



West Midlands BRIT AWARDS: Friday 8th July 2011

After the fantastic success of last year's glamorous Oscars Awards party, the RTPI West Midlands is delighted to announce that this summer all members are invited to our very own **BRIT Awards Ball for Planning Achievement**. Help celebrate planning excellence in the region, and join the red, blue and white extravaganza on **Friday 8 July 2011** at the wonderful Birmingham **Botanical Gardens**. Partners and guests are very welcome to join us for dinner and dancing and the presentation of regional awards by the Institute's President, Richard Summers.

In addition to the main award for **Planning Achievement** (and possible commendations), there will be awards for the **Best Consultancy**, **Best Local Authority**, **Team of the Year**, **Young Planner of the Year** and a **Special Chairman's award**. See inside for details of how to make your nomination.

Tickets for 8th July are now available from Sue Griffith-Jones on 0121 709 1599 or email westmidlands@rtpi.org.uk Book & pay before the end of May to take advantage of the "earlyBrit" rate of £42 per person. Tables of ten are also available at £420. Ticket prices will increase from 17th June.

RTPI West Midlands are very grateful to Alliance Planning for taking the lead sponsorship package, and to GVA, DLA Piper, No5 Chambers, Place Elements & JMP for taking other sponsorship packages.

The 'Brits' will be a black tie event, for the gentlemen at least, and feel free to accessorize with some British Sparkle! There'll be music and dancing, good food, warm company and a real chance to see the West Midlands at its best! See you there! ■

Please book early to avoid disappointment. We anticipate demand will be high for this event.



An apology. Apologies for the late production of this edition of Tripwire. We wanted to provide the full details of the BRIT Awards event on Friday 8th July 2011 and have been waiting for the publicity material to come through.

Editor - John Acres, Ripon Cottage, 5 Manor Road, Kilsby, Near Rugby, Warks, CV23 8XS
Work: 01789 203800 • Home: 01788 824343 • Email: acresclark@lineone.net

Inside

Chair's remarks	2
YPWestmids wins Young Planners Conference 2011	2
West Midlands Landfill Diversion Strategy	3
The High Speed Train (HS2)	4
High Speed Rail lessons for strategic planning	4
Editor's thoughts	7
The Localism Bill – Current progress	7
A clash of lifestyles – planning for gypsies and travellers	8
'From Kyoto to Copenhagen to Cancun'	8
Cutting Red tape – the sequel to the 'Front Door' story	9
Planning Aid England is changing	9
Responding to the Recession – how the Institute is coping with the pressures	10
Free CPD places for unemployed planners	10
Managing Environmental Change at the Rural Urban Fringe	11
CPD	11

Message from the Chairman

Thank you West Midlands Planning Aid. It is with a degree of mixed emotions that I am writing this message from the Chair. On the 18th March the Planning Aid West Midlands office in Ludgate Hill in Birmingham formally closed as part of the rolling wind-down of the *Planning Aid England* Service. This brings to an end a dedicated West Midlands Service that for over four decades has focussed on helping communities and disadvantaged groups engage with the planning system.

I would like to record my personal appreciation and thanks to all those professionals and volunteers who have worked so hard to make the West Midlands Planning Aid Service (WMPAS) so successful

and, particularly, to thank those staff who recently delivered the service under the cloud of uncertainty, speculation and redundancy.

Less than a month later, Planning Minister Greg Clark announced that the RTPI and Planning Aid London have been awarded £1million to deliver a community planning service to support neighbourhoods in England. This is obviously great news for Planning Aid, but what does it mean for the West Midlands and the other regions of England? One thing is clear, the level of funding secured means that the Planning Aid England Service going forward will not be regionally based and there will be no specific co-ordinator based in the West Midlands.

In common with other RTPI Regions, I feel that it is important for RTPI West Midlands to maintain a strong link between the changing Planning Aid Service and the planners in the region who are the life-blood of the service, namely, the volunteers.

Accordingly, the RTPI West Midlands Regional Activities Committee has set up a West Midlands Planning Aid Sub-Group. This group will assist Planning Aid England by providing local knowledge in respect of community planning in the West Midlands. I believe that this group should have as broad a membership of professional planners as possible, so if anyone is interested in joining the sub-group, do please contact me.

But the changes to the Planning Aid Service are not the only issue that have touched planning and our region in recent months. The Chancellor's budget on the 23rd March had a feeling of '*Back to the Future*' about it, with the introduction of two Enterprise Zones in the West Midlands, focussed on the Black Country and East Birmingham & Solihull, together with confirmation that a '*presumption in favour of sustainable development*' will be included in the forthcoming National Planning Policy Framework.

Recognition of the specific regeneration and employment issues associated with these parts of our Region is welcomed but I fear we have seen this "just say yes" style of planning before. Such thoughts led me to re-

read chapters of '*Region and Renaissance*' in respect of the 1980's push for economic growth and jobs. Clearly, if you work in planning long enough then history really does repeat itself!

On other matters in the Region, preparations for the Summer Ball & Regional Awards event at the Botanical Gardens, Birmingham on the 8th July are going well and we hope that this year's event will be the best yet. We have already secured significant sponsorship for the event and I am grateful to all those companies, including my own *Alliance Planning*, who are supporting the event this year. The increased sponsorship means that we can keep the ticket prices in line with last year and provide a few little extras for your money. If you have not booked your tickets please do so soon and preferably before the end of May to take advantage of the reduced 'early bird' rate – another way we are helping members during these challenging times.

Other good news in April was the confirmation from RTPI that YP West Midlands bid to bring the National Young Planners Conference to Birmingham on the 21st and 22nd October has been accepted. This is wonderful news. May I offer my personal congratulations to Laura Smith, Jo Hooper and all the young planners involved with this proposal. Watch this space for more details.

Finally, it just leaves me to remind you all that the RTPI West Midlands AGM will be held on the 23rd May at the Old Joint Stock in Birmingham when our guest speaker will be the Chief Executive of the RTPI, Trudi Elliott. If you have any questions, complaints or issues about the working of your Institute then please come along a put your question direct to the Chief Executive on the night.

As always, I should very much welcome your views and ideas on the RTPI and RTPI West Midlands and in particular any suggestions as to how we can assist members during this difficult period. Please feel free to email me at: mw@alliance-plan.co.uk ■

Mark Walton

Chair, RTPI West Midlands



Hot off the press... Hot off the Press... Hot off the press...

