

# plaNIIt

## NI Awards for Planning Excellence 2023 Accounced



*At an event in June at the Ulster Museum the Northern Ireland Awards for Planning Excellence 2023, were announced.*

*Introducing the Awards, RTPI NI Director, Roisin Willmott said: "Awards have an important value in recognising, applauding and publicising planning excellence. We use our Finalists and winners to showcase planning at its best to the public, to other built environment professionals and to share across the profession – to give a helping hand to spreading good practice.*

*Thank you to those who have taken the time to enter the Awards – we appreciate the effort which takes to enter awards and we are sorry we are unable to give everyone an Award. But rest assured, all our Finalists warrant congratulations today.*

*RTPI NI also thanks the judges who put a great deal of time and effort into making difficult decisions.*

*The winners announced today will go on to be judged alongside the other winners from across the UK and Ireland, so look out for the Finalists to be announced in October, and the winners will be announced at a ceremony in London on 21 November.*

## In this Edition

Awards for Planning Excellence	3
Small Consultancy of the Year	4
Young Planner of the Year	5
RTPI Wellbeing Resources	9
RTPI Responds to Dfl Budget	10
Interim Planning Commission	11
The 'social pages'	12

### Editor

#### Roisin Willmott

RTPI Northern Ireland.

Contact Tel: 0207 929 8197

e-mail: [roisin.willmott@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:roisin.willmott@rtpi.org.uk)

The opinions expressed are contributors' own, unless otherwise stated. RTPI NI is not responsible for statements made or views expressed in this Newsletter.

## RTPI NI Executive Committee 2023

<b>Chair:</b>	Catharine McWhirter
<b>Senior Vice Chair:</b>	Chris Bryson
<b>Junior Vice Chair:</b>	Cathy McKeary
<b>Immediate Past Chair:</b>	Mura Quigley
<b>GA* Representative:</b>	Carol Ramsey
<b>Corporate Members:</b>	Emma Aldridge Alistair Beggs Chris Blair Erin Donaldson Diane O'Neill Nick Salt
<b>Student / Licentiate:</b>	Justin McHenry Lisa Curran

Full details of the Committee can be found here: [www.rtpi.org.uk/find-your-rtpi/rtpi-nations/rtpi-northern-ireland/committees/](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/find-your-rtpi/rtpi-nations/rtpi-northern-ireland/committees/)

(\*GA is the RTPI's General Assembly)

# Welcome to the Summer edition

Welcome to the Summer Edition of PlaNIt.

The headlines for us in this edition is the announcement of the RTPI NI Awards for Planning Excellence, which were announced at a lunch at the Ulster Museum in June. Congratulations to all of the shortlisted entries and those that of course went on to win.

The event was also our Welcome Event where we were able to mark the election of our new Chartered Planners in Northern Ireland - an important step in every planner's career.

We don't want you to think we are turning into the social / society pages but we are catching up with our social gatherings in this edition, with two events having taken place in the first half of the year - there are the photos from the recent Awards and Welcome event and also the annual Dinner which was held in March. Thank you to everyone who joined us at these events.

In September, we will be hosting the Northern Ireland Planning Conference in Belfast. This will certainly turn us to more work focused matters where we discuss the important issues of decision making in a plan-led system. Details and how to book can be found in this edition.

The RTPI appreciates that planners across our membership are experiencing pressures and we have developed a whole range of resources to support your mental health and wellbeing - we have a page focused on the links to our website with details.

I trust you will have a good summer and we look forward to seeing you in the autumn.

*Roisin Willmott, Editor*

We were pleased to be able to visit Ulidia College in June to raise the profile of planning as a career to Year 10 students.



9 likes

ulidiacollege Royal Town Planning Institute visit Y10

On 6th June 2023 students in Y10 were visited by Dr Roisin Willmott who is Director of Royal Town Planning Institute. Dr Willmott spoke to Y10 during their assembly about town planning, students learnt about the importance of planning for settlement sustainability and about the skills needed to be a town planner.

Students are learning about settlement planning within their Urban Environments unit of work in Geography and will build on their learning from Dr Willmott to plan solutions to settlement change in their Geography classes.

## Congratulations to our newest Chartered Town Planners



It is with great pleasure we welcome the RTPI's newest Chartered Town Planners in Northern Ireland.

The most recently elected Chartered Town Planners in Northern Ireland are:

- Sophie Burch, Capita Plc
- Patrick Marks, Savills
- Michael Vladeanu, Capita PLC

(Note those more recently being awarded Chartered status will appear in the next edition of PlaNIt).

For further information and to keep updated, please refer to our website: [www.rtpi.org.uk/membership/](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/membership/) The website includes resources to support you make the step to becoming a Chartered Town Planner, including guidance, podcasts, FAQs and dates for briefing events.

## It's time to nominate

For volunteer roles on our Presidential Team,  
Board of Trustees and General Assembly



#RTPIelections

For information on the positions available and how to nominate visit the [RTPI website](http://www.rtpi.org.uk).



