiversity net gain with Emma Gardener and James Bullock from the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology. I'm now focused in two quite different areas; the first is supporting a project looking at urban rewilding via a project funded by a RECLAIM Network Plus grant. The second is some Arts Council, Reef Group, and Gloucester City Council funded work exploring pride and perceptions of place, and also high street meanwhile uses and interventions, both from the perspective of arts and cultural activities/events. I'm working with colleagues from across the university, and also our Countryside and Communities Research Institute at UoG which does a lot of interesting planning relevant work.

Why did you become involved with the Regional Activities Committee (RAC)?

It's really easy to comment, criticise even, about what isn't happening and isn't being done. But things only happen when people contribute, commit, and make an effort to support something. I've always tried to be an active member of the Institute, particularly in terms of outreach. The RAC is a great opportunity to be constructive and contribute towards the regional activities and wider efforts of the profession. The south west is full of brilliant planning professionals across all sectors; our LPA are filled with outstanding people delivering great outcomes in some really challenging circumstances, and the private sector is full of top quality planners working to bring forward some great placemaking and development projects. It's great to play a small part in highlighting that.

What do you do when you're not planning?

My wife, daughter, and son make my world go round each day. And my parents are close so we make the most of family time. Lots of exploring and trips and adventures together. I enjoy time with friends. I also love sport, but watching not doing! Football (the mighty Imps!) is my first sport, but I also enjoy rugby (league), ice hockey, and a bit of cricket. Beyond that, I like a good film.

Tell me a bit about yourself?

I grew up in Brinkworth, famed for being the longest village in England, but was always drawn to the city and as soon as I was old enough, I left the rural idyll and set my sights on the bright lights of Cardiff. I have always sought out new challenges and adventures, embracing change and looking to get the most out of every experience. To that end I studied planning at undergraduate and master's level at Cardiff university and then, once I had gained some experience of the working world, I set off on a trip around the world to explore and experience how other people live.

I had a look around and eventually settled in Bristol where I live now with my partner Sean and our three girls, which is the biggest adventure of all. By chance we met through planning and our mutual support for each other has brought great happiness.

Why a career in planning?

My dad Nigel inspired me to make my own decisions and see that there is no limit to what I could achieve. My years growing up in a household with an enthusiastic and exceptional planner in the family really influenced my decision to take up a career in planning. He came home happy from his job as a Planning Inspector, I saw this as the years continued and felt that I wanted a job where I would come home every day with a smile on my face. I feel that I have achieved this goal and even on the tough days I still see the bright side of working towards the goal of making better places and a more sustainable future.

I saw the potential of planning to open the door to a range of different job roles and this variety has kept me excited about my career ever since. I am not motivated by money but by the richness of experience and I have certainly gained that through my career as a chartered planner. My job roles have varied through public, private, third and voluntary sector, education and across development management, major sites, policy, enforcement, regeneration, environmental and neighbourhood planning. I currently work in academia and use my 20 years plus of practical experience to inform my teaching, learning and research.

Why did you get involved in the RAC?

I have had great support from the RTPI over the years; my first job was working for the Regions and Networks, and I also worked for Planning Aid as a Neighbourhood Planning Advisor. I was keen to give something back and in my current role lecturing at UWE I felt that this was the perfect time to offer something back to the Institute. I am a relatively new RAC member having joined this year, but I would encourage others to become actively involved with their region as I have met some great people and have been given some excellent opportunities already to contribute to South West RTPI activities.

What do you do when you're not planning?

I spend as much time as possible with my family who support me every day and I love to explore new places and experiences with them. I love music and dancing - we like to go to gigs all year round but especially when it's the festival season I like to get outdoors - the summer break is one of the benefits of working at a university.

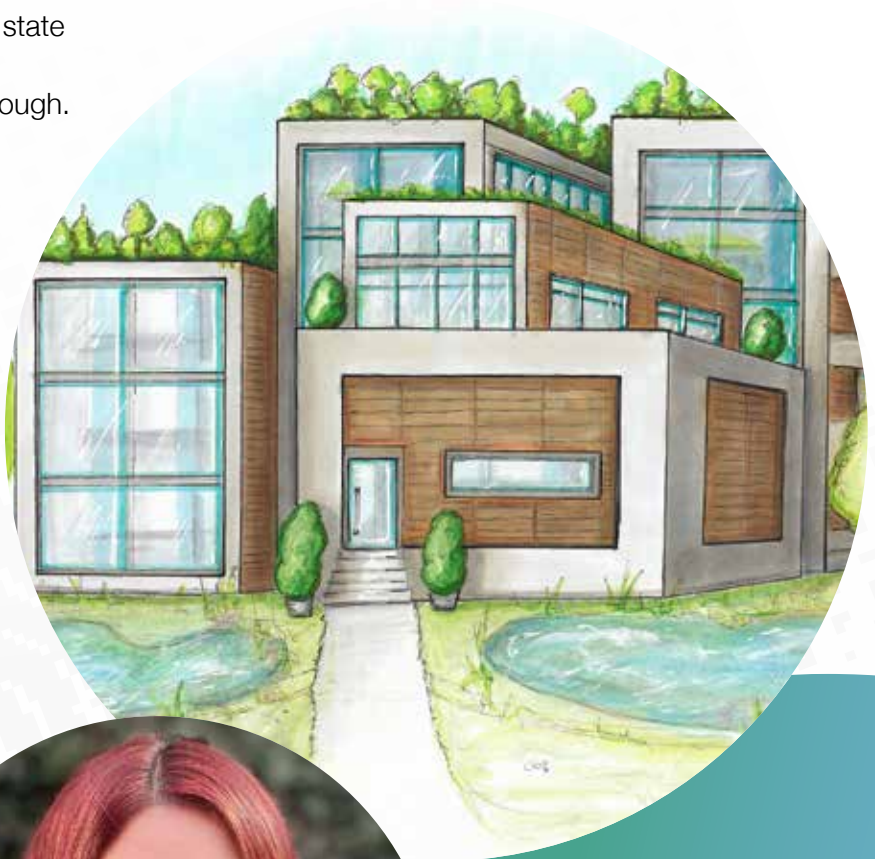
What does your current job involve?