YPWestmids Wins Young Planners Conference 2011

The National Young Planners Conference is the biggest event of the year aimed at Young Planners. Following a successful bid from YPwestmids, this year's conference will take place in Birmingham and will be centred around the

theme **Planning for Growth**. The conference will be held at Birmingham Council House on 21 - 22 October 2011. The Conference Dinner will be held on Friday 20 October at the Burlington Hotel. The conference offers the opportunity to learn

about current issues facing planning from a wide range of high quality speakers. Watch this space! ■

Laura Smith

Chair YPwestmids

West Midlands Landfill Diversion Strategy

Advantage West Midlands won the top award in the 'Spatial Planning Projects' Category for their work in devising a Waste Strategy for the region in the Royal Town Planning Institute, National Planning Awards held in London in January. The aim of the Strategy is to divert waste away from landfill and create green jobs for the region as part of a low carbon economy.

The West Midlands faces a growing shortfall in waste treatment capacity which urgently needs to be addressed if we are to make the most of opportunities for growth and avoid adding to the cost burden of local companies. By 2020 the region will need to manage 3.7 million tonnes more waste each year than it can currently handle without relying on disposal at landfill sites which are inherently unsustainable and have dwindling capacity. Waste disposal is estimated to have cost businesses in the West Midlands about four per cent of turnover in 2007, equivalent to more than £250 million. Cumulative increases in Landfill Tax of £8 per tonne of waste per year could see this grow to six per cent by 2012.

The Landfill Diversion Strategy provides a ground-breaking solution and is the first plan of its kind to be published in the UK. It can easily be replicated across the UK. The Strategy provides a GIS-based Location Assessment Tool which shows how, where and what type of key waste and recycling infrastructure can be deployed to help divert waste away from landfill. For any single point location in the West Midlands, the tool can identify and map opportunities and constraints for waste infrastructure development. This allows 'hotspots' of opportunity to be identified, including the ability to match potential sites with the most appropriate waste technologies or a series of locations suited to a specific type of facility. A series of detailed maps and location shortlists can be generated as part of strategic planning for individual local authority areas, or as part of a wider strategic approach to inform the actions of Local Enterprise Partnerships at the 'greater than local level'.



In making the award, the RTPI Judges commented that: "The approach brings a clear and consistent methodology that helps to breed confidence in the planning process. The quality of the professional work involved in the development of planning concepts, implementation of the analysis and formulation of the strategy has been excellent."

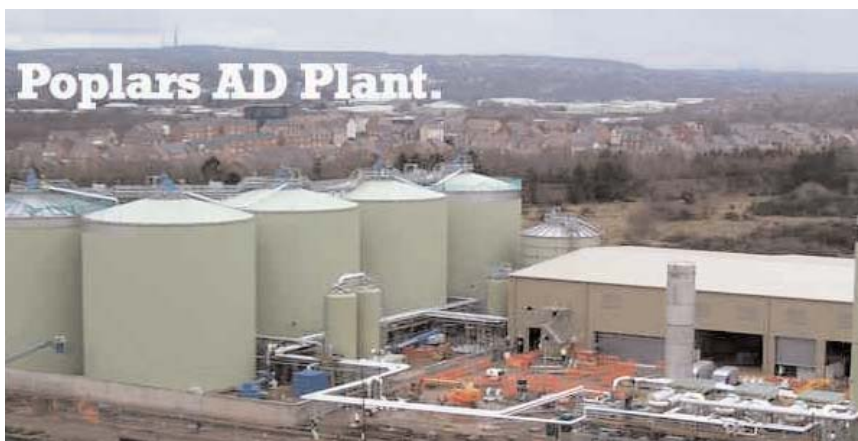
The project was carried out by SLR Consulting (Alban Forster, technical director) and DTZ (Richard Howard, director) and was managed by a steering group of organisations including: Advantage West Midlands (Tim Baldwin, energy and waste manager), Ecolateral (Peter Jones, consultant); Staffordshire County Council (Bruce Braithwaite MRTPI, strategic waste policy officer); the Regional Technical Advisory Body for Waste (RTAB) (Chairman: Adrian Cooper, Shropshire Council) and Biffa Waste Services (Jeff Rhodes, planning manager).

Jeff Rhodes, planning manager at Biffa Waste Services commented that: "Biffa referred to this strategy in support of its successful planning application for our new 120Ktpa anaerobic digestion plant at Cannock and it also endorses our current planning application for an Energy Recovery Facility on adjacent land, although we are still awaiting the outcome of that application. As with all such development tools, the acid

test will be how much it gets used and endorsed now through the planning system and how much regard local politicians have to it when making decisions."

Looking forward, the West Midlands benefits from one of the longest established technical officer groups on waste planning, now known as the 'Resource Technical Advisory Body for Waste (RTAB)'. Working with the Waste and Resources Action Programmellan (WRAP), RTAB is working to support the application of the Landfill Diversion Strategy as part of the on-going development and implementation of local authority waste development plans and by industry and potential investors as part of preparing and assessing potential development opportunities. The group includes about thirty representatives from across a range of sectors: local authorities, the waste industry, government bodies and the third sector. It was first established in about 1995 to provide co-ordination and strategic advice on waste and resource management issues in the West Midlands. A growing scarcity of specialised technical staff in Waste Planning Authorities, together with the scale of the landfill diversion challenge and the forthcoming 'Duty to Co-operate', mean that it is now more relevant than ever.

Application of the Strategy will support the development of stronger links between the waste and recycling industry, regeneration industries and local businesses. It is intended to act as a catalyst for change in the West Midlands, creating a receptive environment for waste technologies as well as positioning the area as a location of choice for waste businesses and developers. Recognition of the economic, as well as environmental cost of waste can help challenge negative perceptions and foster opportunities for local enterprise. The objective is for resource management and recycling facilities to become seen as a form of essential infrastructure for business, as well as an economic growth sector in its own right. ■



The High Speed Train (HS2)

We are currently midway through a Public consultation on the Government's draft proposals for a High Speed Railway, from London to Birmingham – and beyond. The Consultation period started at the end of February 2011 and ends on 29th July 2011.

This is probably the largest (albeit maybe the only) major infrastructure project to affect the West Midlands region, but it couldn't be more important for both planners, for the regional economy and for many local communities.

The project conjures up all the tensions which are inherent in so many major planning decisions – what is good for the national interest may not necessarily be good for the local interest, whether a financial and economic benefit in one area can reasonably offset an environmental impact in another and above all whether the country should be promoting high speed rail as an answer to long distance travel as an alternative to air travel or the private car – or is 'HS2' the equivalent of 'Concorde', an example where excessive speed and expense

were ultimately defeated by the need for greater capacity and excessive costs.

