



THE NORTH WEST PLANNING YEAR
A REVIEW OF
2020



RTPI North West
Royal Town Planning Institute



THE NORTH WEST PLANNING YEAR
**A REVIEW OF
2020**

CONTENTS

Chair's Review of the Year	3
Regional Practice	5
RTPI North West Awards for Planning Excellence 2020	6
Education Careers and Mentoring	15
Newly Elected Chartered Members	18
Planning Aid North West	19
LPA Champions Have Lunch with the President!	22
Equality Diversity and Inclusion	25
North West Young Planners	29
Young Planners Article Club - Running Webinars	37
Fiona Hore - Obituary	39
Regional Research	40
Research and Policy Report	41
Academic Research in the North West: Guest Article	43
Looking forward	46



CHAIR'S REVIEW OF THE YEAR

Unsurprisingly, Covid-19 and social distancing regulations had a significant impact on our yearly plans. We started the year with a full diary of CPD events, social activities, and a wealth of careers initiatives with schools and universities. We had to cancel 17 of our in-person CPD sessions and all of in-person social events, including our much-loved annual dinner. There was a considerable amount of work required to cancel and postpone these events, recover costs, and shift activities online. I would like to thank Bev Watson, our Regional Coordinator, for the hours of hard work she has put in, helping to lessen the impact of Covid-19 on our Region.

As you will see throughout this Annual Review, despite the challenges we have still managed to deliver some of our activities to support and engage our members- albeit in a virtual world!

I would like to share some of the positives from this year, and my own yearly highlights:

Back in January I had the pleasure of presenting John Sturzaker, Head of Planning at the University of Liverpool, with his RTPI Fellowship Award. This was a greatly deserved recognition of all of John's work in the

It has been a strange year as Chair of our Region. Of all the challenges I thought we may face; a global pandemic was not one of them!

When I chose 'going digital' as one of my themes for this year, little did I know how quickly we would all be shifting to online working. Much of our activities this year have been online, and I can commend everyone for embracing and adapting to this new way of living and working.

field of Town Planning and Academia. As John taught me while I was a student at university, it made being able to present this award even more enjoyable.

We have built on the work Andrew Johnston (RTPI NW Chair 2019) started with engaging Heads of Planning and senior officers from LPA's in our Region. Despite cancelling our in-person event, we held a virtual lunch as part of our RTPI President's visit to our Region. This year we also introduced an 'LPA Team of the Year' category as part of our annual awards and my congratulations go to the planning team at Bury Council for being our first winners. We will continue our LPA Champion initiative next year under the leadership of our incoming Chair.

I had the pleasure of chairing a round table consultation on the planning White Paper which had incredible attendance and has meant that the views of our members have been fed back as part of an RTPI response to Government.

We held our first ever online Regional Awards Ceremony (available on YouTube), and instead of conducting our usual site visits as part of our judging process, we did online interviews and virtual visits. Although not quite the same as presenting awards at our Annual Dinner, the online ceremony meant nominees friends and family could also watch and join in the celebration. The calibre of entrants this year was incredibly high, reflecting the excellent planning work and opportunities within the North West. Congratulations to Becky Dewey, the winner of our Young Planner of the Year award and our overall winner 'Pennington Wharf' submitted by Taylor Wimpey (Manchester).

On her regional visit, RTPI President Sue Manns hosted 'Town Planning Bingo', with bingo calls such as 'number 3...don't be a NIMBY' it was a fun and interactive event. President Manns also met our Young Planners

and participated in a town planning themed Room 101 event. I would like to thank Sue for her good humour, support, and her openness to doing things differently.

Our region has two excellent planning schools at the University of Liverpool and Manchester. This year we have formalised our partnership with these two schools and will continue our work supporting students and graduates. I am also excited to announce that we have created a formal position on our Regional Activities Committee for a student planner from each school.

Another new role this year is the creation of an EDI Champion position on our Regional Management Board. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is extremely important for our profession as we work on a daily basis within such diverse communities. It is important that young people see town planning as a career choice, and as part of this, it is important that they see themselves represented within the profession. We will be working hard in 2021 with the RTPI's EDI Manager, to help make our region as inclusive and accessible as we can.

Having volunteered for the RTPI for almost 10 years, I am proud to have held this position as Regional Chair. As one of my final duties as Chair I'd like to welcome Ian Gilbert who will be taking on the Chair role for next year. Having worked with Ian over the last year, I can safely say the Region is in good hands.

Lastly, thank you to the Regional Management Board and Regional Activities Committee for their incredible work this year in the face of so many challenges, for their ongoing enthusiasm and passion for planning. Without them we would not have achieved anywhere close to what we have done.

Kim Cooper
RTPI North West Chair



REGIONAL PRACTICE

In this section we look at what the RTPI North West Region, its planners and volunteers, have achieved in developing, and rewarding, best practice in 2020



RTPI NORTH WEST AWARDS FOR PLANNING EXCELLENCE 2020

This year we received 10 entries to our Regional Awards and shortlisted 7 schemes for further presentations and interviews that took place on 7/8 September 2020. Schemes were considered in the following categories:

- Regeneration
- Heritage, Culture and Conservation
- Spatial Planning
- Small Development Scheme
- Large Development Scheme
- Local Authority Planning Team of the Year (New Category for 2020)

The judging panel for these schemes included representatives from the public and private sector; Chris Findley, Louisa Fielden, Rebecca Dewey, Paul Mason, Peter Campbell, Steve Thompson and Dave Jolley.

In addition, 6 entries were submitted for the Young Planner of the Year Award, with all 6 entries being shortlisted and interviewed.

2020 has been a year unlike any other, and due to the Covid-19 restrictions the award judges have had to do things very differently this

year! Instead of the usual group site visits and meeting the award entrants face to face, the entrants put together a digital presentation and were assessed following a series of online interviews. This new way of working worked very well, and the judges were all impressed with the way that the applicants were able to show their passion and their pride in their projects through their online presentations and interviews. Rather than awards being presented at a formal dinner and ceremony, a 'virtual' awards ceremony took place on Monday 16 November on the RTPI YouTube channel, where the winning schemes were announced.

The decision on the overall scheme winner was a difficult one, as the entries were varied and of high quality. The judges did, however, agree that the worthy winner was Pennington Wharf, submitted by Taylor Wimpey (Manchester). This was an excellent example of long-term partnership working and community involvement, which is creating a high quality and popular new community on a former derelict site.



Regeneration, Large Development Scheme and Overall Winner Pennington Wharf, submitted by Taylor Wimpey (Manchester)

Pennington Wharf is a flagship development, led by Taylor Wimpey in partnership with Wigan Council and Homes England which has delivered a marina basin, a promenade, commercial and retail buildings and 471 new homes.

The vision of all stakeholders was to create a development that turned a vast swathe of derelict land into a vibrant inclusive community. Pennington Wharf is a well-connected place to live; a community which will be enjoyed by all and for many generations to come.

The judging panel said:

“The Judges felt that the Pennington Wharf development had successfully achieved the original vision to create a vibrant and inclusive new community on this derelict site. The developer has worked closely with its partners over several years to bring forward this high quality, well-designed and popular housing development alongside the Leeds-Liverpool Canal. They felt the scheme demonstrated a very high standard of design and recognised the sustainable methods of construction used across the scheme.

“The judges considered that the new Community Hub and central space within the development provide a fantastic new facility and focal point for residents. They also felt that positive community engagement has been a strong feature of the scheme throughout the development process.”

Commendation – within the Regeneration category, the judges awarded a Commendation to the Pall Mall development proposals within Liverpool City Centre, submitted by WSP.

The judging panel said:

“We felt that the Pall Mall scheme was a good example of the use of a hybrid application to bring together a scheme for Liverpool’s first ‘Grade A’ city-centre office space for more than ten years, along with a hotel, and new landscaped public realm.

“The scheme was designed to a high standard, using a series of design codes for the outline elements and included the improved public realm in full detail, for delivery as part of the first phase”.





Commendation – within the Large Scheme Category, the judges also awarded a Commendation to the residential development at Northcote Park, Langho, submitted by Maybern Planning and Development and Pringle Homes.

The judging panel commented:

“The judges were impressed by the design and planning led approach to increase the density of housing on Northcote Park, including a good number of different house types showing variety and interest.

“There was also a commendable approach to establishing the tenure need up front with the local authority. This included bungalows (both market and affordable tenures) which the Council’s housing officer noted were in significant demand across the authority”.



Heritage, Culture and Conservation

Stone Cross Mansion, Ulverston, submitted by Charles Church, Lancashire

This scheme saw the renovation of a Gothic Grade II listed mansion and gatehouse into residential apartments, along with new homes nestled in the grounds. The scheme secures a sustainable, residential led future for the Mansion and its setting.

This project has brought together the skills and knowledge of local craftsmen as well as national experts. Stone Cross is providing a mature and imposing setting for new homes sitting within its grounds, as well as, once again, a home itself.

The planning process has facilitated Charles Church to successfully connect through from design to the physical build, delivering a historic building into a contemporary home

The judging panel commented:

“We were very impressed with the high quality and sensitive restoration of this historic mansion, including the reinstatement of the building’s main staircase.”

The panel also recognised that the volume builders responsible for the scheme needed to move out of their ‘comfort zone’ to successfully develop this site. They were able to do this by working closely with the local planning authority, other agencies and a range of specialist contractors. The result is a unique development that safeguards the future of this important building.”





Commendation – within this category, the judges also awarded a Commendation to the restoration of the Ogden's Clock Tower Building, Liverpool, submitted by Brock Carmichael Architects.

The Judging Panel said:

“This Grade II listed historic structure had been derelict for over a decade before it was painstakingly restored and converted into affordable apartments for rent. The scheme demonstrated how difficult challenges were overcome sensitively through good planning, strong leadership and collaborative working by key stakeholders.”



Excellence in Spatial Planning

Preston City Living Strategy, submitted by Preston City Council and Hive Land and Planning

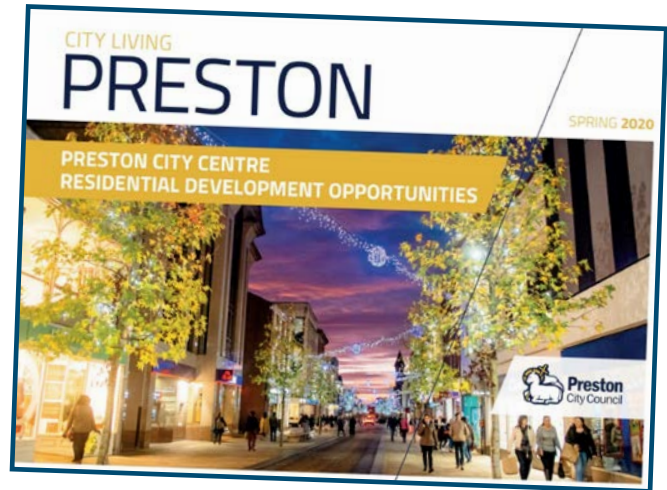
Preston City Council, in partnership with Hive Land & Planning, have been working to deliver their City Living Strategy, a new model for delivering the vision and policies of the adopted Local Plan. It was recognised that a pro-active approach was required to de-risk residential brownfield sites in inner Preston to attract private investment. Relatively limited resources have been utilised to develop a series of innovative solutions to overcome the barriers to delivery.