I currently teach on the undergraduate and postgraduate urban planning courses at UWE in Bristol and spend my days educating the next generation of planners, urban designers, and architects. I also have the role of academic tutor to many of our Degree Apprenticeship students who are working in practice around the South West and beyond, which is a fantastic opportunity to build links between academia and practice whilst helping our students to develop in and out of the workplace. Another main area of my role is research, and I am part of the Sustainable Planning and Environments Research Centre at UWE. I work on projects exploring and seeking new knowledge on net zero, climate change adaptation and mitigation, nationally significant infrastructure projects and recently a project for Homes for the South West looking at affordable housing provision in the region. I am also leading my own research and developing collaborations with a range of partners and organisations to achieve this. Working at a University gives me the opportunity to teach the planners of the future, co-create knowledge with students and a team of wonderful colleagues, and look to the future of the profession.

What do you need to become a planner?

Being a planner draws on a wide range of skills and knowledge, from my experience working in a range of roles what I have learned so far is that is good to have...

- An open and enquiring mind.
- Determination and perseverance.
- An interest in building a sustainable future.
- Negotiation skills and the ability to weigh up arguments.
- Communication skills and confidence to state your views.
- A sense of humour for when things get tough.



18 Forthcoming Events

In-person/hybrid events

26
April

Housing the Unmet Need HYBRID Seminar, Bristol

As ever housing supply and delivery remains one of the hottest of topics in Town Planning with the highest of profiles. The current planning system arguably places significant emphasis on numbers but will the coming changes, whatever these might be, change this? At this event we will look at meeting the need in terms of the mix and sophistication of what is delivered by looking at older and younger people, tenure and other types of housing that are becoming more common which are all seeking to meet the needs of our changing demographics and society. We will have speakers from all sectors exploring these needs and what the future might hold.

More info: www.rtpi.org.uk/swhousing2023

16
May

Back to the drawing board - getting Design & Planning right HYBRID Seminar, Plymouth

Good design has finally been given the pedestal it deserves to sit upon. Paragraph 134 of the National Planning Policy Framework advises us that we should refuse development that is not well designed. We have been given new tools to seemingly allow us to achieve this aim, the National Design Guide, Design Codes, Design Reviews, all there to help achieve beauty and quality. But what does this mean in practice? Can they make a difference? The day will look at these tools and their application and results and will help you understand how to use them most effectively. For those who are new to considering larger schemes there will be an opportunity to look at basic urban design principles and what to look for when considering developments.

More info: www.rtpi.org.uk/swdesign2023

20
June

Planning for Renewables HYBRID Seminar, Taunton

This full day seminar will provide a deep dive into the challenges and opportunities of increasing renewable energy generation. We will explore the unique requirements facing different forms and scales of renewable energy developments. As well as energy generation we will also explore the planning process and assessments required for delivering a low carbon economy.

More info: www.rtpi.org.uk/swrenewables2023

21
Sept

The changing role of Planning in Regeneration HYBRID Seminar, Dorchester

The world in which we live is always changing and over the last 30 years the face of our cities, towns and even rural communities have evolved beyond recognition. The manner in which we live, shop, play and communicate has changed. The advent of a broader global economy, the rise of the internet for shopping and communication has led to the decline of the traditional high street; this combined with an increasing housing crisis means regeneration of our communities has a significant role to play in maintaining or creating great places to live, work and play. This day will consider various aspects of regeneration including use of design codes and masterplans, economic drivers and needs, and the interaction and possible conflicts between regeneration and our built heritage.

More info: www.rtpi.org.uk/swregeneration2023

18
Oct

CPD Day, Exeter

The return of the much valued multiple choice CPD Day with a broad mix of planning and skills themed workshops. With over 20 topics to choose from, delegates will be able to tailor the CPD to their professional development needs. All workshops will be delivered in a practical and interactive format. Topics will be listed as confirmed but will could include areas including Design, Habitat Regs, BNG, Transport, Viability, Heritage, Presentation Skills, Preparing for Inquiries, Assessing Housing Needs, Enforcement and much more.

More info: www.rtpi.org.uk/swcpdday2023

28
Nov

Planning Law Update with Burges Salmon HYBRID Seminar, Bath

This full day seminar will look at the latest government legislation and case law.

More info: www.rtpi.org.uk/swplanninglaw2023

Webinars

Find out about all the latest RTPI Webinars hosted by the Nations and Regions at:
www.rtpi.org.uk/events/?contentType=Online

RTPI Training

Find out about all the latest training courses including 'Giving Evidence at Public Enquiries', 'Planning for Public Health and Wellbeing', 'Enforcement', 'EIA' and 'Planning for non-planners' at
www.rtpi.org.uk/events/?contentType=Training