In this issue we publish a Feature Article by Andy Cowan, who has explored the merits of HS2, using experience from both Britain and Europe. In our next issue, we hope to give space to the opposing viewpoints on HS2, before the Consultation period ends in July. We would however welcome comments from members so that the West Midlands Region can respond to RTPI at Botolph Lane with our own angle on this very important topic. ■

High Speed Rail lessons for strategic planning

Four decades in Planning have taught me that the freedom to say what you think is only as valuable as your ability to think about what you're going to say. But I don't detect too much thinking behind the debate about high speed rail (HSR) over the past year. And I'm not holding my breath as 'pro' and 'anti' lobbies lock horns in the current public consultation on the HS2 i.e. the Coalition Government's proposals to link from London to Birmingham – as part of a HSR network extending to Manchester and Leeds (see map).

Putting the deluge of rhetoric aside, there is a rush to judgement about the operational environmental and economic costs and benefits – as if the (impossible) task of counting them would produce a decision that future generations could applaud. Major national infrastructure decisions are never made on this basis without the strategic context of economic and political forces already pointing in the same direction. For example, if there had been business cases produced for the establishment of the Bank of England in the late 17th century or for the mid-19th century UK railway network they would not have stack-up financially. (Of course, they would

certainly fail a 21st century environmental impact / sustainability appraisal). They were, instead, the result of overriding and converging strategic forces that led to the creation of a financial and military infrastructure on which was grown a vast trading and colonial empire. Done today, the narrow business cases for both would be overwhelming (i.e. slavery and subjugation apart).

The consultation opened by Transport Secretary Philip Hammond MP on 28 February 2011 confirms the Coalition Government's commitment to a HSR network in UK from which, if confirmed by Parliament, future Westminster administrations are unlikely to renege. Signalling its interpretation of 'localism' in relation to local authorities and pressure groups, this Government is set to change the way UK governments do business – and this shows up in its approach to HSR – with some uncomfortable implications for local government and important lessons for strategic planners.

First, culture is important: During the prolonged machinations over HS1 – the (not so high speed) rail link from London to the Channel Tunnel - Jeremy Paxman was observing in his book "The English", that if the French Government "wants to build a railway line or a power station it wills the means, no matter whose back garden it happens to be in." He goes on to add, by way of contrast " (and) the English not only won't raise the taxes to make it happen, but hold planning inquiries at which every objection from Dunroamin can be weighed." ¹ That may now be about to change.

Over a decade on, all the UK's main competitors believe – rightly or wrongly – that HSR networks are essential to be able to compete effectively in the 21st century global economy. Like its predecessor, the Coalition Government believes that "a high speed rail link from London to Birmingham would help

the West Midlands economy catch up with the South East" ² This reflects the long held Whitehall view that the regions are not pulling their weight in the national economy. ³ And a more recent study provides the evidence that GVA declines with increasing travel time from London. ⁴

HSR networks have been built or are planned in France, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain, Italy, China, India, Turkey, Japan, Russia, Poland and the USA, (6 networks). The business cases deployed are network wide, capturing the big citymarkets 150-750 km apart (i.e. too long for the car, too short for the plane) – this is the prevailing economic geography that we ignore at our peril. To our competitors HSR signals a new era in surface transport making, for example, Europe a much smaller place ⁵. It is to rail travel what the jumbo-jet has been to inter-continental air travel with, arguably, much greater potential for cementing international ties and much less embarrassment to global climate change obligations.

A review of research into HSR networks in Japan, France, Germany Spain and Italy points to economic geography being the overriding factor with benefits largely accruing to the big cities and the places in between actually suffering. ⁶ But there are differences in approach: the French use HSR to maintain the centralisation of the French economy in Paris whilst the Germans aim to even-out economic opportunity and accessibility across their 7 or 8 main cities. Consequently, in France the HSR lines are separated from the existing network and so tend to skirt densely populated areas, muting the potential for local objection. On the other hand, to spread the transport and economic benefits the Germans try to integrate their HSR into the existing network. However, this well-intended strategy means penetrating densely populated areas where they encounter more local protest.





What is well understood abroad but hardly grasped in the UK by Churchill's 'island race' is that HSR networks create their own viability by providing affordable mass transit in line with the economic geography of the times and then go on to dictate a new economic geography. HSR is not just a faster version of our current 'classic' railways – it's a different mode of transport. The capacity of one HS2 train is the equivalent of three jumbo jets (i.e. 1100 passengers) – not that they are used on short-haul routes for obvious financial reasons. And for comparative travel time-times we only have to reflect on the fact that gate-to-gate times from Heathrow to Charles de Gaulle have increased by 40% over the past 30 years. Over the 150-750 km range, the gap is closing all the time with HSR squeezing out short-haul flights plying the same routes e.g. Paris –Lyon (1981-84) air traffic's modal share fell from 31% to 7%; Madrid-Seville (1991-94) air traffic fell from 40% to 13%. Rail traffic share increased in these cases, by 40-72%

and 16-51% respectively, due to the opening of HSR lines along these routes.

Moreover, HSR lines are not like motorways or classic railway lines that can be planned by (in effect) draping a piece of string across a map, pushing it this way and that to avoid settlements and designated landscapes. But with a minimum horizontal radius of 8km, HSR lines are the equivalent of piano wire – move it in one place to placate protesters and further up and down the line it infringes the sensitivities of people in other places. So introducing twists and turns in the route or peppering it with 'station-stops' would end up taking the 'high speed' out of HSR.

Major infrastructure projects have their own unique characteristics that define their own constituency for solution. So, for me, the 'constituency' for HS2 was defined in December 2010 when Transport Secretary Philip Hammond responded to the private lobbying of local MPs, by making just a few 'tweaks' to the proposed original HS2

alignment. The route for consultation is now further away from the small village residences of the most vocal protesters but closer to the larger settlements of the less vocal. And it is this pre-consultation tweaking that has left local authorities struggling to find a legitimate way to influence the process. Most directly affected rural councils have already objected to HS2 on a variety of predictable grounds – if only to get the anti-HS2 lobby off their backs until May 2011 local elections are over⁷. Unsurprisingly 'big city' councils in London and Birmingham have given HS2 an unequivocal welcome, ignoring or side-lining the risks to particular city businesses (e.g. overnight hotel stays) and of intensified competition for business relocations.