The delivery of these sites will bring transformational housing growth in inner Preston, regenerate neighbourhoods, and have positive benefits for local communities, as well as the physical environment.

The judging panel commented:

“We were impressed by the innovative and forward-thinking approach which Preston City Council alongside Hive Land & Planning have taken to spatial planning through the Preston City Living Strategy.

“The judges were greatly impressed by the results which have been achieved in re-energising the housing market within Preston City Centre. Through targeted intervention techniques the Strategy has secured new sources of funding and is assisting multiple sites to come forward. The results achieved have led to a significant increase in residential completions within the City”.



Local Authority Planning Team of the Year

Bury Council, Development Management Team, submitted by Bury Council



The judging panel said:

“The judges were extremely impressed with Bury’s Development Management service, overall, in its constant drive for improvement and its willingness to introduce innovation and initiatives to quickly and flexibly address the changes and challenges we continually face as planners.”

“The team have remained a solid backbone for the Council and has looked to recruit from apprenticeships and offering graduate positions that have enabled young people to enter into a worthwhile and rewarding career.”

Young Planner of the Year

Rebecca Dewey

Rebecca has a positive, diligent and straight-forward approach – supported by extensive cross sector experience. This has given her an invaluable understanding of people, planning and the commercial realities of development.

She works for WSP as an Associate Director in Birmingham. Up until 2018, Rebecca had worked in Manchester, having set up Icen Projects' office on her own, after relocating from London. Rebecca has volunteered with the Institute since 2014, still volunteers with the RTPI NW Region and was elected to the Board of Trustees in 2020.

Rebecca is an active ambassador of planning and passionate about nurturing the next generation.

The judges said:

“What really impressed us was the breadth and range of Becky’s experience, and what she has achieved in a relatively short time.

Becky’s commitment to planning is obvious. She is involved in RTPI work, sitting on the RTPI Finance Committee and the Board of Trustees (Nations and Regions). And she is currently working with a legal chambers on a handbook on planning policy set to be published in 2021.

These achievements and the experience Becky has gained would complement the CV of any planner, and it is impressive that she has done all of this whilst still being eligible for the Young Planner award.”

This year we had six particularly strong entrants for Young Planner of the Year. Alongside the Winner, Rebecca Dewey, they were; Andy Cowan from Deloitte, Melissa Wilson from Lichfields, Natalie Corless from WSP, Luke Jiggins from WSP and Darren Muir from Pegasus Group.

The judges stated that ‘this year was simply outstanding in the range and quality of young people and their work. It gives us real confidence in the future of planning in this region’.



The RTPI thanks WYG for sponsoring this year’s awards. The high quality of finalists this year made selecting the winners extremely challenging and the RTPI is grateful for the time and effort put into the Awards submissions by all the applicants.

For more information on the 2020 Awards, and 2021 Awards, to be launched, please see: www.rtpi.org.uk/nwawards

EDUCATION, CAREERS & MENTORING

For the Education, Careers and Mentoring task group, the shift towards digital normality brought about by the pandemic has been largely on theme. We have continued to work on our digital planning model to bring planning to life for school age students. We have engaged (online) with planners across the region seeking career advice and APC mentoring. We have attended many, many webinars. At the time of writing, we are excited to be working with The Vibrancy Hub to deliver an online public speaking training session for RTPI members at the end of November.

Connecting with Schools and Universities

In January through to early March, task group members and enthusiastic volunteers in our network visited Briercliffe Primary, St Mary's Catholic High School, Padgate Academy, Kersley Academy

and Urmston Grammar to talk to students about their careers as planners, reaching a collective audience of over 350 students. We were also pleased to join an IRL meeting with the University of Manchester to discuss a protocol for joint working with the university, with 2019 Chair Andrew Johnston and Julian Jackson. A similar protocol has been agreed with Liverpool University. The protocol commits the RTPI and the planning schools to work together for mutual benefit, an arrangement which will only increase in importance for students as they prepare to graduate into the Covid economy.

Education Network

We have attended two meetings of the RTPI's Education Network, chaired by Andrew Close, which brings together task group leads in regions across the UK to discuss their activities and share best practice.

Schools Competitions

For the second year running, we will be supporting the RTPI to promote the national schools competition, which launched in November. Of course, this year's question is closely linked to local impacts of the pandemic. We have also helped to promote the RTPI's competition for primary schools, which closed on 30 September, asking students to assist Agent Plan-It with ideas for how to create happier and more sustainable places. The competition received 130 entries from across the UK. We enjoyed helping to judge the competition this autumn.

Moss Madden Awards

The task group was delighted to take on judging for the Moss Madden undergraduate and postgraduate awards in 2020.

Under-Graduate Winner

Gemma Redfern,
University of Liverpool
'Fear of Crime: A Study of Women in the Urban Environment'

The undergraduate award was presented in August to Liverpool University student Gemma Redfern for her thesis "Fear of Crime: a study of women in the urban environment".

"The judges said that the student designed a well-structured research question and utilised an interesting methodology to explore an aspect of urban design with a focus on gender that is not frequently considered. The writing style was clear and provided a thoughtful discussion of a highly relevant topic within the planning sector. The student identified gaps in current research and practice by comparing the established principles of 'Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design' with the actual lived experience in the context of a specific walking route in Liverpool. The student communicated a complex topic and associated theories



Gemma Redfern

well, using understandable and approachable language. The judges felt this dissertation has clear links to practice and could be used to benefit the planning profession."

Post-Graduate Winner

Helen Hatch, University of Liverpool
'How is localism paying out in practice with regard the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)? An examination into the use of Neighbourhood CIL within CIL charging areas in North West England and Yorkshire'

"The judges were impressed by the student's well-structured research design, that utilised qualitative and quantitative methods, including freedom of information requests. The research identified a number of shortcomings with the implementation



Helen Hatch

of NCIL that make an important contribution to the planning field, particularly in the context of the North West. The research identifies a significant shortfall in the amount of NCIL money being dedicated to infrastructure projects and identifies alternative models for infrastructure delivery. The dissertation was clearly written and well presented, providing a thorough and thoughtful assessment of an important planning topic, with clear links to practice."

Post-Graduate Runner Up

Jordan Pratchett,
University of Manchester
'The relationship between development viability assessments and the delivery of affordable housing in Tower Hamlets and Kensington and Chelsea, London'



Jordan Pratchett

“The judges were impressed by the student’s clear writing and case study research design that compared two London boroughs with very different demographic and policy contexts. The student provided an overview of how development viability assessments have impacted on the delivery of affordable housing in the two boroughs over the last fifteen years. The desktop research revealed that development viability assessments play a significant role in the delivery of affordable housing, particularly in justifying reduced levels of affordable housing compared to policy requirements. However, there is a clear role for policymakers in mitigating

this impact, and early evidence suggests that the Mayor’s Affordable Housing and Viability SPG appears to be incentivising affordable housing delivery.”

Acknowledgments

The Task Group would also like to express our sincere thanks to Deborah Baker Barnett, who is stepping down from the RAC in 2021. During her two years in the task group, Deborah has been instrumental in improving the region’s offer to existing members, by putting together the soft skills programme that proved extremely popular in 2019. She also used her skills as an APC Assessor to lead an “APC Demystified” session for public sector planners in Cumbria, a model we would like to emulate in future years. Deborah is a keen supporter of digital skills and has played a significant role in advocating the development of a digital model to help further the task group aims.

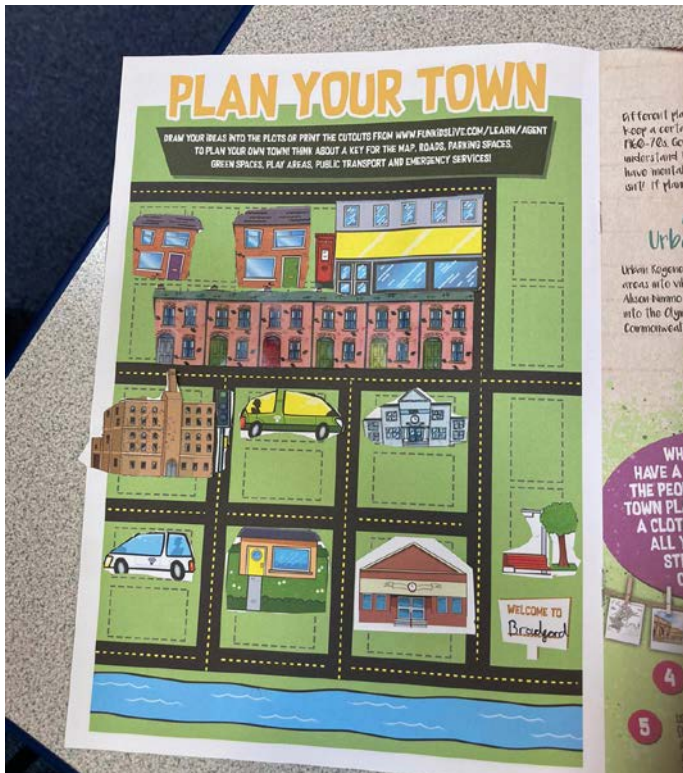
We would also like to thank Heather Lindley-Clapp (Nexus Planning) and Joanne Harding (HBF) for attending schools and inspiring students on our behalf this year.

Agent Plan-It

Students at a primary school in Chester have been busy planning their own village and obtaining some insight into the development sector. There are many new housing developments under construction in the Chester area and students spent time discussing the need for new homes and reviewing marketing material online to understand the different types of houses being built and the green spaces being provided for new residents. They also worked through the “Agent Plan-it: Town Planning For Kids” activity books which is hosted by Fun Kids – the UK’s children’s radio station.



For more information on the 2020 Awards, and 2021 Awards, to be launched, please see: www.rtpi.org.uk/nwawards



One of the Year 4 students said: “We had good fun learning about planning. I loved the Agent Plan-It website, it had so much information. We looked at new houses on the internet and it was so much fun planning our own village. I might be a planner person when I get older.”

