

EAST OF ENGLAND EXPRESS

Autumn 2011

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Newsletter of the RTPI East of England
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INSIDE • [Our Secretary of State](#) • Electronic Newsletters
• [Conference Programme](#) • Young Planners • [Strategic Planning](#) • Wildlife
• [Your Committee](#) • Presidential Visit • [Planning Aid](#) • The Great Debate
• [Chickens and Eggs](#) • Marine and Terrestrial Planning • [Natasha](#)

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EDITORIAL Newsletter of the Royal Town Planning Institute East of England

It's a scoop - yes we are fortunate to have the wise words of the Secretary of State himself to set the scene for this edition...

Eh oop lads and lassies o'the 'softy' East 'f England planning profession!

Well, a'll go t'foot of our stairs-what a surprise to be asked to write a bit for y'r neowsheet -a'm reet med oop!

Well ah just want t'say, youu just keep hanging on in there, you namby pamby planners- doon't you go into private practice and I'll tell y'r why - you are what we call in t'government, a booffer. Aye, a booffer a'tween t'community -(who ever they are - a' m still waiting for a definition from ma team here) and t'coouncillors - that bunch a do-gooders who believe everything ah say!!-cos I was once, one a'them, m'sen, tha' knows.

Eh, I recall ma days back in Bratford when I were a cooncillor. We had nowt but Hovis t'eat and only Emmerdale t'watch on t'box. Well now that's a thought: we could clear oop this housing crises in one go w'lots o'little Emmerdales all around t'coountry. In best possible taste of course - plenty o' Yorkstone clad in' eh? -make me feel reet at home. Ah must get the mandarins to do an amendment to an obscure circular or rewrite, very slightly, an old PPG so's no one'l notice! But what's happened t'national planning framework eh? I hear you aask. Well it's proovin' a bit difficult for ma officers who like to yoose twenty words when one'l doo. But we keep promisin' ...Eh but wait, nay, is that reet-y've received a draft for consultation? That Steve Halfpint moost 'v got his finger oat at last!

Any way, what were I sayin'- oh ay, I need you lot t' still be around 'cos when it all goes belly oop, (and it will, believe me), a'm go'n to have to blame soome one - and I can't blame t'community 'cos who are they? And I can't blame m' friends t'cooncillors and I can't blame t'government -'cos that's me -so, guess who it's going to be, eh?

Eh but jokin' a part, I doo think you planners produce some good stooff -those Grotton Papers fr' instance . Av had ma lot here gooin thro it wi a farne toooth cormb tha knows-tha might be soommat in it we can yoose!

Well, ah can't think of owt more t'say, so...

Keep smiling - a'v got m' beady eyes on you lot.

I remain Your Obedient Servant, the Right Honourable, Eric (Chubby) Chutney, Secretary of State for Circumlocution and Local Gobbledegook.

Well thanks Eric -that clarifies a lot!

Peter Hakes, Editor



ATTENTION ALL READERS

We are going green - and trying to use your money more effectively!

Next year you will only be able to access this newsletter electronically - via the RTPI web site to be precise.

From the main RTPI web site follow the link to the East of England, then to East of England Newsletters.

Alternatively go directly to:

<http://www.rtpi.org.uk/Item/916/23/5/3>

We will of course continue to alert members when a new newsletter is available via our E Bulletin.

It is therefore vital that you let us know your up-to-date email address as soon as possible.

Contact Tina Jessup at:

eastofengland@rtpi.org.uk

giving your name, 1st line of your home address and your preferred email address.



Next Issue

The next issue should be published in Christmas 2011. Deadline for copy is 14th November 2011 to: The Editor Peter Hakes, 30 Viking Way, Brentwood, Essex, CM15 9HX
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Acknowledgements

Editing: Peter Hakes/Tina Jessup
Design: David Lock Associates
Printing: New World Creative Print Ltd
Distribution: Jean Aldous
Thanks to all contributors

Notice to Readers: The RTPI East of England Regional Management Board wish to point out that the sponsors have had no editorial role in the production of this newsletter and the Board does not endorse the sponsors or have any view on any matter on which they are involved.

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REGIONAL EVENTS PROGRAMME 2011

Theme:

“Skilling for the New World of Planning”

With comments in recent feedback forms such as:

- “very informative and thought provoking”
- “brilliant and interesting conference”

these events attract a very high calibre of speaker, and they offer you, the local member, an opportunity to keep your knowledge up-to-date and to network with other members, without spending a fortune on training.

Wherever possible, the conference fees for 2011 have been reduced from those charged in 2010 by using venues that provide excellent value for money and keeping lunch costs to a minimum.

To keep up-to-date with the programme visit the Region's web site at http://www.rtpi.org.uk/rtpi_east_of_england or email Tina Jessup at eastofengland@rtpi.org.uk asking to be included on the Region's email circulation list.

LATEST INFORMATION ON CONFERENCES & EVENTS FROM JUNE TO DECEMBER 2011

TITLE	DATE	LOCATION	COST	COMMENTS
THE ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN SUPPORTING A NEW ECONOMIC BASE	Tues 27th September 2011	Hughes Hall College, Cambridge	£85 + VAT	
RETAIL PLANNING	Wed 19th October 2011	City Hall, Norwich	£85 + VAT	
EAST OF ENGLAND PLANNING LAW UPDATE	Fri 11th November 2011	Downing College, Cambridge	£140 + VAT	(free place won by Tanya Adams, courtesy of the Planning Legislation Update Service)
CONFERENCE FOR COUNCILLORS	Mon 21st November 2011	St John's Innovation Centre, Cambridge	£100 + VAT	
HOUSING - WHERE ARE WE NOW?	Tues 6th December 2011	Hampton, Peterborough	£85 + VAT	(sponsored by David Lock Associates and O&H Properties)

(Note: events are also open to non-members).

Your support at these events is vital to ensure their success

Does your organisation have a suitable conference room that we could use?

Or would your organisation be willing and able to sponsor one of these events by making a contribution towards the cost of a venue or towards the cost of lunch?

In return, the organisation's name would be included on the conference literature and promotional material could be displayed at the event.

A “free” place or two would be available on the event for your employees.

Are there topics which you think should be included in the Events Programme?

Let us know as soon as possible to ensure your views can be taken into account during forthcoming discussions.

Do you have an expertise in one of the suggested topic areas and would like to share your knowledge with other members?

We are currently in discussions with Anglia Ruskin University to provide co-ordinated delivery of CPD events and training for planners in the East of England.

Any offers of help or assistance from Regional members would be very gratefully received!

Please help us to provide the Regional events you need!

Up-to-date information can be obtained from:

Tina Jessup, Regional Co-ordinator, RTPI East of England

Tel: 01359 233408; Fax: 01359 232176; Email: eastofengland@rtpi.org.uk

Web: www.rtpi.org.uk/rtpi_east_of_england

RTPI East of England Regional Office

4 Opus House, Elm Farm Park, Great Green, Thurston, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP31 3SH

QUIZ - WHERE ARE WE NOW?



Easy!

Yes of course-if you know it that is, and 28 of you did!