Clearly, middle class pressure to ration access to cherished locations is still a political force to reckon with - in the UK. Tucking Philip Hammond's 'tweaks' under their belts, the well-shod anti-HS2 lobby has shifted focus towards national financial issues, gelling otherwise disparate opposition around the slogan that tax payers will be left to foot the bill for this 'white elephant'. A similar disposition was evident in the 19th century when the great and good 'railed' against development of the original classic railway network⁸. And it reared its head again when jumbo jets opened up Caribbean and similar exotic holiday locations to the masses and later as 'no-frills' airlines made trips to the likes of Tuscany, Provence and Prague affordable for almost everyone. The same pressure now seems to underlie current arguments in favour of alternative HS2 routes along existing motorway and classic rail corridors - the environments there are already degraded so a bit more doesn't matter. Accepting the principle of HSR – as many 'anti' HS2 people do – but not the detail ignores the 'piano-wire' nature of HSR and is really saying 'it's a good idea – but for somewhere else please'.

Ostensibly, the Coalition Government is striving for the same equality of opportunity that drives the German approach to HSR. Its HS2 proposal includes connections to the classic network with half of the train fleet



What the new train might look like if plans proceed.



Anti and pro campaign literature.

engineered to be able to run on both high speed and classic railway lines. But this is just skin deep. The basic principle of HS2 is to skirt all but the very largest centres of population with on-route connections to just the biggest city destinations from new interchange stations (at Old Oak Common in West London and the National Exhibition Centre just east of Birmingham). Extension of the network to Manchester and Leeds will continue these principles – displaying all the separate and dedicated features of the French system, probably with similar economic and political centralising tendencies.

The stark reality is that the speed and direction of HSR network development in the UK is already out of local hands. Central government has taken a tight grip on both the finance and the politics of HSR - and since 'finance is the gun and politics is knowing when to pull the trigger' - it will be taking all the major decisions more or less unaided by the rest of us.⁹ Like the French, we might as well get used to it.

So the prospect is grim for local authorities - torn between short term political imperatives (the up-coming elections) and long term economic realities (e.g. HSR will happen sooner or later). Excluding them from the 'behind the scenes discussions' that led to the December 2010 pre-consultation revisions sends the clear message that local authorities are not regarded as part of the HSR 'constituency for solution'. And the Hybrid Bill process means that there will be no public inquiry at which councils can demonstrate their technical and political superiority in local issues. They can, like anyone, respond to the consultation but

few if any councils will have the resources to make a decisive influence on the Parliamentary debate. Of course, (if and) when the Bill is enacted, local authorities will be left the thankless task of acting as brokers in the inevitable disputes over the minutia of local road and footpath diversions, colours of noise barriers, etc.

Meanwhile, as strategic planning leaves the purview of local authorities - bound no doubt for a variety of public, private, and independent voluntary sector organisations - there's still a job for strategic planners, wherever they are working. In the spirit of the authors of the 1947 Town & Country Planning Act, let's hope they can aim to provide for the development needs of society in a balanced way – not try to determine them beyond our capacity to gauge the implications. We need a clear understanding of the nature of HSR, what it means and how those implications that we can measure could be steered towards achieving the objectives of our different organisations.

It occurs to me that HSR offers a lot of opportunities for strategic planners to exercise their skills. You don't have to be a genius to figure out that, for example, just in terms of HS2 construction, an injection of as little as £3 billion in the West Midlands economy over a 10 year construction period dwarfs anything that the former Regional Development Agency could offer to stimulate economic growth over the past 10 years. Likewise, the on-going operational expenditure will be much greater than could be attributed to the largest of existing (or past) industrial enterprises. There are clear opportunities to re-invigorate failing

regeneration schemes if they do not have to accepted out-migration of the more independent households to jobs in better-off locations when those households can commute to work there by HSR and still live, spend and invest back home. And it doesn't stop there. The scope for directing funding and ownership control to environmental management regimes (of the sort piloted by HS1) has to be enormous compared with what is currently available from DEFRA and EA.

The challenge (and I don't mean 'problem') for strategic planners will be to suspend those judgements that cannot be made now and will have to be left to future generations –persuading their employers of the wisdom of doing so – and at the same time resisting the current preoccupation with taking sides first and then trying to justify choices later. Good luck!

Andy Cowan, BA (HON), MRTPI, is a former County Planner, now living in Rugby, Warwickshire. He has over 40 years' experience of local government, leading work on a wide range of major development proposals, including national infrastructure projects. ■

References:

1. Paxman, J. 'The English – A Portrait of a People', 1998, Penguin, pp. 132-133.
2. Philip Hammond MP, Secretary of State for Transport, quoted by BBC Online, 24 February 2011.
3. "Competitiveness and Productivity in the UK 3 – the Regional Dimension". HM Treasury, London 2001.
4. Martin Boddy, John Hudson, Anthony Plumridge and Don J. Webber. "Regional Productivity Differentials: Explaining the Gap". Faculty of the Built Environment, University of the West of England, Bristol & Department of Economics, University of Bath. Regional Studies (Special Edition) 2004. p.14.
5. Daily Mail. "Deutsche Bahn sends 200mph ICE3 train to London"; 20th October 2010.
6. Albalade, D. & Bel, G. "High Speed Rail – Lessons for Policy Makers from Experiences Abroad". Barcelona University - Research Institute of Applied Economics; Working Paper (2010/03).
7. Townsend, S. "Town halls link to fight rail route". 'Planning Resource' 14 Jan 2011.
8. Sir Peter Hall. "Rail worries are typically English"; 'Planning' 14 Jan 2011.
9. Observation made by the fictional character, Don Lucchesi, Vatican Finance Chief, made to the fictional character Michael Corleone in 'Godfather III'. Film directed by Francis Ford Coppola (1990).

Editor's thoughts

A shift in emphasis or a sea change in policy.

This year's budget was heralded as a 'Plan for Growth' – not unusual perhaps – they often are! But this time the tone, content and presentation were very different.

The tone was up-beat and determined, reflecting the urgency of a Chancellor desperate to break loose from the current recession. The content of the Budget speech was accompanied by an integrated package of measures designed to kick-start the development industry and shake off, what the Coalition see, as the shackles of planning. Above all, the presentation was carefully planned, choreographed and integrated, with synchronised presentations from George Osborne (the Chancellor), Vince Cable (Business Secretary), Greg Clark (Minister for Decentralisation) and Eric Pickles (Communities Secretary), all saying much the same thing – we need growth!

