



Contents

- Message from the Chair
- Editor's Blog
- Living with Dementia by Wendy Mitchell
- Dementia Friendly Planning & Design
- Talking Ageing & Dementia
- Development affecting Railway Level Crossings Devon, Cornwall & Somerset YP
- RTPI South East Young Planner of the Year
- Meet the SW Planning Aid England task group
- Planning Aid England
- RMB/RAC Updates
- Getting to know you - Stephen Essex
- Branchout review, 40, 30, 20 & 10 years ago!
- Class Q appeal decision letters from 2020
- Self-build and custom housebuilding
- Biodiversity net gain
- Developers perspective
- Q&A on Biodiversity Net Gain
- Nash Partnership African Projects Summary
- Forthcoming events



RTPI South West
Royal Town Planning Institute

www.rtpi.org.uk/southwest

BRANCHOUT **NEWS**

No 183

SPRING 2021

Picture
Clifton Suspension Bridge

Message from the Chair

Hello all!

Welcome to the first edition of Branchout 2021 and to hopefully what will be a much brighter year for us all.

As incoming Chair for this year I have a number of ambitions that I hope to achieve, as well as inspire others to think about the positive impact we can all have on people's lives in more ways than one. As planners, we have the ability to shape the world around us, and create a built environment that is accessible to all, thereby allowing everyone to enjoy their life to the full.

This leads me on to my chosen theme for this year, which is health and wellbeing. Following the global pandemic and its ongoing impact it was sheer coincidence that the timing of my theme is very apt; as there are so many of us that have been affected by the pandemic in many different ways. Some of us have faced isolation, whilst others have had to balance working around the clock whilst home schooling. All of this has taken its toll on our mental health as well as those who have sadly been physically affected by the virus.

Being Chair this year is particularly rewarding to me, as it is something I have wanted to do since beginning my career as a planner. The story of which started after being a carer for my elderly nan and understanding just how difficult it was to push a wheelchair down a street when the environment made it so difficult to do so - for example, the lack of dropped kerbs! This early stage of my life gave me a real insight into how the built environment can restrict so many of us from accessing it, and it was thereon that my passion for wanting to make a change to the world around us began.

As Chair, I hope to inspire others to make this difference, and to think more about the slight changes that can be made to development proposals to ensure that they are inclusive.

Whilst our CPD continues to be delivered via online webinars, there are indeed a number of positives that this brings. Many more people have been able to access the events more easily given that there has been less travel, which excitingly means that we are able to reach more people. This has also reduced our carbon footprint, with less people having to travel around the region to attend events. The only negative side of course is the inability to network and meet new people, which we hope is something that we will soon be able to do again. As a means to try and overcome this in the meantime, as Chair, I will be hosting online lunch discussions around different topics of interest on a monthly basis, with details of these coming out shortly.

Following the key theme, the forthcoming CPD programme seeks to focus on topics such as building for dementia and other impairments, learning post 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic and the importance of open space. There is a rather different CPD event lined up for early summer, which will look at the NHS and our role as planners within the healthcare system. We will also be looking at the importance of walkable neighbourhoods - what benefits they bring and the impact they have on mental as well as physical health.

As Chair, I have introduced a slight change to the CPD events this year. In an attempt to make the CPD events more 'real' we have brought in personal stories from members of the public in order that we can get a real understanding of how planning can make a real difference to their lives. On the 11th February I chaired my first webinar of 2021 on Planning for Inclusivity with personal accounts of people living with dementia or a neurodivergent condition and how the design of the built environment affects their ability to navigate. Please do watch the webinar at <https://youtu.be/HRR8PWKAgiM> and be inspired!



Angharad Williams
RTPI South West Chair 2021

Whilst we remain in a lockdown situation at present, we must not forget how far we have all come and how much progress we have made. We should never lose sight of how adaptable we all are to change, but also the great things we can achieve when we work together.

This year may challenge us again in ways we never thought it could, but keep going, keep talking and seek to inspire. I look forward to the year ahead and the great things we can accomplish together.

Editor's blog

Welcome to the first issue of Branchout 2021 and my first issue as your editor for the year. I follow on from Julie O'Rourke who was Junior Vice Chair and editor last year and now moves on to her new duties as Senior Vice Chair; thank you for your work on Branchout and all the best for your year ahead. This isn't an Oscar speech but I do have a few other mentions if you would indulge me.

I'd like to continue by thanking Dawn de Vries, our outgoing Chair for her hard work in what has been a turbulent year for everyone, and she did a wonderful job in very difficult circumstances. Whilst you may feel like Phil Connors in Groundhog Day waking up to the same day over and over again at the moment, things do change and it will get better. For us, one of those changes is our new Chair for the year; welcome to Angharad Williams. If you have been reading this issue start to finish you will have already read her message, if you haven't then have a quick read then meet me back here. I've known Angharad both professionally and personally for many years and it's great to see her being able to spread more widely her passion for making better, more accessible places for all. I wish you all the success in inspiring others and making those positive changes you dream of.

The running theme of health and wellbeing for this year, which will be seen in Branchout and at our CPD events, has come at a time when the world has faced challenges never before seen. Almost everyone across the planet has been affected by the global pandemic in some way, be it through personally suffering the virus or supporting someone they know who has; the sad loss of loved ones; the upheaval of home schooling whilst adjusting to working from home; the loss of work; the pressure put on those in key roles; isolation and loneliness; or, just that feeling of déjà vu each day and a loss of hope. Many of these issues have affected health, and in particular mental health.

In line with Angharad's health theme we open with two articles which consider dementia; the first by Wendy Mitchell who tells us about living with dementia and the challenges she faces on a day to day basis in the world around her. This is followed by commentary on dementia friendly planning and design by Claire Puckey of Plymouth City Council who offers an insight into what can be done to make our places more accessible for those living with dementia.

Our Young Planners then take us on a different journey, by rail, to consider developments affecting railway level crossings and also give us an insight into how the pandemic has affected some Young Planners. We even have a short piece on a Young Planner from the South East region, an alumnus of the University of Plymouth, who has gone on to become RTPI Young Planner of the Year in the South East. Speaking of the University of Plymouth, Dr Stephen Essex of the University tells us about his journey in planning and where his research has taken him.

If you want to give something back using your skills look no further than Planning Aid. Meet the South West Planning Aid Task Group, find out about what they do and perhaps be inspired to join them.

Feeling nostalgic? Travel back in time with Mike Oakley to look at Branchout articles and conferences past; interesting to see some messages and issues which we continue to tackle to this day. When you have finished reminiscing about the "good old days" you can return back to the present to consider something possibly unthinkable 40 years ago in a world of Development Control; the conversion of agricultural buildings to dwellings under permitted development. Graham Gover gives us a roundup of ten Class Q appeal decision letters which will be of interest to those planners who are looking for the latest on a subject that has become increasingly complicated and open to interpretation.

Three Dragons present to us a piece on self and custom building following the updates in the Planning Practice Guidance and also highlight what they consider to be omissions from that guidance.

We get close to the end of this packed issue of Branchout with two pieces on Biodiversity Net Gain as well as a Q&A. This is a hot topic and one which brings with it its own challenges.

Finally, if that wasn't enough already, we close this issue with an international piece by the Nash Partnership on their Africa based projects including the Jigawa Energy City Project in Nigeria, an energy led Masterplan which makes for an interesting read and project updates in Mozambique and Ghana.

I hope you enjoy the content as much as I did and if there is anything you would like to see covered in future or you have a piece you would like to contribute please get in touch via the email address in the bubble.

Until our next issue, stay safe and look after yourself and those around. Oh, and don't forget to sign up for our CPD webinars which remain free for Members. Be seeing you.



Ian Perry
RTPI South West
Junior Vice Chair

Living with Dementia

I was diagnosed with dementia on July 31st 2014, I may not have much of a short term memory anymore but that's one date I never forget as it changed my life. At the time I was living happily alone in York and in full time work in the NHS. Naively I thought services would kick in to help and advise me both financially and emotionally. I had a mortgage, I lived alone yet there was no help out there.

After sinking into depression and feeling abandoned by the non-existent services, I began to realise that the only person who was going to help me was me. I was forced into early retirement and in a catch-22 situation. I had to sell my house and move to a cheaper area where I could buy a house outright as no one was going to give me a mortgage or allow me to keep my current one. I was forced to move from what I thought was my forever home in York to a quieter village in East Yorkshire, but I knew I had to future proof any house I moved into as rarely is the design dementia appropriate, even with new builds.

Dementia isn't just about memory – so many of our other senses can be affected as well. One of the first to be affected with me was my hearing. Loud noises physically hurt my ears. Audiologists are now starting to realise that many people with dementia have hyperacusis, something in common with children with autism. It simply means a sensitivity to certain tones of noise. But many of our high street stores play music to distract; restaurants playing music to add atmosphere. For people with dementia this can simply lead to sensory overload and make venturing out confusing and isolating. If I do go into a restaurant or a café where music is being played, I simply ask if there's a quiet corner away from the speakers or to turn the music down- most have never thought about the confusion it may cause and are happy to oblige.

Me and my daughters didn't realise at the time that I wasn't capable of choosing an appropriate house. I'd always relished moving in the past and taken on projects and done all the work myself. Suddenly I chose a house because of the big picture window that overlooked an old paddock, ignoring the 2 gardens to maintain, the steps up to the front door and at the back of the house, the 3 bedrooms I didn't need. But we are where we are and now I adapt it as dementia throws challenges at me.



Wendy Mitchell

Author of Sunday Times Best Seller:
Somebody I Used to Know - Published in the UK by Bloomsbury

Now proud and humbled to be DrDr from Hull and Bradford Universities

Please feel free to read my blog on living with dementia:

www.whichmeamitoday.wordpress.com

When I did move, I hadn't appreciated how hard it would be to get use to a new house and learning where I lived. I live in a row of 4 identical houses so I had to find a way to make mine immediately different. So I put a forget-me-not tile on each side of my door, and now I know exactly which is mine. Once I settled in, I decided to widen the path, as the narrowness of mine and the others meant I kept falling off the edge into the garden. When the men came to do it, I asked if they could put different coloured bricks a few inches away from the edge to make a straight walkway for me to follow away from that edge. So simple for them to do, but it made it so much easier for me.

The street itself is relatively easy to find. The sign right on the corner sits on the wall, not high up so I miss it. But also my community know me. If I get disorientated or confused, I know I can ask anyone the way back to my home and they'll help me.

On the steps leading up to the house and up to the back garden I painted luminous stripes as I kept falling up and down them because the edges weren't clearly marked.

But I can fully appreciate how people get confused and anxious when they move to a care home, nothing familiar anymore, layouts strange and things not as they were.

Living with Dementia cont...

I have a tiny kitchen but when I moved in it had 2 doors which used to confuse the hell out of me as I couldn't remember where the doors led to so I would spend ages walking round in circles. My solution was simply to remove the doors - I can now see exactly where each exit leads now without getting confused. Doors are often a problem for people with dementia. Some prefer them closed to feel safe others prefer them open, everyone's different, adaptability being key.

I don't see the kitchen cupboards or wardrobes in my bedroom - they just blend into the walls so I just forget there's stuff behind the doors. When I first moved in my daughters would ask me why I was wearing the same clothes each day and I said I thought I couldn't have unpacked all my clothes as I couldn't find them - but it was because I couldn't see the wardrobe doors so forgot they were there. Many people said I should have see-through cupboards, but not only are these expensive, they also look chaotic if you don't keep them mega tidy - and glass often looks like there's nothing there. So my solution was to take a photograph of the contents of the cupboards and wardrobes and stick them on the doors - the photos attract my attention and remind me that they have things inside. Simple yet effective solutions.

Colour and contrast is so important for many people with dementia. The easiest way to see if a room or area is dementia appropriate is to take a black and white photo and if the contrast in the shades of greys, black and white are marked you've probably got it right. When I was deciding on colour I would spend hours with samples, taking black and white photos to check the contrast was good.

Vision is often affected in some people - their eyes see but their brain doesn't interpret the information immediately. So stairs should have a visible edge; signage should be simple, clear and at eye level. Toilets clearly sign posted in all areas, simple yet often forgotten. My local town centre has circles on the pavement from the rail station to the shops and back again - simple yet effective solutions.

Common environments, such as shopping centres and hospitals, to name two, are often designed with aesthetics in mind - does it look good? There's a prestigious shopping centre in Leeds that has wonderful shops, but the floor is shiny and shades of black... making it look like moving water to me. The only way I can walk on the floor is to look up to the ceiling and hold someone's arm. Such designs may look wonderful but the effect for people with dementia can be disastrous.

My local community hospital asked me to look round once it was complete and give my feedback... the resulting report would have cost them over a million pounds to put right the wrongs.

Designers need to ask people who are going to use facilities to be involved at the design stage not after the event when it's too late to avoid wasting the very resource which may be in short supply... money.



Dementia Friendly Planning and Design

Dementia Friendly Planning and Design

I have coordinated the Dementia Friendly City initiative for Plymouth City Council and the Plymouth Dementia Action Alliance (PDAA) since December 2014. The PDAA formed in 2011 as a partnership between Plymouth University and the Council. It has a diverse membership base from a wide variety of sectors including care, health, emergency services, legal, financial, education, transport, faith, community and voluntary, local authority, retail, leisure etc. with everyone working together to improve the lives of local people living with and affected by dementia.