It was of course the 'butterfly bridge' over the River Great Ouse at Bedford

The first name out of the RTPI Mug, and pictured here, was **Colin Endean** of Harlow Council who has been sent a £25.00 gift voucher.

Runners up were:-

Michael Robinson, Angela Smedley, Michael Ovenden, Graham Thomas, Jackie Patterson, Richard Kelly, Pru Khimasia-John, Gemma Pannell, Awais Khan, Andrew Dawes, Matt Leigh, Dean Hermitage, Nicola Stevens, Katie Rodgers, Richard Koller, Christine Koller, Nick Leigh, Clare Buddle, Philip Wilson, Katie Simpson, Matt Clarke, John Williamson, Alastair Wren, Michael Stevenson, Kim Hutcheson, Vicky Owen and Michael Brooks.

Well now it's your chance to win that valuable voucher.

All you have to do is decipher the photo on the front cover and tell me where it is!

Letters, post cards and e-mails (to address on page 2) will be eligible.

These will be kept in a secure place until 2 weeks before the closing date of the next issue. The first entry taken (by someone independent of the RTPI) from this secure place will be the winner. Only those on the East of England RTPI register will be eligible, except the Editor and staff of David Lock and Associates.

Good luck!

Young planners Update



This update on Young Planner's matters, ties in with other articles on the President's visit to the region in late June.

A successful YP event took place on the 29th June at the Belgian Monk in Norwich. Fresh from his visit to North Norfolk earlier in the afternoon, Richard Summers met with YPs to discuss their perspective on planning and issues affecting them in the current financial and political climate. Discussions were helped along by the wide range of Belgian beer on offer, some of which was quite potent indeed! Mussels with chips and mayonnaise were also a popular food choice. The evening concluded with a final pint or two in Bedfords Bar and it was nice to see a good turnout of YPs with a number of new faces. My thanks to Richard for coming along to meet with us and also Phil Godwin for performing chauffeur duties.

The next event, which is currently being finalised with the RTPI at the time of preparing this article is an APC event, which is proposed for early September, ahead of the final APC deadline of the year at the end of that month. This is an interesting area at the moment as Judy Waugh has replaced Tracey Lloyd as Head of Membership and Careers at the RTPI and has some thoughts on refining the APC process. It is very much a case of watch this space and it may be that this will inform some of the discussions at the upcoming event.

There should also be a further CPD event in the Autumn and the traditional (or should that be not so traditional) Xmas Curry will take place at some point in December.

I would also like to take this opportunity to once again plug the 2011 Young Planners Conference in Birmingham taking place on the 21st and 22nd October and also the Young Planners Network at http://www.rtpi.org.uk/young_planners_network/. There are also various other networks that you may wish to sign

up to subject to your own interests and specialisms. Finally the Young Planners Facebook page continues to go from strength to strength and is well worth a look for updates on events and other discussions.

As ever, if you have any particular issues you would like to raise or ideas for events, please contact me at graham.bloomfield@bidwells.co.uk

Graham Bloomfield



The 'Belgian Monk' in Norwich, where the Young Planners met the President.

REGIONAL CONFERENCE 18.05.11

Strategic Planning - Whats Next?

Hugh's College, Cambridge

As the title suggests, at the time, and continuing to date there appears to be some confusion as to what form Strategic Planning is to take in the new era of coalition government. This conference was intended to clarify this.

With the Localism Bill being the big game in town this event focused on where the Government, through the Localism Bill is (or depending on the time of reading, was) taking planning. Each of the speakers gave their individual perspective on where the profession is going. In brief:

Speaking first **Matt Thompson**, RTPI Head of Policy, gave a talk on the RTPI's stance to the localism bill. He expanded on the positive approach that the RTPI has been taking in trying to influence government policy, and illustrated this with the campaign the RTPI led of 30 international and national organisations with the objective of ensuring that the need for strategic planning was recognised, even if it was under the guise of "larger than local" planning.

James Cutting of Lawson Planning Partnership then spoke about the roles of county and district councils in the future. He summarised that there is going to be an ongoing need for strategic planning as required by assorted European directives and planning policy guidance / statements. With this need established, there may be some refocusing within councils, but largely the skills required are those that already exist in the profession and will need sharpening to make the most of the localism agenda.

After a short intermission, **Tim Jones** and **Kevin Leigh** of No 5 Chambers gave two presentations, both taking the form of crystal ball gazing but each with a slightly different focus. The former entitled The Future of Strategic Planning predicting that in 2012 a pro-growth, NPPF would be issued with increased protection for national designations; Regional Strategies will be formally abolished; and that through a duty to co-operate there would be some policy formation at a multi-LPA level. The latter presentation focused on what would be coming for the development industry. This largely concluded that in the short term there would be uncertainty in the construction industry, and without major policy changes the industry would remain cautious in its approach.

The morning was concluded with a thought provoking panel discussion led by **Rob Hobbs** of Ipswich Council. It covered many perceived issues that are expected to arise from the Localism bill. While this particular discussion was unable to reach many conclusions, it did lay a good basis for the afternoon, which did yield quite a satisfying conclusion.

The afternoon session opened with **Phil Morris** of Norfolk County Council, illustrating the work of the Greater Norwich Development Partnership. He focused on the benefits of having a single body that was able to work across boundaries, and their successes.

President **Richard Summers** gave the final talk of the day. He spoke about what developers want from the planning system. The conclusions of this were that the development industry desired certainty in both the planning system and the property

market, and the best solution to this was for the development industry to work closely with planners.

The final part of the afternoon was dedicated to a general discussion led by **Richard Summers** which brought together all of the individual strands into a satisfying coherent message. It opened with a slow start focusing on the issues expected as a result of the localism bill, which mostly centred on concerns over the duty to cooperate and the presumption in favour of sustainable development. In contrast to the previous discussion that just circled the expected problems; this one took an interesting turn.

By considering the presumption in favour of sustainable development and the duty to cooperate together it was possible to see how they could potentially interact with each other. The discussion followed this logic: if there is no plan then the presumption in favour of sustainable development could lead to unwanted development, this in turn would lead to pressure for a plan to be provided; in the preparation of any plan the authority would have to demonstrate that they had complied with the duty to cooperate, or their plan would be found not sound; in isolation this second part may seem problematic, but neighbouring authorities would be in a similar position, and it would be very short sighted if an authority decided not to cooperate. Experience suggests that even with the best plans, there will always be occasions where things just do not work, but this should be an exception rather than the norm.

Overall the conference provided a good overview of current thinking, and as discussed during the day, contained within that thinking that there is a core of good strong ideas. The idea of decisions being made as close to local level as possible; the idea of 'regional and sub-regional', sorry, "Larger than Local" boundaries being flexible, to change with time, held together by a duty to cooperate; and the idea of encouraging neighbourhoods to be engaged in forward planning. All of these are good strong concepts that should stand the test of time. The proposed implementation of these is rough around the edges at the moment, but it is my suspicion that it's a very rare occasion when a policy maker looks at emerging policy and declares: "It's perfect!" And while it is emerging policy, it is just that, it is not the final copy. It will take time to understand what is intended, how it will work in practice, the implications of it, and what unintended consequences there may be. Keep an eye out for future conferences which may be able to help with these issues.

