

ROYAL TOWN PLANNING INSTITUTE NORTH WEST REGION FORWARD PLAN 2012 – 2015



***RTPI NW & WYG PLANNING ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS FOR 2010 OVERALL WINNER
The East Lancashire Railway 2020 Development Strategy***

Registered Charity Numbers
Registered Office Address

(262865 in England and Wales) (SC037841 in Scotland)
Royal Town Planning Institute, 41 Botolph Lane, London, EC3R 8DL

RTPI NORTH WEST REGION FORWARD PLAN 2012 - 2015

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SECTION 1 – BUSINESS PLAN OBJECTIVES FOR 2012 - 2015

The key objective is to ensure this Regional Business Plan links to and reflects the objectives set out in the RTPi Corporate Strategy.

The RTPi Corporate Strategy (for the period 2010-2014) identified a series of objectives which are:

1. Empowering Communities
2. Developing Knowledge and Raising Standards
3. Developing and Shaping Planning Policy and Practice
4. Delivering Services for, and supporting, members
5. Prioritising membership and attracting new members
6. Effective Governance
7. Efficient and Effective Business Practices

We would like to align this Regional Business Plan to the Corporate Strategy so that it is making every attempt to deliver those corporate objectives.

This plan seeks to clarify those links with the aim that it encourages the RMB and RAC to reflect prior to implementation and resourcing; enabling them to clearly express our own objectives and to provide a planned structure to achieve and fulfil the goals identified.

Set out below we illustrate and identify how we are seeking to reflect each of the 7 corporate objectives:

1. Empowering Communities
 - Supporting Planning Aid
2. Developing Knowledge and Raising Standards
 - Newsletter
 - CPD Programme
 - Regional Awards
 - Social events – raising the profile
3. Developing and Shaping Planning Policy and Practice
 - Policy consultation responses
 - Planning an active role in the local media and local events; pan-professional networking
 - CPD Programme
4. Delivering Services for, and supporting, members
 - CPD
 - Newsletters
 - E-bulletins
 - Social events
 - Young Planners
 - Careers, mentoring
5. Prioritising membership and attracting new members
 - Careers & Recruitment events
 - Outreach into schools and education system
 - Communications
6. Effective Governance
 - RAC and RMB
 - AGM
 - Presidential visit

7. Efficient and Effective Business Practices
 - Operational and organisational structure
 - Fiscal control and forecasting
 - Communications with Members
 - Involvement of Active Members – encouraging volunteers
 - Staff – training and development

The Region continues to derive significant benefit from having a full time administrator based in an office. This is a key and fundamental resource, without which the Region simply could not function.

The administrator's primary role is being tasked with the responsibility in delivering general administration involved in the functioning of the Region (through the RMB, RAC and the AGM) but to also keep a steady hand on the tiller of all other Regional Tasks and activities. However, the bulk of time is spent in administering the Regional Conference programme of CPD events and it is this and a close management of social events that generate an income that supports the non-profit / non-revenue making functions of the Region.

Maintaining an active body of RMB and RAC members is essential in delivering services to the wider Membership; all are volunteers giving up some considerable time for little more than professional and personal enjoyment and satisfaction – with out this team of people the Region would grind to a halt for it is this free time and resource that the wider Membership often fails to recognise when going their day to day work.

SECTION 2 – REGIONAL CONTEXT

The North West Region has about 7 million inhabitants, the second largest population of the United Kingdom's regions and is three times more densely populated than the European average.

The economy is worth about £60 billion, which is larger than five European member states - Republic of Ireland, Finland, Luxembourg, Portugal and Greece.

It is considered to be a great place to live and work and its economy is rooted in Chemical, Textile, Engineering, Food and Drink Manufacturing industries which, together, account for 75% of the region's manufacturing output. Tourism has an increasing role to play with over 15 million tourists annually experiencing all that the North West has to offer.

The Region is centred on the two major cities of Manchester and Liverpool, but there is historic Chester, the Golden Mile at Blackpool and the beauty, peace and tranquillity of the Peak District and the Lakes. The North West has a lot to offer.

It has strong links to neighbouring regions and nations (Wales and Yorkshire & Humberside), but weaker ones with others (Scotland, West Midlands and East Midlands).

Once the home of the industrial revolution, the North West has developed at a rapid pace. One of its greatest assets is its people and their ability to be forward thinking, entrepreneurial, determined and resolute.

The North West proudly boasts 8 major universities which lead the field in research and development, delivering over 30,000 graduates each year. Significantly, a large proportion of those attending Universities in our region like it so much they decide to stay on and build a life for themselves. This is a clear indication of the quality of life that people are able to enjoy.