My work is multi-faceted and I don't come from a planning background but one aspect of my role involves supporting organisations to conduct a dementia friendly assessment of their premises (inside and outside). Through this, I make them aware of any issues that may potentially cause problems for people living with dementia of which there are many e.g. shiny, reflective floor surfaces looking wet and slippery like water or dark floors/mats/patches of flooring looking like black holes, just to name two. I also give them suggestions for changes they might consider making to ensure their environment is easier for people with dementia to negotiate.

Why the built environment is important to people living with Dementia

The environment can make a huge difference to the quality of people's lives and I'd say that is a given for everyone really. For people living with dementia though, some places can be potentially frightening and bewildering and they can sometimes feel like they are in a foreign country where they don't understand the language.

If surroundings are poorly designed, unfamiliar and overcrowded or there's too much noise/excessive bright light/clutter this can all lead to stress that can exacerbate symptoms e.g. people can experience frustration, anxiety, spatial disorientation and embarrassment. If buildings and places are designed well and are dementia friendly on the other hand, over the past thirty years, a growing body of research evidence has shown that this has a lot of positive effects. For example, it can support a person's emotional wellbeing, reduce disorientation, agitation, anxiety and confusion. It also supports wayfinding and enables people to stay independent and in their own homes for longer whilst reducing the likelihood of falls and so forth. If people are enabled to remain in their own homes for longer, in a financial sense this can lead to less pressure on the health and social care purse too. Additionally, if the environment is right for people with dementia, this will benefit a lot of other groups of people with varying abilities and disabilities too.

Whilst it is important to note that dementia affects people of all ages (currently over 42,000 people under the age of 65 are living with it in the UK), it is mainly diagnosed in those over the age of 65 (currently this is over 850,000 people across the UK with that figure predicted to increase to over 1 million by 2025). Normal ageing impacts the senses i.e. older people are likely to have poorer eyesight and hearing which can be worsened by the visual and spatial perceptual distortions that can be part of some people's dementia. So, poorly designed environments can be further disabling.

Everyone experiences dementia differently but it is likely that many will experience increased distress and disorientation linked to their surroundings. Most people living with dementia want to remain living at home so the built environment and ensuring it is designed to enable this really matters.



Claire Puckey

Dementia Friendly City Coordinator,
Plymouth City Council

Dementia Friendly Planning and Design cont...

Dementia friendly environments - examples from Plymouth

Dementia Friendly Car Parks

These arose after Ian Sherriff (PDAA Chair) and I did an assessment of two multi-storey city centre car parks and I consulted with a local carer's group regarding some proposed signage changes and suggestions for anything else that would improve access for them. I then worked with Plymouth City Council's parking team manager to create the first pilot dementia friendly parking bays in the two car parks, advising on how they should look and where they should be located. They needed to be clearly labelled and at entry level, close to the ticket machines, pedestrian walkways and exits. Very positive feedback was received from local carers and subsequently, a designated space was allocated in the new coach station and in a further four car parks across the city (Making a total of seven).

The photo below left is one of two of the initial pilot dementia friendly spaces in Western Approach Car Park (A further 2 pilot spaces were introduced at the same time in Theatre Royal Car Park, both in Plymouth City Centre).



The ripple effect is that a variety of other organisations and areas in the UK have now emulated this work, positively impacting and helping to support people living with dementia and their carers in their communities.

Dementia Friendly Toilets

Several years ago I worked with Plymouth City Council's facilities management and print and design teams to conduct dementia friendly assessments on several public toilets across Plymouth and to produce new signage for them. Again, I explained what current difficulties could be experienced by people with dementia in using the facilities and made recommendations for signage changes which were implemented. Perhaps not very glamorous but incredibly important nonetheless, especially as most of the toilets are of modern design and therefore fixtures and fittings may be unfamiliar, especially to older people living with dementia. Overly modern fittings may mean that there can be confusion and a delay in using the toilet facilities which can then lead to distress and incontinence. For me, neither of these things are acceptable when they can be easily avoided with the right design and installation of clear dementia friendly signage.

Similarly, I carried out the same process with our public libraries and our First Stop Shop office (accessed by the public) in city centre.

This photo shows dementia friendly signage in the interior of one of the city centre public toilets.



The photo above showing dementia friendly signage on the front of the door to one of the city centre public toilets.



Dementia Friendly Planning and Design cont...

Dementia Friendly Planning

The director of Strategic Planning and Infrastructure at Plymouth City Council is supportive of the dementia friendly approach. My work in partnership with the planning team is longstanding and has included, for example:

- Designing and delivering a bespoke training session for planning officers.
- When requested, giving advice and guidance on some local building developments to officers.
- Being included in the weekly planning applications list circulation so that I can raise any dementia friendly issues with the responsible case officer directly.
- The Plymouth and South West Devon Supplementary Planning Document was adopted across Plymouth, South West Devon and South Hams in July 2020.

This provides guidance for developers and residents who are seeking planning permission. Plymouth City Council's planning team worked incredibly hard on this for a long time and I supported them by providing dementia-related content.

The document now explicitly states that good practice guidance should be considered when designing a new development proposal, to ensure accessibility e.g. RTP1 Guidance on Dementia and Town Planning.

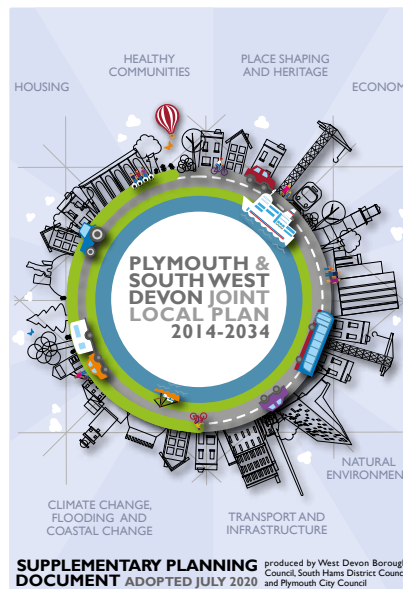
It also includes in the section regarding parking for motorists with disabilities that the provision for dementia-friendly car parking should also be considered and it details clearly how this should look with specifics about signage whilst also stating that car park attendants should be trained on how to deal with people with dementia and their carers. This is a significant step forward in making environments more dementia friendly.

With rising numbers of people of all ages being diagnosed, it is absolutely imperative that planning and design has dementia friendly considerations built in as a matter of course. You can make a real difference to the quality of people's lives who are affected by dementia, making places and buildings more accessible and easier to negotiate by including dementia friendly design considerations in all of your planning decisions.

Help by spreading the word and encouraging other planning colleagues and organisations to become dementia friendly, involving people with dementia and their carers in your planning (they are the experts so this is vital) and by accessing further training as it is important that you have a good knowledge and understanding of dementia and the myriad of ways it affects people in order to be able to plan to create the right supportive environments. Details of relevant specific training courses alongside other helpful dementia friendly design reports, documents and information are available in a resource list I have compiled.

Please contact me at:

claire.puckey@plymouth.gov.uk
if you would like a copy.



www.plymouth.gov.uk/sites/default/files/JLPSPD2020FINALred.pdf

Talking Ageing and Dementia: A Planning Poem

I often forget the bus number
That I need to get to town
And if I do get there,
I struggle to get around.

There's lots of stalls and seats,
Bins and bollards in my way;
The sign posts are so small
That I can't read what they say.

I used to know these streets
And every single shop and name,
But every week it changes and
All the buildings look the same.

My bus route home changed too,
And that really confused me -
I thought it was a 72
But now it's a 73!

I got shouted at today
As I wandered down the street;
Apparently there's a cycle lane
Sitting right beneath my feet!

I don't know when that happened,
Or even how I'd know -
No one ever told me
And the lines don't really show.

Did I say already,
That I don't like going to town?
With all the cluttered streets,
It's hard to get around.

By Jadine Havill

Senior Planner at Turley and Member of RTP1 SW Activities Committee

Development affecting Railway Level Crossings

There are around 6,000 crossings on the rail network, which is in general terms an intersection where a railway line crosses a road or path. As an organisation, Network Rail is committed to reducing risks to passengers, workforce and members of the public wherever possible. Level crossings represent a significant risk on the railway, often dependent on humans performing reliably and behaving responsibly.

Recent media examples have shown how irresponsible members of the public can behave on level crossings, with examples of photoshoots on the railway line from weddings and TikTok videos. This is not only extremely dangerous, but trespassing on railway lines is against the law. Therefore, Network Rail are committed to continually seek for solutions that eliminate or reduce any risk. When development is close to the railway, it is strongly advised that applicants/developers seek the advice of Network Rail who are a statutory consultee for any development within 10 metres of the relevant railway land. This includes any development likely to increase in the volume or material change in the character of traffic using a level crossing over a railway.

Residential development has the greatest potential to change the character of use of a level crossing, both from individual development proposals, and through cumulative impact over time.

In the same way that a developer or local authority would consult with the Environment Agency when in an area at risk of flooding or if there was a main river running through a site, Network Rail would encourage this same practice when development is close to a railway.

Time and time again Network Rail are consulted on planning applications which may well lead to an increase in the use of a level crossing but without any assessment included within the Transport Assessment. It is then impossible for our Level Crossing team to fully consider the impacts of a development without any detailed information, which will in turn delay the decision-making process.

Should you wish to discuss future developments and the possible impact on the railway network, or require further information please contact myself or Network Rail TownPlanningWestern@networkrail.co.uk



CASE STUDY

Impact of development on a Level Crossing

The Secretary of State has previously dismissed an appeal against a decision of Wycombe District Council for an outline planning application with all matters reserved for “380 - 400 dwellings, up to a maximum of 896 sqm of Class B1(a), up to a maximum of 224 sqm of Class A1 (Shops) and/or Class A2 (Financial and Professional Services) and/or Class A3 (Restaurants and cafés) and up to 13.5 hectares of public open space comprising 2 tennis courts, 2 Multi Use Games Areas, 5 Local Areas for Play, 2 Local Equipped Areas of Play, 1 Neighbourhood Equipped Area of Play, 2 playing pitches, sports pavilion up to a maximum of 169 sqm, floodlighting, community woodland, orchard and allotments” (appeal reference: 2154070). The appeal considered various options for the unmanned pedestrian railway crossings which would have provided the new residents access to the town, the options included closure of existing railway crossings due to safety, retaining existing crossings, an underpass or a new bridge across the railway. However, the Planning Inspectorate stated that: “Erring on the side of safety would indicate the need to close the railway crossings and in addition to bringing about a severance of a direct route to the town for new residents, would seriously reduce the connection with the countryside for existing residents and visitors and would harm tourism and leisure opportunities. The merits of the alternative route and its bus service are insufficient to overcome this actual loss and the lost opportunity for a truly integrated, sustainable and inclusive form of development”.

Development affecting Railway Level Crossings cont...

The Secretary of State shared the Inspector's view that "even with the crossings retained, the resulting development would risk not achieving the aims in CS policies CS6 and CS20 and that the closure of the crossings would make the failure on those counts that bit more acute".

The appeal was therefore dismissed due to the overall impact on the level crossing and failing to demonstrate that safe, convenient access on foot could be achieved across the railway line.

Future events:

2021 event ideas and suggestions:

The West of England Young Planners are looking to host a number of CPD events throughout 2021, if any of our members have any ideas for online events for the next year or would like to present a topic, we would love to hear from you.

Please get in touch with us via southwest@rtpi.org.uk or contact any Steering Group members.



Emily Johnson
Town Planner at Network Rail
Chair of West of England Young Planners

South West Young Planners Round Up

Devon, Cornwall & Somerset Young Planners (DCSYP)

Reflections of COVID-19

Unfortunately, due to the current pandemic DCSYP have not held any further events following our Historic Environment Webinar in the summer. However, the Steering Group continue to communicate behind the scenes to both support one another and discuss potential ideas for any future events once restrictions lift. In the meantime, Keegan (Chair) and Opani (V-Chair) had the opportunity to present to and speak with students (future planners) at the University of Plymouth. Both were pleased to see the keen interest students have taken in the subject.

Aside from Young Planner (YP) activities the group has experienced a number of ups and downs, being planners during this COVID-19 pandemic. Across the board we have had to deal with furlough, a change-of-job and working from a less-than-convenient home-space. Now well into the third lock-down in England we've had a chance to reflect on these experiences and share some of our thoughts here. In our first story, one member recalls handing in their notice from their local authority job in mid-January 2020. It seemed like a sensible step in their planning career. At that time, COVID19 seemed worlds away, with the topic barely making the news. What followed was a number of very uncertain months whilst they worked their notice period from home, not sure whether their new role would still be there at the end. There was definitely no chance for a leaving-do, that was for sure!

Luckily, after this period of uncertainty, this particular Steering Group member was able to start their new role, and became busier than ever. It would seem the "Get Britain Building" ethos resonated through the development sector with planning projects of all scales and sizes being enquired into.

The second lockdown sought to see as many work from home if reasonably possible. As they currently live in a shared house with three others, each dealing with their own job-situations, and, with the office largely vacant, it was determined that they could continue to use the office, taking the necessary precautions, enabling them to cling on to some normality.