# Excellence in Planning for a Successful Economy *Game of Thrones Studio Tour* submitted by *Resolve Planning*

*The Game of Thrones Studio Tour at Linen Mill Studios in Banbridge delivers a world-class tourist attraction in a repurposed former linen mill. The development is the only official Game of Thrones Studio Tour in the world and brings with it significant economic and social benefits. This exciting development includes a series of measures aimed at ensuring compliance with low-carbon and sustainable development objectives including renewable technologies such as high-efficiency heat recovery ventilation, biomass heating, energy management systems and water conservation technology. It also includes a new Park & Ride facility that significantly reduces the reliance on the private car.*

### The Judges' view:

This tourist attraction is of a global scale, yet the careful siting, materials and landscaping treatment is extremely sympathetic and results in a scheme which is sensitive to its rural setting and blends effortlessly into the landscape.

The judges considered it to be a complex project which was delivered to a very high standard. In particular: the re-use of the existing buildings; enhancement of the local environment and habitats; use of renewable, local, heating and power sources; showcasing local talent and expertise in film-making to an international audience; and adding to an already high quality tourism product in Northern Ireland. Climate action and decarbonisation is at the core of the project with a sustainable ethos throughout.

The proactive approach during the pre-planning stage and ongoing engagement during the planning application is to be applauded.



The project has clearly result in a benefit for the local community and economy and reflects a positive re-use of an existing structure, which was well managed through the design and planning application process.



## Excellence in Planning for Heritage and Culture *Enniskillen Workhouse submitted by Fermanagh and Omagh District Council*

*The ‘New Workhouse’ project has sympathetically restored and enhanced the Entrance Block of the former Enniskillen Workhouse, a grade B2 listed building on the BARNI register, to create flexible and dynamic workspaces, and incubation facilities for new businesses with a programme of support to develop high growth potential business ideas, whilst also ensuring the story of the Workhouse is preserved through both educational and tourist visits. During delivery the project also provided a focused Heritage and Education Skills Programme accredited training in the built heritage, helping to ensure the sustainability of our built heritage into the future.*



### **The Judges’ view:**

This is an innovative re-use of an historic building, which integrates economic development and educational uses into heritage, conservation and sustainability principles. It is historically significant, as one of the last remaining work houses in NI, which had been on the Buildings at Risk register for many years.

The project is a good example of a multi-stakeholder project bringing together heritage and restoration with education, training and innovation. The physical, social and cultural interrelationship and integration with the neighbouring FE South West College - itself a passivehaus building - was novel across all levels of the project from energy sharing to physical links and creating and retaining enterprise and skills in the area.





# Northern Ireland Small Planning Consultancy of the Year

## **TSA Planning**

*TSA Planning is one of Northern Ireland's leading independent planning consultancies providing a first class service through an innovative, passionate and professional approach. The 8 strong team, led by Tom Stokes, share a desire to deliver the best results for our client by way of a dynamic, tailored approach. The team have a wealth of experience in all areas of planning consultancy and have acted for residential and commercial property developers, national retailers, financial institutions, healthcare providers and others on planning schemes of varying size, scale and complexity.*



### The Judges' view:

Small planning consultancy businesses are an incredibly important part of the infrastructure in delivering the planning system in Northern Ireland.

TSA Planning has delivered on difficult briefs to a high and professional standard. The judges were impressed with the time and support given to staff development and wellbeing, which is an inspiration, encouraging a loyal and dedicated workforce.



Have you recently changed your job, address, email or phone number? Make sure your details are up to date by going to 'Login' on the RTPI website so we can stay in contact.

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

# Northern Ireland Young Planner of the Year

## Emma Aldridge



*Emma has worked across the various planning systems within the UK and Ireland, building on her knowledge of the planning systems and legislation. She uses this knowledge to actively try to make the planning process easier to navigate for those working within it and easier to understand for those trying to engage with it. She enjoys helping young planners at the early stages of their career and assist with their journey to RTPI membership. She has a passion for promoting the planning profession to students and helping them to gain a better understanding of the roles and routes into planning.*

### The Judges' view:

Emma is energetic and enthusiastic. She has taken every opportunity to be involved in planning projects both through her work and through volunteering, which has helped to broaden her knowledge and understanding of planning policy. She is a true role model for other planners old and young!



## RTPI NI Policy and Research Forum visits new transport hub

In June, members of the RTPI NI Policy and Research Forum toured the new Belfast Grand Central Station. Thank you to Arup for organising, Translink and their delivery partners for hosting us and to Juno for joining us to share their knowledge too.





RTPI Northern Ireland

## Northern Ireland Planning Conference

# Embracing the plan-led system in Northern Ireland

Wednesday 6th September 2023, Europa, Belfast

Several Local Development Plans have now proceeded through independent examination and are progressing towards adoption. Once these plans are adopted, it will represent a radical change to decision-making in the planning context and it is important that understanding of the changes are understood widely.

This years Conference offers the opportunity to explore this and push forward the positive approach to planning expected by the Public Accounts Committee and NI Audit Office in their 2022 reports.

Join us for a day packed with experiences, information sharing, best practice, top tips and of course many opportunities for discussion and networking.

Prices start at £50+VAT for RTPI Student, Licentiate, Unemployed members; £90+VAT for RTPI members and £115+VAT for non-members.