The messages from each were as follows:-

- That from now on the default response to new development should be 'yes', unless the proposal undermines essential 'sustainability principles' – this is the foretaste of the long awaited 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'.
- That the planning system is focused on supporting economic growth and recovery to help rebuild the British economy,
- That local authorities should press ahead without delay in producing Local Development Plans, speeding up the delivery of applications and assisting in facilitating new homes and jobs, and above all.
- That the new initiatives and policy stance should apply with immediate effect. As

Steve Quartermain explains in an accompanying letter, entitled 'Planning for Growth' the Ministerial Statements can now be regarded as a 'material consideration' in decision making.

These inter-connected statements provide the clearest indication that the Government really means business this time and that planning must become the *solution* not the *problem* in stimulating growth. Indeed, against a background where the first quarter statistics show a 5% fall in construction activity, against a modest 0.5% growth in the economy, development is now seen as a high priority in stimulating the economy.

More specifically, the Budget Statement contains measures to:-

- Impose a new 'presumption in favour of sustainable development', except in areas covered by clear protectionist policies such as Green belt and AONB,
- Introduce a strongly pro-growth National Planning Policy Statement,
- Change permitted development rights, including the freedom to change the use of empty office buildings and warehouses to residential development,
- Encourage local authorities to review S106 agreements, where viability is hampering developers from delivering schemes which would create jobs and investment,
- Extend the Neighbourhood Planning model to businesses to reduce the need for planning consents,
- Remove so-called arbitrary targets, including the current brown-field target for the delivery of land for residential development,
- Offer a 12 month guarantee to developers for the approval of planning applications,

Some will say these initiatives are not before time, if we are going to climb out of the paralysis which planning has suffered in the last few years. Others may argue that we have heard all this before, with the attempt by the Thatcher Government in the early 1980's to boost the economy through streamlining the planning system and relaxing controls. However, these are far-reaching changes which have been greeted with some scepticism by the National RTPI President, Richard Summers. In a strongly worded statement, he warned of a nation where 'in a decade we will end up with an England of 'tin sheds, Legoland housing and US style shopping malls'. In truth, if it takes a decade to achieve more economic development, then I suspect the Coalition Government will feel it has failed. They want it delivered sooner.

But in the context of the philosophy of 'localism' where local people are expected to have a greater say in the future of their communities, this strong centralist tone sends a sharp reminder to local authorities that it is Government which makes the key decisions, as well as providing the resources (for example through New Homes' Bonus). Hence the freedom to say 'no' to poorly designed or inappropriate development (as well as sustainable development) has just become much harder.

These statements will provide a clear signal to local councils, developers and the Inspectorate that the Government now means business – in more ways than one. But the key test of course, will be how the Minister responds to the more politically sensitive appeals and called-in decisions where he has to make difficult and often unpopular decisions. It will be then when we discover whether this is a genuine sea change, or just a storm in a tea-cup. ■

The Localism Bill – Current progress

The Second Reading of the Localism Bill took place on 17th January 2011. Eric Pickles, Communities Secretary, introduced the Bill by indicating that it would: '*reverse the centralist creep of decades and replace it with local control*'. He described it as '*a triumph for democracy over bureaucracy*'.

Shadow Communities Secretary, Caroline Flint, argued that '*the Bill would not revolutionise local politics, empower the masses to shake up their Towns Halls or reinvigorate local democracy*'. She reiterated the words of the Business Secretary in saying that '*it is a Bill which is not thought through*'. Above all, she said, '*it empowers one person – the Secretary of State*'.

Since then, between 25th January and 10th March the Localism Bill has passed through its Committee stage, with the Committee considering a whole range of amendments from members. In some areas the Government has agreed to re-consider aspects of the Bill, for example;

- whether local authorities should need to have an up to date development plan in place by the end of 2012 after which the presumption in favour of Sustainable Development would apply,
- whether Community Infrastructure Levy Payments should be available for affordable housing,

- how might the business community should get involved in Neighbourhood planning, and
- who should qualify as an Independent Examiner of future Neighbourhood Plans.

These and other matters will now be considered by the Government before it returns to the Report stage (at a date yet to be announced) and moves on to its Third Reading. It will then be referred to the House of Lords later this year before returning to the Commons, probably in the next session for any further amendments. It is not expected that the Bill will receive Royal Assent until sometime in 2012. ■

A clash of lifestyles – planning for gypsies and travellers

About 3 years ago, over the 2008 Easter period, gypsies moved onto land which they had acquired beside the Fosse Way, near Shipston on Stour. Within 4 days, they had built fences, laid hard-core, installed cables and water pipes the established a small community of caravans – all without planning consent. I suspect many people were thinking, if only one could find builders who were that quick and efficient!

Today the gypsy site still remains and seems to have become established. It attracted particular publicity at the time, because it was within sight of Tessa Jowell's country home, although she later clarified it belonged to her estranged husband, David Mills – and it was his problem.

Two years later a similar situation occurred, this time at Meriden in Warwickshire, in Carol Spelman's Constituency. Once again, gypsies moved in, over the 2010 Easter period and settled on a green belt site next to the A45. However, this time, things have been rather more fraught and the battle lines have been drawn. Local people have formed a resistance group 'Residents Against Inappropriate Development' (RAID) and the local authority, Solihull MBC, has taken enforcement action against the development.

A year later, a representative of the gypsies, Noah Burton, has appealed against the Enforcement Notice and the first 5 days of the 2 week Public Inquiry were held in March – the second week of the Inquiry is due in July.

In a future issue, Tripwire will be exploring the changing climate on Planning

for Gypsies and Travellers, the implications of the new Consultation Paper on Gypsies and Travellers and the outcome of the Meriden case and what it means for gypsies and local communities.

If anyone has direct experience of this issue, do please contact the editor. ■



Noah Burton.

'From Kyoto to Copenhagen to Cancun'

Is there a parallel between the shift in the world's attitude to climate change and the movement from globalism to localism?

This seemed to be the central theme in a thought provoking lecture held at Aston University, in Birmingham, delivered by Dr Douglas Crawford – Brown, Executive Director at the Dept of Land Economy in Cambridge University and also Emeritus Professor of Environmental Science and Policy at the University of North Carolina.

The common belief amongst the environmental fraternity is that Copenhagen Accord in 2009 made little progress beyond the targets and objectives agreed in the Kyoto Protocol in 1997 which were fine tuned by the Marrakesh Accord in 2001 and came into force in 2005. But Dr Crawford Brown viewed things somewhat differently.

