



## New President from the West Midlands

**O**ur very own, Clive Harridge, who both lives and works in the West Midlands, has been inaugurated as the new national President of the Institute.


Clive who is a Director of **Entec** based in Leamington Spa, took over the reins from Ron Tate at the end of January and for the next year will be new figurehead of the planning profession.

His main challenges and themes for the year will be addressing the issue of climate change, developing sustainable communities and tackling environmental justice. He has already raised the profile of the



profession by calling for a national planning strategy, something that has been sadly missing despite the recent revolution in the planning system.

Clive has worked in the public and private sectors. He began his career at West Midlands County Council before moving on to Warwick District Council and then Rugby Borough Council. In 1989 he joined consultants Shankland Cox which subsequently became Entec.

Now turn to the centre pages of Tripwire for a special *exclusive* interview with the new Institute President. 

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## Helen Brookes Martin – Young planner of the year

**C**ongratulations to Helen Brookes Martin who was awarded the title of 'Young Planner of the Year' at the RTPI National Planning Awards in London.

Helen, who is based at Dudley MBC has worked in a number of different authorities in the West Midlands, starting with Shrewsbury & Atcham DC in 1996, and moving on to Dudley (1999), back to Shrewsbury (2000), on to Bromsgrove (2001), up to Cannock Chase DC (2002) and finally back to Dudley again.



In her current job, Helen has a key role supervising and mentoring colleagues and focusing on performance and process. Indeed, she has implemented an improvement plan to raise the standard of Dudley MBC to a top performer within a year.

John Pattinson, general manager for Dudley MBC has praised Helen as an 'inspirational leader' who is caring and supportive of all her staff and is cool, calm and collected even under pressure.

Well done Helen. 

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## Chair's remarks

### WEST MIDLANDS BRANCH IS DEAD! LONG LIVE THE REGION!

**T**he West Midlands Branch is dead! Long live the West Midlands Region! You may not yet have spotted the difference, but at our EGM on 5 December, in the unlikely surroundings of the Wing Wah restaurant, Oldbury, the West Midlands Branch, which we are all familiar with, was consigned to history.

Instead, in its place, those present at the EGM were asked to endorse a constitution for a new West Midlands Region, which they duly did. So what's different?

On the one hand, very little. The new RTPI West Midlands Region covers exactly the same geographical area as the old Branch, and will serve the same membership. On the other hand, quite a lot. The inauguration of new RTPI Regions throughout the land is the final stage in implementing the 'New Institute' reforms and the culmination of the 'Branch Review' undertaken by the RTPI at Botolph Lane. The name change signifies a fundamental change of emphasis of how the RTPI works and delivers for local membership. Coincidentally, more by the personalities involved than by process, a much more constructive relationship has been built up between the new Regions and the 'centre' at Botolph Lane than before. A new spirit is evident in the relationship over the last year, with much less diktat from headquarters and much more 'partnership'. The new reforms, both at headquarters and in the Region,

will build on this, enabling a much more responsive membership services culture.

This change of emphasis is reflected in the new Regional management structure. At risk of boring you with an explanation of the bureaucracy, the Region is now run by a Regional Management Board (RMB) which has delegated authority to run RTPI affairs in the region. Alongside the RMB is the Regional Activities Committee (RAC). This RAC has the dual function of keeping the RMB in check and organising activities and services for members in the region, such as CPD events, social events and responses on behalf of the RTPI to regional planning issues. The RMB consists of the Chair; the immediate Past Chair; the Vice Chair; the Hon Secretary; the Hon Treasurer; and the Regional Representative on the RTPI General Council. The RAC consists of anyone else elected by you or co-opted by it. In this way, it is hoped that more members will become active in regional CPD and other activities, without having the burden (or boredom) of management responsibilities. Your new RMB fully supports the new initiatives and believes they are in the interests of members.