Matt Breeze



Table Left – Tim Jones Table Centre Left – Kevin Leigh Table Centre Right – Rob Hobbs Table Right – Matt Thompson

Wildlife on your site is not scary!

Working with specialists like The Ecology Consultancy can help ensure that a construction project keeps to schedule while remaining on the right side of the law. During the planning process, there is a legal requirement for development projects to be assessed for possible ecological impacts and to make provisions to minimise that impact on protected species and their habitats. It makes sense to work with ecologists to greatly increase the chances of getting planning permission first time round.

Many species and habitats are protected under various UK and European laws. It is an offence to kill or injure individuals or to damage or destroy their homes. The legislation covers a range of wild animals including all birds, all bats, dormice, water voles and badgers, lizards, snakes, slow worms and great-crested newts, and a number of invertebrates, such as butterflies. Many plant species and their habitats are also protected.

Conserving wildlife comes down to understanding what is important on a site and mitigating for any impacts. However, all too often the potential for enhancements is overlooked despite the fact that real benefits can accrue. For example, Ashmount Primary School in North London has recently achieved an 'Outstanding' BREEAM rating for the design stage assessment of a unique and exceptional site. The project team, which included the school, commissioned The Ecology Consultancy to advise on the ecology section of the BREEAM.

A range of measures were recommended, with a view to increasing the number of insects, birds and bats that already used the area for foraging and breeding. These included a biodiverse brown roof, growing climbing plants on the vertical structures, planting wildflower meadow plants into amenity grassland and creating native hedgerows. Overall the benefits are manifold and the school, its teachers and pupils, and the surrounding neighbourhood will be the beneficiaries.

Two important groups of animals deserve a special look: bats and invertebrates.

Bats in buildings

All UK bat species are afforded the highest protection, and considering that injuring or deliberately disturbing a single bat can attract a £5,000 fine or six months in prison, it pays developers and their teams to be well-informed. We use a number of methods to assess a site for bat activity. Daytime inspections give an idea of the general potential resource for bats; dawn and dusk surveys are used to estimate the amount of bat activity on a site, by monitoring emergence and re-entry, especially once bat roosts have been located. Climb-and-inspect surveys are most reliable when activity surveys have indicated a roost in a tree is likely. Our bat specialists are qualified to cover all methods of inspection and can advise on the best timing to mitigate for a roost.



Bat-brick in residential wall

Mini-beasts and development

Sometimes overlooked, terrestrial invertebrates are increasingly considered important as many are classed as UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) priority species and therefore species of principal importance under the NERC Act. In practice this does not confer absolute protection but it does place a duty on planning authorities "to have regard" for these species when determining planning applications. A requirement of national Planning Policy (PPS9) is that "Planning authorities should refuse permission where harm to the species [designated for protection] or their habitats would result unless the need for, and benefits of, the development clearly outweigh that harm".

This can be a difficult area with contradictions: many UK BAP invertebrates are afforded this status in response to recent declines and yet can actually be widespread in distribution. Some brownfield sites are of exceptional importance and support good populations of many species that have otherwise been lost from the wider countryside.



Wild flowers on a brownfield site

The value of brownfield sites stem from their impoverished nature – with poor soil derived from rubble and hardcore and even contamination – perfect for open grassland habitat to develop, which is favoured by many important insects and spiders. In the wider countryside such conditions have been largely lost.

The Thames Gateway has been the scene of particular conflict between regeneration and invertebrate conservation, including the Royal Mail depot at Thurrock Marshes that resulted in High Court Action. In a review of over fifty site reports we estimated that about 10% justified greater consideration of the invertebrate potential of the site, possibly even to include detailed site surveys to identify impacts and inform mitigation.



Chimney-sweep

Assessment of this risk is normally treated pragmatically and invertebrates only become an issue where the populations are particularly large, or several or exceptionally rare species are found. For many invertebrate species, soft landscaping and green roofs can be very effective in mitigating harm and site enhancement, even to the extent that they are seen as a vital step towards reversing the decline of urban wildlife caused by the ongoing loss of habitats such as brownfield land and gardens.

YOUR COMMITTEE 14.07.11

Green roofs not only have substantial biodiversity value in the urban context, but have important benefits in ameliorating storm water and for mitigating local temperatures. Extensive green roof designs with deep substrate of fine aggregate effectively replicate some brownfield conditions and have been shown to support rare invertebrates. On-going research will help us further understand the design requirements for green roofs and invertebrate diversity, as well as the knock-on benefits to bats and birds.



Green roof on Barclays Bank, London

The Ecology Consultancy is a specialist consultancy established in 1999 with over 30 permanent staff across offices in London, Norwich, Lewes and Edinburgh.



RTPI AWARDS – SHORTLIST

The judges have met and agreed the entrants shortlisted for the project categories of the RTPI Planning Awards 2011. Site visits and presentations will follow over the next few months and the awards made at a ceremony in February 2012.

The shortlisted projects from our region are:-

- **All together now: Delivering the Vision,**
Cambridgeshire County Council,
- **Greater Norwich Joint Core Strategy,**
Greater Norwich Development Partnership,
- **High House Production Park, Purfleet,**
High House Production Park,
- **Norwich Memorial Gardens,**
Homes and Communities Agency and Norwich City Council
- **Stubb Mill Restoration Project,**
Broads Authority,
- **Victoria Gateway and City Beach,**
Southend –on –Sea Borough Council.

The shortlist comprises only the entrants for projects. The finalists in the planning consultancy, education and lifelong learning and Young Planner of the Year award categories will be announced late this year.

A Very Brief Summary

Held as always at West Suffolk House in Bury St. Edmunds

The home of 'Bury in Bloom'.

- Chair, Peter Geraghty, agreed to invite a representative from the University of Cambridge to our meetings, following the accreditation of their MPhil Planning, Growth & Regeneration course.
- Discussions took place on how the East of England Business Plan should be amended for the period 2012-2014. The Region should focus its attention on providing affordable local events for its members and look into the possibility of organising more half-day seminars.
- Proposed topics for 2012 conferences: Localism Bill, Neighbourhood Planning, Planning Law Update, Energy, Enforcement, Community Engagement, Design and Conservation, Minerals and Waste, "Meet the Professions", Enabling Development, Marine Planning (follow-up to the 2011 event). In addition, a Councillors conference and another Debate should be organised.
- It was agreed that the Region should again look into the feasibility of working with Anglia Ruskin University to provide more skills-based events.
- Charles Veal reported that the HQ was concerned about the amount which the Region spends on printing and postage. He reported that many other Regions have saved on these costs by promoting events by electronic means only and there appears not to have been a decline in the attendance figures as a result. Despite the current problems with sharing of membership information between RTPI Head Office and Regions, Charles urged the East of England to follow the lead of other Regions. The Committee agreed that no other mailings should take place in 2011, apart from the Autumn and Winter editions of the Regional newsletter. This should save on printing and postage costs for the events taking place in the second half of 2011.
- David Lock Associates have kindly sponsored the production and printing of the East of England newsletter during 2010 and 2011. They have generously offered to continue this sponsorship for another two years, during 2012 and 2013. As a result of the discussions on how the Region can save on postage costs, the Committee requested that David Lock Associates be asked for this sponsorship to take the form of an electronic newsletter only, with the consequent saving in the Region's postage.
- Charles Veal also reported that the RTPI East of England now leases the most expensive office of all Regions and it was requested that we look for cheaper accommodation as soon as possible.
- Planning Aid -see separate item in the newsletter.
- It was agreed that the committee should once again support the Maurice Hellier Award, presented by Anglia Ruskin University to an outstanding student on the Environmental Planning course.