The North West has at present 5 identifiable sub-regions - the counties of Cheshire, Cumbria, Lancashire and the conurbations of Greater Manchester and Merseyside.

The RTPI North West England Region reflects this geographical land mass area, but also includes the Isle of Man, whilst a number of members from North Wales, Staffordshire and Derbyshire share common interests and often get involved in NWR activities. The Region embraces these and sees this as important in the light of cross-border integration.

The total membership of the North West Region extends to **2,133 members (as at 22 August 2011)** – making the NWR the 3rd largest region after the South East and South West Regions – being made up of:

1,477	Corporate
9	Fellow
10	Associate
5	Legal Associate
17	Technical
237	Licentiate
53	Student (fee paying)
58	Student (non-fee paying)
266	Retired
1	Honorary

The Region is also proud to be home to 3 Planning Schools, located at the institutions of the University of Manchester, the University of Liverpool and Liverpool John Moores University.

The Region is geographically biased in that:

- RAC and RMB meetings are generally held in Manchester.
- CPD Conference events are held largely in Manchester and Liverpool, but also in Wigan, Bolton and Warrington and other locations.
- The Regional office and staff is located in (Sale) Manchester.
- The annual Dinner is held in Manchester.
- Social (football and golf) events are held at Bolton and Cheadle respectively.

It has been found that having centrally located events and operations encourage maximum use by the Membership.

Outreach to Members in other urban locations, particularly rural spots, has been difficult and has largely failed to generate either interest or attendance.

This is disappointing, but when holding RAC meetings in such locations attendance has plummeted and costs were driven up; the same experience has been felt when holding CPD events.

The RMB, in consultation with the RAC, has therefore reluctantly taken an executive decision to focus meetings and events in centrally accessible areas of the region so as to maximize participation and revenue.

In addition, the RMB consider that the RTPI is principally a service for its Members and whilst outreach to a wider audience (public and other professions) is undertaken, it is not considered to be the priority of the Region to service non-Members before Members. However, the RMB do believe that the appeal of its Conference Programme needs to appeal to a much wider audience than just "Planners" particularly given the need to both raise the profile of the profession but also to generate income to support and fund Member activity.

SECTION 3 – OUR ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

The North West Region prides itself on its organisational structure, efficiency and effectiveness.

It has a long tradition of pioneering new ways of working and delivering activities long before others; indeed we have provided the template and blueprint for how the Regions can operate.

Whilst the Region has become synonymous for operational practice we strive to maintain and enhance new and better working methods for the benefit of our membership and for the profile of the profession through learning what others do best and we make every attempt to pick up and implement innovative ways of delivering services.

Our focus is on member engagement, principally through our CPD Programme, but also through a social calendar and resourcing the precious amount of volunteer time members of the RAC provide in promoting activities such as the Young Planners and Careers tasks.

Budgetary constraints generate both focus and pressure to deliver.

The North West Region has the following organisational structure:

Principal Officers

The Principal Officers are the **Chairman** (who enjoys a 2 year tenure in order to deliver his/her choice of business), **Senior Vice Chairman**, **Junior Vice Chairman**, **Honorary Secretary** and **Honorary Treasurer**.

Together with the **immediate past Chairman** and the **Region's representative on the RTPI General Assembly** these officers form the Regional Management Board (RMB).

Regional Management Board

The **Regional Management Board (RMB)** is responsible for the strategic conduct of the affairs (tasks), administration and finances of the Region subject to any decisions at Regional General Meetings.

Whilst the ultimate responsibility for the conduct of affairs and finances of the Region rests with the Regional Management Board, the Board takes advice from and involves other people as required. The RMB meets before every RAC meeting and on average 4 times per annum.

Regional Activities Committee

The **Regional Activities Committee (RAC)** is responsible for the conduct and delivery of the key tasks of the Region.

It comprises the 5 Principal Officers, the immediate past Chairman, the Region representative on the RTPI General Assembly, 16 Corporate Members, 6 Student Members and 2 Technical Members.

Co-opted members can, and do, also play a role on the RAC and indeed there is positive encouragement for Members to do so.

There are 4 RAC meetings per year, plus the AGM (held on the 1st Friday of every December).

It is not uncommon for meetings to be attended by an external speaker who may be invited to discuss an issue of current planning concern/interest as part of the RAC meeting.

Meetings are also open to all members of the RTPI.

The main business of each meeting is for challenging and dynamic discourse to take place – with Task Groups presenting feedback updates for debate and decision making.

However, it is critical for Task Groups to be taking actions and decisions outside of the formal RAC meeting forum in order that outputs are actually achieved and the Region avoids becoming a “cosy talking shop”.