As your first ever Regional Chair (and last ever Branch Chair!), I look forward to welcoming you to more regional RTPI events. 🏠

**Hector Pearson** Chair, RTPI West Midlands

## Editor's thoughts on – political consensus

**I**f a week is a long time in politics - then the last few months must have seemed like a lifetime. In the short period since just before Christmas, the political climate would appear to have changed out of all recognition.

The Conservatives have now elected a new leader who seems to be well to the left of the Labour party, where consensus is the norm and where all the old stereotypes are disappearing. The new Labour Party, still led by Tony Blair, continues to pursue a programme which displays all the characteristics of Tory principles and seems primarily focused on cementing the Prime Minister's legacy – whether or not it conforms to the ideals of the party. On the third hand, the Liberal Democrats don't seem to know quite which way to turn – and yet have succeeded in winning the seemingly un-winnable by-election seat of Dunfermline and Fife – the home of the Chancellor and Prime Minister in-waiting. Consensus politics it would seem are the order of the day!

In terms of planning, after long resisting John Prescott's 'Sustainable Communities' plan and rejecting attempts to deliver more housing, the Conservative spokesman, George Osborne, last week delivered a landmark speech in which he supported the need for growth areas and welcomed the need for more affordable housing. He also agreed with the proposal floated in PPS3 to dilute the development of 'brownfield' land to exclude houses and gardens in certain circumstances – though quite how this will be interpreted in practice remains to be seen.

The move towards consensus is a feature of the new planning system which will shortly be put to the test. The Lichfield Local Development Framework will be the first in the country to be put through the new Public Examination process. As the Inspector, John Mattocks made clear at the Pre-Examination meeting on 14th February although there are controversial issues at stake, the series of 'debates' will be primarily focused on testing whether the Plan is 'sound'. No longer will developers or local residents be able to object or challenge the Plan on the basis that they have a better alternative.

I anticipate that the pressure to deliver plans quickly and the heavy responsibility now placed on the Inspector to determine the adopted plan will mean that few changes are likely to be made and certainly no fundamental alterations can be expected which would undermine the overall strategy of the Plan – after all the first Plan to be tested will need to be seen as a success.

But I suspect that once the first wave of the new LDF's have been through the system, local residents and developers will have to 'take stock' and decide how better they can engage with the process. Notwithstanding the lip service paid to consultation, they will soon realise that their views and proposals play very little part as the Plan moves forward to adoption in its final stages. After all, if the targets for adoption are to be met there will no time to take a breath never mind to make changes. 🏠

**John Acres** Editor

## Another first for the West Mids – Lichfield LDF Examination

In our last edition of Tripwire we reported that Stafford Borough had become the first local authority to submit their Local Development Framework Core Strategy. In this issue we can proudly report that the first Examination into a Local Development Framework in the country will open in Lichfield on 25th April 2006.


Lichfield District Council pulled out all the stops to process all the 700 representations from local residents, businesses and groups ready for the first Pre – examination meeting which was held on 14th February 2006 under the control of the Inspector, Mr John Mattocks. A series of Topic Reports will set out the Council's policy stance in time for the opening of the Examination itself in April.

Craig Jordan, the new Development Plans and Implementation Manager, is acutely aware that the Council will be in the spotlight over the next few months. *'Whilst welcoming the opportunity to be at the forefront of the new process'* he said, *'it puts even greater pressure on us to make sure we get it right'*.

Councillor Neil Roberts, the Cabinet Member for Development at the District Council commented, *'We know how important development is to local people. We're proud to be the first Council in the country to push forward with a new development framework'*.