Meanwhile, another member recalls feeling slightly poorly on a Friday in the middle of March. With the news of COVID-19 slowly starting to make headlines in the news, they stayed at home that day, just as a precaution. While it turned out to be no more than a seasonal cold, they would then not return to the office until well past the first lockdown. Their company jumped into action to support employees with the various equipment they required and their manager safely delivered items from the office so that they could continue working from home, along with sanitary products to keep the home work-space clean. In terms of workloads, while there was an initial moment of worry, similar to the first steering group member, this member felt busier than ever.

However, while they felt completely supported by their company, they were living as a lodger in someone's home. Their landlord was also working from home, and it left them feeling penned into the four walls of their bedroom. This Steering Group member recalls with some despair that they would open their eyes in the morning staring directly at their workspace and files. The room would become a space where they ate, slept, worked, exercised and lounged for those first 3-months. On-line conference calls became the norm, which often meant angling the computer awkwardly so that attendees would not see their bed or the open-style closet. They were thankful when the "blur-background" feature came in.



South West Young Planners Round Up

They used the first opportunity they could to move out of this particular situation, and now live in a space which allows for a little more flexibility. Thankfully, shortly after, the company allowed them to come into the office a few days a week, taking the necessary precautions. They still experience various stresses such as the drop in internet signal but finds that every day brings its challenges.

Unlike the first two Young Planners, this next Steering Group member was furloughed for over 5 months. They initially found it difficult adjusting to not working, and while it seemed that their job would be secure, everything still felt uncertain given the pandemic. Thankfully however, they were called back. That said, coming back from furlough into a high pressure environment, with lots of project deadlines, was extremely stressful. Mostly because of how much they had to catch up on, but also because they were out of practice for so long and had to refamiliarize themselves with various processes. Their company has an employee support program which they found to be a massive help with their mental health when they returned. Having this support allowed them to stay focussed on projects and maintain their momentum.

Overall, while we, like many across the nation, experienced a few uncertain months, we count ourselves fortunate both professionally and personally, as we have avoided any of the more severe effects of the pandemic. Engaging with DCSYP even on an irregular basis has helped us to stay engaged in the planning world outside of work.

For now, we continue to long for the days we can meet up again with a pint, some good food and networking without a screen or mask at a YP social.



Forthcoming events:

With the RTPI now hosting a full schedule of online CPD events, the Devon, Cornwall and Somerset group will now be focusing their efforts on physical events so that they can hit the ground running once restrictions are lifted.

The group continues to operate with 4 members but is open to welcoming new people to join.

If you are interested, please contact Keegan (keegan@avalonplanning.co.uk) or Opani (opanimudalige@lrmpplanning.com) for further information.

Find out more
www.rtpi.org.uk/swyp

West of England, Dorset and Gloucestershire Young Planners are all still active groups and look forward to sharing new events with you in due course.

Plymouth graduate is RTPI Young Planner of the Year in South East England

Daniel Young, who graduated with BSc (Hons) Geography (2014) and MSc Planning (2017) degrees from the University of Plymouth, has won the Royal Town Planning Institute's Young Planner of the Year Award for the South East of England in 2020. He is currently a Senior Planning (Policy) Officer with Portsmouth City Council and faced tough competition for the award from planners in the private sector.

The judges were impressed with his enthusiastic commitment to the natural environment and with his Master's dissertation on how coastal local authorities are responding to climate change, which has been published in the Journal of Environmental Planning and Management. They wished him every success in taking these interests forward and felt that he has a bright future ahead of him in town planning. Daniel now goes forward to be considered for the National Young Planner of the Year Award.



Daniel said

It was a great honour to receive this award from the RTPI. Planners have a vital role to play in creating healthy, sustainable places for all and I am excited to be in a position to be able to champion the benefits that the profession can bring to addressing the challenges we face today and in the future”.

Further information is available [here](#)

Meet the South West Planning Aid England task group!

The South West task group originally formed in 2016, when Planning Aid England (PAE) created task groups to organise and deliver activities in the regions. Since then the South West task group have worked with University of Plymouth, Plymouth City Council and Plymouth Octopus Partnership to help deliver activities in the South West. The task group are always looking for opportunities for outreach projects, so please get in touch if you had any suggestions.

Please meet your volunteer task group, who explain why they volunteer for Planning Aid and also give a tip for wellbeing as this year's theme in the South West.



Katie Graham

I originally volunteered for PAE about 12 years ago, when I was working towards my APC and wanted more community engagement experience. This led me to help deliver neighbourhood plan workshops and when the opportunity came up to join a task group and become more involved, this really interested me. Volunteering for PAE helps me to remember that there are those who may not be able to afford or access planning support. By joining the task group I have worked with other organisations such as University of Plymouth, I've met with fellow volunteers from across the country and it has led to my joining of the RTPI Regional Activities Committees. In my day job I am planning officer for Strategic Developments in Plymouth, recently including the train station, Civic Centre, Millbay, The Box and Royal William Yard.

Tip for wellbeing: At Plymouth City Council I am a trained wellbeing champion. This role has opened my eyes to the need to support those with mental health issues and the need to look after your wellbeing. I have learnt so much over the last few years and it is now a topic I'm really passionate about. My one tip that has been consistent with me since training is the 5 ways to wellbeing:

Connection, Learning, Being Active, Noticing, Giving.
More info can be found here:
www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work/taking-care-of-yourself/five-ways-to-wellbeing/
www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/improve-mental-wellbeing/



Jo Widdecombe

My name is Jo and I've been with Planning Aid for circa 15 years now. So why have I stuck with it for so long? Well, the people I have met along the way and the opportunities to see and influence 'planning and place making' from different perspectives. Opportunities for CPD and networking being invaluable and thanks from communities and individuals we have supported, so rewarding.

2021 and beyond, well...I'm not sure what challenges and opportunities we, as professionals, individuals, communities and parents are going to have to face, but one thing is for sure...don't underestimate the importance of friendship and laughter in carrying us all forward - which is my tip for health and wellbeing. Oh, and not forgetting the all-important nice cake once in a while!



Dawn de Vries

I am Dawn and I am a Chartered Planner, a Principal Planning Officer for Sedgemoor District Council and former Chair of the RTPI SW (2020). I got into Planning Aid England through the RTPI Regional Management Board having relocated to the South West from the Isle of Wight. I saw it as a brilliant development opportunity and a way to get right to the heart of planning within the region. I wanted to play an active part and support the exposure of planning supporting communities. Since my time on the Planning Aid task group we have managed to deliver CPD direct to the volunteers which was taped to what they identified, engage university students with a project to identify areas within the region that may need Planning Aid support and we are now working on a Planning Aid led webinar!

The world has changed a lot in the last 12 months and the focus of the RTPI SW this year is wellbeing. In that respect my top tips would be lower expectations and give yourself credit for every goal you achieve, however small! Last week this for me meant accepting that my 8 year old would probably not be educated, reality was she managed a few online maths and English games - epic win! So keep positive, stay negative!



Meet the South West Planning Aid England task group! cont...



Tim Burton

I am Tim, a chartered member and up until March 2019 I was Head of Planning at Taunton Deane and West Somerset Councils. I left to set up my own consultancy offering planning advice to Local Planning Authorities as well as to private clients. I also work with the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) providing advice and support to Councils on performance and delivery matters. After around thirty years as a chartered member (and having a little more time on my hands having stepped off the Local Authority treadmill!) I felt that I would like to get involved with the RTPI regionally and give something back to the organisation which has supported me over the years. Therefore I joined the Regional Activities Committee in early 2019. I seem to recall that on a train returning from one of my first Committee meetings Dawn managed to persuade me to join the Planning Aid Working Group as well. Over the years I had considered volunteering for Planning Aid on a number of occasions, but had never followed through with it. I would now like to use the opportunity to help others take that step which I didn't get around to making.

My tip for wellbeing through lockdown is to stick to a routine. A schedule creates the boundaries that define your working day. However, many of the previous boundaries such as the daily commute have been swept away. Not having to work regular office hours is a benefit, but if you don't set parameters you will be in danger of dipping in and out of work 24/7.



Jessica Vaughan

Hello! My name is Jess and I am a Chartered Planner Officer at Plymouth City Council. I became chartered in November 2018 and straight away signed up to become a Planning Aid volunteer and expressed an interest in joining the South West Task Group. Over the years at Plymouth I've worked primarily in local plan consultation and neighbourhood planning as well as leading on other engagement initiatives such as the City Change Fund and DATAPlay. Because of this work I was keen to support others to get involved in planning in ways that is most suited to them. I also recognised what an amazing opportunity Planning Aid provides to get involved and work on other projects which are not just linked to my day job. Before becoming chartered and joining the task group I worked with South West Planning Aid volunteers to set up an engagement programme linked to the Plymouth Plan consultations, so as soon as I became chartered I knew I wanted to become more involved in Planning Aid.

My top tip for wellbeing is to take regular breaks and ensure you're making time to rest and recharge your batteries. As planners our jobs are always full of high demands and with the long-term impacts of COVID-19, Brexit and an increasing amount of changes to the planning system, I believe the demands on our time and resources are only going to increase in the future. Make sure you're taking the time to rest and relax as well as work and play!



The task group is supported by Holly McLaren

I'm the Co-coordinator for Planning Aid England and a key part of my role is to coordinate a range of volunteer services and projects that help the public engage with the planning system. I've worked in the charity sector for around 12 years and I particularly enjoy working with volunteers, who are freely giving their time and expertise to try and make a difference.

My wellbeing tip is to make the most of the great outdoors whenever you have opportunity!

Planning Aid England update January 2021

As a predominantly volunteer-led service, it was difficult to predict how the pandemic would impact service delivery during 2020, with staff and volunteers alike having to adapt to very different working circumstances. However, thanks to ongoing volunteer engagement and support, we were able to maintain all our key services that provide planning advice to the general public. Our dedicated advice website - www.planningaid.co.uk, which is regularly reviewed and updated by volunteers, received over 100,000 hits across the year; our volunteer-led email advice service responded to over 1750 requests for planning advice; and casework volunteers continued to deliver bespoke assistance via remote channels to those who qualify for enhanced PAE support.

In 2021 we look forward to extending our support for community engagement in planning by offering 'neutral facilitator' advice, via 'virtual workshops' and other remote channels, on planning activities such as Local Plan consultations. We will also be producing more 'how to' podcasts and videos for the PAE website. Additionally Regional PAE Task Groups will be continuing to meet virtually to organise online support, training and events. The Task Group for the South West are first off the marks this year with an RTPI Online event: The Planning White Paper: A radical shift in how we engage with our communities? To book your place on this webinar follow this [link](#).

Update provided by **Holly McClaren**,
Planning Aid England Coordinator



Planning Aid England
Engaging Communities in Planning

If you are interested in volunteering for Planning Aid England

please visit www.rtpi.org.uk/planning-advice/volunteering/how-to-apply/ to complete the application form.

If you had ideas for outreach for Planning Aid in the south west please get in contact with the task group via **Katie Graham**: Katherine.graham@plymouth.gov.uk

Regional Management Board & Activities Committee Up-date

There have been two joint meetings of the Regional Management Board (RMB) and Regional Activities Committee (RAC) since the last edition of Branchout. As is the tradition in the South West, the last meeting of the outgoing RMB / RAC for the year and first meeting of the incoming RMB / RAC for the next year are held on the same day. This year on 27 November. Holding the meetings back-to-back allows for the ceremonial handover of the Branch's Badge of Office (see right) and, as the timing is in the run up to Christmas, a joint lunch after the meetings. That, of course was before the world of Covid-19. In what has become business as normal, the meetings were in this instance held virtually.

Chair's Report

Having two meetings on the same day meant we had two reports.

In her last meeting as chair for 2020, Dawn de Vries reported on recent and planned activities being taken forward by the RTPI South West. Notwithstanding the challenges throw up by COVID-19 Dawn was able to set out an impressive array of activity including CPD events.

She highlighted the success of this year's virtual South West Awards for Planning Excellence and thanked all those involved for their hard work. For those who missed the 'live' event it can be seen on the RTPI's YouTube channel. Dawn noted that the third and final President's visit was a virtual visit to Guernsey, Jersey and Isles of Scilly. The visit focussed on climate change, 'smart island' technology and shoreline management and flooding. You can see the visit www.youtube.com/watch?v=p22nF2YojMM&feature=youtu.be

Summing up her year as chair, Dawn said that the word 'change' best captured the flavour of 2020. She hoped, with a vaccine on the horizon, that at some point in 2021 we could get back to meeting face-to-face as well as virtually. Dawn thanked everyone on the joint committee (and more widely) for their input and support during the year, singling out Charlotte Daborn, our regional co-ordinator, who had been critical in enabling the RTPI SW to continue to offer services to the wider membership. Dawn also expressed her thanks to Chris Balch and Andy England who were standing down from, respectively, the RMB and RAC, and to Richard Williamson for his representation of the region on the RTPI's General Assembly.

In her first report Angharad Williams, the incoming chair for 2021, congratulated Ian Perry and David Lowin on their election as, respectively, Junior Vice Chair and RTPI SW Representative on the General Assembly, and welcomed Stephen Essex and Harry Quartermain to the RAC. In setting out her priorities for the year, Angharad said that healthy and inclusive environments would be a key theme. She explained this aspect of planning had always been a passion and that the pandemic had underlined its importance. She also emphasised the importance of volunteers to the region's work and encouraged everyone to be as fully involved as they could manage.