This is only a very brief outline of the detailed and meaningful discussions that took place. The full minutes can be obtained from Tina Jessup. If any Member feels the urge to join the fray at these exciting meetings please contact Tina, for details of dates, times etc. (see address on page 3)

With great sadness we have to announce that Steve Wilson, a new member of the committee died on Saturday 10th September after suffering a heart attack. A thoroughly nice guy who will be greatly missed. We send our condolences to his wife and family.

SUMMERS HERE

President richard summers visits the east

Our President Richard Summers visited his home patch (the East of England Region) over two days on the 29th and 30th June 2011.

Richard started his visit by participating in the morning session of a workshop taking place in Great Yarmouth entitled: **"Integrating Marine & Terrestrial Planning"**. This event organised by our Regional Activities Committee –see separate report- set the tone for what was a very successful two days. In the afternoon Richard accompanied Erica Whettingsteel to Happisburgh, where he was met by Rob Young. Rob is the Senior Planner (Coastal Issues) and has been actively engaged in dealing with the planning and community issues arising out of the erosion of the coast at Happisburgh. They were joined by the District Council's Portfolio Holder for Development Planning, Cllr. Keith Johnson and by Mr Malcolm Kerby (Co-ordinator of Coastal Concern Action Group and Chairman of National Voice for Coastal Communities). Richard was able to see first hand the dramatic effects of coastal erosion in the region. Afterwards Richard travelled to North Norfolk Council Offices in Cromer where he met the planning staff, Cllr Keith Johnson and Chief Executive, Philip Burton.

During the evening, Richard joined young planners and other RTPI members in **Norwich for a social evening** to cap a hectic but enjoyable first day in the region.

The marine theme continued into the second day with a visit to Southend to see the new **Southend** Swimming and Diving Centre. The centre was recently named winner of the Best Technical Design and Construction 2011 category in the Local Authority Building Control (East Anglia) Building Excellence Awards. The centre is to be used as a London 2012 training



"RTPI Presidential Visit to Happisburgh". Cllr Keith Johnson (NNDC Cabinet Member with the Planning Portfolio); Malcolm Kerby (Chair of the National Voice for Coastal Communities); Phil Godwin and Richard Summers.

base by gold medal hopeful Tom Daley and fellow members of the British Olympic diving team. Richard met Council Leader Nigel Holdcroft, Deputy Leader John Lamb and Chair of Planning Brian Kelly as well as members of staff.

After his visit to the pool Richard went on to Southend Airport to examine plans for the proposed runway extension and the airport's new railway station. The site is the subject of a Joint Area Action Plan prepared in collaboration between Southend Borough Council and Rochford District Council. Richard took the opportunity, whilst visiting the airport to meet with and talk to planners from both authorities.

Richard also visited a number of important highway and infrastructure improvements in the town. They included the four projects delivered as part of the £25million "Better Southend Initiative" - Progress Road, Cuckoo Corner, Victoria Gateway and City Beach. Following this he travelled to Bury St. Edmunds to attend a 'question time' styled discussion entitled the **"The Great Debate - Big Society & the Built Environment - Will Communities Embrace Localism?"** The panel included representatives from the RIBA, RICS, ICE, Landscape Institute and Peter Aldous, Conservative MP for Waveney.

Prior to the Great Debate Richard presented the **East of England regional planning awards for 2010**. The main award went to the **Great Fen Partnership** for its visionary master plan. This award rounded off a successful year for the partnership which also won the national award (Silver Jubilee Cup) in February. Jackie Ward in her introduction to the awards noted the high standard of entries this year.

A hectic but very successful visit to our President's home region and we look forward to reading his blog on his adventures here.

Peter Geraghty

Regional Chair and RTPI Junior Vice-President



Richard Summers; Dave Taylor, (Centre Manager); Peter Geraghty and Andrew Meddle (Southend Borough Council).



John Lamb, Deputy Leader of Southend Borough Council; Richard Summers; Peter Geraghty Regional Chair; Nigel Holdcroft, Leader of Southend Borough Council.



Visiting the new Southend Airport Railway Station

PLANNING AID



Update



Stella Meesters

Planning Aid England rides again!

A new Planning Aid service in England began on 13th June. This follows the success of securing £1m from the Department for Communities & Local Government's new Supporting Communities and Neighbourhoods in Planning fund.

Two main services will be provided:

- a single national Planning Advice Line on 0330 123 9244 where all callers

can receive 15 minutes of free, independent and professional advice. In addition some callers may be eligible for further assistance from a professional volunteer. Other callers will be guided to the website and to other organisations.

- a neighbourhood planning service will also be provided to support people and communities in gaining knowledge about the planning system and how they can be involved. A team of community outreach co-ordinators have been recruited to support volunteers to work within target communities to build their own plans for the neighbourhood they live in. Details of the service can be obtained by calling 0207 9299453.

The RTPi is keen to engage and mobilise its volunteer network as a priority and a volunteer workshop took place on 1st July in Leeds for all volunteers. For volunteers unable to attend the Leeds event local events will take place. This will be an important opportunity for local community outreach co-ordinators to engage with local volunteers. Volunteers are central to the Planning Aid England service and will be at the forefront of the work in engaging disadvantaged and marginalised communities.

In addition the RTPi has set up a Planning Aid England (PAE) Giving Scheme to encourage donations to help support its work following the reduction in PAE's funding from Government. To help the RTPi promote the donation scheme to stakeholders and through networks please visit <http://www.rtpi.org.uk/item/4641/23/5/3> for more information.

As the new Planning Aid areas cut across the East of England, we are fortunate to have two local Community Outreach Co-ordinators working across the region. They are Stella Meesters and Rebecca Elson. The service is concentrating on working with the top 20% most deprived areas and communities as defined in the English Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2010.

Stella's general area is the south coast, south east and east of England below Cambridge, and she will primarily be targeting Luton, Ipswich, Tendring, Harlow, and Southend-on-Sea. As part of sharing good practice, she will also be providing support to Frontrunner areas which will include:

Brentwood Borough Council (Doddington Parish) and Uttlesford District Council (Stansted and Newport). Her contact details are stella.meesters@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk or 07976 744945.



Rebecca Elson

Rebecca's general area is the East Midlands and the East of England above Cambridge, and she will be targeting areas in and around Great Yarmouth, Norwich, and Peterborough. She will also be providing support to the five Frontrunners in Breckland and Broadland. She can be contacted at rebecca.elson@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk or 07816 406282.

There will continue to be a close working relationship between Planning Aid England, based in London, and the Regional Activities Committee in the East of England – which is setting up a sub group to monitor and assist the Planning Aid service in this region.