### LICHFIELD FACTS & FIGURES

- Lichfield DC submitted its Statement of Community Involvement to the Secretary of State in July 2005.
- Lichfield DC submitted its Core Strategy, Allocations of land & site development policies DPD and Development Control Policies DPD to the SOS in October 2005.
- There were 396 representations to the Core Strategy, 208 to the Allocations DPD and 103 representations to the Development Control Policies
- All representations were considered by the Council's Executive on 17th January.
- The Examination opens on 25th April 2006. There was a pre-examination meeting on 14th February.
- In addition the Council is preparing 2 Action Area Plans; one covering Lichfield City Centre and the other covering West Burntwood.
- These will be submitted at the earliest date after the adoption of the Core Strategy.

For more information, please contact Craig Jordan 01543 308202 or Paul Ansell 01543 308147 

## Live/Work; what exactly does it mean?

Planners and developers will be watching the outcome of an appeal inquiry in Stratford on Avon District very closely. The appeal into the proposal by Brockhall Village (Tern Hill) Ltd for 56 'live/work' units on a brownfield site next to the Oxford Canal, in the shadow of the famous Napton Windmill, has just closed, as Tripwire goes to press.


The Napton Brickyard site, which has been derelict for many years, was previously designated for employment uses under the adopted Stratford on Avon Local Plan, but has not come forward for development. It has since been re-allocated in the emerging Local Plan review for *'mixed-use development to incorporate Class B1 industrial units, residential units tied specifically to businesses on the site, holiday accommodation and canal-based recreation'*. This has opened up the possibility for 'live/work' development. But what is 'live/work' development?

Up until now, the concept of live/work has normally consisted of vertical or horizontal mixed use development in **urban** areas – often involving the redevelopment of redundant buildings. Alternatively it has involved rural workshops or offices linked to

existing residential buildings in **rural** areas, or farm diversification. But in this case the scheme involves rows of large new purpose built dwellings with detached workshops/offices aligned to form a separate 'commercial street'.



The intention of the scheme is for people to occupy the new dwellings and develop local businesses in the adjacent commercial buildings, but what happens if the firm fails to get off the ground or goes bust? And what happens when the owner retires? Above all, since 'live/work' is categorised as *'sui generis'* (rather than a mixture of residential and employment) within the latest revision to the Use Classes Order, does this mean that the normal policy constraints which control the location and distribution of housing and the need for affordable housing still apply or not?

These issues have all been debated through the recent appeal inquiry. But it is very clear that this concept, if approved, could set the pattern for new development both in towns and the countryside. Do you have any experience of 'live/work' in practice. Please contact the usual Tripwire address if you wish to comment. 

## Harnessing planning gain

### A PRIVATE SECTOR VIEW ON THE PLANNING GAIN SUPPLEMENT

Following his article two years ago in the January/February 2004, edition of 'Tripwire', David Coates, Planning Director with house builders J A Pye in Oxfordshire, reviews the Government's latest proposals for the introduction of a 'Planning-gain Supplement'.

**W**ell, this time they must be serious – a Consultation paper at the end of last year from not only ODPM but also H M Treasury and H M Revenue and Customs. After several false starts we now have the genuine article.

What has now emerged, as I speculated earlier, is a relatively straightforward tax on the increase in land value which accrues on the benefit of (an implementable?) planning consent. I say 'relatively straightforward' because previous attempts, Development Land Tax for example, introduced in the late 1970s, were particularly complex and costly in their administration. There may well be exceptions in the application of the tax, for example, the bringing forward of more costly brownfield developments, reflecting the difficulty of exceeding existing use values and, (though this is by no means certain), small sites, however defined.

Unusually for a Treasury proposal on taxation there is no indication as to what the rate will be. Speculation is that it will be 'modest' ranging from, say, 10% up to 30%. There is also uncertainty in terms of how revenues would be spent and here there will clearly be a number of issues of concern to local authorities. To what extent will revenues be recycled and at what level? How much might be applied on a pan-regional basis? What will be the balance between the so-called growth areas and other parts of a region where there is an 'infrastructure deficit'?