Corporate Activity

Richard Williamson provided feedback on the third, and final, meeting of the RTPI General Assembly (GA) of 2020 which was held virtually on 14 October. His report explained that the main items of GA business were:

- i. Presidential Team Report;
- ii. Chair of the Board of Trustees Report;
- iii. Chief Executive's Report;
- iv. discussion on the evolving RTPI response to the planning white paper;

- v. an update from the Chair of the Membership and Ethics Committee;
- vi. a progress report on the Corporate Strategy Implementation Plan;
- vii. the presentation of the RTPI Learning Partner of the Year award 2020 to Optimis Consulting for its graduate programme.

Richard's report also noted that the 2020 RTPI AGM took place during the mid-day break in the GA. At this, the minutes of the 2019 AGM were approved and the annual report and accounts for the year ending 31 December 2019 together with the auditor's report were received. They can be accessed [here](#).

In his report of the meeting of the Nations and Regions Panel held on 22 October Peter Ellis drew attention to the RTPI events strategy; the key themes Wei Yang had set for her presidential year (2021); and, further changes to the schemes of delegation for RMBs and RACs. More about Wei's priorities can be read in her article in the January edition of the Planner.



Regional Management Board & Activities Committee Up-date

In his final Treasurer's update Chris Balch Chris explained that because of the need to cancel physical events for the majority of the year the budget for the South West had remained stagnant. There had been few outgoings and other than from the first two events in the year there had been no income. Charlotte advised the joint meeting that the business plan for 2021 was still to be confirmed. She had not, however, received any adverse comments from the scrutiny process at HQ so we could work on the assumption the draft would be approved.

Reports from working groups

The joint meetings also considered updates from working groups including reports from Planning Aid and Education / Future Planners. The latter provided an update on the school competitions held nationally by RTPPI HQ. In the Challenge for Change competition young people were asked to work with town planning superhero Agent Plan-It. Students wrote and drew proposals on how to create better towns and communities, thinking differently about the environment, and how best to use streets and parks, as well as the ways we learn, work and communicate. In the annual secondary school competition, linked to World Town Planning Day, students were asked to take a closer look at their local and wider environment and the many decisions that affect it. It was good to see a group of "Budding town planners" featured in their local press.

In setting the context for the CPD Working Group the joint meeting was advised that thinking at HQ was that there would be fewer events in the regions – around 10 core CPD events per year which would focus on local issues. Networking and social events would be in addition to the 10. Regions would also feed into the envisaged Planning Live South event by supporting topics and suggesting speakers. There would be a consistent pricing

strategy across regions from January 2021 and it had been confirmed that webinars would stay free for RTPPI members.

The joint meeting also considered a report proposing a rejigging of working groups and their responsibilities to reflect more closely and align with the deliverables identified in the RTPPI corporate strategy and the region's business plan for 2021. You do not need to be a member of the RMB or RAC to participate in the working groups and any RTPPI member is welcome to join. More details can be found [here](#). Meetings take place virtually or in Taunton, Somerset.



Getting to know you - Dr Stephen Essex

Dr Stephen Essex (University of Plymouth)



A bit about yourself

I moved to Plymouth in 1987 when I took up my lectureship as a geographer at the University Plymouth (then Polytechnic). I have seen the University and Plymouth evolve over the subsequent years and have enjoyed living and working in the city. I count myself lucky that my commute to work is by the public water taxi across Plymouth Sound. It is my good fortune to live in an exceptionally beautiful part of England. While I reside just a few miles from the city centre, the countryside also lies close to my home and I therefore enjoy easy access, both for walking and cycling, to other parts of the west Devon and east Cornwall landscape. As a specialist in planning, I therefore have a rich and diverse 'living laboratory' very close at hand.

Why did you choose a career in planning?

While my academic background is in geography, a strong theme in my studies and research has always been planning-related. I studied BA (Hons) Geography at the University of Wales in Lampeter, where my interest in rural planning was first inspired by Dr Paul Cloke (now Professor at the University of Exeter) and others. This interest prompted me to pursue PhD research and I was fortunate to be awarded an ESRC studentship at the University of Nottingham under Dr Philip Wheeler. The research was a collaborative project with the Peak District National Park Authority into the effectiveness of planning interventions in woodland change and management, and involved archive work into policy documents, interviews with landowners (from the stewards of the Chatsworth Estate to the owners of small farms) and surveys of the condition of their woodlands and forests.

On completion of the PhD, I obtained a two-year lecturership post at the then Dorset Institute of Higher Education (now Bournemouth University), where I taught on the BSc Geography and Landscape Studies degree. Here my teaching focused on rural planning, although extended into urban planning and tourism as well as many other topics. I then joined the University of Plymouth, where I have contributed to BA/BSc (Hons) Geography, BSc (Hons) Environmental Sciences and BSc (Hons) Tourism Studies programmes, including a stint as Programme Leader of the Geography programmes (2001-2006).

In order to diversify the courses in the School of Geography, with the support of some others (including of Paul Barnard and Peter Ford at Plymouth City Council, and Andrew England, then at Cornwall Council), I devised the University of Plymouth's MSc Planning programme. The degree was launched after accreditation by the Royal Town Planning Institute in 2010. I became the programme leader from its inception and sought the appointment of Professor Chris Balch, and now Dr Olivia Wilson, as additional planning specialists. Beyond the 'core' planning curriculum, we offer modules in coastal urban regeneration and rural planning, which particularly reflect our location in the South West and the well-known expertise of the University of Plymouth.

We are now in the eleventh year of running the MSc and I enjoy teaching both full-time and part-time students, many of whom are now working in planning in the South West in the public and private sectors. I derive great satisfaction from witnessing the positive response of students to the course's content and the tangible results for individuals in terms of their professional development. Advising students on their dissertation research and helping them to publish the research in academic journals has also been a highlight. In 2019, we also started a Level 7 Chartered Town Planner Degree Apprenticeship (MSc Town Planning), which is open to local authorities and other employers who pay an apprenticeship levy as a way for their staff to gain professional development whilst working.

The new degree offers opportunities for employers to work closely with the University to ensure that the students gain the relevant practical and academic experience.



Dr Stephen Essex
University of Plymouth

Getting to know you - Dr Stephen Essex cont...

Running the MSc Planning programmes at Plymouth has offered many opportunities for developing my own knowledge, skills and professional development. As an academic, obtaining Chartered Membership of the RTPI was one of the most challenging tasks that I have experienced in my career – first as an associate member in 2009 and then as full member in 2011. A three-month sabbatical in the Planning Service at Plymouth City Council in 2008 was another tremendously beneficial experience. Since then, I have been an assessor for chartered membership (L-APC) of the RTPI, 2014-2020. This work has given me some excellent insight into the skills and competencies required within the profession and has been invaluable in informing my modules and assignments for the students.

In September, 2019, I co-organised the XIII Biennial of European Towns and Town Planners conference with Plymouth City Council, the Royal Town Planning Institute and the European Council of Spatial Planners on the University of Plymouth campus. The theme for the conference was 'Planning on the edge: coastal settlements, regeneration and the marine environment', and was attended by about 160 academics and practitioners from across the whole of Europe.

What are your main research areas?

As an academic, I have also been fortunate in being able to undertake a variety of original research projects that have presented opportunities to work in different parts of the world, including Hong Kong, Brittany, Barcelona, Mallorca, Australia, Switzerland, and South Africa. For me, four notable highlights stand out in my planning-related research. First, my work on the planning and infrastructural implications of staging both the Summer and Winter Olympic Games, 1896-present day (Essex and Chalkley, 1998; now translated in Chinese, 2019; Chalkley and Essex, 1999; Sanchez and Essex, 2017; 2018). Sabbaticals have enabled me to visit a number of Olympic cities, including Sydney Olympic Park both before (1994) and after the Games (2008). Second, my research

on the post-war planning and reconstruction of Plymouth city centre, using previously neglected sources of original correspondence between the key actors at the time, which has reshaped ideas about this formative period of the planning system (Essex and Brayshay, 2005; 2007; 2008; 2013). The third main area of research has focused on the planning and regeneration of coastal communities, which has reviewed the policy response of coastal planning authorities to climate change (Young and Essex, 2019); the delivery of sustainable mixed communities in waterfront regeneration (Thorning, et al., 2019); the challenges of brownfield development on the coast (Leger, et al., 2016); and a reflection on 30 years of regeneration along Plymouth's waterfront (Essex and Ford, 2015). A recent co-authored paper (Agarwal et al., 2018) formed evidence to a House of Lords Select Committee on the 'Future of Seaside Towns' in 2019. Fourth, as part of an international and interdisciplinary research team, I have investigated the role of municipalities in the distribution of electricity in South African cities and the unusual barriers which exist to impede the creation of governance/management structures to facilitate pathways to low carbon urban energy configurations (Essex and de Groot, 2019; Caprotti et al., 2020; Caprotti et al., 2021).

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

This is the second time that I have been on the RAC. It is important for the University to have close links with the RTPI SW so that the course is professionally relevant to the students. The RAC provides an important link between academia and practice. I am particularly interested in the Education and Careers, Policy and Research, and Editorial Working Groups and look forward to becoming actively involved in the work of the Committee.



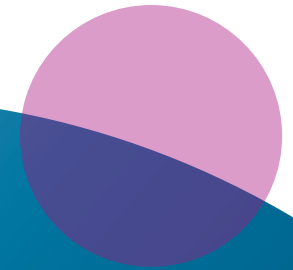
Find out more
www.plymouth.ac.uk/staff/stephen-essex

Branchouts & Conferences - Looking back over 40, 30, 20 & 10 Years!

Throughout the 75 year history since its formation in May 1945 the RTPI SW 'Branch' (1945-2005) and the re-named 'Region' (2006 to date) has sought to provide comprehensive information and advice on a wide range of issues relating to planning practice and planners in the South West. This has been delivered principally by the staging of just over 700 Conferences/Seminars/Workshops since 1945 and the publication since June 1978 of 182 issues of the newsletter 'Branchout'. Recently these have been supplemented by the issue of regular email news updates. As shown in opinion surveys over the years, South West Members have been, and continue to be, pleased with these services, in particular the range of Conference topics and the range/quality of speakers. However through the years a small minority have expressed concerns that either certain issues are never or rarely covered ('my specialism never features at Conferences or in Branchout') or some are repeated too often ('Not again-nothing new is being said!').

As the unofficial RTPI SW 'Archivist', I thought it would be of interest to Branchout readers if I examined the provision of the information and advice over the years, in particular in the context of the views on lack of, or over coverage of, topics. I have thus examined, in the same format as set out in other journals, the programmes of the Conferences and Branchouts 40, 30, 20 and 10 years ago over a similar period as this current issue of Branchout. Of particular interest to me are the views on planning issues expressed by the 1981 Branchout Editor and the 1991, 2001 and 2011 Chairmen/Chairs.

Although the results set out below are only samples, my conclusion is that over the period 1981 to 2011 the provision of information and advice at Conferences and in Branchout was well balanced with little evidence of under or excessive coverage of specific planning issues in the South West.



Branchouts & Conferences - Looking back over 40, 30, 20 & 10 Years! cont...



BRANCHOUT ARTICLES

*Two comments by the Editor (Bryan Smith):

“One of the repercussions of the recession and Government cut-backs has been the drying up of job opportunities” (January 1981 issue) and “It really does seem tragic that 7 years after LG reorganisation there still exists in many areas a constant bickering about who does what between County and District Council planners.” (April 1981 issue)

*Up-dates on the progress of Structure Plans in the South West (January 1981 issue) followed in the April 1981 issue by the comment “Nearly there on the Structure Plans - only a few minor skirmishes remain!” *On a lighter note progress reports on the RTPI SW Branch Squash Tournament. (January & April 1981 issues)

*Comments by Jill Jameson, the 1991 Chair of the SW Branch, the first woman to hold the post. Her two main priorities were to give time to issues of concern to women especially job sharing and safety at work and secondly to encourage more contact between planners working in different sectors. (January 1991 issue)

*The proposed introduction of the RTPI mandatory CPD scheme. (January 1991 issue)

*New directions for Planning Aid. (January 1991 issue)

*Bristol City Council's Green Charter, the purpose being to show the City Council's commitment and intent on a wide range of environmental issues. (March 1991 issue)

*The RTPI Code of Conduct which seeks to eliminate racism in planning practice (March 1991 issue)

RTPI SW CONFERENCES TOPICS

*Visit and address by the RTPI 1981 President, John Collins (23-1-1981)

*Joint meetings with other professions: -- RICS 'Joint Ventures' Speakers from Bristol City Valuers, Plymouth Planning Department, MWT Architects and Bristol JT Group (18-2-1981)

-Institute of Municipal Engineers

‘Working Together- Land Reclamation in Cornwall’ Speakers from Cornwall CC, Restormal DC and English China Clays. (20-3-1981)

-RIBA ‘Conservation in Practice – Penryn’ Speaker from Carrick Borough Council and a tour of the Penryn Conservation Area. (15-4-1981)

* ‘How green is Planning?’ Speakers from Avon CC, Gloucestershire CC, Devon CC, Gloucestershire CC and Bristol Polytechnic. (18-1-1991)

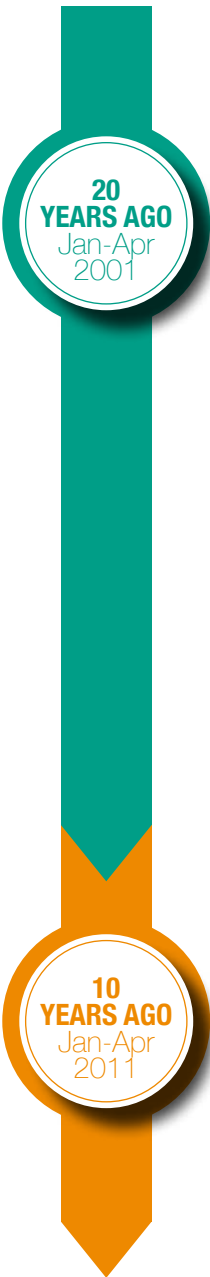
*‘River Conservation and Enhancement’ Speakers from Manchester Polytechnic, NRA, Hydro Research and Development, Avon CC, Wessex Water, Costain Homes and Northavon DC. (6-2-1991)

*‘The Region beyond 2000’ Speakers from Somerset CC, Cornwall CC, SERPLAN and Chapman Warren. (15-2-1981)

*‘Local Authorities, Volunteers and Environmental Action’ Speakers from Bristol/Avon Groundwork Trust, Volunteers Centre UK, Avon CC and an Artist/Designer (20-3-1991)

*‘Tourism and Leisure’ Speakers from Torbay BC, Chapman Warren, Brown Waycotts, Paignton Zoo, Devon Rural Skills Trust, Jeremy Evans Leisure and an Architect (19-4-1991)

Branchouts & Conferences - Looking back over 40, 30, 20 & 10 Years! cont...