He argued that perhaps 60% of people attending the Copenhagen Conference arrived with a political agenda to stifle economic growth as a means of attacking capitalism, believing that curbing consumption would halt or at least reduce climate change. In fact, he argued it simply hampered the third world and exacerbated

global poverty. He believed that Climate Change policy needed to co-exist with economic growth – that both mitigation and adaptation were legitimate environmental objectives.

The Kyoto Accord set ambitious 'top-down' targets (in much the same way as our last Labour Government imposed hurdles and targets). These were imposed on regional and local authorities through legislation and formal codes within member countries and hence became a burden rather than a benefit.

In contrast the Copenhagen Accord introduced market opportunities, identified actions and offered incentives in a 'bottom up' process so that local communities and authorities were encouraged to change behaviour and introduce a 'green market'.

Once again he saw parallels with our current planning system. The Kyoto Protocol was equivalent to adopting a strategy, whereas the Copenhagen Accord was consistent with delivering a strategy. Kyoto was about regulation, imposition and assertion, whilst Copenhagen was about bringing people and organisations together to facilitate the reduction of climate change –

whatever their personal, political, professional or philosophical motives.

But he warned about reading too much into climate change statistics and the dangers of taking them at face value. Evidently over past years, the developed world has shown a steady reduction in CO2 emissions, implying that the programme for climate change reduction is on target. But this has largely been as a result of the shift in manufacturing activity from Europe and America to China and south-east Asia. We don't make things anymore – and therefore we require less energy and burn less fuel.

On the big questions however; To what extent is mankind responsible for climate change? and When will it all end? Dr Crawford Brown was less forthright. Climate change he said will happen anyway, but it is better to try and reduce CO2 emissions and minimise ones environmental impact as best we can. Like many peoples' attitude to believing in God, it may not make a difference, but it just might. ■

John Acres
Editor

Cutting Red tape – the sequel to the ‘Front Door’ story

Never has an item in Tripwire attracted quite as much interest as the story in the last edition about my front door. As an example of ‘red tape’ I explained how our very helpful Conservation Officer had spelled out the requirement for a full Design & Access Statement, together with plans, elevations, (before and after), photographs, application forms and certificates (all in quadruplicate) for, yes, replacing a front door to our listed cottage.

Fellow planners now frequently greet me with the question – ‘How’s your front door?’ or ‘Have you got that door replaced yet?’

Having now taken the advice of the local Conservation Officer (many thanks Meg), to repair and re-paint the door, rather than replace it, I have since discovered that I am not alone.

I have recently been sent a news item from a regular Daily Mail reader about a Mr

Broderick who lives in a 16C listed cottage in Stockport in Cheshire. Evidently, finding himself in an identical situation – having to replace a rotten and ill-fitting door which he felt was a target for burglars, he replaced the white door with a new one of a similar design only to find himself with the threat of a £20,000 fine.

Sadly the new door was regarded as ‘out of keeping’ with the property since it contained a glass panel slightly different in design from the old one – a feature the 72 year old pensioner preferred because he could check on visitors before opening the door. Mr Broderick then faced enforcement action, against which he appealed, but lost the case. Now he has spent a further £400 buying another replacement door. The Council suggested that he could have fitted a better lock and bolt if he wanted to improve security. A clear case of closing the door before it is bolted!

Meanwhile, the ‘front door’ story seems to have stirred growing interest in Government circles, where a new purge has started against ‘red tape’ with a new ‘one in, one out’ policy and a new consultation paper on examining the duties of local authorities. It is surely only a matter of time before a white paper emerges on ‘Streamlining the Planning System’. ■

John Acres



Planning Aid England is changing

On 13th April 2011 Planning Minister Greg Clark announced that the RTPI and Planning Aid London have been awarded £1million to deliver a community planning service to support neighbourhoods in England. This is the maximum grant award that the Dept of Communities & Local Government (CLG) said that any single organisation would receive, so congratulations to everyone at the RTPI who has worked on securing this bid and to all the volunteers whose experience of working with the disadvantaged and ‘hard to reach’ was a key part of the bid.

The Planning Aid Service will continue to deal with individual cases, but the neighbourhood planning role will be focused on areas of known economic and social deprivation across England, (ie. the bottom 20% most deprived areas) rather than the existing RTPI regional structure.

Delivery details are still to be finalised with CLG, but we understand that the Planning Aid Advice Service will in the future will be operated centrally from Botolph Lane.

A central telephone advice-line will be available to both individuals and communities and will be staffed by experienced planning advisors based in London. Every caller will be offered 15 minutes of ‘free’ advice, with more complex calls from those who meet the eligibility criteria (based primarily on income) being passed to volunteers. Other callers will be signposted to sources of advice, for example planning consultancies. A Project Manager and volunteer manager will also be based in London.

A team of ‘outreach coordinators’ will be home based and their role will be to support community planning initiatives within the agreed areas of deprivation. The coordinators will liaise with volunteers and arrange community planning events, but it will be volunteers who deliver the advice and assistance.

This represents a very different ‘Planning Aid’ model from the one we have had previously but it does ensure that the provision of free, independent and professional advice to

individuals and community groups is continued. Clearly, the new structure places much greater emphasis on the role of our volunteers and I think it is imperative to the on-going success of Planning Aid that existing and potential volunteers continue to actively engage with the Service going forward. Planning Aid needs you!

The funding from CLG is for a 12 month period. There is currently no certainty that that funding will be extended into future years so it is important that the Service is seen to deliver on its objectives in the next year. Therefore, if you are an existing volunteer, please get actively involved now and offer whatever time you can. If you are not a Planning Aid volunteer then please consider joining up.

The contact number for the Planning Aid advice-line and volunteering is **0330 123 9244**. ■

Mark Walton

Chair, RTPI West Midlands

Responding to the Recession – how the Institute is coping with the pressures

The 2009 recession has had a major effect throughout the UK and the RTPI has also felt the impact of the downturn. As an organisation, the Institute has seen its revenues fall considerably and in a similar fashion to many other similar organisations we have had to make hard choices to ensure that we can continue to deliver services to members and to assist the next generation of planners.

Helping our members at this difficult time has been a key priority for the RTPI. Since 2008 we have frozen subscription rates, with 2011 now being the third year in which there has been a nil subscription rate rises. We have also developed our 'Planners in the Workplace' programme which offers support and advice to planners facing redundancy or difficulties at work and we have expanded the number of free and low cost events available to our members.

However, freezing subscription rates doesn't mean that we can freeze inflation and the RTPI has been working hard to make sure that we live within our income. Not only have we faced tightening subscription income we have also seen declining revenues from our commercial activities such as advertising jobs in 'Planning' magazine and event income from RTPI Conferences.