Aside from these matters of detail and implementation, it could be argued that the tax element of what is being proposed is broadly acceptable, depending, of course, on the developer's deal with the landowner. The rest of the consultation package, however, raises considerable uncertainty in view of the retention of the need for continuing negotiations and hence delay, to provide what

is quaintly described as a new 'development-site environmental approach'.

This, I would argue, undermines the claim that what is proposed through the PGS will 'improve the efficiency and transparency of the planning obligation system'. Those items outside the 'new scope' and, by inference, to be funded through the taxation element, include education and health care provision. Whereas, within this 'new scope' are particular matters of detail, several of which include, for example, landscaping and design coding should logically be dealt with by planning conditions.

The most problematic and contentious issue continues to be that of affordable housing. Under the new system this would remain a matter for local negotiation and that, it is commonly recognised, is the single most time consuming element in concluding any Section 106 negotiation. Could it, I wonder, instead be considered on a par with education and health needs and funded in large measure through recycled local revenues? Not, perhaps, an easy one to grapple with but an approach which should, nevertheless, be assessed from the standpoint of simplifying agreements, reducing costs and, ultimately, speeding up delivery.

So long as this twin-tracked approach of taxation and separate, local agreements is proposed, then there can be no expectation of a streamlined, efficient system. We have, in many respects, the worst of both worlds with continuing policy inconsistencies and arguments about impact on a development-site approach whilst through the tax element, a severing of the link between 'need' and the value of contributions.

The intended implementation date of 2008 may seem some way off but given what we have seen in the Consultation paper much of that time will be needed to produce a worthwhile and workable package. 

**David Coates**  
Planning Director, JA Pye.

## Planning Gain – Editorial Comment

Peter Snow, in his recent television programme 'Who owns Britain' came out with the interesting fact that 90% of the population of Britain live on 10% of the land. Apparently there are roughly 60 million people living in this country and about 60 million acres of land – yet only about 4 million acres of it are occupied.

Only a very small fraction of that land in Britain is likely to be developed. Yet the difference in value of land with and without planning consent can be as much as 200 fold. Small wonder then that ever since the planning system was invented, successive Governments have tried to tap the enhanced value of land from planning consents. Not only is there a deep underlying social inequity in allowing landowners to profit from the presence of a system designed to protect the community, but they simply seem too good a target to miss.

So far of course all attempts have all failed, either as a result of changes of Government, decisions by

landowners to withhold their land or because they were simply too complex. This time it would seem there is a much greater prospect that the Government's objective will be achieved – at least somehow.

Change – like death and taxes – is inevitable. In this case the Government has scored two out of three. The Government's proposals for a 'Planning Gain Supplement', aim to impose the tax on the difference between the existing use value before consent and the ultimate value with full planning consent, with the tax being paid after the grant of full planning consent – so far so good.

But laudable though the aim might be, the PGS is not without its problems.

Firstly, setting the existing use value may not be a simple matter. Land allocated for development will already have an enhanced value. Furthermore, land in productive use,

## Capturing planning gain for public benefit

### A PUBLIC SECTOR VIEW ON THE PLANNING GAIN SUPPLEMENT

**T**he Government's proposal for a Planning Gain Supplement is the first genuine attempt for a long time to have any chance of cracking the age-old dilemma of equitably harvesting community benefit from the 'hyke' in land value from gaining planning permission. However, what must be clearly understood is that it will not pay for public investment, merely assist in it.

Land and property valuation, for all the professional expertise applied to it, is an imprecise craft. It should clearly be seen that the, hopefully modest, contributions from Planning Gain Supplement on brownfield sites on greenfield land would not address all the infrastructure needs for new development, particularly where facilities are already inadequate to meet the needs of the existing population before the development takes place.


But too high a rate of contributions would indeed be a disincentive to development. On the other hand, the lower the contribution from Planning Gain Supplement, the more will be the requirement for general funding from other forms of taxation.