Teacher Mrs Hand added: “During lockdown I was working with a group of keyworker kids ages 7-9yrs. I took the booklets in and we talked about new housing and how planning permission is needed to allow houses to be built.

We worked through the booklet during the day. The kids asked lots of questions and we looked up the “Agent Plan-It” website targeted at kids, which they loved and have been wanting the “fun kids love” radio on every day. In the afternoon we cut out the village part of the booklet and planned our own unique village. We discussed where to put a school to be central to a village but away from main roads and clusters of houses together to form communities. The children really enjoyed the opportunity to do this.”

NEWLY ELECTED CHARTERED MEMBERS

We would like to congratulate the following members.



Yvette Black, JLL Limited

Nick Blackledge, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

Kieran Blaydes, Hive Land and Planning

Elliott Bullock, NJL Consulting

Lauren Butterworth-Taylor, Cheshire West and Chester Council

Jacques Carboni, Capita

Louise Chadwick, The Environment Partnership

Andrew Clement, Lancaster City Council

Ann Daniels, Pegasus Group

John Dixon, Natural England

Hannah Ellison, The Planning Inspectorate

Neil Gates, Entrust Professional Services Ltd

Hannah Graham, Deloitte LLP

Katarzyna Gotlibowska, NJL Consulting

Jordan Guy, Hyndburn Borough Council

Jamaal Hafiz, Clarke Telecom Limited

Victoria Harvey, Emery Planning

Rachel Hiorns, Atkins Ltd

Joseph Holden, Mott Macdonald

Rachel Horton, Ribble Valley Borough Council

Melanie Hughes, Stoke on Trent City Council

Jessica Jarman, Peel Holdings Ltd

Luke Jiggins, WSP Group

Kate Kingston, Peel Ports Group

Samantha Lee, Rapleys LLP

Thomas Lord, Turley

Andy McLaren, Lichfields

Olivia Pemberton, Savills UK Ltd

Kate Salter, Nexus Planning

Nicholas Scott, Emery Planning

Elizabeth Snead, Warrington Borough Council

Bradley Wiseman, Savills (UK) Ltd

For more information on RTPI Membership options and processes, please see:

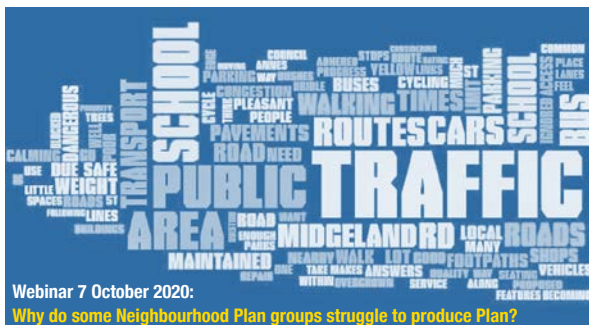
www.rtpi.org.uk/membership

Planning Aid North West in 2020

2020 was a challenging year for providing Planning Aid support in the Region. The Planning Aid Task Group has continued to meet on-line since March and has offered assistance to communities in various ways, but not surprisingly many have been trying to deal with various urgent matters other than planning.

Neighbourhood Planning

Work on Neighbourhood Plan preparation in the Region has particularly slowed for numerous groups during 2020. Many of those that are not otherwise pre-occupied with coronavirus matters are being hampered by the inability to meet-up with members of their community in-person and are unsure about or reluctant to embrace videoconferencing technology. However, a few on-line meetings have been held with IT enabled Neighbourhood Plan groups where our volunteers have been able to advise.



Webinar 7 October 2020:

Why do some Neighbourhood Plan groups struggle to produce Plan?

There is though, a more longstanding issue that our annual monitoring work has revealed - some Neighbourhood Plan groups have seemingly been struggling with plan making for several years. A small team of Planning Aid volunteers was formed in the middle of 2020 to try and reveal the reasons why this is the case. They used a telephone/email survey with a sample of parish councils and forums. The groups approached had not progressed their Plan to a formal stage beyond initial designation for at least four years.

Again, the survey work proved to be challenging in that it was difficult to establish clear reasons for the lack of progress. Although most of the groups had done some preparatory work after designation and were still intending to produce a Plan, many now cited COVID-19 issues as the latest reason for delay. Perhaps most concerning was that very few of the groups contacted seemed aware of Planning Aid or the RTPi generally.

The initial action out of the survey was to put arrangements in place for a webinar led by leading figures in neighbourhood planning to explain why they thought some groups struggle.

The webinar was originally intended as training for Planning Aid volunteers across England so they could better advise groups. However, the webinar proposal was adopted as a full RTPi event and so was available to all members. It was held on 7 October and over 80 delegates attended.

The four speakers presented on different aspects. Professor Gavin Parker provided a brief overview of recent but as then unpublished research into the delivery of neighbourhood planning. Examiner Nigel McGurk explored whether part of the problem is whether neighbourhood planning groups are trying to produce a Plan for the wrong reasons or start off with false expectations. Independent planner Eddy Taylor asked whether the whole process is just too hard for the non-planners that typically make up Plan steering groups. Cheshire East Council's Neighbourhood Plan Manager Tom Evans outlined the problems associated with maintaining community volunteer commitment over the sustained period it takes to produce a Plan. Each speaker suggested ways forward for struggling groups. The webinar can be viewed on the [RTPi YouTube channel](#).

Development Plan Making Monitoring

Following on from the webinar the annual monitoring of preparation progress of Development Plans in the Region was focused on what all the slow performing Neighbourhood Plan groups in the North West have been doing since designation - in short, a wide variety of tasks but interspersed with periods of inactivity. How Planning Aid support could contribute to helping these groups will be a key aspect of the Task Group's work in 2021.

Raynesford Review Seminar

Providing training for Planning Aid volunteers has long been a role of the Task Group. An on-line seminar on the Raynesford Review and community planning was held in November and proved to be a timely topic brought into sharp focus by the Planning White Paper proposals to change when and how local people should be involved in planning matters.

National Assistance

As is normally the case, several volunteers based in the Region contributed to the national support work of Planning Aid England (PAE) throughout the year. Two of our volunteers have been part of the PAE email advice service and several other North West volunteers have provided follow-on more detailed 'casework' assistance to individuals for those enquiries that need more in-depth or on-going support.

Become Involved

If you want to be involved in supporting local people with planning issues, then why not become a Planning Aid volunteer? To do so you first need to register on the RTPi website using the following link:

www.rtpi.org.uk/planning-advice/volunteering/how-to-apply

If also you want to help organise Planning Aid activities in the Region by being part of the Task Group, then contact Bev Watson
beverley.watson@rtpi.org.uk



Planning Aid England
Engaging Communities in Planning

LPA Champions Have Lunch with the President

In 2019, our new chair Ian and other members of the committee (led by past Chair Andrew Johnson) even took time to meet with the region's LPAs to ask how RTPI NW could better support my fellow officers. As a result of their efforts, the RTPI NW 'LPA Champions' network was born. We now have a network of officers from most LPAs in the region.

In mid-October more than a dozen LPA Champions joined a lunch-time video chat with RTPI President Sue Manns. This was part of Sue's virtual visit to the Region and an event she clearly relished [I hope this is not the start of several luncheon puns, Ed.].

Regional Chair Kim Cooper led proceedings by welcoming everyone and Regional Management Board member Julian Jackson briefly outlined the purposes of the LPA Champions initiative:

- To involve local authority planners more in the workings of the RTPI in the Region
- So better meet the professional needs of council planners, and
- To promote greater understanding between the public and private sectors and foster joint working between them

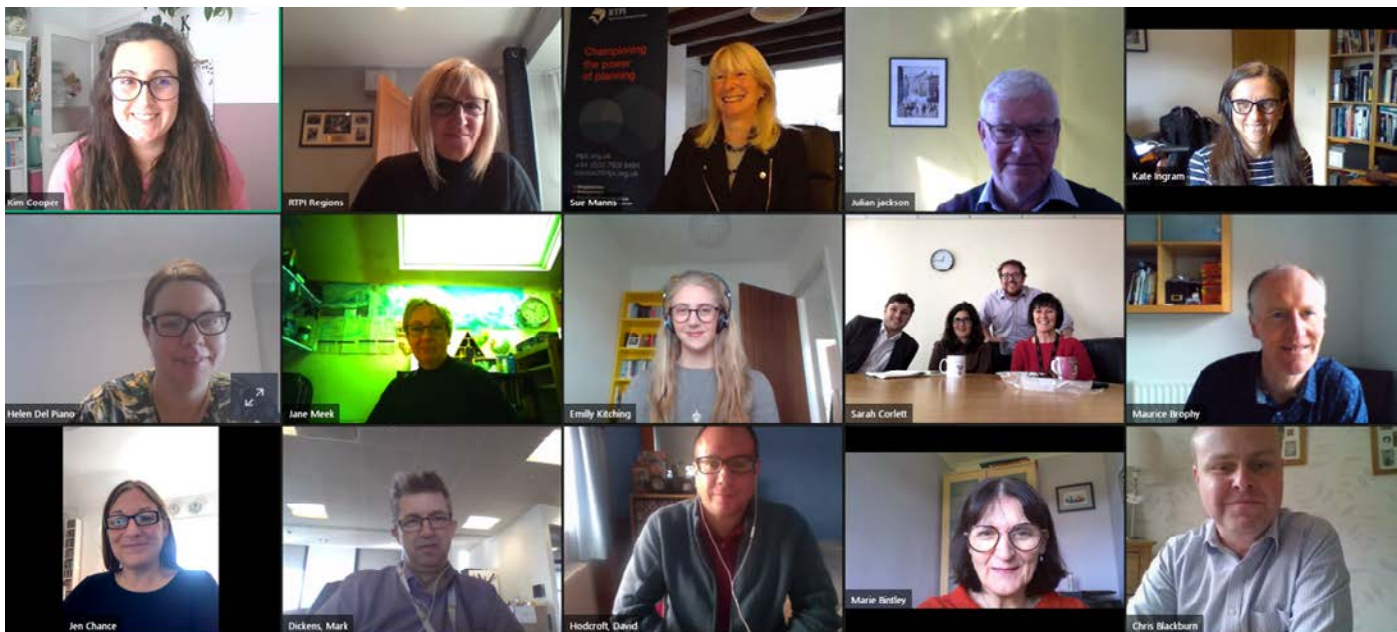
Kim then put the first questions to the Champions.

How do you think your team has coped with COVID? How do you rate the support provided by the RTPI?