BRANCHOUT ARTICLES	RTPI SW CONFERENCES TOPICS
<p>*A message from the 2001 Chair (Marc Willis) setting out his views on planners and planning practice: -“I believe that unlike many professions we have the ability, even the responsibility to make the world, or at least a small part of it , a better place.....if we don't believe this, don't strive to achieve this on a daily basis perhaps we are in the wrong job?” -“There is too much democracy in the planning process. Now let me say that an element of public consultation and the involvement of elected members is not just important but a vital part of both the development plan and the development control process. By and large, we do it very well but you can have too much of a good thing. When member involvement leads to a state of near paralysis in decision making or excessive consultation leads to unnecessary delay in the preparation of plans, there is rarely, in my experience, a commensurate improvement in the quality of decision making”.</p> <p>*The RTPI Mentoring Scheme. The article states that ‘the aim of the Scheme is to pair RTPI Student Members with experienced Corporate Members who are able to provide them with independent and confidential advice on professional matters and assist in preparing applications for full membership’. The article notes that ‘with the re-launch of the national Mentoring Scheme the South West Branch is looking for potential mentors and mentorees to join the Scheme in the South West.’ (March 2001 issue)</p>	<p>**‘Development Control and Law Update Workshop’ Speakers from Foot Anstey Sargent, RTA Development and Planning Ltd, and the Planning Inspectorate. (17-1-2001)</p> <p>**‘Regeneration in the Region’ Speakers from the University of the West of England, Kandu Arts Sustainable Development, West Development Partnership, Kerrier DC and Bristol City Council. (23-2-2001)</p> <p>**‘Planning and Retail Development- Some Current Issues’ Speakers from the CBI, MVM Planning, University of the West of England, DTZ PIEDA Consulting, Bryan Smith Associates and a Consultant. (15-3-2001)</p> <p>**‘Coastal Planning and Flood Plains’ Speakers from the SW Development Agency, Cornwall CC, the Severn Estuary Study, Bristol Port Authority, Dorset CC and the Environment Agency. (6-4-2001)</p>
<p>* Following the publication in December 2010 of the Decentralisation and Localism Bill, the 2011 Chair, Jean Marshall, gives her views: “The overall theme of decentralisation and giving back to communities is all very laudable and much of the Bill's content is probably publicly welcomed. I am sure it is the right thing to do giving communities empowerment but am I the only one who is cynical enough to think that many local people really are not going to be bothered about doing something for the benefit of their community with little money and little support? I suppose we will just have to wait and see but to me it seems that this is going to lead to even greater divisions in society between those communities who do choose to work together and who have the money to accomplish things and those who cannot do this or choose not to. I do feel the Bill presents a mixed bag in this sense” (Spring 2011 issue)</p>	<p>**‘Retailing and Employment’ Speakers from SW Regional Development Agency (RDA), Marks and Spencer, South Somerset DC, Alder King and Waitrose (28-1-2011)</p> <p>**‘Development Finance and Viability’ Speakers from HCA, SW RDA, Savills, Regenerate, RCA Regenerate, South Worcs Development Plan. (18-2-2011)</p> <p>**‘Development Management’ Speakers from Ashfords, South Somerset DC, East Devon DC and the RTPI Chief Executive. (18-2-2011)</p>

Branchouts & Conferences - Looking back over 40, 30, 20 & 10 Years! cont...



BRANCHOUT ARTICLES	RTPI SW CONFERENCES TOPICS
<p>*'All change at Planning Aid in the South West' An article setting out comments on the decision by the Government to end funding of the Planning Aid service in England at the end of March 2011. It is noted that the form of the SW service from the 1st April 2011 would be very dependent on the RTPI's national policy on Planning Aid and also on the scale of funding granted by the Government from its new fund which aims to support communities and neighbourhoods in developing the new Neighbourhood Plans. (Spring 2011 issue)</p> <p>*'The University of the West of England Agency Project' – an article that celebrates 21 years of the Agency Project, a module that seeks to deliver a valuable insight into planning practice for final year undergraduate students. Approximately 80 students per year are hosted with organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors. (Spring 2011 issue)</p>	<p>*'Design and Masterplanning' Speakers from Dorset CC, Savills, FERIA Urbanism, Coe Design, Lacey Hickey Caley and Creating Excellence. (8-4 -2011)</p>



Mike Oakley
Member of the RTPI South West Activities Committee.

Mike has been active in volunteering for the RTPI South West Committee for 47 years. He was Chairman in 1982

10 Class Q appeal decision letters from 2020

Exeter planning solicitor Graham Gover has provided a sample of ten decision letters from 2020 of significance to planning practitioners because they deal with interpretation of the Order, rather than the exercise of planning judgment related only to the facts of the case. They will therefore be of wider application and interest. *The paragraphs in italics are taken from the decision letter directly.*

The site must not be confused with the established agricultural unit

Location: Slinfold, Horsham
Authority: Horsham DC
Inspector: L McKay
Decision: Dismissed on curtilage issues
Date: 7 December 2020
Reference: APP/Z3825/W/19/3242825

The buildings that were to be converted were part of an established agricultural unit involved in egg production/ packing until that activity ceased in the late 1990's, then the farm was leased as a chicken farm for a period, after which more ad-hoc agricultural use took place, including use by people other than the appellant. The appellant's statutory declaration was specific to the appeal site, and stated that all three buildings had been "solely used for agricultural purposes in an established agricultural unit since 1987 and was [sic] solely used in agriculture on the relevant date of 20 March 2013". The application had been refused because the planning history of the wider farm, including planning appeal decisions, suggested that it had been put to other uses. The Inspector noted that the site (that is, the agricultural building and its curtilage) must be used solely for agriculture not the wider farm, and that it was common for farm holdings to include other uses. None of the evidence of other uses applied to the site.

Underpinning is not permitted operational development

Location: Billingshurst, West Sussex
Authority: Horsham DC
Inspector: Andrew Bremford
Decision: Dismissed
Date: 16 October 2020
Reference: APP/Z3825/W/20/3251781

The building had concrete slab foundations, but the structural report stated that no trial pits were undertaken to view what lay beneath the exterior walls, and "If there are no foundations, the walls will need to be underpinned ... [in unit 3] there are no existing foundations. New foundations will be required". In regard to unit 3, given that the ground floor slab did not appear to be in good condition it should be rebuilt and where exterior walls are to be replaced, they should be built on trench foundations.

The excavation and installation of new foundations, and underpinning works, are not building operations that fall within Paragraph Q.1.(i)(i) of Class Q that are reasonably necessary for a building to function as a dwellinghouse. Such building works would be significant and include works underneath the exterior walls of the buildings. Hence, they would not likely be restricted to only the interior of the buildings and would likely go beyond 'maintenance, improvement or other alteration' which would be exempted from the meaning of 'development' under s55(2)(a) of the Act.



10 Class Q appeal decision letters from 2020 cont...

Undesirable location also includes visual impact on surrounding landscape

Location: Keighley, Yorkshire
Authority: City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council
Inspector: Robert Walker
Decision: Dismissed
Date: 25 September 2020
Reference: APP/W4705/W/20/3254772

The building was a prominent, isolated structure in an area with a dramatic and attractive rural character and wide-ranging views over the rolling upland landscape. The proposed residential use would give rise to incremental domestication, increase light spill and urbanise the landscape.

I recognise that the context of the permitted development right conferred by Class Q, is such that it is to be expected that buildings will be in a rural setting. Moreover, the examples in the Planning Practice Guidance (the PPG) for what is meant by 'undesirable' do not include the impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding landscape.

However, in my view, the list within the PPG is not a closed list and a degree of planning judgement is required ... (the Framework) amongst other things, recognises the intrinsic beauty of the countryside (paragraph 170).

For the reasons outlined above, the proposal would be contrary to the provisions of the Framework. It would result in unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area. As such, the siting and location of the appeal building makes it undesirable for it to change from an agricultural use to a dwelling.

Growing of Christmas trees is an agricultural use

Location: Charfield, Gloucestershire
Authority: Stroud DC
Inspector: B Davies
Decision: Allowed
Date: 9 September 2020
Reference: APP/C1625/20/3252210

Planning permission was granted for 'agricultural use' and the officer's report referred to its proposed use to be in connection with a forestry business. The land was also used for keeping sheep and birds. Forestry is not agriculture and the growing of Christmas trees is not forestry.

There is a strong parallel between growing flowers that are grown for decoration, typically cut at the point of sale and Christmas trees. I consider that cut flowers could be defined as either market gardening, which is a typically small-scale operation selling fruit, vegetables and flowers, or horticulture, which relates to the cultivation of a garden. A nursery implies transplantation, whereas most of the Christmas trees are sold after being cut. I am satisfied that because growing of trees is on a small scale and for decorative purposes, and integrated with indisputably agricultural activities, including raising poultry and producing hay, the overall enterprise is agricultural.

Conditioning use of adjacent farm buildings removed concerns over residential use

Location: Witheridge, Devon
Authority: Mid Devon DC
Inspector: Rachael Pipkin
Decision: Allowed
Date: 8 September 2020
Reference: APP/Y1138/W/20/3252641

The closest farm buildings would be 5 to 9 metres distant. The appellant suggested a restrictive condition to control the use of the adjacent building so that it could only be used for the storage of machinery or fodder stocks. With the use of the adjacent barn restricted, the nearest barn which could be used for livestock would be some distance from the proposed dwelling and any noise, smell or fly disturbance would be significantly reduced. The Council raised a concern about the enforceability of the condition, in particular if the building was used sporadically for the storage of livestock which would make enforcement related investigations impractical. Resourcing constraints to undertake such investigation was a matter for the Council and is not a reason why such a condition would not be enforceable. Costs were awarded to the Appellant because prior approval could have been given with such a condition.



10 Class Q appeal decision letters from 2020 cont...

Use in breach of a condition is not permitted development

Location: Feckenham, Redditch
Authority: Redditch BC
Inspector: JP Sargent
Decision: Dismissed
Date: 18 May 2020
Reference: APP/Q1825/W/19/3239696

Planning permission was given for an access track that lay between the proposed dwelling and the highway subject to a condition that it shall be used only by agricultural vehicles in connection with the land to the south and east of Rookery Cottage and for no other purpose, including as a residential access to Rookery Cottage. Under Article 3(4) of the GPDO, to benefit from any planning permission granted by Article 3 of that Order the development must not be contrary to any condition on an existing planning permission.

To my mind what is before me is contrary to the condition imposed on the planning permission for the existing access, even if that condition was originally intended to allow access to this barn. This is because it would result in the access being used for a purpose other than by agricultural vehicles in connection with the land to the south and east of Rookery Cottage. Accordingly, what is proposed is not development permitted by the GPDO. It is development for which express planning permission is required.

A non-agricultural use has to be a material change of use to prevent permitted development

Location: Banham, Norfolk
Authority: Breckland DC
Inspector: R Sabu
Decision: Allowed
Date: 17 February 2020
Reference: APP/F2605/W/19/3240798

The acknowledged former use was as a piggery which had long since ceased and at the time of the application the building was used for non-agricultural storage.

The storage use was not formally confirmed as being lawful and no planning permission to use the building for purposes other than agricultural use has been granted. While I note that further information with regard to the number of pigs kept on the site was not forthcoming, this in itself does not demonstrate that the previous agricultural use was not dormant or that an alternative use had commenced. Consequently, on the balance of probabilities, the observation of storage of miscellaneous items amounts to insufficient evidence that a material change of use from agriculture has occurred. I therefore consider that the site has been dormant since its last use for pig accommodation. As such I am satisfied, based on the evidence and my findings above, that the scheme would comply with Q.1 (a).