For further information, please contact our Regional Chair, Peter Geraghty, or Planning Aid England's local community outreach co-ordinator Stella Meesters on stella.meesters@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk



The Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) has been

commissioned by Sustainability East to deliver climate change skills training for local authority planners and elected members in the East of England. This project is being developed as part of the Climate Change Skills Fund programme. The programme is managed by Sustainability East on behalf of Improvement East. The training course will be delivered jointly with CAG Consultants and LDA Design, and will take place with the first events for elected members from the 20th September 2011 and for planners from the 18th October, both in Cambridgeshire. Please see

www.tcpa.org.uk/events.

for more information or contact the project co-ordinator, Michael Chang, Michael.Chang@tcpa.org.uk.

THE GREAT DEBATE 30.06.11

Big Society and the Built Environment - Will Communities Embrace Localism?

West Suffolk House, Bury St Edmunds

This was the first time in the East of England that we have tried such an event, and hopefully it will prove to be the first of many. The event had been organised as a vehicle for this year's **RTPI President, Richard Summers** to meet and engage with planners and other professionals in his home region.

PLANNING ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

The event started with the President presenting the **East of England Planning Achievement Award for 2010** to the three winners, all of whom were there to receive their certificates and set up displays to illustrate the winning projects.



The winning team: The Great Fen, Huntingdon - Malcolm Sharp of Huntingdonshire District Council and Geoff Brighty - Environment Agency.



2nd Place - Design in Central Bedfordshire - Andrew Davie, Central Bedfordshire Council and Richard Guise of Context4D lead author of the Guide



3rd place Green Infrastructure by Design - Laura Kitson, Project Manager, Central Bedfordshire Council

THE GREAT DEBATE

The 'Great Debate' Panel was chaired by Richard Summers and was joined by **Peter Aldous MP for Waveney** for the first half of the event. The other panel members represented built environment professionals from the east of England:

- **Peter Geraghty**, Junior Vice President and East of England Regional Chair,
- **Philip Singleton**, Royal Institute of British Architects
- **Glen Owen**, Regional Director, Institution of Civil Engineers
- **Peter Fane**, Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, and
- **Steve Coghill**, Landscape Institute

The first question (put by **Joe Welch**) the panel considered was "How is localism supposed to help us deliver the homes and jobs we need?" Peter Aldous said that it was rather a "leap of faith" and that the New Homes Bonus is the main carrot in making it work, although he conceded that it may be a NIMBY charter in those affluent communities that don't want or need the NHB. He said that Gregg Clark has an open door, and that developers are reporting success in engaging communities.

Richard Summers questioned the Government's analysis of the failure of the planning system. Other panel members pointed to the need to address more strategic matters to ensure homes and jobs could be provided such as water and energy supply and transport systems.

The second question (put by **Georgina Challis**) engaged the panel and audience members - how can localism deliver large housing schemes, particularly where residents are well resourced to object. **Geoffrey Lane** gave examples of communities bringing forward or accepting development once the context was explained or in response to a specific issue. One member of the audience felt it should be made easier for communities to put forward their view, even if these were against the LDF, whilst Peter Geraghty noted that seeking a balance and engaging with communities is what we do as planners. Steve Coghill felt that funding should be provided to enable professionals to work with communities and articulate their aspirations. Richard Summers felt that more strategic needs may not be met - smaller communities won't know or understand the needs of nearby conurbations. **John Dagg** (from the audience) agreed - what is feasible in Eye isn't feasible in Stevenage. Several people felt that the tension between local community needs and views and infrastructure provision and capacity is an issue that should be explored further.

Peter Aldous MP summed up at the end of the first part of the debate by noting the number of questions this issue has raised. He assured the audience and panel members that Ministers will listen. Richard Summers asked him the two things he would take away with him, and he replied that the existing planning system does enable the local community to be engaged and to make their views and aspirations known, and the successful example of local community planning at Eye.

After the break the debate returned to the question of how localism and large-scale development fit. As the discussion turned to the issue of sustainability Philip Singleton said that the approach should be "holistic not stylistic". A sustainable building is one that is fit for its place, and good design is a synthesis of the place and people.

'A mingling over refreshments at the Great Debate.'



A discussion on infrastructure provision and how to fund it was followed by the need for development to engage with the land and the hope that localism would be the vehicle for communities to take more interest in their green space.

Peter Geraghty said that the presumption in favour of sustainable development was seen as a magic bullet and becomes a marketing tool. Peter Fane felt that the challenge is to incorporate sustainability at the early stages – we should insist on sustainability being incorporated into Neighbourhood Plans.

Richard Guise pointed out that Neighbourhood Planning requires a critical mass to support it, and that it is often how a place is organised that make it acceptable or not. We need to work with communities and use techniques such as Planning for Real – who will pay for this? Some communities will need professional advocacy. Richard Summers said that the Vicar of Dibley approach to parish plans has been up-scaled and would need to be addressed in towns and suburban areas where parish councils don't exist. Peter Fane felt that Government will have to help make things happen with funding and used the example of renewable energy.

Ralph Carpenter put forward his opinion that development in the countryside has been shut down by the planning system, and he asked the panel how this stranglehold could be broken and self-build promoted. Philip Singleton noted the large vacant sites that are in the ownership of bodies such as HCA and the RDAs, and cited the example of the eastern harbour in Amsterdam. Individual plots were sold – this was localism at work, allowing people to get their hands dirty, and provided an opportunity to let mass development to happen. We should look for opportunities around the UK to do something similar. Philip then went on to promote design review – the best design panels are those where there is a mixture of professionals. He said there is a paucity of funding for design thinking in councils, and that we need a model where Design Review Panels are roving and can advise.

Richard Summers closed the debate by asking panel members for a "last word" on localism. Peter Geraghty said localism should be realistic not pessimistic. Peter Fane felt that if we are going to make it work DCLG would need to recognise that we need resources to help people take proposals forward. Philip Singleton said that good planning is intervention in place and space. We need good quality decisions and money to make it work. Glen Owen pointed out that there is still time to influence ministers – the Bill is enabling legislation and there will be a need for a great deal of regulations. Steve Coghill's view is that we need to develop an approach to ensure that green space is central to new development.

Richard Summers concluded by saying that the Great Debate had provided a fantastic opportunity to get professionals together to talk about something really important, and he hope that it would be the first of a series of debates involving built environment professionals in the east of England.

Jackie Ward

'At the top table during the Great Debate.'



Panellists – L to R is Richard, Philip Singleton RIBA and Steve Coghill from the Landscape Institute

THE BIG MEETING

Yes, that time honoured, traditional gathering took place once again on 19th May 2011. You may be wondering what I am going on about-but of course it was the good old **AGM!**

The event of the year kicked off with a sumptuous **sandwich lunch** held in the contemporary surroundings of West Suffolk House in Bury St Edmunds. Coincidentally? No, 'by design', the Regional Activities Committee had held its own meeting that very morning –the old 'captive audience' trick.

Delegates were welcomed by our new Chair, **Peter Geraghty** who then neatly took **apologies for absence** (were you there? –did you send apologies? –ah, I thought not!).