Clearly some LPAs were more prepared with remote working systems than others. Carlisle City Council had put those in place after their major flooding incident of a few years ago, whereas for others receiving the right kit has taken some time to materialise. It was commonly mentioned that policy teams working together on major plans and projects had struggled more than others because the opportunities to bounce ideas between colleagues had been curtailed by the dependence on video calls.

Fully involving younger members of staff had also proved challenging; some new recruits had not yet met their new colleagues in person! Most of those present were working from home all the time but others preferred to be in sparsely occupied offices. Commonly mentioned was the tendency to work longer hours when home-based.

Representatives from the Isle of Man Government explained their envious position of the island being COVID-free and able to work normally from the office, but they are also choosing to do more home working than previously.



Several Champions praised the RTPI for its response to the coronavirus situation and the widespread provision of on-line CPD events. These were particularly welcomed by the Isle of Man planners, as even in normal times it is time consuming and costly for them to attend training events on the mainland.

Is RTPI Membership valued in your authority?

Ideally LPA Champions should be RTPI members as one aspect of the role is to encourage colleagues to become and stay members. However, several attendees bemoaned the fact that RTPI fees were no longer paid by their authority, commonly where membership is now not an essential requirement in job descriptions. Others reported that paying fees had had a major effect on successfully attracting job applicants and retaining staff, so making it cost effective in the longer run.

Helping staff to become fully qualified through the

APC route had been another driver of the Champions initiative but some attendees reported that colleagues had found the process very time consuming and difficult to complete, especially when faced with demanding domestic commitments.

Sue Manns said the RTPI was urging the UK government to put more resources into council planning teams and it was good to see that the White Paper recognise this along with the importance of supporting fully qualified planners to do their job. She also mentioned two RTPI initiatives: GROWPLAN aimed at increasing RTPI membership numbers and NUTURE – measures to support existing planners.

What do you consider are the current big issues for the RTPI and planning in general?

People being more home-based has clearly had major lifestyle implications, such as on commuting, the

sustainability of centres, where people want to live and the exposure of health inequalities; all brought on by the COVID situation. Which has also contributed to seemingly endless rounds of bidding for government grant support schemes which were taking up much officer time. The Planning White Paper's new emphasis on upfront planning policy and design code work rather than development management was also cited as a move that would, if implemented as proposed, greatly change how local authority planning departments are operated.

Sue Manns commented that the RTPI was striving to remind the UK government of the importance of the benefits of good planning and its contribution to the 'levelling up' agenda.

In conclusion

Sue Manns was very impressed with the event. Afterwards she said...

"It was clear that Local Authority planning teams across the north west have been flexible, adaptable and resilient in the face of COVID 19. Whilst no-one missed the daily commute, all were agreed on the need to support junior staff and to find ways of recreating the informal office networks that support innovation.

"It was great to see how well digital webinars and CPD sessions were working and how they had improved access and reached those who often felt excluded. I was also particularly struck by the comment that those authorities who pay RTPI member fees had seen improved recruitment and retention, making it great value for money.

"Thank you to everyone for inviting me to be a part of the NW LPA Champions lunch."

Also, afterwards, attendee Chris Blackburn, Planning Policy Team Leader at Preston Council said *"I thought it was a fantastic session and really enjoyed it."*

So, there we have it, the first time LPA Champions in the North West have come together for a virtual lunch in this way, following the cancellation of an in-person event planned for earlier in the year. As for what attendees were eating for their lunch, this was difficult to gauge as they were being very discrete with their munching. So much so that your correspondent felt obliged to turn off his webcam so he could tuck into his tuna salad without embarrassment.

Despite on-going efforts to recruit Champions in each authority there are still about a third of councils without one. These are Liverpool City, St. Helens, Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Tameside, Peak District, Cheshire West and Chester, Warrington, Barrow, Chorley, Ribble Valley, Rossendale and West Lancashire. So, if you think you can fulfill that role or can nudge a colleague to do so, then please act. Bev Watson (northwest@rtpi.org.uk) can provide further details of what is involved.

Covid-19 resulted in a bit of a false-start in terms of getting our 'Champions' network going during 2020, but we'll be cracking on during 2021. If you work for an LPA, please join it.

As an 'LPA Champion', you'll be able to help us deliver more activities/events that LPAs need. The network also provides a great opportunity to meet other officers – Which'll no doubt also look great on your CV.

Let's make 2021 the year where LPA planners really get back on board with the RTPI. Join our LPA Champions network. Tell us what you need. Help us deliver it.

Equality Diversity & Inclusion

RTPI North West creates EDI Champion role on Regional Management Board

In order to plan for diverse communities, we should have town planners who are representative of the communities they are planning for.

In January 2020, the RTPI published its new [Corporate Strategy 2020-2030](#). Equality, Diversity, and Inclusivity (EDI) is one of the four integrated Pillars within the strategy which support three core objectives of Influence, Members and Learning. To help deliver on these objectives the RTPI developed an action plan for EDI – [CHANGE](#) – which will help guide both members and employers as they work to achieve a more balanced profession.

To support this as a Region, we are excited to announce that we have created an EDI Champion role to form part of our Regional Management Board. The role is responsible for:

- Ensuring EDI is embedded and delivered through our regional task groups' business plans
- Identifying and linking with EDI groups within our region (both within planning and also the wider built environment professions) for collaborative working
- Working with the newly appointed RTPI EDI Manager to ensure actions within CHANGE are delivered regionally

As part of our regional work on EDI, we've already connected to some EDI groups operating in our region. You can find out more about them, and how to get involved, below. We're excited to continue our work around EDI and look forward to having some exciting updates over the coming year.

If you'd like to get more involved with EDI please get in touch and we'll introduce you to our EDI Champion: northwest@rtpi.org.uk.

BAME Planners Network

The BAME Planners Network, launched in August 2020, is focused in raising the profile and visibility of BAME Planners, providing support in achieving career goals, encouraging BAME into the planning profession and collaborating with other organisations to eliminate discrimination.

To see a difference in the profession, we have to work together to make a difference.

The Network is free to join, it is not exclusive and anyone who seeks to support the aims of the Network is welcome to join. The network is our network and collectively we can make it work

To Join them as we forge ahead in the journey of having a fairer and more equitable planning profession contact: info@bameplanners.com



LGBT Property Professionals

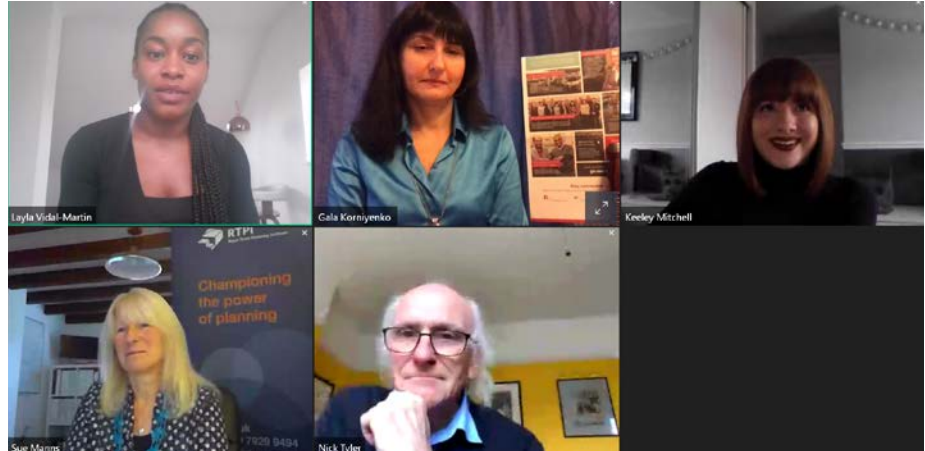
LGBT Property Professionals is a networking group, based in Manchester, that aims to drive LGBT inclusion within property and construction. They are a networking events organisation with the aim to connect all sectors of the property industry. If you are ... Developers, Construction, Surveying, Sales & Lettings, Block management, Property management, Contractors and any others who work within the property sector they want to hear from you!! You can follow them on twitter: [@LgbtProperty](https://twitter.com/LgbtProperty).

Neurodiversity Network

This year the Neurodiversity in Planning Network was established and held its first online event in October 2020 which was attended by about 80 people. Established in September this year, 'Neurodiversity in Planning' is a voluntary workgroup comprising town planners and a variety of built environment practitioners. The webinar was a joint event organised by the RTPI North West and London regions.

The webinar aimed to improve planners' understanding of neurodiversity, what it means to be neurodivergent, why it is important and why planners and urban designers should be more aware of it.

Neurodiversity is a biological fact and refers to the diversity of human brains and minds – the infinite variation in neurocognitive functioning within our species. We have different interests and motivations and are naturally better at some things and poorer at others. Neurodiversity includes various neurological differences such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity



Disorder (ADHD), Autism, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia, Dysgraphia and Tourette Syndrome.

Most people are neurotypical. Being neurotypical means that your brain functions and processes information in the way that society expects. It is estimated that 1 in 7 people (around 15 percent of the UK population) are neurodivergent.

The first presentation was delivered by 'Prof Nick Tyler' who is Director of the UCL Centre for Transport Studies and Chadwick Professor of Civil Engineering. Nick investigates how people interact with their immediate environments, including the way in which common functions - such as walking - are managed

by subconscious control systems which interact with the physical, sensory and cognitive environments in which people function. Using examples of how people interact with the world through their senses, Nick set out what this could mean for design, and making neurodiversity-friendly public places. Nick briefly talked about how the brain aggregates data to form a pattern, and depending on the brain's ability to aggregate data, multiple patterns can be comforting, challenging, or conflicting. For some, this would mean that if their brain cannot process data from the built environment quickly enough, they can have surprises. Nick's presentation was finished by reminding planners and urban

designers that design is all about enabling people to feel comfortable with what they feel is unexpected.

The second speaker 'Keeley Mitchell' provided an interesting insight into the 'basics' of neurodiversity. Keeley is a co-founder of 'Neurodiversity in Planning' and Trainee Planning Officer at Dacorum Borough Council. Items on Keeley's agenda for the webinar included: what is neurodiversity, who are 'Neurodiversity in Planning', why the conversation is so important, and how neurodiversity can be supported. During her talk, Keeley explained that neurodiversity is a natural and valuable form of human diversity and therefore the neurodiversity paradigm rejects pathologising of neurodivergent. She went on to say that the neurodiversity paradigm provides the foundations for neurodiversity movements to launch, and then introduced the 'Neurodiversity in Planning' workgroup and its aims and strategies.