Task Groups

The main work of the Region is carried out by **Task Groups**, each having a task leader, responsible to the RMB and RAC for reporting progress updates.

Notes

1. RAC/RMB Members can be members of only 1 task group – to ensure focus and delivery
2. Each Task Group shall appoint a Task Leader to enable tasks to be delegated within each group to individual members for specific areas to be championed and delivered.

SECTION 4 – ACTIVITIES & TARGETS FOR 2012

The following activities (with their expenditure codes in brackets) are divided between 5 Central Tasks and 6 Task Groups and are proposed to be undertaken by the NW RTPI during 2012 and beyond.

Strategic targets are provided for each task under their respective headings below; these will be developed by each Task Group in association with RAC and the RMB, where appropriate.

CENTRAL TASKS

- **Regional Activities Committee & Regional Management Board (RMB 282)**
 - Managing and administering Regional affairs with the RMB making recommendations to the RAC on finance, administration, and general direction of Regional affairs, with the RAC acting as forum for task group decision making; identifying areas of sponsorship and funding.
- **Annual General Meeting (AGM 284)**
 - Organising the annual general meeting held on the 1st Friday of December.
 - Presentation of **all** Awards (excl. winner of Regional Planning Project Award) and presentation by the overall winner of the Regional Planning Project Award.
- **Presidential Visit (PV 285)**
 - Organising the annual Presidential Visit to the region and arranging a reception dinner where members shall be encouraged to attend.
 - Aim is to attempt to combine visit with Annual Dinner.
- **CPD Conference Programme (CPD 281)**
 - Providing and offering members and non-members with a mainstream programme of commercially competitive professional events to meet CPD needs.
 - Ensuring the programme maintains maximum relevance to current and emerging planning topics of the day and attracts the widest and largest audience possible.
 - Encouraging engagement of all RAC members in their delivery.
 - Supplemented, where viable, with lower cost / free events on topics areas that might attract and be targeted at more localised/marginalised audiences and those of a more specialist nature.
 - Exploring and developing a programme of events with other built environment professions to widen audiences and topic areas. (e.g. UDG, RIBA, RICS, Landscape Institute, CIH, ICE, IHE, NAPE, etc).
 - Programme arranged by Chair, Administrator and Universities – signed off by RMB.
 - Rely more on e-mail publicity and ensure publicity material is circulated more widely and that events are advertised on different portals so as to attract both RTPI members but also other professionals in the built environment and beyond.
 - Each event organised by individual RAC members.
 - Each event hosted and chaired by individual RAC members (guidelines produced).
 - Ensuring that Members receive a discounted rate on ticket prices over non-members who will be charged a small premium.
 - Reduce hard copy handouts at events and attempt to save money in e-mailing out speaker notes.
- **Social Activities (SOC 261)**
 - Developing a social calendar of events for all members; these currently include:
 - 5-aside football tournaments.
 - Annual Dinner to be held 1st Friday of October – where the overall winner of the Regional Planning Project Award is announced and presented on the evening.
 - Golf Day to be held on 3rd Friday of June annually.
 - Others will be supported where they can operate off a break even cost base.
 - These events can often involve engaging with and developing links with other related professions across region (e.g. UDG, RIBA, RICS, Landscape Institute, CIH, ICE, IHE, NAPE, etc); thus raising the profile of the profession.

TASK GROUPS

● Communication (NEWS 283)

- Encouraging all Members to provide a personal or work e-mail address for communicating professional matters.
- Communicating with Members and the wider community.
- Providing regular e-bulletins and e-mail alerts to membership on all task group activity and member services.
- Production of all copies of "PLANNET" as e-newsletters.
- Managing the Website and encouraging footfall onto the site by Members - facilitating links and developing content.
- Going from 50% email penetration of Membership to 70% penetration by the end of 2012; to 80% penetration by end of 2013 and to 90% by end of 2014

● Awards (AWA 286)

- Administering the annual Regional Planning Project Award for best exemplar projects and studies undertaken by Planning professionals across the region – main overall award winner to be announced and presented at Annual Dinner, with all other awards and commendations to be presented at AGM, where a presentation from main overall award winner is given at the AGM.
- Administering the annual Regional Student (Moss Madden) Award for the best undergraduate and best postgraduate final year project from submissions taken from the 3 Planning Schools – to be presented at the AGM.
- Administering the annual Regional Personal Awards Programme for "Today's Leader, Tomorrow's Leader and Outstanding Service Award" – to be presented at the AGM.