4 for 3 package available - Book 3 places and get a 4th free (cheapest place free) *\*terms and conditions apply*

[Book now](#)

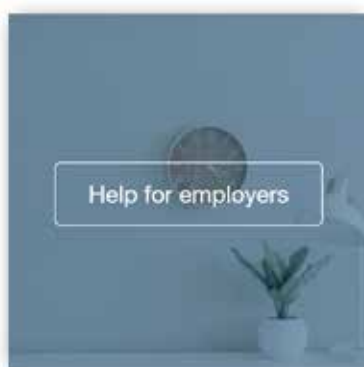


Francis Taylor Building



## Introducing the RTPI's mental health and wellbeing hub

The RTPI has a mental health and wellbeing hub on our website. Whether you're an individual or employer looking for ideas about where to go for help around mental health and wellbeing, or if you're interested in what the RTPI are doing to raise awareness around these important topics the hub is worth a visit. Click on the icons below to find out more on the wealth of information available, including the free (for RTPI members) 24/7 365 confidential helpline.



## RTPI NI Responds to DfI equality consultation on budget decisions

The Department for Infrastructure (DfI) has recently consulted on the potential equality implications of their budget allocation, including the following (seemingly impossible) decisions in response to budgetary constraints in the context of not having a functioning Executive at Stormont:

- Reduction of essential road maintenance to emergency response only;
- Streetlights are switched off;
- Reduction to Concessionary Fares Scheme;
- Community transport not funded beyond 30 June; and
- Ceasing funding for Community Places.

Many, if not all, of these needs are vital, and reducing or removing funding would have a disproportionate effect on the most vulnerable groups. For instance, ceasing or reducing funding for Community Places would likely mean an end to the only free independent planning advice service available in Northern Ireland, having a disproportionate impact on marginalised individuals and their ability to participate in the planning system, navigating what are often complex and technical planning processes.

Significantly reducing/ceasing funding for community transport would have a disproportionate impact on older people, people with disabilities, and parents/guardians/carers, who rely on community transport to access essential goods and services which they would not be able to otherwise due to their lack of access to private transport and other barriers such as neurodiverse needs or mobility difficulties.

Reduction or cessation of wastewater treatment could have a hugely detrimental impact on our natural environment, contaminating and destroying natural habitats, harming ecosystems, and causing dangers to public health.

Evidence shows that larger settlements, with higher densities and mixed land use, can increase levels of self-containment, bring efficiencies with infrastructure such as water and road infrastructure provision, reduce the need to travel long distances to access amenities such as schools and shops, enable more cost-effective public transport provision (which reduces the need to travel by car and the concomitant emissions), and can encourage continued physical activity, economic participation and social interaction for an ageing population. Therefore, cost savings, physical wellbeing, and climate resilience, can all be impacted by the settlement patterns which are approved through planning. The planning system has a vital role to play in the economic and sustainable development of Northern Ireland.

RTPI NI has urged DfI to consider an approach to budget setting which encourages long term sustainable behaviours and works towards the aims of the Climate Act 2022, albeit we appreciate DfI faces severe budgetary constraints and difficult decision making. Consideration should be given to the more strategic view, of the location of development and the infrastructure that is required to support it.

The consultation can be found [here](#).

**RTPI NI's consultation responses and evidence given can be found on the [RTPI's website](#).**

## Interim Regional Planning Commission

A key recommendation of the Public Accounts Committee report on Planning in Northern Ireland (March 2022) was that a Regional Planning Commission be established. Prior to leaving office in September 2022, the former Infrastructure Minister approved the establishment of an independently chaired voluntary Regional Planning Commission.

The Department for Infrastructure has established now an interim Regional Planning Commission which is independent of the Department and has an advisory role. The interim Commission has been tasked to constructively review, identify improvements, and promote further accountability in planning in Northern Ireland. Their work will compliment a wider Planning Improvement work programme currently being progressed by the Department in collaboration with local government and stakeholders.

Membership of the interim Regional Planning Commission has been designed to reflect key stakeholder interests across the community; economic and environmental sectors. The interim Commission will be chaired by Rosemary Thomas a former Chief Planner for Wales.

The Royal Town Planning Institute in Northern Ireland (RTPI NI) is pleased to have taken on the secretariat role for the Commission.

The interim Regional Planning Commission will be subject to review upon return to office of an Infrastructure Minister or within 6 months of its establishment, whichever is the sooner.

Further details can be found on the [DfI website](#).



Above from the first meeting of the Commission in February 2023 -

**back row** (from left to right): Aidan Campbell (Rural Community Network), Louise O’Kane (Community Places), Kathryn McFerran (DfI - Observer), Claire Sullivan (CBI), Michelle Hill (NI Environment Link), and Stuart Anderson (NI Chamber of Commerce).

**front row** (from left to right): Roisin Willmott (RTPI NI - Secretariat), Kate Bentley (Heads of Planning - Observer), Rosemary Thomas, Chair, Julie Harrison (Department for Infrastructure).

# Northern Ireland Awards for Planning Excellence and Welcome Event June 2023





# RTPI NI Annual Dinner, March 2023