With relation to law and neurodiversity at work, Keeley highlighted that some

neurodivergent individuals may meet the definition of disability, under the 'Equality Act 2010', and therefore can benefit from reasonable adjustments at work. However, it is more likely that many neurodivergent people instead change aspects of their personality at work due to lack of understanding that is needed to cater for neurodiverse people.

The final talk was delivered by 'Gala Korniyenko' who is a PhD Candidate at Ohio State University. Gala introduced the 'Autism Planning and Design Guidelines 1.0', a research undertaken by the Regional Planning students at Knowlton School of Architecture at Ohio State University. The research has culminated in the creation of a planning and design strategy called 'The Six Feelings Framework' which aims to promote the feeling of being included. The study is focused on Autistic adults and explains how the design of the public realm can help adults with Autism.

Gala explained why it is essential for town planners to understand that it may not be useful to plan and design for one group of people

and that to make planning more inclusive, planners should have regard to neurodiversity too. It is the responsibility of built environment professionals including planners and designers to create spaces that are more usable, comfortable, inclusive and beneficial to everyone.

The RTPI President 'Sue Manns FRTPI' concluded the discussions by reiterating that adopting an inclusive approach is essential, and equality, diversity and inclusion combined can sustain the planning. She recapped the main points delivered by other speakers and closed by recapitulating that neurodiversity – as a rather less-recognised form of minority – should be part of the conversations.

If you're interested to know more about neurodiversity in planning or would like access to resources, you can do so by joining the 'Neurodiversity in Planning' network on LinkedIn. If you're interested in the network, please contact:

northwest@rtpi.org.uk.

NORTH WEST YOUNG PLANNERS

2020 has been a strange and challenging year for us all, enduring dodgy hair cuts and forfeiting our diets of Greggs Sausage Rolls have indeed been the least of our worries. One of the groups that is sometimes overlooked in challenging times are young professionals embarking on their career into an industry that faces an uncertain future. Now more than ever it is critical to share our experiences about the challenges young planners have overcome throughout the recent months, provide support to those who need it and to ensure we are well informed and equipped for what lays ahead.

To help with this, the RTPI North West in conjunction with the Young Planners have put together this article which draws upon the insight of a number of young planners and students across our region to reflect upon these challenges and the opportunities which may emerge in 2021. Ian Gilbert, the Incoming Chair for 2021 looks at the role that the RTPI has in supporting our young planners and how engagement with the RTPI can help overcome the challenges ahead.

CLASS OF 2020

One of the biggest challenges for the planning industry is attracting and retaining new talent. The RTPI plays a key role in supporting the transition from completing academic studies to entering the work place. We spoke to four young planners in the region who finished their respective RTPI accredited courses at universities and asked them four questions to gain an insight into their transition.

1. How did you prepare for post-graduation?
2. How was your experience of the job application process?
3. Top tips for other students and those entering the profession?
4. How can the profession make itself more appealing to students?

Matthew Forman

Newcastle University | MPlan | Graduated July 2020

Q1. Preparation for myself developed from doing my very best to understand just how planners work in practice. Whilst at university I gained various short-term work experiences, undertook a placement year and tried to speak to as many planners as I could to learn from their experiences and knowledge.

In particular, gaining a year planning placement at

Transport for London in the Spatial Planning team and a 6-week placement at DPP Planning offered me a varied and motivating experience into the planning sector. I had the fantastic opportunity to work with diverse planning professionals both internally and externally. I found they allowed me to excel in the roles whilst discovering more about just how varied the planning sector is and understanding further how it operates.

I feel the various work experiences certainly set me up stronger for my final year masters and improved my confidence and knowledge of the planning sector, preparing me well for post-graduation.

Q2. Covid-19 has meant job applications have been difficult this year. The uncertainty has made it harder for both recruitment and applying. But as things changed the application processes adapted and it gave me great hope and confidence in the planning sector. I joyfully joined DPP Planning as a Planning Assistant in September this year! I couldn't wait to get going and I will always be thankful for the opportunity in such unusual times.

Q3. Be positive and proactive. Speak to as many planners as you can, you'll quickly learn about its varied routes and opportunities. You never know where it might take you!

Q4. Working together with both public and private sectors, the planning profession should continue to look for new ways of working using greater new technologies for more effective connection to make the planning profession more diverse and inclusive.

Esme O'Meara

University of Liverpool | Master of Civic Design (MCD)
Town and Regional Planning | Graduating December 2020

Q1. I carried out a 4-week placement at PRP Architects in London in summer 2018 prior to graduating from my undergraduate degree and this helped me to decide whether to pursue a career in planning. Following this, I applied to Liverpool University for an RTP1 accredited postgraduate degree and prepared for this by volunteering at Liverpool City Council to gain more up-to-date work experience in the public sector. This helped enormously and made starting my postgrad much less daunting (especially after minimal exposure to planning modules in my undergraduate degree).

Q2. The job application process went relatively well. I knew where I wanted to apply purely by speaking to people through my work experience and picking up names of companies. I used LinkedIn, the university careers service and typing 'graduate planning jobs London' into Google. There are so many ways you can find jobs now but where you would get the most support is through university. So, my biggest piece of advice is: use your resources because that is what they are there for. Take time with your CV, play about with fonts, layouts and organise it well. I advise dedicating some time to it because you'll be surprised how much better you feel about it once you have given it some attention.

Q3. My top tip would be to get work experience. I had no idea what I wanted to do until the summer before the third year of my undergraduate degree. Use your summers well and that might sound a bit boring but even if it's just 2 weeks, it's better than nothing. You will benefit so much and so will your CV; it is so important to have up-to-date work experience and who knows, some great opportunities might come of it!

Q4. The profession can make itself more appealing by making it more obvious as to what it is. I know when I first heard planning, it could have meant anything. If there are more people like me who wouldn't know how many layers there are to planning, then finding ways to convey that it isn't just 'houses' or 'planning permission' would be so beneficial.

John Kerr

University of Liverpool | Town and Regional Planning M/CD (1 year) | Graduating December 2020

Q1. Keeping a part-time job throughout the course helped to take away the pressure when applying for planning roles. Also, organising a LinkedIn profile appropriately with email notifications of planning roles within the north west was a useful reminder.

Q2. The application processes definitely allowed me to express my abilities in being able to do the job in hand. Applications are also usually a fairly long process; it can be difficult to complete in one sitting. I would recommend saving your answers on a separate document in the event that you lose your application. I was fortunate to be offered a planning officer role by a local council. Due to the pandemic, the interview was online via Zoom meetings. I was asked 7 questions, which were marked out of 10. Using examples from university and previous work experiences to answer these questions was a key part and it was important to research the area you would be working in, reading local plans, local news articles, planning policy context, and finding out about the issues in the locality. Never be disheartened if you don't get offered the role, use every interview as a learning curve.

Q3. 1) Keep a file of applications that you have completed. You may get asked similar questions for future applications. However, always ensure that you alter your answers appropriately for the specific

question. 2) Apply for roles even if you feel they may be out of your reach. I would always encourage people to be proactive in applying for a number of different roles. They may have the option to offer you a role more suited to your level. 3) Contact those that may be able to help. University tutors, professionals that you may have spoken to when carrying out your dissertation, professionals that you may have worked with for a placement. They have all been in the same position that you are in.

Q4. Targeting students at GCSE and A-Level would definitely make the planning profession more appealing and may help students feel more inclined to study planning at university. I personally only began to take an interest in planning during my Geography degree at the University of Liverpool.

Christian Cardiss

University of Manchester | MSc Urban Regeneration and Development | Graduating Summer 2020

Q1. Preparations for life after graduation came well before I began my masters degree and pursuing a career in town planning, specifically within the private sector, was (and is) an ambition I was fully dedicated to. And so, from the early months of my undergraduate degree, preparing for 'life in the real world', so to speak, had been in my thinking for a long time. This meant that I was actively engaging with different ways of preparing for my first professional post. I was attending events, meeting all kinds of professionals from various companies (many of whom I still keep in touch with now!), sometimes straight after a full day of lectures, sometimes late in the evenings, other times I would book days off work. I would read up on news stories and take a meaningful interest in what was being built in the city I lived in. In reflection, these all feed into your interest and shape your career ambitions and when you couple this with lecture material then it contributes, I

believe, in a significant way to your professional life after University.

Q2. Before the successful interview with my current employer, One Planning Consultants, came about, my experience of the job application process came from two job interviews for planning consultancies in Macclesfield and Greater Manchester. The latter was back before the pandemic and I had a face-to-face interview. The former was online, via Zoom, obviously. To expand on that experience, for the position in Macclesfield, I had been tasked to produce a site appraisal to assess the development potential for a site in the town centre which I thoroughly enjoyed. Ultimately, I was unsuccessful, but I sought feedback on my efforts and from that, learned a lot moving forward.

Q3. If I was to offer my 'top tips' for other students and those entering the profession, then I would point to my earlier comments. I think it is so important to take an active interest in the industry beyond what you are taught as it shows initiative, drive, ambition, and industry awareness and it demonstrates that you have a genuine interest in your career. Events that supplement your continued professional development have never been so accessible. But other than this, there are free daily news updates that you can register to receive directly to your inbox, the RTPI possess a wealth of resources and The Planner Magazine is always worth checking regularly. There are many, many more alternatives that are readily available. If you are struggling to find some then please get in touch with me directly and I will share some of my favourites with you.

Q4. At college, I studied a BTEC in construction and the built environment and before my planning degree, had studied architecture. To this day I find it incredible that in all that time I had never been made aware of town planning, how planning binds the built environment sector together or how

important planning is in managing and guiding the development of urban and rural areas. Years later I learned how planning communicates with a range of built environment industries in a way that I never knew at college. To that end, I think the industry could benefit from increasing its awareness and advertising its appeal to students by engaging with college students and undergraduates in a way that explores its influence on the built environment, this could be done by talking about particular projects, developments or plans. Your typical events are a tried and tested method for this. But specifically, I think that having young planners, for example, sharing their experiences and their 'journey' could be particularly beneficial. Offering their support in a mentorship capacity could be an interesting option, where colleges and universities are connected to young or senior planning professionals who can share their time, experience and journey with those with the ambition to follow in their footsteps.

ADAPTING TO THE NEW WORKING ENVIRONMENT

In the space of a few short months, the planning industry has seen a transformation in the way we work, where we work and in a lot of cases if we even work. It would be an erroneous assumption to claim that a disproportionate number of those who suffered redundancy or being placed on furlough in our industry were young planners or the less senior individuals within their organisations. However, numerous reports including one particular report published by the Resolution Foundation found that 19% of 18-24 year olds who were furloughed were unemployed in September, compared to 9% of the general population. This does indicate that younger people have faced more uncertainty with their employment.