● Young Planners (YPN 287)

- Promoting social and professional activities amongst members under 35 yrs be these undergraduate students or those in practice, together with those graduates and others struggling to enter gainful employment.
- Events will be spread around the region and where possible joint initiatives and events shall be undertaken with other built environment professions; thus engaging with and developing links with other related professions across region (e.g. UDG, RIBA, RICS, Landscape Institute, CIH, ICE, IHE, NAPE, etc).

● Policy Consultation Responses (CON 260)

- Presently this involves an individual Member being tasked with being the central point of contact responsible for responding to legislative planning policy releases that are considered to have a particular relevance for the practice of planning in the Region.
- This involves circulating draft submissions (made on behalf of the Region) to the Task Group for comment/input.
- It then results in a formal Response being made to DCLG (and other consultative bodies) to national and regional statutory planning consultation releases that have an impact upon practice of planning in the region. This can also include responses to RTPI policy documents.
- This task needs to be accountable to reflect the responses made and to embrace and combine with National Networks.

● Education, Planning School Liaison and Career Development Advice (CAR 263)

- Providing students (in higher/further education be they Planning or non-planning undergraduates and postgraduates) with advice on the profession and encouraging entry into the profession; shall involve careers fairs and talks to students on what the profession is seeking and what it's like to be a Planner.
- Providing students (primary and secondary schools) with information resource packs on Planning as a career and as a tool in shaping the built and rural environment.
- Regular and meaningful liaison with the 3 Planning Schools in the region on curriculum development with academics and exploring joint working initiatives.
- Providing members (employed, unemployed and returners) with career development advice.
- Providing non-members (e.g. those looking to make a career change into Planning) with advice on the profession and encouragement on entry into the profession.
- Providing career development and general advice to Members who need support during times of career uncertainty and obtaining gainful employment/experience/internships.
- Responsible for providing Licentiate members with APC assistance and guidance.

● Planning Aid (OTH 288)

- Individual tasked with being a point of contact responsible for liaison with the externally funded Planning Aid service.
- Developing opportunities for outreach into the community (e.g. schools and amenity groups); providing contact with the service where support and access to resources can be facilitated.
- Encouraging Members to act as planning aid volunteers.
- Developing the service within the confines of available funding.

SECTION 5 – FUNDING & BUDGET FOR 2012

Once again we have administered cuts and streamlined service provision; providing only core services.

The intention for 2012 is to once again use our Positive Accumulated Reserves position to fund the planned (inevitable) deficit.

In our opinion, this method of budgeting continues to be unsustainable.

It is painfully clear that there is a mismatch between expenditure and income and that if this was a commercial operation it would have been bankrupt and wound up several years ago.

Since 2008 we have made cutbacks year on year, yet despite this we are unable to budget for a deficit and rely totally on our reserves to stay in the black.

We would urge and implore the Board of Trustees together with the RNP (Treasurers) to review how the Regions are funded.

There are presently two very significant pressures on the profession and its membership, namely:

- **CPD** – making sure Planners have the skills in the new and emerging planning system (sic. Localism, NPPF)
- **Unemployment** – ensuring Planners (graduates, etc) understand the skill set that they can offer is attractive to employers, whilst coping with and assisting in ways of obtaining experience/jobs in a difficult market
- **Planning Aid** – how to facilitate its operation should CLG funding cease

Our Region is conscious that a current, relevant and commercial **CPD Programme** is essential; the main challenge is to maintain this but to also ensure members can actually afford the ticket price and we as a Region are able to generate sufficient revenue. As the cost base increases (venue hire, etc) it is anticipated that belt-tightening will continue to place income under pressure.

There is no easy panacea to the **employment problem**, but there are ways and measures that the Region can assist and support its Members in addressing these issues and our Region is making every effort to ensure its services in this area are focused.

With regards **Planning Aid** the decision taken by the RMB is that funding (to the tune of £5,000 pro-rata over 9 months – April to Dec 2012 - i.e. £3,750) be provided in the event CLG funding ceases in April 2012; thus enabling us to provide the service with some additional staff resource and that this is done using our Reserves rather than giving it a specific budget head as it could be expenditure that is not required.

It is hoped that the active involvement of the Region in providing services in these focal areas can, in some way, positively address the way in which Members relate to their profession and how the profession relates to its Members.

Both HQ and the Regions need to work together in making sure there is not a duplication of services (sic. Networks); there has, over the years, been a trend towards placing greater responsibility upon the Regions but without any additional resources; this needs to be addressed and we will continue to engage with HQ to ensure these and other important messages are relayed from the grassroots.

The financial forecast budget and summary position for 2012 is provided beneath.