The main event was the skimming through of the **Minutes of last year's AGM** when accuracy was noted and approval given. The agenda then refers, rather mysteriously, to **matters arising**.

Last year's Regional Chair, **Robert Hobbs**, was unable to make it, so **Peter Geraghty** reported on **last year's activities**. His detailed report (see <http://www.rtpi.org.uk/download/11843/ANNUAL-REPORT-2010.pdf>) was duly accepted by the forgathered delegates.

There then followed, for acceptance, reports from regional representatives on RTPI General Assembly and Panels.

Our noble Treasurer, **Steve (cash in the attic) Bateman**, then gave his report.

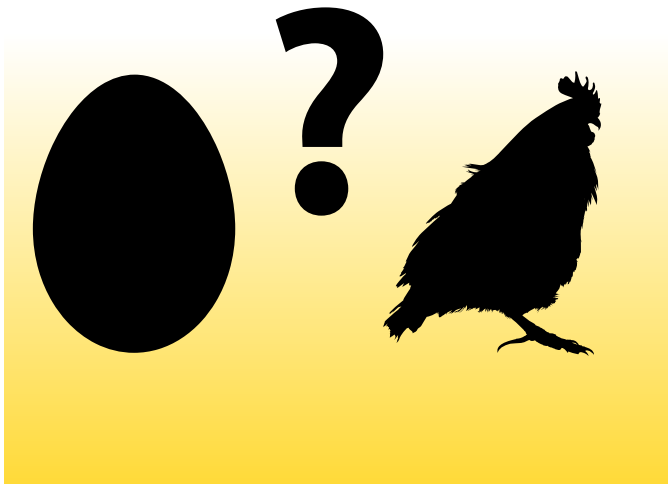
The **2010 Regional Awards** appeared briefly on the agenda and this was followed by that good old stalwart, **Any Other Business**.

The meeting closed at a sensible hour and delegates left the premises in an orderly crocodile.

Notes by

The editor apologises for the singular lack of detail in this report, due to the fact that the note-taker, who wishes to remain anonymous (don't tell 'em Pike) did not actually attend. However it is felt that the general flavour given, above, should adequately satisfy the discerning member. Anyone who is really interested could attend next year's event when the minutes for this event will be available!!

Chickens or eggs which will come first as a result of the sweeping changes proposed to our planning system?



The summer of 2011 saw discontent reigning. This manifested itself in the form of both riots on the streets and in the submission of comments to the DCLG on a raft of proposed changes to the planning system which is now seen by politicians to have failed to deliver enough jobs or new homes. Planner bashing is again in fashion even though the economic downturn is only partly due to the lack of the economic multiplier that development creates but is also due in the main to the failure of earlier governments to establish an appropriate financial system here in the UK and the globalisation of debt and the complications that this has and continues to create for most established economies. If the RSS targets had been retained then construction jobs would have been retained and some of the first homes would have occupants. However, this was not to be the case. Some in our profession regret this loss of employment and housing. Others are delighted that top down housing targets are to be abolished. What ever your perspective, the confusion caused by the actions of Mr Pickles has resulted in none of the then and now much needed jobs, new homes and community facilities to be delivered.

To avoid a protracted recovery perhaps the 'bashing' should stop and everyone should look in the mirror to see how they can help. The fact is we are where we are no matter whose fault it is or was. Indeed, the purpose of this piece is to highlight, to our frequently demoralised profession, that change is on its way and we need to embrace it with open arms in order to maximise its opportunities.

In the run up to Ministers going on their pre-riot summer vacation they released a raft of consultation documents on possible changes to the planning system. This included proposed changes to:

- how the issue of localism could be implemented as the Select Committee on the matter considered that the government definitions were overly 'elastic';
- the Localism Bill after its slow progress through the Upper House of Lords where clarification was provided on 'business neighbourhoods', the enforcement regime, neighbourhood planning, the weight to be given to clause 124 issues (finance), the procedure for considering infrastructure projects and CPO's to name but a few. Interestingly the much discussed third party right of appeal now appears to have fallen between the cracks of legislative change and will no longer be part of the bill;
- allow councils to retain business rates and introduce local tax increment financing to promote economic growth;
- how local plans (yes this phrase is back again) are prepared to allow councils to work together, simplify the documents they need to prepare and speed up the process of review;
- the Use Classes Order – for example the ten leading questions could lead to the question should supermarkets be a use class of their own? Their impact on the locality is far different to the independent local grocery store that dominated the high street when the initial order was published;
- how Mr Pickles wishes to respond to the latest Select Committee Report of the RSS abolition;
- how the Community Infrastructure Front Runners in Project 2 can achieve benefits for the local community – in the East of England this is being pioneered by Cambridge Horizons and Chelmsford Borough Council;
- how business – led neighbourhood planning trials are each to receive £20,000 funding to help develop their proposals;
- the EIA regulations in relation to screening decisions;
- the final draft of the energy national policy statements including a new nuclear power station at Sizewell in Suffolk;
- the consultation process of the Town or Village Green Regime – with a view to making it fairer;
- a draft NPS for Hazardous Waste;
- the definition of affordable housing;
- the previously approved Waste Policy to encourage the action of all parties towards a 'zero waste economy';
- the Green Belt in the from of increasing the powers of councils to enforce against unauthorized development by virtue of the Planning Green Protection Bill;
- the status of Grade 1 agricultural land so it can only be developed upon in exceptional circumstances via a private Members Bill; and perhaps most importantly of all
- the planning system in the form of condensing all of the existing national guidance into the new 60 page National Planning Policy Framework.

Localism vs the NPPF

The government's rhetoric appears to have evolved from the mantra of 'The Big Society' and localism determining what local people want to how sustainable growth can be actively facilitated. However, what is missing is how is the freedom of self determination in localism to be balanced with the national imperative for economic growth. After all, in reality most local residents are only involved in the planning system to oppose development and yet the government is seeking to encourage locals to say YES to significantly more development. How will the circle be squared is a question for us all?

A Golden Thread

Throughout the document reference is made to the presumption is favour of sustainable development. Equally, councils are actively encouraged to progress the preparation of local plans in order to guide development to sustainable locations in line with ten core principles. Inevitably, if confirmation is not provided on what sustainable actually means, it will be up to the lawyers to provide the required detail in the courts at the expense of both developers and councils.

NPPF vs Development Plan?

Local plans are back. A simpler development plan system is promised by the regulatory changes but the 'devil will be in the detail' as there is still a huge amount of 'wholly' language in the guidance which is open to interpretation, reinterpretation and misinterpretation. A further major concern I hold is the continuous dilution of sub-regional or regional spatial planning. Local planners and politicians may be able to provide local solutions to local problems but sometimes a wider perspective is required for the delivery of large scale projects or infrastructure. Consequently, detail on what is meant by a 'duty to cooperate' and how that duty is to be discharged is a critical point for us in the East of England particularly in places such as Bedford, Ipswich, Luton and Milton Keynes where settlements are reaching the edge of the 1974 government reorganisation boundaries.