We asked four young planners to reflect upon the challenges they have faced throughout this period, how they have overcome them and what opportunities they see emerging to develop their careers over the next year.

Richard Ketelle

Savills | Planner

This year has presented the planning world with unprecedented challenges; from the logistics of local authority remote decision making, working with a new planning use class order and new permitted development regulations, to communicating with colleagues in new ways.

Working remotely since March has meant that I have no longer been able to carry out site visits in London, requiring the need to embrace new desk-based technology. One such software my company has embraced is VU.City, a fully interactive digital city platform that presents macro and micro 3D views and includes the ability to visualise the existing and emerging, immediate and wider surrounding context. Whilst this has overcome the immediate need for visiting a site, I don't believe it can truly replace the sense of place that you get from a physical site visit.

For me, another big challenge is the need to communicate effectively with consultants, colleagues and Local Planning Authorities. This has become increasingly difficult with furlough and staff working remotely becoming the new normal. The need for good communication has never been greater which has been made easier and more effective through new video conferencing software. This has not only enhanced the way my team works collaboratively, but also allows us to jet off to more sunny climates with the click of a button. Going forwards into 2021, I hope to be able to come out of lockdown a more well-rounded planning consultant through embracing new technology and a new way of working.

Louise Chadwick

The Environmental Partnership | Consultant Planner

2020 has no doubt been a year that has presented a lot of challenges to overcome. When I first left the office in March, I never thought that I would still be working at home in November. I had never worked from home before so did not know what to expect and the uncertainty of how long I would be in this position was quite daunting, especially being at such an early stage in my career.

One of the key challenges has been communicating with colleagues throughout the company. The use of technology to be able to receive briefings for new projects, weekly team meetings and CPD sessions is something not only I, but many people, have had to adapt to using. Whilst this technology has been an invaluable tool over the past couple of months, I found that it is not as effective or does not always provide the same benefits as the office environment. For example, the office environment allows me to learn through group discussions with colleagues and to share ideas and collaborate face-to-face. Whilst this has sometimes been difficult, it has provided me with the chance to develop my interpersonal skills.

During this period, I was placed on furlough for four weeks. This gave me time to reflect on what I have achieved over the past year since graduating and the opportunities ahead. Furlough provided me with the time to finalise my L-APC submission and upon my return to work I was promoted to a consultant planner. No one knows what the new normal will be or when we will return to the office, but I intend to use the current situation to develop my project management skills, taking advantage of online meetings, where I've found people are eager to engage, as we are all in this together, regardless of job title, position or company.

Sally Riley

Redrow Homes | Planning Manager

2020 has certainly raised a number of challenges which I would never have considered prior to the pandemic. From the uncertainty of being placed on Furlough to the twists and turns of the various iterations of government guidance, the most accurate summary is most certainly 'a rollercoaster'. The biggest challenge however in my working life has been the transition to working at home. As a team, good communication has become more prominent than ever. My advice to all young planners is to never be afraid to pick up the phone and ask questions. Disregard any thoughts that you are 'pestering' someone. Being clear about your task and resolving any issues upfront leads to more efficient working, rather than spending hours trying to conjure up an answer that you are still unsure of.

Working for one of the country's leading house builders, the need to acquire land is greater than ever. Despite the pandemic the internal targets remain high, however the need to minimise costs where possible has resulted in a greater focus on internal resources rather than using consultants. Personally, this has opened up opportunities to develop my own planning skills, becoming more hands on with the preparation of planning documents to support applications. Moving into 2021, I hope to refine my planning language to further my written communication and enhance my project management skills – leading in pre-application meetings and liaising with key stakeholders to ensure planning permission can be granted in a time efficient and collaborative manner. Despite the rollercoaster of 2020, 2021 provides a great opportunity for me to take more ownership and control of the entire planning process.

Sarah Myers

Cushman & Wakefield | Planning Consultant

It's now been 7 months from the first official day of lockdown in the United Kingdom and we have all had to adapt to a new way of living and working in that time.

As a Planning Consultant at a Global Real Estate Company a lot of my work relies on engaging with other skill lines within the business as well as with Clients and Consultants across various sectors. When we first began working remotely in March the biggest challenge was maintaining the same level of collaboration that we had when working in the office. Planning can be very complex at times and although digital platforms allow us to engage with others effectively, they can't replace the social interaction we had when working in the office.

As a Young Planner this means I have had to work more proactively over the last few months to overcome the barriers that working from home can create. This has involved communicating regularly with my team to discuss projects I may be working on or any problems I am encountering. As well as committing time to online learning via seminars or CPD resources.

As I now split my working week between the office and home, I can appreciate the benefits of both environments. I now look at the office as a space for teamwork, learning and collaboration whereas working remotely provides me with the time to work independently on tasks such as report writing, research or CPD. It could be a long time before we return to the office on a full-time basis, if ever, and so my aim is to continue to learn and adapt and take the positives from what is a challenging time.

MOVING INTO 2021

These reflections from eight young planners have highlighted a number of challenges and opportunities we are likely to experience moving into 2021. The way we work has changed and whatever aspect of the planning industry you work in, your job requirements and demands are likely to have evolved. How we prepare for the challenges moving into 2021 to meet these demands is crucial, whether you are a student moving into the final year of your studies or a young professional with years of experience.

For the unemployed, the reflections from recent graduates highlight a number of ways to prepare for the recruitment process. In a highly competitive market, it is crucial to prepare well by perfecting your CV, targeting a comprehensive hit list of potential employers, thoroughly research the company you are interviewing for a position with and be open to new roles within organisations to diversify your skillset. Being open to different positions is a crucial opportunity, key to ensuring you are continuously developing your exposure and experience across the industry. I am not going to tell you that your next job could be in cyber (and you just don't know it yet)- but the message is along those lines.

For those who are continuing in their employment in 2021 and are looking to take a step up the ladder, the four young planner reflections consider a number of opportunities for you to further your career as we enter a new year. We now have greater access to online CPD than ever before, the pressure of absorbing more tasks allows you to become more indispensable and the re-purposing of our limited time spent in the office to focus on more interactive and collaborative activities with colleagues. For me the opportunities do not end there. I have seen this as an opportunity to tailor the way I engage with my line manager and colleagues, to request accessibility and greater structure in the ways I

formally engage with colleagues to compensate for the loss of informal learning. As networking and socialising migrates towards social media, many have responded by becoming increasingly active and engaged on social media platforms. Young planners aren't generally expected to engage with business development or initiate organisational responses to market fluctuations, but 2020 has been a grand old year of market fluctuations and senior figures may be more inclined than ever to listen to new ideas. One such idea may be to target an emerging market or promote a new way for your company to engage with the market. The final, and greatest opportunity is getting ahead of the curve with the proposed changes to the planning system. There is an abundance of online resources and analysis of the proposed radical changes which are expected to materialise more formally early in 2022. If the future system indeed looks as radical as what has been proposed, there is no doubt that those who flourish will be those who are best acquainted.

The RTPI's role in supporting members is key to ensuring our industry continues to thrive. The Institute has a series of networks in place to support young planners in the north west region covering Cheshire, Cumbria, Merseyside and the Isle of Man.

The key network is the North West Young Planners Committee who organise events based in Liverpool and Manchester and have associations with an urban design group- Street North West and the Student Urban Development Network for Manchester University students. The Committee has been established for some time in the region and now with ten members, hosts dozens of events each year allowing you to network with likewise young professionals and access CPD to help you develop your knowledge in specialist areas. In 2021 the Committee have planned for a number of online or Covid-friendly activities including the successful Article Club; city tour by bicycle; scavenger hunt; summer bbq; webinars and

speaker led sessions for Modular Homes, International Regeneration Practices, strategic regeneration frameworks, urban resilience in Liverpool, non-typical routes into planning and Health in Planning. The APC sessions will also continue as normal via webinar whilst a parallel APC webinar will be aimed at public sector planners.

There are a number of other committees who forms part of the RTPI North West region and play a role in supporting young planners in the region including Social Activities, CPD Events, Education, Careers & Mentoring, Planning Aid and Social Activities. Each have their own role for supporting members and promoting the planning profession.

Two key programmes are currently being promoted by the Institute which provides a great opportunity for 2021, regardless of your situation.

1. **NURTURE:** is to be launched for entry to all mid-career planners, female and male, in February next year and will enable those who are no longer at the start of their careers to receive mentoring from senior planners on how best to make their next career move.
2. **Chief Planners of Tomorrow:** a work-shadowing scheme offering RTPI Young Planners the chance to step into the shoes of a Chief Planning Officer for the day. Submissions open in December 2020.

Further careers support is available online on the Institute's website where you can get further information about finding work experience, finding a job or the employment helpline to advise on employment or HR matters.

Alongside the ongoing support the Institute offers to its members, it continuously strives to expand the

strength of the planning profession. The Education & Careers Committee are active on the ground, visiting schools, sixth forms and running the Schools Competition pre-lockdown. Their intentions are to promote the profession to youngsters yet to make a decision about their career pathway. This coincides with GROWPLAN which is a comprehensive growth strategy to attract new members and was introduced through the 2020-2030 Corporate Strategy. This strategy aims to build off the back of the highly successful Chartered Town Planner Apprenticeship scheme recently introduced which is opening new routes to become a chartered town planner.

THE RTPI IN 2021

The RTPI NW continues to support the planning industry now and in the future through its work with schools, collages and universities in fostering the next generation of planners throughout the education process. It also seeks to encourage planning excellence and support the growth of its young planners through CPD events, networking and through awards such as Young Planner of the Year and the Moss Madden Awards. However, the biggest way we can support young planners is through engagement with the RTPI itself. Next year we welcome new Student Members to the Regional Activities Committee, and we continue to support our growing Young Planners Network which we encourage young planners to be a part of. Volunteering with the RTPI provides you with opportunities to engage with the profession from the earliest stages of your careers, meet future colleagues, mentors and employers as well as enhance your CV along the way! If you are interested in getting involved, we'd love to hear from you.

For more information on the RTPI North West Young Planners, please see:
www.rtpi.org.uk/nwyoungplanners

Young Planners Article Club

Running Webinars in 2020

The RTPI's summer 2020 event calendar was transformed to suit the ever-increasing digital era we are experiencing due to Covid-19. As part of the RTPI North West Young Planners Committee, I hosted an online series of webinars called Article Clubs to help the industry stay connected through unprecedented times.