Assessing the extent of the established agricultural unit

Location: Badgeworth, Cheltenham
Authority: Tewkesbury BC
Inspector: Robert Lankshear
Decision: Dismissed
Date: 5 February 2020

Class Q rights are disallowed where development under Part 6 has been carried out since 20 March 2013 on the same established agricultural unit. Such development had previously been carried out at a time when the land was subject to a farm business tenancy which ran from September 2012 to September 2019. When the Part 6 development was carried out it was justified by the business of the landlord not the tenant farmer.

In my mind the established agricultural unit would be that recognised and accepted in the longer term. Owing to the justification provided for the original barn, and the term, nature and expiration date of the tenancy in question, I consider on the balance of probability, that it is reasonable to consider that the barn erected under the 2013 prior approval falls within the established agricultural unit of Halfpenny Farm (the appellant) and not that of Burley Fields Farm (the tenant). As such, I consider that both barns fall within the same established agricultural unit for the purposes of the GPDO. Therefore, I consider that the proposal does not meet the relevant requirements of Class Q.



10 Class Q appeal decision letters from 2020 cont...

Failure to determine a prior approval application in time does not grant immunity from enforcement

Location: Abbotsley, Cambridgeshire
Authority: Huntingdonshire District Council
Inspector: Graham Wraight
Decision: Allowed
Date: 21 October 2020
Reference: APP/H0520/W/20/3253722

The Authority accepted it had not notified the applicant within 56 days. As a result, prior approval was deemed to have been granted and it was not open to the Inspector to determine whether the development complied with the limitations and conditions imposed on permitted development under Class Q. The Council queried the use of the building in 2013. The Inspector's decision only affected the question of prior approval. If it subsequently turned out the development was not permitted development for whatever reason, then the decision did not confer any immunity against the issue of an enforcement notice. The only way to definitively deal with this issue is to make a Lawful Development Certificate application to confirm whether the proposal is permitted development.

Use for the keeping of horses was an agricultural use

Location: Langford, Essex
Authority: Maldon District Council
Inspector: Andre Pinto
Decision: Dismissed - impact on RAMSAR site not mitigated
Date: 24 November 2020
Reference: APP/X1545/W/20/3252627

The Council accepted that the building had been under agricultural use for the past sixteen years, but stated that the proposed development could not be permitted development as the site was not used, at that date, as part of an established agricultural unit. The Council's view was based on its findings that, as the horses had not been merely grazing on the land, then the use of the land falls outside of the scope of agricultural land, as defined in the Belmont Farm case.

The Appellant provided information which suggested that activities other than putting the horses out to graze, were limited to securing their welfare, such as providing the horses with additional feed, a rug and a well-drained area to lie in. These additional activities were incidental to the main purpose and use of the site and unit, the 'keeping of horses' and grazing, which does constitute agricultural use.

The Inspector did not find any visible signs in the landscape to suggest that the horses were being kept for recreational purpose, such as a round pen or any other kind of equestrian paraphernalia. As such, and in the absence of any evidence to demonstrate that the site and associated paddock had been used for any purpose other than grazing, he found that the site was used solely for agricultural use as part of an established agricultural unit on 20 March 2013.



Self-build and custom housebuilding: Government updates guidance

On 8th February, the government updated Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) for self-build and custom housebuilding. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/self-build-and-custom-housebuilding> The guidance was first introduced in 2016 to support the Self & Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 and this update is the most wide-ranging since the guidance was expanded in 2017. As an increasing number of local authorities are looking to diversify their housing offer to respond to local interest in this type of housing, the amended PPG strengthens and clarifies the ways in which this demand can be planned for and met.

There are many changes to the PPG and this article highlights some of the key changes that will affect planners and the development industry alike. Alongside the PPG, the government has also published data about progress for each local authority in England in implementing the Self & Custom Housebuilding Act 2015.

The changes

Importantly the definition of self-build and custom housebuilding is strengthened with the PPG setting out that:

Self-build and custom housebuilding covers a wide spectrum, from projects where individuals are involved in building or managing the construction of their home from beginning to end, to projects where individuals commission their home, making key design and layout decisions, but the home is built ready for occupation.

The PPG also makes clear what is not self-build and custom housebuilding:

In considering whether a home is a self-build or custom build home, relevant authorities must be satisfied that the initial owner of the home will have primary input into its final design and layout... Off-plan housing, homes purchased at

the plan stage prior to construction and without input into the design and layout from the buyer, are not considered to meet the definition of self-build and custom housing.

Local authorities are already aware of their duty to maintain self-build and custom housebuilding registers and local authorities across the south west have already set these up. The PPG reminds authorities that they can work together to publicise and promote their registers and use a single application form to do so.

There is greater emphasis in the PPG on the links to be made between information collected through the register and how this can assist with plan and housing strategy policies. Additional information about, for example, applicant's age, preferred location for their plot and preferred plot size can be sought (where it is relevant, proportionate and reasonable) and used to inform policies. This data can be very useful in identifying the sizes and type of plots to be made available for self-build and custom housebuilding.

For plan making, numbers joining the register is the 'starting point' for establishing the overall demand for self-build and custom housebuilding in an area and, "...are also likely to be a material consideration in decisions involving proposals for self and custom housebuilding." But registers are not the only information that authorities can draw on to assess demand for self and custom housebuilding. A variety of other data sources e.g. building plot search websites can be used and, for the first time, there is explicit recognition that 'demand assessment tools can be utilised.' This would seem very important for authorities when reviewing their local plans; with local plan horizons much longer than the three years allowed under legislation to identify suitable plots to meet the demand identified in a 'base period' (i.e. of one year – to 30th October of that year).

In the South West, the Right to Build Register Monitoring system shows that over 5,800 individuals and groups registered an interest in self and custom housebuilding in the three years 2016-2019.



Self-build and custom housebuilding: Government updates guidance

In meeting the demand for self-build and custom housebuilding, local authorities have a duty, to give development permission to suitable serviced plots in their area. The national monitoring system shows that just under 8,200 plots have been given permission during the same period. In comparing the difference between numbers on the register and permissions on plots, performance around the region has varied considerably and in about 3 out of 5 authorities supply is short of demand. This shortfall by authorities is consistent with Three Dragons' findings, using its Demand Assessment Tool. Indeed, using this approach to assessment the shortfall becomes closer to 3 out of 4. Estimates by Three Dragons indicate that nine out of ten authorities should be planning in the longer term for the provision of more plots than the short term picture indicated by their registers.

The updated PPG extends the definition of a serviced plot to include conversions of existing buildings but leaves the core definition of a serviced plot unchanged i.e. it is:

A serviced plot of land is a plot of land that either has access to a public highway and has connections for electricity, water and waste water, or, in the opinion of a relevant authority, can be provided with access to those things within the duration of a development permission granted in relation to that land.

However, the PPG provides new guidance in paragraph 38 on how authorities are to record suitable permissions, emphasising the importance of demonstrating that the initial owner has primary input into the final design and layout of their new home. Being granted a CIL exemption is another way a suitable permission can be identified. The PPG emphasises to authorities their role in alerting registrants to opportunities to develop their new home, when they have permissioned suitable land, or when suitable sites are made available through land disposal.

What is missing

Three Dragons will be preparing a full analysis of the updated PPG as soon as possible. But there are some issues affecting the planning for and delivery of self-build and custom housebuilding that have not materialised in the new PPG:

- There is no clarification how the viability of developments including self-build and custom housebuilding should be assessed - this is proving an increasingly tricky issue not explored in this new PPG nor in the PPG dealing directly with viability;
- Planning for developments with a mix of developer and self-build and custom housebuilding can be problematic but are not covered in the new PPG;
- There is no guidance on marketing a custom or self-build plot and measures to take to protect a developer who is unable to sell a plot – this is something Inspectors have raised concern about in local plan examinations.

If you would like to know more about the latest update to the PPG or about how we assess demand for self-build and custom housebuilding, please contact laura.easton@three-dragons.co.uk



Lin Cousins & Laura Easton
Three Dragons

Biodiversity net gain: things are looking up for biodiversity

Net Gain. Well it's a game changer for biodiversity in my book. At last, there is a mechanism to help bring about nature recovery. More, and better, nature also has benefits for our health and wellbeing and helps create attractive and sustainable places in which to live and work. The recent COVID-19 lockdowns have brought into sharp focus the importance of nature for our wellbeing and, in particular, nature that is local and can be accessed easily from home.

Support for net gain is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which highlights the role of policies and decision making in minimising impacts and providing net gain for biodiversity. For more information have a look in the Planning Practice Guidance. There is a useful description of net gain here as "an approach to development that leaves the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand".

The Environment Bill, currently making its way through Parliament, will make net gain mandatory and set a minimum level of net gain at 10%. It will also require that proposals be accompanied by a 'net gain plan' and that delivery of a net gain scheme is for a period of 30 years.

Delivery of net gain may be on site and delivered within the application area, or off-site. On-site provision has the advantage of enabling a local community to see a direct link between a development and the gains that have been achieved. A third means of delivering net gain will be through the purchase of biodiversity credits. These would then be invested into larger scale net gain delivery projects. A national register will be developed to keep a record of net gain delivery sites.

So, how is net gain measured?

Well that's where the Biodiversity Metric 2.0 comes in. This can be used to measure net gains and losses to biodiversity resulting from development. It's worth mentioning here that opportunities for biodiversity net gain may exist within opportunities for wider environmental net gain and green infrastructure. Examples could include things like provision and management of new public spaces to be more wildlife friendly and climate resilient as well as planting trees characteristic to the local area to make a positive contribution to the local land/townscape.

What about the mitigation hierarchy?

Where does that fit in? Importantly, biodiversity net gain should not be applied to irreplaceable habitats. Also, any mitigation and/or compensation requirements for European sites should be dealt with separately from net gain provision. Options to avoid impacts on biodiversity should be considered first off. When avoidance is not possible impacts should be mitigated and finally if there's no alternative, compensation should be provided. Biodiversity net gain should be additional to any habitat creation required to mitigate or compensate for impacts and should, of course, be delivered even if there are no losses through development.

So, to finish, net gain is a key driver in improving biodiversity and safeguarding all the ecosystem services it provides. The role of planners will be critical in helping to achieve this aim.



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Natural England

One Developers Approach to Biodiversity Net Gain

Introduction

Despite the recent delay to the progress of the Environment Bill through parliament, developers continue to prepare for the introduction of mandatory biodiversity net gain for new developments. This short article outlines the approach of one national housebuilder in this preparation and explores the implications of net gain for developers, based on experience to-date.

Beyond Net Gain

Redrow is one of the UK's largest housebuilders with a network of 13 divisions operating across England and Wales. In July 2020, the company launched its new Nature for People Strategy, in partnership with The Wildlife Trusts. The strategy has three main objectives: to ensure Nature Gains as a result of developments; to help local communities live Wilder Lives by accessing nature-rich green spaces; and to deliver a long-term Flourishing Legacy for people and nature (see Box).

The strategy commits Redrow to exceeding the government's proposed 10% biodiversity net gain target, where possible. However, three further priorities also emerged during development of the strategy in relation to biodiversity net gain.

To create the best new developments for wildlife where people benefit from access to nature-rich spaces; and to use our activities to increase biodiversity, inspiring other businesses to do the same. The 'Nature for People' sets out Redrow's vision, approach and commitments to enhancing nature on all developments, finding ways to connect people with it and ensure it thrives for the long-term.

NATURE GAINS

- ✔ Prior to purchasing land we will assess the wider potential impacts on high quality habitats and wildlife in our decision making
- ✔ We will design our developments to contribute to existing or potential nature recovery networks
- ✔ We will retain, protect and enhance high quality habitats and compensate where losses are unavoidable
- ✔ We intend to exceed government requirements for a 10% net gain wherever possible
- ✔ We will achieve biodiversity net gains on-site, or as local to it as possible
- ✔ Our developments will be inspired by the landscape character with locally relevant, species-rich planting and pollinator friendly areas
- ✔ Green infrastructure on our developments will be multi-functional, benefiting nature and people

- ✔ We will create opportunities for the community to learn about local wildlife and support participation in the care of green spaces
- ✔ We will provide edible planting and opportunities for community food growing on our developments

FLOURISHING LEGACY

- ✔ We will choose organisations to manage our developments, who share our ambition to deliver a vibrant and natural legacy
- ✔ We will set clear expectations and develop inclusive delivery plans which guarantee long term gains for nature
- ✔ We will measure and share information about outcomes for nature, wellbeing and people

REWILDING LIVES

- ✔ The community will enjoy doorstep access to nature-rich green spaces throughout the development.
- ✔ We will provide bird, bat or bug boxes and hedgehog highways to new homeowners and support them in creating wildlife friendly gardens
- ✔ We will encourage community and stakeholder participation in the design of green spaces



One Developers Approach to Biodiversity Net Gain cont...

Connectivity

Although the current Defra Metric 2.0 recognises the importance of habitat connectivity, it is deliberately - and rightly - a relatively simple and practical tool. Consequently, the Redrow strategy takes a more explicit approach to ensuring connectivity for species through the development, as well as seeking to contribute to existing local nature recovery networks. The proposal for new 'Local Nature Recovery Strategies' (LNRS) in the forthcoming Environment Bill should help Redrow's teams identify local habitat networks more easily, which will inform decision making around land purchase and design approaches.