Accordingly, to make all of our lives easier we perhaps need to encourage the Ministers to accept the responsibility of 'fiddling' with the planning system and clarify where there is ambiguity, detail where there is 'fluff' and establish agreed criteria where matters are for local determination. We need to inform them that political fudge is not palatable. If we fail to do this then we only have ourselves to blame for not highlighting the shortfalls of the current draft of the NPPF to its authors. After all you work with the system on a daily basis they merely work with the theory.

What is an appropriate Evidence Base?

Planning for economic and housing growth is seen as key factors in the NPPF. This is timely as the HBF announced in late August 2011 that the annual number of permissions for new homes has declined by a further 26% to what is now an all time low. However, what is currently lacking in the draft NPPF is an accepted methodology on how to assess local employment and housing need in a nationally accepted way. If this is not provided then years of further rhetoric will follow and the development industry and the economy we are all part of is likely to stagnate even further.

A substantial amount of policy guidance is currently found in the existing Planning Policy Statements, Planning Policy Guidance Notes and Regional Spatial Strategies. Their existence meant that Core Strategies did not have to replicate it. If most or all of

it is now to disappear then the threat exists of the RSS vacuum being extended by a local plan policy vacuum which will inevitably lead to a further tier of cost, delay and uncertainty for communities starved of new investment. Is this acceptable or an efficient use of our time when time and resources are so scarce?

Thinking ahead?

Lastly, it is inevitable that over time, parts of the NPPF will need to be updated in order to reflect changes in political thought. At present this is undertaken relatively easily by changes to individual PPSs or other documents. With the loss of separate document and the concentration of all government guidance into a single document changes are likely to be more difficult? Potentially, but the government could consider a modular approach to the NPPF, so that individual parts of it can be replaced without disturbance to the rest – as has successfully been the case with the Planning Law Encyclopaedia for a substantial period of time. Perhaps we should inform those that drafted the NPPF that this simple solution already exists to future proof the document without which the planning system in the future will only be further complicated.

So what should you do?

Autumn is now fast approaching. Trees are shedding their old out dated leaves and preparing to grow new buds next spring. They are planning for growth.

Perhaps, as a profession, we should follow their lead and instead of complaining of what is now inevitable change, we should put our energy into thinking how we can make the new system work. If you do not then you may not be able to influence which comes first: the chicken (planned development which is frequently better for society) or the egg (growth by appeal or field by field planning which frequently lacks the delivery of integrated infrastructure). Consequently, if you have constructive ideas about the raft of changes currently proposed then I encourage you, if you have not already, to submit comments to the relevant government body so together we can all have a system which has fewer imperfections and delivers what, when and where society requires changes to its environment.



Robert M Purton

Partner on behalf of David Lock Associates Limited The views expressed are his own.

Helping members to attend conferences

East of England semi-retired, fully-retired and full time student Members in full time education are able to attend conferences at a subsidised rate. A carer's allowance may also be available for those Members who have to make special care arrangements to attend a Regional event.

For further details contact Tina Jessup – details on Page 3.

REGIONAL CONFERENCE 29.06.11

Integrating Marine and Terrestrial Planning

Imperial Hotel, Great Yarmouth



Jointly facilitated by the RTPI and North Sea Marine Cluster, the conference was held against the backdrop of the Scroby Sands offshore wind farm along Great Yarmouth's seafront. Delegates from both planning spheres were welcomed by President **Richard Summers**

who opened the day's proceedings by reassuring delegates of the RTPI's stance on criticism aimed at the profession from politicians. He stated that though the Government is within its rights to pass judgement on the planning system, he maintained the RTPI's commitment to help but stated under no circumstances should the profession be blamed.

Russell Gadbury, senior planner from the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) then outlined the purpose behind Marine Planning and its role supporting the delivery of the UK government's Marine Policy Statements (MPS). It was clear that both marine and terrestrial planning disciplines are carved out of similar relationships with DEFRA, DCLG, MoD and DECC, and are comparable in policy output and productivity i.e. plan making, monitoring and the spatial interpretation of supporting evidence bases. However, Russell reiterated the infancy of marine planning and the importance of continuing to build relationships across sectors and stakeholders and strengthen ties with the terrestrial planning system.

The second presentation was by **Jim Claydon**, planning consultant and past RTPI President who evaluated the common ground between terrestrial and marine planning policy. Jim emphasised that whilst key marine and coastal policy exists within regional and local strategies, only a few plans have been adopted and the proposed revocation of the RSS is likely to dilute this pool of regulation further. Emerging National Planning Policy is likely to eventually fill these gaps. However, its delay may lead to a vacuum in coastal and marine policy for some time.

In response, some local planning authorities are beginning to 'road test' new innovative approaches, including Coastal Change Pathfinders (CCP), pioneering marine projects (C-Scope), whereas in Cornwall, planners are 'putting all their ducks' in a row before marine planning comes along, letting everyone know what they want out of the marine plan and how a marine plan will play into their strategic planning.

This was followed by **Peter Warner**, Head of Planning and Business Services at Great Yarmouth Borough Council, who gave an overview of the changing marine and terrestrial planning interfaces. Using interesting examples from Great Yarmouth, Peter described the marine interface as being formerly limited to the Port and Local Authority, though as a result of cross-related marine and terrestrial planning jurisdictions (marine boundary – high water mark, terrestrial boundary – low water mark), the interface is part of the 'join' between the two planning spheres and requires an integrated approach.

Inevitably, such new integration creates new issues and a steep learning curve, particularly as marine planning may add, to what others have perceived, as an additional layer of bureaucracy to an already over-regulated system. Developers involved within the marine sector want to navigate a gentle course; free from reams of planning red tape where a negotiating party of 6 or

7 organisations would not be unusual, and less attractive at encouraging inward investment.

Robert Upton, Deputy Chair of the IPC provided an update on the legislative relationship between marine planning and the Planning Act 2008, drawing upon the Government's intentions to lay before Parliament National Policy Statements on Energy and Ports in 2011.

He mentioned that the IPC and MMO are developing a working relationship, centred on off-shore wind turbine developments which come under Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects. Having both land and sea components, as power generated generally involves a large substation on land the link between marine, terrestrial and infrastructure planning is tangible, yet the potential trans-boundary effects due to their scale and location may impact upon nearby Continental planning too.

Jed Griffiths was the chair for the second half of the day, which focussed more upon the beneficiaries of the marine environment. The first presentation of the afternoon was delivered by **Richard Hill** from the UK Cable Protection Committee (UKCPC) who principally explained the need for marine plans to remain flexible due to the multi-faceted nature of the marine environment.

In respect of sea-bed cabling, the expansion of communications will be required to meet increasing demand and new technologies, and will need new planned space for growth. However, as the problem lies within the unpredictability of the sector, there is a substantial need for openness between those who are expanding and those who need to plan for the expansion.

Forewind representative **Kim Gauld-Clark** provided an insight into offshore wind development delivery, explaining that the marine environment is heavily constrained both environmentally and economically which influences appropriate area selection. A clear dialogue with other marine users and evidence gathered from the Strategic Environmental Assessment process is critical in mediating a sustainable area within the marine environment, but also important in providing valuable information to the MMO when configuring marine plans.