The first Article Club focused on climate-conscious planning, with the second discussing the urban housing crisis. For each topic, three articles were chosen to engage and spark debate amongst attendees. The premise of the series was to create a comfortable space where everyone was considered a 'panellist'. Nonetheless, a prearranged group of industry experts remained on screen to aid the discussion and be asked any questions posed by myself and attendees.

Comparable to events being modified, 'we' as human beings also need to adjust to the new online realm. This inevitably requires trial and error to understand what works well and what does not. Accordingly, alterations were made between the first and second Article Clubs to appeal to a larger audience and help the events run with ease. For instance, I organised more on-screen panellists for the second event to encourage attendees to share their camera when joining the discussion. In addition, the time of the event changed from 5pm for the first Article Club to 12pm for the second Article Club to correspond with the conventional working day's lunch break.

Moreover, in regard to hosting the Article Club series, I deem several steps should be undertaken to ensure the online event is successful:

- 1. Embrace technical difficulties and silences**
Acknowledge that everyone appreciates that hosting online events is foreign and a new skill which requires practice. Also, recognise that there may be a lag between speakers, questions, and answers, as well as attendees feeling uncomfortable to speak up immediately.
- 2. Practice – have a 'dress rehearsal'**
Familiarise yourself with the chosen online software and settings; they could be useful for your event such as, an 'online waiting room', 'chat box', or 'mute all' button.
- 3. Prepare your panel**
Brief the panel of the general structure and questions so they know when they are speaking and can prepare concise responses, as well as reducing any anxiety about participating.
- 4. Follow a general structure and script**
The event is online; no one but you can see what you have around your laptop. Have prompts on post-it notes and an outline of the event's structure to ensure the event runs smoothly in addition to reducing any nerves you may be experiencing prior and throughout.

5. Ensure the event is topical and informative

There is an overload of online events to sign up for and a high probability that those attending are suffering from burnout. Therefore, make your event current and light-hearted; be individual and creative.

6. Time management

Assign an approximation of time to each part of the event and do not be afraid to move on to stay on target, this will keep those attending engaged and online as they do not have to leave due to other commitments.

7. Ensure the event is inclusive and accessible

Choose an online forum which is easily accessed by the majority of people without technical difficulties on a phone, tablet, laptop, as well as dialling in. Ensure that event topics are varied, providing everyone the opportunity to participate in an event they are passionate about. Create a group online such as on LinkedIn, where attendees can continue the discussion or debate, network, and propose ideas for future events.

8. Market and advertise

Promote the event via social media channels and ask your colleagues to share their perception of the event to gain traction prior to and after. Remember to post after the event so those attending can follow your social media and remain informed of future events.

9. Know your audience

Acknowledge who your target audience is, what current affairs and online events they are involved in, as well as when their free time is. It may be useful to share a short survey to regular attendees about what events they want to see materialise.

10. Follow Zoom etiquette

The background and image of yourself you present establishes the tone for the duration of the event. Either have relevant images displayed or nothing at all to prevent attendees becoming distracted. Dress equivalent to 'in-person' events; it is still an occasion and both you and attendees should perceive the event to be separate to just sitting at home.

In summary, just remember we are all acclimatising to this 'new normal' and errors are inescapable using unfamiliar technology, so remove any unconstructive criticism towards yourself. Instead, enjoy the process of learning a new skill amongst everyone else and use this opportunity to be creative, innovative and individual!



Fiona Hore Obituary

On 23rd March 2020, Fiona Hore, Chief Planning Officer at Cheshire West & Chester Council, passed away aged 56.

Fiona had been a chartered town planner since 1996 after graduating from Sheffield Hallam University, where she studied urban and regional planning. After starting her career at Ceredigion County Council and Newark & Sherwood Council, she moved to Chester in 2006 and worked for Chester City Council as a development planning manager. Hore rose to become head of planning at the combined council.

Fiona was an active RTPI Member and had just joined the North West Regional Activities Committee in January 2020, where she was active in the Promotion of Planning Task Group, which, amongst other activities, edits this Annual Review. Fiona is perhaps best known for her

appearances on the TV show 'Planners' in 2013, which followed the work of local planning officers in the UK.

Her colleagues at Cheshire West & Chester Council commented that:

“Fiona was a nurturing and supportive manager. People could often be taken aback by her firm approach when dealing with planning proposals she was unhappy to support but she often joked that she wasn't as scary as people made her out to be. She looked out for her staff and was always keen to point out that their health and safety always needed to come first.

“Fiona was an enthusiastic supporter of Planning and the important part it plays in shaping places. She believed passionately about the responsibility of Planners to improve our communities and the places we live. The Planning Team have been

receiving condolence messages from those Fiona worked with locally for the last 14 years. They have highlighted how much people enjoyed working with Fiona, even when they found themselves challenged by her in connection with their proposals. They appreciated her positive and pragmatic approach and her enthusiasm for the planning process.

“She will be deeply missed by the team and will be remembered as a brilliant leader and friend.

“As the chief exec has said in an e-mail to us ‘Her integrity, ability to stand her ground on the right arguments, and above all commitment to the borough, was genuinely an inspiration to us all.’”



REGIONAL RESEARCH

The RTPI and North West planners have been working hard over 2020 to develop and influence policy and practice at all levels. This section looks at their achievements and the views of regional academics on key issues

RESEARCH AND POLICY UPDATE

There were a diverse range of consultations from government and other organisations which enabled RTPI North West to contribute a regional dimension to national RTPI responses on a variety of Planning and related matters.

At the regional level progress on plan-making has been made in spite of the many challenges facing the Planning profession. As we approach the end of this difficult year, the two city regions of Liverpool and Manchester are to hold major public consultation on their respective sub-regional plans.

The Liverpool Spatial Development Strategy (known as LDS) will be a statutory planning document. When published, it will form part of the 'development plan' for the city region's six local authorities alongside their own Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans. To date consultation both locally and beyond has been both informal and at quite a high level. In turn, this has enabled people to have their say on a range of different policy themes along with an online survey and also conducting a series of consultation events with community groups and representatives from the development and construction sector.

A full round of consultation took place in the Autumn so that local communities and other parties would now be able to comment for the first time on specific Planning policies. The Liverpool City Region (LCR) direction of travel document was published in November. The consultation will run until 1st February 2021. The Spatial Planning team at the City Region have agreed dates in principle to hold a couple of digital roundtables before Christmas for RTPI members and RTPI Policy staff. The Lead Officer from the City Region will attend in order to answer practical questions, After that, RTPI policy staff would then work with RTPI North West to draft a full response to the consultation on behalf of RTPI.

The Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF) is the proposed city region plan for the ten Planning authorities of Greater Manchester which together form the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) . This will be the third major round of consultation following two previous versions of the Draft GMSF including one early last year. Those responses have now been assessed and published and further work has been undertaken to develop

the plan. This included further assessing housing and employment need and supply in order to inform the need for allocations. The next stage of consultation on the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF) had been expected this autumn and dates have recently been confirmed for the approval process and for the consultation.

The latest version of the plan, the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework Publication Plan 2020, was considered by each of the ten local authorities in Greater Manchester and was approved for consultation over Dec 2020-Jan 2021. The Plan can be found on the [GMCA website](#).

For the previous version of the GMSF, RTPI North West held a series of roundtables in February 2019 in Manchester for RTPI members. These were facilitated by RTPI Policy staff and our regional co-ordinator Bev Watson. A further round of public consultation on the GMSF took place between January and March this year. A series of round table discussions for RTPI members and other activities took place in February with members attending from within the Greater Manchester area and beyond. It is hoped to hold

at least one roundtable via virtual technology early in the New Year for this latest version of the GMSF. Further details will be sent to RTPI members when details of the event(s) are available. An agreed response between the RTPI and RTPI North West based on the round tables would then be sent to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority. Following consultation, the Publication version of the GMSF will be formally submitted to the government alongside all supporting evidence. The government will then appoint an independent Planning Inspector (or a panel of inspectors) to undertake the public examination of the GMSF. Following the examination and subject to it being found sound and approved by the Secretary of State, the GMCA envisages that the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework would be ready for adoption by 2022. It is to be noted that the plan would then need to be approved by each of the ten councils before it can form part of the statutory development plan.

In September Lancashire County Council published its “Proposition for Local Government Re-organisation in Lancashire” following a period in which there have been ongoing discussions between the local authorities. The document describes

current system of local government in Lancashire as “a patchwork of different structures, with three upper tiers comprising one County Council, two small unitary authorities, and 12 lower tier districts”. The document can be found [here](#).

Although it is probably going to take some time for an agreed model to surface, it is good to see that spatial planning is clearly one of the key factors the County Council has taken into account in presenting this document. The proposals would see the establishment of three unitary authorities within Lancashire (Northwest , Central and Pennine/ East areas) with a Mayoral Combined Authority for the whole of Lancashire to become more effective, develop and deliver a coherent set of strategic priorities across multiple service areas. These would include business growth and support, skills and employment, housing, planning and infrastructure, environment and natural capital, and tourism.

At the other levels of Planning policy within the North West, the challenge of meeting social distancing and keeping safe has posed major issues to all Planning authorities. Particular challenges are how to engage with local communities for online consultation and in other ways which are safe for all parties and determining the length of any plan

consultation given the constraints imposed on all parties by Covid. Following the commencement of consultation on the Planning White Paper in August, a number of LPAs within the region began to review their current plan making arrangements in the light of the proposed major changes being suggested by Government in the White Paper.

Localism in Planning – flash in the pan or something more substantive?