In order to maintain services we recently undertook a comprehensive review of all RTPI activities with the aim of finding savings wherever possible. As a target we asked most Institute departments to find 5% savings. In 2009 we found £400k worth of savings and in 2010 we managed to find an additional £200k worth of cost reductions. However, those departments critical to delivering frontline member services such as the 'Regions and Nations' had their budgets protected so that they could continue providing low cost CPD.

We have found savings in a number of different areas, for example we looked at our travel budget and made sure that all journeys were strictly necessary and members always buy advance tickets. Where possible we have combined meetings to reduce the number of

trips. We have expanded the use of teleconference and online meeting technology. The RTPI has also revisited our suppliers and looked for improved value and more cost effective solutions – for example, this led to cheaper contracts for printing services.

It is not only in the bigger costs that we have sought to make savings but also in the detail. We have found more cost effective lunches for committees, timed meetings to avoid peak time fares, used cheaper venues or hosted smaller meetings, all helping to keep the Institute's costs down.

The RTPI has additionally taken a long hard look at recruitment. Since 2009 we have had a freeze on creating new posts and as members of staff have moved on we have considered whether their job could be outsourced or combined with another role. In this way, over the last three years we have managed to make the Institute leaner and more efficient.

One of the biggest financial changes for the RTPI is the Coalition Government's decision not to renew the 'Planning Aid England' grant after the 31 March 2011. This grant was worth £3.6million and supported over 60 staff. As members are no doubt aware the RTPI has had to reduce the scope of Planning Aid England and unfortunately close many of the regional offices. Consequently Planning Aid staff are being

made redundant. More recently, (as you will read elsewhere in this edition), the Institute has been successful in securing a £1million grant for Planning Aid over the coming year to assist in the Government's Neighbourhood Support Programme. Whilst the transition to a smaller *Planning Aid* service is very hard, the Institute is committed to making sure we can provide a financially viable service. Later in 2011 we will see the RTPI looking to find new ways of delivering *Planning Aid England* and rethinking our financial models.

The drive for improved value for money in the Institute will continue. The RTPI will not only rigorously scrutinise and question all expenditure, but we are also looking at ways of growing our income and ensuring that our subscription structure is the right model. At the same time the RTPI is expanding the number of events that we have on offer. We are investing in new IT systems and improving our procedures to make us as cost effective as possible.

The RTPI is a membership organisation and we want to make sure that we use members' money as effectively as possible. In difficult economic times we have looked again at how we do things and found savings whilst maintaining standards. We will continue to make sure we spend your money wisely and look at new opportunities to improve the RTPI. ■



Free CPD places for unemployed planners

In our Sept/Oct 2010 issue we announced that in response to the current recession, for the whole of 2011 we would be offering free CPD places for selected events in order to help those, who through no fault of their own, are currently unemployed. This is intended to help planners keep in touch with their

colleagues as well as keeping up to date with planning during these difficult times.

We are trying this out as an experiment, but we hope that it will become permanent. There are already concessions at RTPI events for students and retired planners but we feel that those planners who are unemployed are

a special case and deserve extra help in getting back into work. ■

If you need further details, please contact Sue Griffith Jones, Regional Co-ordinator on 0121 709 1599 or westmidlandsbranch@rtpi.org.uk

Managing Environmental Change at the Rural Urban Fringe:

Capturing Institutional Memory from the past to plan more effectively for the future

An innovative interdisciplinary project funded by the Rural Economy and Land Use Programme www.relu.ac.uk led by Professor Alister Scott (Birmingham City University) is assessing the prospects for Managing Environmental Change at the Rural Urban fringe (RUF). As part of this a recent workshop was held at Millennium Point; significantly at the former offices of the West Midlands Observatory involving 15 planners across the West Midlands region who have been at the forefront of regional planning.

The idea stemmed from Mark Middleton (ex Director of Policy in the WMRA) a member of the research team. The workshop was also attended by Dave Thew, former WMRA Head of Planning who is now leading the West Midlands Futures Forum. The event captured some 250 years of collective experience and expertise in dealing with regional planning matters in general and the RUF in particular. And given impending institutional reform and abolitions was seen as a valuable opportunity or “wake” to reflect soberly on what had been lost and learnt with the impending death of regional planning. By so doing the RUF project will benefit from the collective wisdom and critical reflection for future planning.

This is particularly pertinent as the RUF represents a particularly ‘messy’ boundary and opportunity space between town and

country that challenges planners and various stakeholders; each with their different notions of the desired directions of change. This research has tried to capture this within its current foci on four key challenges facing the integrated management of such spaces:

1. Integrating spatial planning and ecosystem services to better understand and view RUF problems more coherently,
2. Improving connectivity between grey, green and blue infrastructure
3. Assessing contested values and improving decision making,
4. Long-termism.

The interdisciplinary research team unites both academic and policy practitioners from a range of backgrounds that collectively shapes and contributes to this work in a unique social learning experiment. As part of this we have just held six exploratory workshops and are currently working on two case studies including North Worcestershire to look at integrated management at a landscape scale.

The findings of this interactive workshop (see photo) highlighted the dangers of making unprecedented planning policy changes concomitant with sudden and irreplaceable loss of human capital without regard given to the lessons learnt in order to inform future strategic planning that

characterises most urban fringe situations. The boundaries the RUF crosses in terms of local authority, land use, and sectoral all demand joined-up approaches based on accurate understandings of future needs.

The key lesson arising was that whilst the names and organisations can and should change the sudden loss of human expertise and their associated networks can create a vacuum of uncertainty resulting in short term decision making thereby threatening wider policy goals such as sustainability. Indeed, the failure to learn from the past is a major theme of this research as reflected in the work done by the Countryside Agency (now Natural England) between 2000-2006 which was only “found” as a key individual kept her own paper copies.

Moreover as we connect with many other agencies doing research on the RUF across the UK and Europe we are beginning to learn that people are often operating in their own little enclaves rarely communicating and sharing experiences. Surely good planning and policy is as much about looking back and learning lessons as it is looking forward. Perhaps Messrs Pickles and Quartermain should take note before a further pronouncement states we “must learn the lessons”

People wishing further information on the project should contact alister.scott@bcu.ac.uk A full list of people connected with the project is here <http://tinyurl.com/5spg9l4>

Continuing Professional Development

Events Calendar :: May > June

Regional Programme

Non-members of RTPI welcome to attend.