Local Context

When using formulaic tools, such as the Defra metric, there exists a risk that a prescribed response is produced based on numbers in a spreadsheet. This can result in a 'one-size-fits-all' approach and solutions that aren't necessarily responsive to the local context. Redrow's approach seeks to avoid this by asking 'what is needed in this place?' and committing to designing developments that respond to the local landscape character, with habitats that are appropriate to the site conditions, and planting of native, locally relevant species.

Biodiversity and People

Finally, balancing the needs of community access to green spaces with the desire to create ecologically valuable habitats needs to be addressed. The two don't always go hand in hand and a balance will need to be struck on a development by development basis. Redrow is seeking to achieve net gains on-site where possible, since the benefits of this approach are numerous. It will help the company in their aim of Creating Thriving Communities

- there is a body of research showing that high quality, biodiverse green spaces can positively impact the health and wellbeing of people accessing them. Additionally, the current pandemic has reinforced the vital importance of easy access to local green spaces for people. Achieving gains on-site benefits those living local to the development and can be considered a more socially equitable approach. And lastly, the process of retaining, enhancing and creating new habitats simply helps to create better developments. Notwithstanding these benefits, careful planning and design will be essential to protect and enhance biodiversity on-site and, in some circumstances, biodiversity offsetting may be a more appropriate option. Redrow's Saxon Brook development of 350 new homes near Exeter is a good example of a development that is set to achieve biodiversity net gain at the same time as enhancing placemaking and providing nature-rich spaces for the community to enjoy. The development site was previously agricultural land, mainly improved grassland, all of which was lost to the new development. A variety of new habitats were created including species-rich wildflower meadows, native woodland, orchard trees, new ponds with emergent and marginal vegetation, and marshy grassland. As well as being forecast to achieve a 15% net gain, the new landscaping provides several walking routes for the community to enjoy the green spaces.

Pilot Projects

The business is currently implementing the new Nature for People strategy – still in partnership with The Wildlife Trusts – and at present is working on a series of biodiversity net gain pilot projects. The aim of the projects is to inform development of new processes within the business, develop new briefs for ecological and landscape consultants, and consider ways that land, planning and design processes will need to change to achieve 10% net gain. The pilots are also mapping scenarios for achieving 15% and 20% gains to examine what these targets would mean for the business. Some of the key findings of projects carried out to-date are discussed below.



Natural planting around the ponds at Saxon Brook, Exeter

One Developers Approach to Biodiversity Net Gain cont...

Goodbye Amenity Grassland?

Previous pilot projects took a retrospective look at current developments and what they would have scored using the Defra metric. One of the key biodiversity findings (there were plenty of technical and process discoveries too!) was the obvious need to re-imagine the green spaces being designed. Even though many Redrow development sites are on agricultural land of low ecological value, replacing low value agricultural grassland with low value amenity grassland doesn't create an increase in biodiversity. The days of heavily mown lawns across whole swathes of development are numbered! Designing-in wildlife meadows on verges, creating community orchards and allowing some softer natural growth throughout developments all help to improve the score and at the same time provides interest and recreational value for the community. However, on some more densely plotted developments, or those with greater requirement for other facilities such as sports pitches, there simply may not be enough area to achieve a net gain and offsets may be needed. Similarly, achieving gains on smaller sites can also sometimes prove more difficult due to the space issues discussed above.

Collaboration for Success

There is recognition that a collaborative effort to achieving net gain and good schemes for nature and people is required, with input and support from a range of organisations. Ecology and Landscape design consultants need to work together more closely. First from a technical perspective to ensure mapping and plans are aligned, but second and more importantly to enable a shared understanding of the ecology and habitats being protected, enhanced and created and to enable communication of this to other parties. Redrow

are planning a webinar for all consultants to talk through the new Nature for People strategy and net gain, to obtain their input and to outline how Redrow's expectations are changing. Management companies have a critical role in ensuring gains are achieved and maintained in the long-term. The company is currently reviewing its specification for management companies to ensure a greater focus on biodiversity net gain, community engagement with the green spaces including events and volunteering, and measuring, monitoring and reporting of progress. Redrow are also working on further developing the relationship with The Wildlife Trusts at a local level which will provide local knowledge and ecological expertise, including biodiversity priorities, local site conditions and information on locally relevant species. They can also help promote engagement with the local community and ensure effective long-term management.



Responsible Developers

For Redrow, biodiversity net gain is a welcome intervention. It provides a structured, standardised approach to enhancing nature on new developments. Nature is in decline and the existing network of protected conservation sites alone won't halt this decline. All land has a role to play and new developments can provide important habitats for a range of species and should seek to provide connectivity to enable the movement of wildlife and help provide people with a daily connection to nature. It also helps create better places to live.

Nicola Johansen

Group Sustainability Manager
Redrow

**Redrow's Nature for People Strategy
can be viewed here:**
redrowplc.co.uk/biodiversity

Q&A on Biodiversity Net Gain and Local Nature Recovery Strategies

Based on the questions received during the RTPI South West Biodiversity and Achieving Net Gain webinar in January 2021.

Re-watch the webinar at:

https://youtu.be/BDrE_O0-Q_M

What is the difference between biodiversity net gain and environmental net gain?

Biodiversity net gain (BNG) only considers biodiversity (using habitat features as a proxy measure for this). Environmental net gain is underpinned by BNG but goes beyond BNG as it also seeks to capture the benefits and change across wider ecosystem service benefits. Environmental net gain also considers other considerations such as the amount of waste going to landfill, the thermal performance of buildings etc. Environmental net gain is more complex and simple tools are being developed to pinpoint or measure environmental net gain.

Can features like bat boxes be incorporated into the net gain calculations?

No they are not included in the BNG metric. There will be a question in the forthcoming consultation about the adapted BNG metric for small sites, asking whether there should be a mechanism to capture these other species features.

Another way that things like bat boxes can be captured is by referencing them within the net gain plan that the developer also has to submit along with the planning application and metric calculation.

When will the Biodiversity Metric 2.0 be updated?

This spring will see the publication of Metric 3.0 as well as the consultation on the Small Sites Metric.

What will be the implications of the Environment Bill for Neighbourhood Plan making?

It will reinforce the need for plans to consider the environment as early as possible and to seek to include BNG within neighbourhood planning.

How is soil being taken into account in BNG? E.G. loss and gain of soils, potential for carbon sequestration, microbiological activity, mycorrhizal networks and activity?

BNG metric version 2.0 or forthcoming version 3.0 do not take soil condition or quality into account. Soils might be taken into account in future as we move towards more of an environmental net gain approach. There are new and emerging voluntary tools – such as the eco-metric – which do seek to take other factors beyond just biodiversity into account. However, these are not part of the future mandatory net gain requirement.

Would local authorities increase their local BNG requirement to constrict the feasibility of development and restrict housing numbers?

Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) still need to deliver on their other obligations to government. Natural England together with government (including the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG)) have undertaken viability studies and are confident that the

minimum 10% BNG can be delivered without negatively impacting on housing delivery. LPAs should consider what impact, if any, locally increasing the percentage BNG over and above 10% may have. There are examples of LPAs who already require 20% BNG.

With off-site offsetting, will sites with a high biodiversity value already, be difficult to demonstrate a net gain? What is the ideal type/sort of land when considering off-site offsetting sites?

You can generate biodiversity units either by enhancing existing or creating new habitat types. So if the site has a high biodiversity value but is in poor condition then yes, it can be used to generate biodiversity units by managing it to improve its condition. However, existing high value and good condition habitats are not suitable sites for the delivery of net gain as they have little/no capacity to deliver any further uplift in biodiversity units.

Will legal agreements be needed to deliver BNG on 3rd party land?

Any BNG delivered outside the development red line boundary will need a legal agreement in place with the landowner delivering the BNG outcome on behalf of the developer. This is likely to be in the form of either a) a planning obligation or b) a conservation covenant.



Q&A on Biodiversity Net Gain and Local Nature Recovery Strategies cont...

Can BNG be used to improve an approved restoration plan as part of a planning permission granted 5 years ago? e.g. minerals and waste sites

The BNG requirements in the Environment Bill are not retrospective. There will be specific guidance (subject to secondary legislation which is still to be drafted) that sets out how minerals consents that have come up for renewal should be considered.

Statutory credits - will there be an incentive/multiplier for the credits bought under this scheme to be delivered locally? There is a multiplier for offsite but what about statutory credits? If there is none, why not and where is the benefit to the local stakeholder?

The detail of statutory credits is still being discussed within government, however, it is intended that they are there to help provide a mechanism whereby BNG can be delivered in the event of a developer not being able to deliver BNG on site or via the local market.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies

What is a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and how does it link to BNG?

Local Nature Recovery Strategies will be locally developed spatial strategies for nature recovery. They will identify opportunities and priorities for enhancing the natural environment. They will be mandatory, based on the Environment Bill. LPAs can direct the delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain in these LNRSs.

What is the geography of an LNRS?

LNRSs will coincide with one or more Local Plan areas (down to Mean Low Water) and are likely to be at the county scale.

What will be in an LNRS?

The Environment Bill requires an LNRS to contain a statement of biodiversity priorities and a local habitat map.

What impacts might LNRSs have on developers?

Defra and MHCLG have worked together with the aim to create LNRSs that aid the delivery of planning policy. The protection and enhancement of biodiversity is already part of planning policy. LNRSs will help developers to achieve this through knowledge about where development will have the least impact on biodiversity and where and how investment in new habitat creation or restoration will achieve best outcomes for biodiversity.

Will there be a timescale for LNRSs, will they be subject to consultation and examination and will they be for the local Council to prepare?

Defra is keen to progress this substantial programme of work as quickly as possible, as these strategies will become a vital tool in supporting nature's recovery and delivering on other environmental outcomes. Following Royal Assent of the Environment Bill, regulations will be published on preparing, publishing, consultation, reviewing and republishing an LNRS.

Is the responsible authority for LNRS the Local Authority or the County?

The Secretary of State will appoint a "responsible authority" to lead the production of each LNRS from the list of potential public bodies set out in the Environment Bill. By and large they are public bodies with strong knowledge of the local area and includes all types of local authority. The exception is Natural England, which will have an important role in contributing to the development of and advising on the production of all LNRSs, and can itself become the "responsible authority" where no willing local public body is found.

Would the Environment Bill and LNRSs have a major impact on the regeneration projects and urban town centres development? If so, in which ways?

LNRSs will identify opportunities for creating or improving habitat for biodiversity and wider environmental benefits. These individual opportunities will not be directly binding but delivery of each strategy as a whole will be incentivised and supported. It is intended that LNRSs will identify opportunities across urban and rural areas.

Will the landowner be informed prior to any land being identified on an LNRS map?

Defra are keen that landowners and land managers play an active role in developing LNRSs and any land identified as such should not come as a surprise to landowners. It is the intention that the strategies provide useful information to landowners and land managers and are produced collaboratively with involvement from public, private and voluntary sectors.

Nash Partnership African Projects Summary



In keeping with the wider world, progress on Nash Partnership’s projects and prospects in Africa has been slow over the last few months. But it has been moving forwards, nonetheless.

Jigawa Energy City, Nigeria

We have been edging towards completion on the Jigawa Energy City Project in northern Nigeria. The objectives of the project include reducing the country’s dependence on gas-fired power plants, developing a world class renewable energy cluster, creating jobs in a deprived part of the country and stimulating investment in the renewables sector more generally.

The project involves the creation of an energy-led masterplan, including a solar park, a cluster of associated industrial, R&D and educational uses and supporting housing and community facilities. The first phase of the masterplan covers 484 hectares (including the solar park) and would deliver circa 4,100 homes, 62 hectares of employment and community uses and 69 hectares of open space. Our approach was guided by a series of principles informed by a mix of international (the UN Sustainable Development Goals), national and state-level policy objectives (summarised below left).

Typically, the masterplan was informed by socio-economic and environmental baseline research. The latter included a study of local urban morphology, focused on key settlements elsewhere in the region. This was important, as cities in the north are different from other regions due to climatic, cultural and religious factors. It was also informed by a review of case study examples, including a 20-year old locally prepared masterplan for Jigawa and more recent masterplans prepared by international consultants. It was also underpinned by a mixture of urban design analysis and high-level concept, the latter picking up on the design traditions relating to the Calabash, ubiquitous in northern Nigerian culture.

The masterplan is shown below.