Dr Alex Nurse

Lecturer, Geography and Planning
University of Liverpool

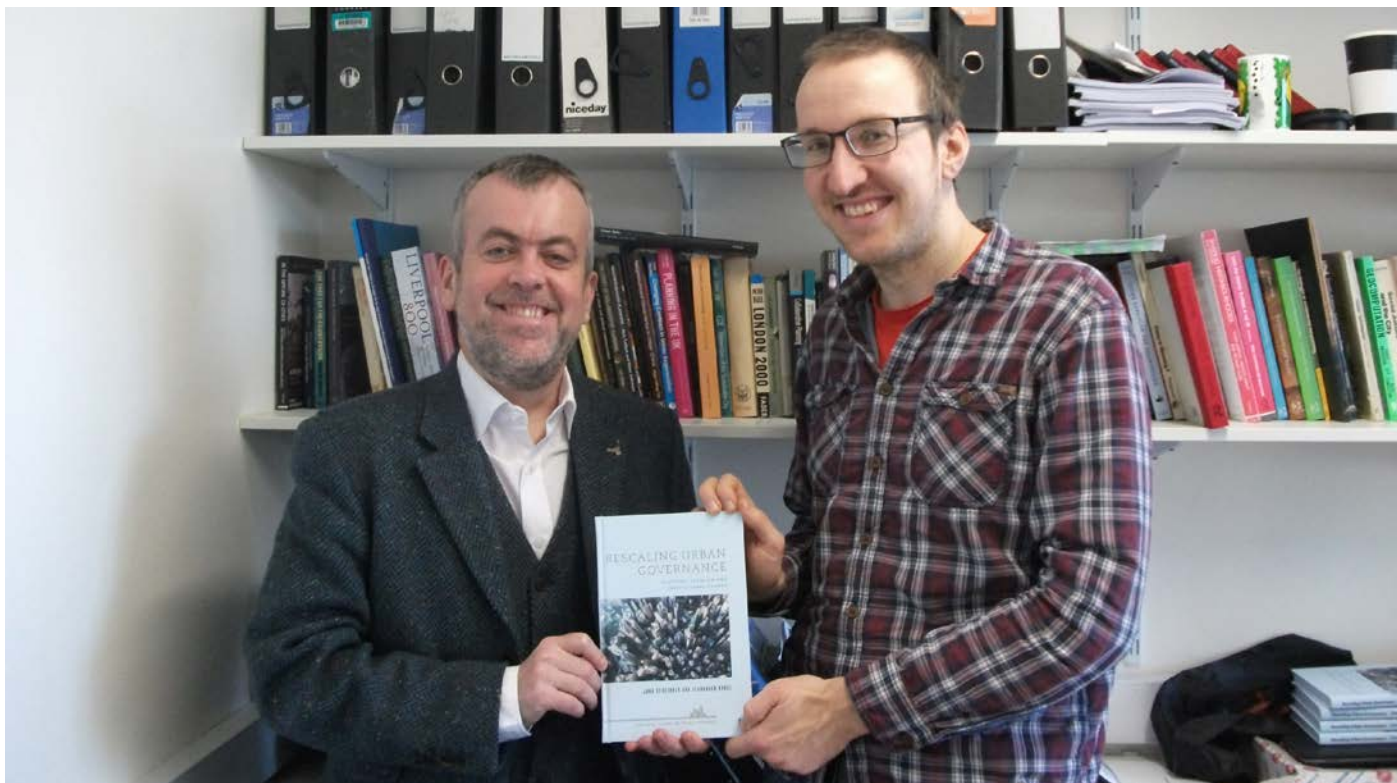
Dr John Sturzaker

Senior Lecturer in Civic Design/Planning
University of Liverpool

At the time of writing, in October 2020, we are still digesting the implications of the Planning White Paper for Planning in England. These implications are potentially profound across a range of topics and activities, and one of these is the relationship between Planning and the localism/devolution agenda. Some people have argued that if the proposals in the White Paper come into force, the production of strategic plans will be undermined (by the determination of housing numbers centrally); and the role of neighbourhood plans will be watered down yet further (by the introduction of zoning and centralised development management policies).

What form the final reforms take is as yet unclear, but now is a useful point to look back at the decade of localism and devolution which has followed the Conservative-led coalition government coming to power in 2010, and to consider what have been the impacts of the legislation and policy changes which have taken place. Happily, earlier this year we published a book, *Rescaling Urban Governance: Planning, Localism and Institutional Change*, which undertook just this sort of reflection. In the book we looked at every scale of change, from the national to the community. In this short piece we summarise the main findings of our book of particular relevance to the North West.

In Chapter Three of the book we explore the history of subnational planning and governance reforms in England, including the enduring ‘North–South divide’ in the economy that has informed successive waves of reform. We reflect on the change from the ‘New’ Labour governments’ preferred approach of using the scale of the eight Government Offices for the Regions to the 2010–onwards Conservative-led government’s preference for the scales ‘above’ and ‘below’ this – the supra-regional and city-regional. The Northern Powerhouse is the best-known example of the former, and is in part predicated on the Core Cities cooperating with each other instead of competing – but there is



little evidence of such cooperation so far, in part due to the informality of the governance of the Northern Powerhouse. There is, for example, no statutory plan that might focus investment in specific industrial sectors in specific locations – the RTPi’s Great North Plan initiative an attempt to fill this gap.

The next chapter of the book focuses on the series of experiments that have played out since 2010 as regards how cities/city-regions are governed. These experiments have included directly elected

mayors at city level (adopted in only two cities, including Liverpool), combined authorities, police and crime commissioners (PCCs), and directly elected mayors at city-region level (including Liverpool and Manchester). We identify several recurring features across these experiments, an important one being the tension between different tiers that each claim some form of democratic legitimacy – for example the ‘spare mayor’ in Liverpool, which now has one of the only examples of a city-level elected mayor operating in tandem with a city region mayor.

We then move on to look at local authorities. Set against a background of austerity, in which some local authorities have seen their operating budgets cut by half, the chapter explores how local authorities are finding ways of adapting to the limits austerity has placed on them. We identify two different approaches – firstly, what academics refer to as “entrepreneurial” activity, such as using enterprise zones to prioritise economic development. In doing so, as in the 1980s, there remains a pragmatic reliance on central government subsidy to see

authorities through more straitened times, which poses the question: is it worth cutting local authority funding if they will simply require support by other policy activity? The chapter also considers other more radical approaches to urban austerity including what has become known as the 'Preston model', a return to the sort of municipal socialism seen in the 19th century.

Finally, we examine some of the ways in which, post-2010, communities have been given powers to plan for their own futures, with a particular focus on Neighbourhood Planning as one of the main 'community rights' brought forward as part of the Localism Act 2011. The chapter highlights that by having to broadly conform to 'strategic' planning principles, there are limits to what local residents can do with their Neighbourhood Plan. Through new data presented in this book, we confirm a supposition held by many that there is a link between deprivation and the extent to which Neighbourhood Planning is undertaken, with less deprived areas more likely to engage with the Neighbourhood Plan-making process. We also find that while there was often a rump of people within a community interested in Neighbourhood Planning, typically work was concentrated in a few

hands that were, more often than not, those with professional experience. Finally, we note local political opposition to the Neighbourhood Planning process in some places.

Cutting across the different geographical scales of reform, a number of themes recurred:

1. An overall persistent public disengagement and dissatisfaction with "localist" reforms. This is highlighted through things such as a rejection of elected mayors or apathy when reforms were thrust upon the public (for example, in PCC elections). As state spending, particularly through local government, has been reduced, in some instances citizens have been forced to step in to run services such as libraries. So David Cameron's 'Big Society' is taking root in some places – but this appears to be out of necessity rather than any great desire on the part of citizens to run their own services.
2. The significance of austerity. There is a convincing argument that local government – heavily reliant on central government for its funding – was disproportionately negatively affected by the post-2008 cuts in

government spending. Wherever you look, it is impossible to miss the effects of these cuts. Austerity has had profound effects on the funding choices and priorities made by local authorities, with many forced to pare back services to the point that only statutory services remain. There is evidence which suggests that these cuts more heavily affected the places that were already more deprived, and thus were more adversely affected by the loss of essential services.

3. This disproportionate impact of austerity is just one aspect of what we think is our most important finding – that from neighbourhoods through to supra-regions, while the government has talked about closing divides, often we have seen those divides being widened. In short, places that are richer are tending to do well, and places that are poorer are tending to do badly. It would be unfair to declare the entire period as either a 'success' or 'failure', but it is certain the reforms have not succeeded on their own terms.

Looking Forward

2020 has been a strange year for the RTPI as it has been for all of us. A year that promised a packed calendar and ambitious plans from our current Chair, Kim Cooper, was turned upside down with the events emerging early in the year.

Under Kim's leadership and with the help of a resilient and stoic group of individuals within the RTPI NW's Management Board and Activities Committees the RTPI NW has weathered the storm well. We have switched many of our meetings and activities over to a digital platform, including our President's Visit, online webinars and even our Annual Awards Ceremony!

We are all grateful to Kim and the team's efforts in continuing the work of the RTPI for helping us survive this year; including recouping funding from our suppliers and returning money our members for cancelled CPD bookings all whilst being able to balance the books. Whilst it definitely isn't the year Kim wanted or expected, her achievements have been no mean feat under the circumstances.

Turning to 2021, none of us know what lies ahead as the world continues to adjust to being in the midst of a global pandemic.

However, as I look forward to my year as Regional Chair, I am full of enthusiasm for the challenges ahead. I see 2021 as a year where we as a region look to find our feet again, building on the new ways of working we have found this year and flourishing in our work regardless of the challenges faced by COVID-19.



Most crucially, I am keen for us as an organisation to recover background lost to the Coronavirus in the level of support and opportunities we offer to our members; something the North West Region has always excelled at!

In 2021, we want to:

- **See the return of a comprehensive calendar of CPD and Social events.** We want to capitalise on our new digital capabilities to offer our members easy access to both nationally run and locally focussed CPD events. We are also working hard to put in place plans to return to in-person events later in the year with a view to returning to our crucial role in connecting our members with each other for learning, business development and social opportunities. Never has the importance of our connections with friends and colleagues been so evident and we as a region are keen to play a role in the return of our profession to making those connections.
- **Diversify our profession and help plan for diversity.** The RTPI has a role in ensuring that our profession, and the RTPI itself comprises a diverse group of people. It is essential that those professionals that are tasked with shaping the way places are made represent the people that we are making those places for. Diversity takes many forms, and the RTPI NW is already working with the BAME Planners Network and establishing a local Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Champion. We continue to work with young planners through our YP Network and through links with our local universities and our Education and Careers Team.

Our commitment to diversity and learning will run through everything we do as a regional body.

- **Expand the support we provide to our members.** It is an encouraging sign that we continue to welcome new members to our Regional Activities Committee for next year. We want to use the strength and enthusiasm of our team to concentrate on the support we provide to our members. We will continue to expend our interaction with members in Local Planning Authorities through our LPA Champions initiative (including provision of help with chartership), work with student members to assist with training, networking and employment opportunities. We look to support the future of our profession and the built environment as a whole through our Education and Careers Team's work with schools and teachers.

I hope that my optimism for this year is reciprocated by you all and I look forward to working with you over the coming year. If you'd like to get involved, or have any ideas on how we can better support you as a profession then please do get in touch – we'd love to hear from you!

Ian Gilbert

RTPI NW Chair 2021

ian.gilbert@BartonWillmore.co.uk

THE NORTH WEST PLANNING YEAR
A REVIEW OF
2020



RTPI North West
Royal Town Planning Institute

Registered Charity Number: 262865
Registered Office Address: RTPI,
41 Botolph Lane, London, EC3R 8DL

Designed by

Varcoe DESIGN