MONDAY 23 MAY

RTPI West Midlands AGM & Supper

Time: 6.15pm to 7.45pm (meeting of Regional Activities Committee will follow and those attending AGM are welcome to stay for this)

Speaker: **Trudi Elliott, RTPI Chief Executive**

Cost: **Free** (includes buffet)

Venue: Upstairs function room, Old Joint Stock, **Birmingham**

Details & booking: Sue Griffith-Jones Tel 0121 709 1599
Email westmidlands@rtpi.org.uk

FRIDAY 8 JULY

RTPI West BRIT awards Ball for Planning Achievement

Venue: Botanical Gardens, **Birmingham**

Time: 7.30pm

Cost: **£42 incl VAT per person** (£420 for tables of 10) for payment before the end of May, £47 & £470 after.

Details & booking: Sue Griffith-Jones Tel 0121 709 1599
Email westmidlands@rtpi.org.uk

Other Events

TUESDAY 10 MAY

TCPA West Midlands regional policy briefing and discussion

Discussion on planning reform, High Speed Rail, the TCPA Green & Blue Space Adaptation for Urban Areas & Eco-towns (GRaBS) European project.

Venue: Eversheds, 115 Colmore Row, **Birmingham**

Time: 5pm – 7.30pm

Organiser: TCPA

Details & booking: Michael Chang Tel 0207 930 8903

Email Michael.Chang@tcpa.org.uk

WEDNESDAY 18 MAY

Heritage as the lever for economic development & sustainability

Venue: Burslem School of Art, **Stoke-on-Trent**

Time: 1.30pm – 3.30pm

Organiser: RTPI Historic Environment Group

Details & booking: Andrew.Matheson@rtpi.org.uk

THURSDAY 26 MAY

New Partnerships for Health & Well-Being

Venue: Baskerville House, **Birmingham**

Cost: **Free**

Organiser: Learning for Public Health West Midlands

Details & booking: ginder.narle@sandwell-pct.nhs.uk

THURSDAY 9 JUNE

Wind Farm Visit & Planning Seminar

Venue: STEAM - Museum of the Great Western Railway
Swindon

Cost: **Free**

Organiser: RenewableUK

Details & bookings: Sarah Harper Tel 0207 901 3000

Email s.harper@renewable-uk.com

TUESDAY 14 JUNE - WEDNESDAY 15 JUNE

RTPI Planning Convention

Planning the Big Society?

Venue: **London**

Cost: RTPI Members **£339 +VAT**, Licentiates £140 +VAT,

Students £99 +VAT

Organiser: RTPI

Details & bookings: Email.services@rtpiconferences.co.uk

Tel 0845 082 1171

SUNDAY 19 JUNE - WEDNESDAY 22 JUNE

International Urban Design Summer School

Venue: **Birmingham**

Cost: **£895 +VAT** early bird rate until mid May. Reduced rates for those who are unemployed or not working full-time & paying their own fees (£750 incl VAT as residential delegate, £500 incl VAT non-residential)

Organiser: MADE

Details & bookings: Tel 0121 363 0064 Email

info@udss.org.uk



RTPI

mediation of space - making of place

RTPI WEST MIDLANDS - SUMMER BALL – THE BRITS

8th July 2011 – Botanical Gardens, Birmingham

The following awards will be presented:

- The Regional Award for Planning Achievement sponsored by Alliance Planning
- The Chairman’s Award sponsored by Alliance Planning
- Local Planning Authority of the Year sponsored by JMP
- Consultancy of the Year sponsored by No5 Chambers
- Team of the Year sponsored by DLA Piper

Plus a new award for 2011, Young Planner of the Year sponsored by Place Elements

NOMINATIONS ARE INVITED FOR

LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY OF THE YEAR	CONSULTANCY OF THE YEAR	TEAM OF THE YEAR	YOUNG PLANNER OF THE YEAR
<p>Local Authority Planners – Have you excelled?</p> <p>Consultants – Have you found an LPA excellent to work with?</p> <p>There are many examples of good local authorities and it is our desire to recognise the hard work that goes on within Planning Departments in the region.</p>	<p>Consultants - It has been a difficult year and yet there are many good news stories. What has your consultancy achieved? Tell us why your consultancy has succeeded.</p> <p>Local Authority Planners – Who are the consultants you have used or worked with who have excelled?</p> <p>We are looking to celebrate success stories from the region and those who have delivered.</p>	<p>Have you been in a team or do you know a team that has delivered (a project, plan or planning document)?</p> <p>The team can be a LPA, Regeneration body, Consultancy. In a challenging time co-operation and collaboration is encouraged.</p> <p>We are looking for a team that has produced the goods and delivered something of quality that will last into the future.</p> <p>If you are proud of something you have done and work you have achieved let us know.</p>	<p>This award is intended to celebrate Young Planners in the West Midlands. This could be in planning practice, innovation, enterprise or philosophy.</p> <p>Nominations are welcomed for the brightest Young Planner involved in the profession in the West Midlands.</p> <p>Nominees must be 35 or under.</p>

HOW TO MAKE NOMINATIONS

In not more than 1,000 words or 2 sides of A4 (and using illustrations and examples of projects, if applicable), send your nominations to Sue Griffith-Jones at westmidlands@rtpi.org.uk

DEADLINE FRIDAY JUNE 10TH 2011



Main Sponsor of the Event

Regional Award For Planning Achievement and the Chairman's Award

Sponsor of drinks reception



Sponsor of Event & Consultancy of the year award



Local Planning Authority of the year award



Team of the year award



Young Planner of the year award



RTPI West Midlands is proud to present the West Midlands BRIT Awards, Dinner and Ball



What: RTPI Planning Awards, Dinner & Ball

- Drinks reception
- Sit down dinner
- Award winners announced
- Music and dancing

When: Friday 8 July 2011, 7.30pm to 1am

Where: Birmingham Botanical Gardens,
Westbourne Road, Edgbaston,
Birmingham, B15 3TR

Who: The RTPI President, Richard Summers, joins RTPI members, guests, friends & family

Why: To celebrate planning excellence in the region and wine and dine in style

For more details or to book your place please contact Sue Griffith-Jones at westmidlands@rtpi.org.uk or telephone 0121 709 1599.

RTPI West Midlands is very grateful to the following organisations for sponsoring this event and the awards.

AlliancePlanning 

Main Sponsor of the Event

Regional Award For Planning Achievement and the Chairman's Award

Sponsor of drinks reception



Sponsor of Event & Consultancy of the year award



Local Planning Authority of the year award



Team of the year award



Young Planner of the year award