She concluded that such open relationships between all parties should be sustained so information is shared and bureaucratic hurdles are reduced.

The final presentation of the day was delivered by **John Bowles** from Porta Planning LLP who gave a fascinating insight into the marine planning interface in the ports of Felixstowe and Harwich. He noted that as dynamic drivers of the regional economy and areas of future change, their strategic direction, previously upheld by the RSS could end up becoming rudderless. However, he added that if economic priorities set by LEPs are incorporated into Marine Plans, some strategic economic direction should be provided during the current uncertain climate.

This presentation was followed by a panel discussion centred on the day's topics, facilitated by Jed Griffiths. Following this debate, delegates were asked to feedback from their groups the three main issues relevant to the terrestrial and marine interface.

The suggestions included: the alignment of funding and infrastructure (both marine and terrestrial) to fully integrate planning spheres; continued communication between all sectors involved; a hierarchy or protocol explaining the interactions between marine and terrestrial planning; understanding their compatibility and being realistic as to what can actually be achieved – especially at a time when terrestrial planning is being dismantled and marine planning is being established; and lastly, understanding and applying good terrestrial planning practice whilst learning from, and correcting, past mistakes.

Kim Balls

INSIDE THE BACK WITH *Natasha x*

Natasha Oosedam, Editor of 'Planners Up Front and On Top', brings you 'love, intrigue and town planning' from the 'Agatha Friskey' of the Marshes' - Marcia Worlspittle.

An Overarching Challenge

The white foam edged, dark green sea was neatly parted by the prow of the Peninsular and Orient Liner SS Orcades as she ploughed her way majestically across the broad Atlantic on her first cruise following her recent refit. This was a new experience for her as she had previously been one of the principal liners on the Australia run.

Alexander Crewe gazed up at the tall yellow smoke stack and marvelled at the scale and luxury of this magnificent gleaming white floating hotel.

He was one of the 1635 passengers, most of whom were intending to complete the triangular trip from Southampton to Canada, down the US Eastern Sea-board to the Caribbean and back home to 'blighty'. Our hero however had boarded the ship at Queenstown in southern Ireland, having arrived a few days earlier from the dusty heat of Tangiers and had booked only for the first leg - to Montreal, where he hoped to join the 'Mounties'. What a contrast this new life would be with his 'old lives' - the relative tranquillity of rural Norfolk and then the highs and lows of life in the French Foreign Legion.

As he later lay on his deck-bed, watching the gulls swooping low, he recalled his comrade in arms, a fellow Englishman who called himself Jean Boule. What grand times they had had, carousing in Sidi-Bel-Abbes, sharing the irksome boredom of lonely hot desert outposts and helping each other survive in the harsh military environment of French North Africa.

They had yarned at times of their past lives-the girls they left behind them. Latterly, having escaped from the severe hardships aggravated by the regime operated by the hated Sergeant Major, 'The Silent Crocodile' LeGrande, they had sought comparative safety in a Bedouin Caravan. He smiled wistfully as he recalled that not only had Jean known Bella and her family but had also been able to clear-up a romantic misunderstanding that had led to our hero joining the Legion Etrangere in the first place. The deep throb of the engines soon lulled him into a fitful sleep.

The next evening as they approached the mid-way point, he sat watching the dancers in the opulent Ballroom. This enforced relaxation led his mind to wander back to the second reason for his flight from England. There was that TPI trip to Peterborough, the decision to stay overnight, the ill fated visit to the New Bedford Club, the police raid and the .. criminal record. He had kept all that quiet from Bella and his fellow planners, so imagine his dismay when on a site-visit to an isolated farmstead at the behest of a developer, his indiscretion suddenly reared its head. He recalled the two burly characters, one with steely grey eyes set just a little too close together.



They mentioned the Peterborough incident and explained, in a slightly bullying way, that the 'record' could be 'lost' if he agreed to help his country. They explained what 'help' meant: the odd bit of couriering and listening to 'talk' on his travels around the country. Yes, they had clearly done their home-work - they knew that he was on the Visiting Panel of the TPI Education Board.

After the shock had worn off he said he would think about it and let them know his decision. That was the reason for his hasty departure.

Another interminable day on the huge liner brought them further north. The sea was now grey-green and the air crisp cold-everyone's breath was made visible by the icy arctic wind and the odd small iceberg added visual interest.

To fill the time he decided to go on one of the ships tours. The highlights included the Bridge - so high up- with the ships wheel, radar and telegraph. Then down to the huge engine room where the massive Vickers steam turbines fed twin screws to give a speed of 24.7 knots. Lastly was the radio-room where, one of the two operators was talking on the 'ship-to-shore' and unobtrusively watching our hero. She was an attractive girl with long glossy black hair and had the trace of a Welsh accent...

The air was now very cold and the sea a light grey-green. The mist swirled around them as the ship passed between Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, through the Cabot Strait into the Gulf of St. Lawrence, through Gaspé Passage, past the island of Anticosti and then down the mighty St. Lawrence, past the City of Quebec to the Old Port of Montréal.

There were long queues in the huge custom shed, but at last his battered leather case was marked with chalk and he was free, free in the 'new world'-where new adventures awaited him. As he approached the exit doors, anticipating the sights, sounds and smells of the Canadian city, a tall burly man caught his attention-but it was the steel grey eyes that were a little too close together, which sent a shiver down his spine....

To be continued?... (probably not).

If you have been affected by anything in this narrative please contact Oosedam Counselling Services via one of the premium rate telephone numbers on page 28.

David Lock Associates are always on the look out for talented planners and urban designers. We have been delivering value to our clients in the East of England for over 20 years by responding to changing circumstances to bring forward and implement development at all scales.



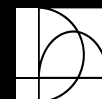
Our skills include:

- Communication and consultation skills to engage effectively with local communities, business groups, local stakeholders, political leaders and young people. We can build the capacity required to ensure effective participation in debate, discussion and planning for growth and change.
- A long track record in the master planning and regeneration of towns, cities and regions, through robust spatial plans and urban design frameworks that guide investment in infrastructure.
- Ambition for places - their potential and opportunity - to make 'big plans' which have the ability to galvanise consensus around a vision for the future.
- Capacity to make good places through urban design and the implementation of complex plans at the local level to bring the vision to fruition.
- A trusted multi-discipline network of fellow consultants, particularly our 'Collaborate' partnership and our sister companies Integrated Transport Planning and DLA Architects Practice, to draw together complementary skills to match any project.
- A broad appreciation of the complexities faced by public and private sector clients to deliver regeneration and change, reconciling differing requirements through planning and engagement.

If you're motivated by creating sustainable developments that make a real difference to the quality of people's lives, DLA are looking for talented planners and urban designers. If you think you have the right creative skills to make a genuine contribution to our projects in Colchester, Felixstowe, Ipswich, Luton and Peterborough then please send your CV to Jo Cave: jcave@davidlock.com.

www.davidlock.com

David Lock Associates
Town Planning and Urban Design



© 2011 David Lock Associates. Photograph taken at Hampton, where DLA continue the planning, master planning, design and implementation of development at Peterborough's southern township

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