Dimension	Principles
Economic	<p>1. Economic empowerment</p>
	<p>2. Fostering innovation, diversification and value addition to the local economy</p>
	<p>3. Promoting the role of the private sector in growth and development.</p>
Social	<p>4. Creating people-friendly places</p>
	<p>5. Reinforcing local distinctiveness, culture and identity</p>
	<p>6. Spatial and social inclusion and integration</p>
Environmental	<p>7. Reducing energy use and promoting zero-carbon energy</p>
	<p>8. Providing of green/ blue infrastructure networks</p>
	<p>9. Promoting sustainable waste management and use of materials</p>

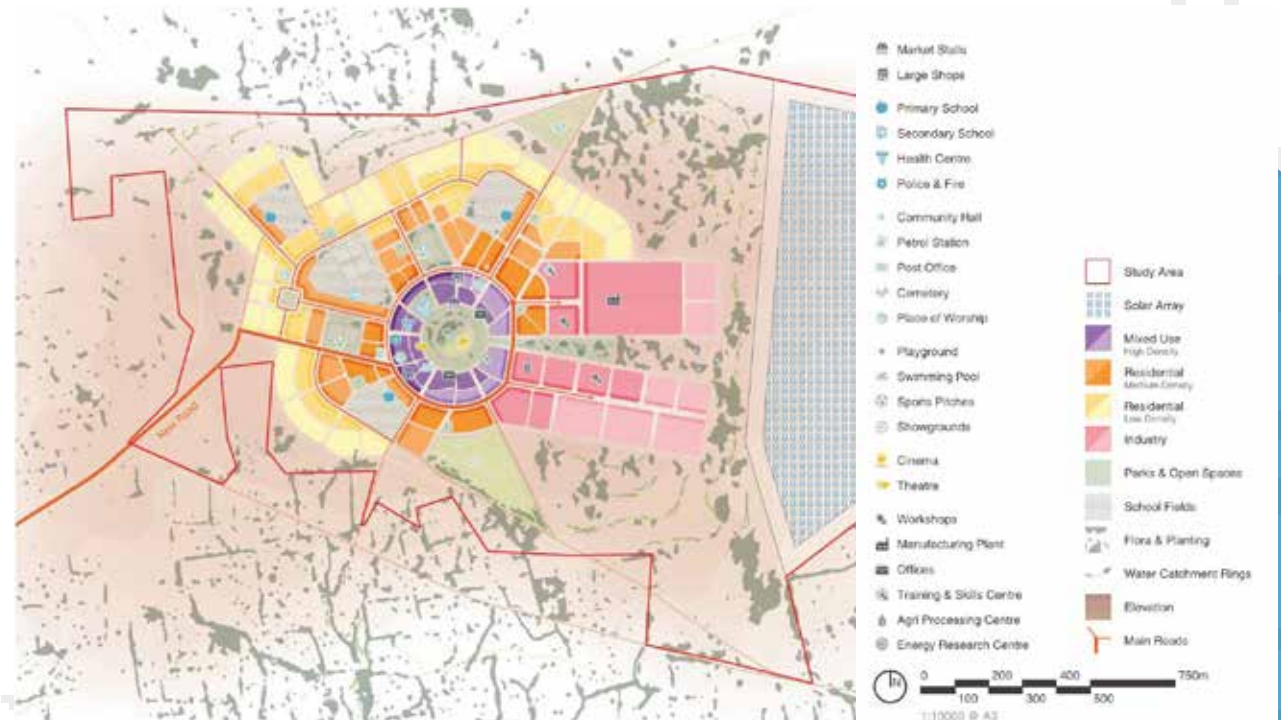


Figure 1: Jigawa Masterplan Principles

Nash Partnership African Projects Summary



The project is due to be signed off by project stakeholders, who include the African Development Bank, the Nigerian Rural Electrification Agency and Jigawa State Government imminently. The next stage – to be led by others - will be to source funding for the delivery of the solar park, together with other key infrastructure required to deliver the masterplan.

Pemba, Mozambique

We have also been working with the British High Commission and Pemba City Council in Mozambique, to develop proposal for a new planning framework for the City of Pemba in the north. Sitting on a beautiful coastline and at the southern tip of the third largest natural bay in the world, this city of over 200,000 faces multiple pressures – positive and negative. These include tropical cyclones, most recently reflected in Cyclone Kenneth which cause widespread damage in 2019; a growing Islamic insurgency in northern Cabo Delgado, giving rise to significant incoming migration of internally displaced persons (IDPs); and the recent discovery of offshore gas. COVID-19 has now been added to that list.

As a result, the city is in desperate need of a city plan to coordinate the rapid changes it faces, which will give rise to increasing inequality and insecurity if not properly coordinated. It should also help make the most of its significant natural assets for tourism, energy generation and other purposes, which in turn will help provide a longer-term transition away from gas towards more sustainable income generation. A planning framework, investment strategy and building the capacity of government officials, academia and the community will all form key planks of the strategy.

We are currently working with the British High Commission to source funding for the project. This has been delayed due to short-term funding prioritising those projects relating to COVID-19 and human capital development, the latter to arrest the growing Islamic Insurgency in the north.



Figure 3: Pemba Coastline

Mike Fox
Nash Partnership

Akosombo, Ghana

We also led a bid for a smart city masterplan for Akosombo in Ghana. Akosombo was originally planned in the 1960s alongside the creation of the Akosombo Dam – the largest post-independence project in Ghana- which created Lake Volta, the largest man-made lake in the world. Having out-grown its original masterplan, The Volta River Authority sees an opportunity to build on the town’s modernist foundations to create a smart, sustainable town based around growing its tourism, technology, and quality-of-life offer.

We led a team comprising a mix of Ghanaian and international consultants and await the outcome of the bid.

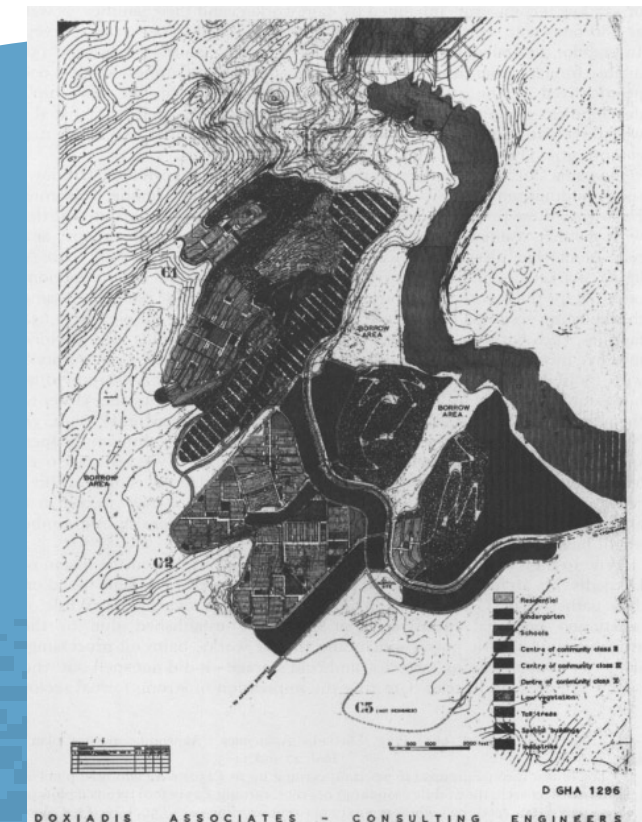


Figure 4. Akosombo
- Original Masterplan

RTPI South West Events 2021

Discussions of the Lunch Queue

Open house networking opportunities hosted by RTPI South West Committee Members

25 February, 22 April, 17 June 12.00-13.00

As we are now 'all' mostly settled back in our working from home environment, embracing technology and joining the wide variety of RTPI webinars which allow us to learn from professionals from across the UK, there is one that has been difficult to replicate...networking

Therefore we are hosting a range of virtual informal networking events which would allow a small group of members to come together to have those conversations. This could be current issues in planning, The Planning White Paper or our aspirations for planning in 2021 onwards, but otherwise we will take the conversation as the meeting naturally leads us.

www.rtpi.org.uk/swnetworkingfeb2021

BOOK NOW



Learning from COVID-19 - how the pandemic has shaped the way in which we will live in the future

8 March, 1200 - 1300

The recent pandemic has had a huge impact on the mental health of our societies. Part of this was due to isolation and limited access to open space. This webinar seeks to explore how the virus has changed the way we want to live with a personal insight into how it has affected one individual and their future decisions on housing.

The webinar will also introduce the latest edition and new name for Building for Life 12 - Building for a Healthy Life. Funded by NHS England and supported by Homes England, Building for a Healthy Life is about how you can create healthier places to live through more thoughtful design.

We will then also understand more about the Green Minds project in Plymouth which received EU funding. Green Minds aims to put nature at the heart of decision making recognising its role in shaping a healthy future for all.

Speakers

Personal perspective

Emily Porter, Town Planner at Tetra Tech

Building for a Healthy Life

Dr. Stefan Kruczkowski, Urban Design Doctor Limited

Green Minds - Rewilding people and places

Zoe Sydenham, Natural Infrastructure Projects and Partnerships Manager, Plymouth City Council

www.rtpi.org.uk/designmarch2021

BOOK NOW



These hour long webinar sessions are a very helpful way to gain an insight into a particular area of planning and keep up to date on key issues"

RTPI South West Events 2021

The Planning White Paper: A radical shift in how we engage with our communities?

Organised by Planning Aid England South West

16 March, 12.00 - 13.00

Join us on the 16 March for a discussion with local professionals from the South West on engagement in planning and the impact of the recent Planning White Paper. As well as discussing the implications of the White Paper on future projects and community engagement, we will also consider the opportunities and challenges it may bring.

The webinar will illustrate its discussion by looking at examples of community projects in the region and providing perspectives from planning policy, a developer and the community. PAE will be seeking questions from volunteers in advance, and there will be an opportunity to ask questions on the day.

As this is organised by volunteers on the South West task group for Planning Aid England (PAE), the Chair will give a short update.

Speakers

Richard Grant - Head of Planning Policy at Cornwall Council

Hannah Sloggett - Co-Founder and Director of Nudge Community Builders which is a grassroots community benefit society bringing empty buildings back into use in collaborative ways for long term local benefit on Union Street in Plymouth.

Paul Brockway - Founding Director at Hyas Associates Ltd

www.rtpi.org.uk/paecommunityengagement

BOOK NOW



Mixed use neighbourhood developments Resilience against crisis?

27 April, 1200 - 13.00

How are our neighbourhoods changing and what impact is this having on our society? This webinar will explore the resilience of existing neighbourhoods and identify the potential positive impacts that creating mixed-use developments can have.

Speakers

Personal perspective Wilstockhub -

Creating a community hub

Lucinda Spelman-Ives, local resident and fundraiser

Delivery mechanisms for social infrastructure, healthcare and local services

Tim Crawshaw, RTPI Vice President

The West of England Placemaking Charter and the 15-minute neighbourhood

Juliet Bidgood

www.rtpi.org.uk/mixedusedevelopmentsapril2021

BOOK NOW



A great, bite-size opportunity to keep up with the latest developments"



This was a very helpful hour of CPD, the topics were clearly explained and there was a good level of detail covered"

RTPI South West Events 2021

Note: These events will only take place if it is safe to do so in light of the pandemic.

GETTING OUTDOORS - CYCLING & WALKING EVENTS

Following the Chair's theme of Health and Wellbeing and a desire to offer a broader range of events for members. We are hoping to host a range of walking and cycling events in the region. They will be great opportunities to network whilst also exploring a local planning case study or discussion.



Cycling event

The first cycling event will be a splendid leisurely ride along 16 miles of the Exe Estuary Trail on the South Devon Coast. The Exe Estuary Trail was also overall winner of the RTPI South West Awards in 2015. The cycle ride will include plenty of stops and a selection of CPD presentations on

- 1 "Planning for Coastal Change" by Corine Dyke / Alison Slade (Ecologist) - Natural England
- 2 "Planning for Green Infrastructure" by Estelle Skinner - Green Infrastructure Officer, Teignbridge District Council
- 3 "Planning for delivery of the Exe Cycle Trail" Hayley Stokes - Devon County Council RTPI SW Award Winner in 2017) and the case officer for parts of the Exe Estuary Route
- 4 "Planning for Active Travel: Case Study Exeter" Mark Hodgson of Co-Cars/Co-bikes to speak. Co-bikes is the electric bike hire network which is being rolled out in Exeter (the first in the UK).

The cycling event will be accessible with pedal and electric cycle hire available and also if you do not wish to do the cycling, you can join the event for just the CPD presentations

Please note that dates are not being marketed at this stage, but if you are interested in attending or even helping to organise a walk or cycling event please contact southwest@rtpi.org.uk



Walking events

A variety of walking events across the region including:

- 1 **Gloucestershire** - The Cotswold Way and preserving nature vs human impact. A walk of approximately 4.5 miles with leaders from Painswick Beacon Conservation Trust, Stroud District Council and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust
- 2 **The good, bad and ugly of Bristol planning** This walk will take you to what could be perceived in planning as the 'good' in the pedestrianizing of Queen square, the 'bad' the roundabout outside St Mary Redcliffe and the 'ugly' being the Galleries and the sky track. The walk will allow for discussion about why these are not good in planning terms and how we think these could be changed to turn them into 'good'.
- 3 **Regenerating Plymouth** - This walk will look at the Conservation Area and associated Heritage Action Zone/Future High Streets Fund, city centre regeneration at different stages, boulevard link to waterfront (Mackay Vision), public realm projects, Pilgrim Court and finish at The Box
- 4 **Teignmouth** - A walk with a Coastal Town Regeneration theme. The route will look at and talk about the where the new Premier Inn hotel to be built, the consultation on the Teign Estuary cycle trail, the Network rail scheme to realigning the railway along the coast, and community led arts / crafts regeneration. Also a discussion on the recently completed Pavilions led by the Council which provides entertainment space, function rooms, restaurant and a number of small business units.

- 5 **The hidden gems of Shepton Mallet** - This 5 mile circular walk will look at some of Shepton's listed buildings including the Grade II* listed former brewery and now-closed prison, past Kilver Court, over the fields and under the (grade II* viaduct) to the Fosse Way before heading back.



COMING SOON!