The new system, if applied universally, should have the advantage of ensuring that even small-scale developments will contribute proportionately in the same way as larger ones do, to the community. Payment at the start of development will prevent the criticism that the grant of permission is itself a taxable event, particularly after a substantial fee has been levied for processing the planning application. Also the valuation mechanism should reflect up to date land prices and building costs, which have a tendency to rise rather than the reverse.

If properly designed the system should take account of the difference in values before and after permission is obtained for any site anywhere. This should reflect site conditions and market variations in different parts of the country as well as whether sites are previously developed or not.



So long as self-assessment is based on clear guidance, then all these variances should be capable of being factored in. However, it must be accepted that the new system will not generate equal amounts of revenue in different parts of the country or types of site and thus cannot be expected to meet all associated costs of infrastructure.

Taxation provides for mainstream public investment in infrastructure. This principle must not be allowed to be subverted. If the Government thinks there will be enough in the 'PGS pot' to pay for expenditure required at regional level then it has completely misread the real values likely to arise from the process. The purpose of the new tax should be to ensure that landowners to contribute a fair proportion of their "unearned windfalls" from development towards achieving community benefit, not to solve the need for public expenditure in the first place. 

#### John Birkett

John Birkett has recently retired as Director of Planning at South Derbyshire District Council.


### Planning Gain – Editorial Comment (contin...)

for example as a car park or a factory, may be difficult to value. Similarly, the value with planning consent may still be subject to ransoms and covenants which makes valuation problematic. Self-assessment is in practice likely to be very difficult to enforce.

Secondly, it is open to discussion whether the tax will apply to brownfield land and to smaller windfall developments and at what threshold or tax rate it will be levied. But brownfield development now accounts for 72% of new housing, so without income from PGS, the tax rate will need to be extremely high (or the income will be very low).

Thirdly, it remains unclear how the split between PGS and S106 agreements will be made. Can site based obligations so easily be separated from general contributions? Where will the money go and will local authorities lose a substantial source of funding from S106 agreements to disappear in a regional bureaucratic pot!

It is becoming increasingly clear that simpler 'tariff based' contributions, on the lines explored at Milton Keynes, are likely to prove much more popular. Indeed, Yvette Cooper has suggested that local authorities and developers press on with such tariffs in the meantime. Whilst they may be less sensitive to variations in betterment, they have the advantage that they are more closely related to the delivery of infrastructure and both the developer and the local authority can at least see where the money is going.

Meanwhile landowners and developers have three years until 2008 to get on and deliver more development before the new tax is implemented. But of course by then we will have had another General Election and anything may happen. 

John Acres Tripwire Editor

## Life as 'The President' ...

*A few weeks ago, our own Clive Harridge who lives and works here in the West Midlands took over the role as National President of the Institute.*

*'Tripwire' has obtained an 'exclusive' interview with him to explore his thoughts and dreams of running the Institute.*

### What are your thoughts on becoming President?

I am taking on my role as RTPI President with great excitement and anticipation. For a start, 2006 is a great year to be President. It marks the culmination of what has been little short of a revolution in planning over the last 5 years, with radical reform of the RTPI, redesign of planning education, the introduction of spatial planning and the development of new planning systems. The RTPI has more members than ever before and planning schools are full with high quality students. All this combined with top level political support for planning (Blair, Brown and Prescott) and initiatives to change the culture of planning have put planning where it deserves to be – centre stage in Government policy and in delivering sustainable communities.

As some of you may recall, I was elected to President by a ballot of all RTPI members. This was the first time such a ballot had been held so I was particularly proud to have been elected in this way – and with such a big majority!

I also have great humility in following in the footsteps of my eminent predecessors over the past 90 years – Presidents such as Raymond Unwin (1916), Patrick Abercrombie (1925), Sir George Pepler (1949), Desmond Heap (1955), Colin Buchanan (1963), Jim Amos (1971), Gordon Cherry (1978), Chris Shepley (1989) ... and many more.

### What will you be doing as President?

As President I will be a key spokesperson for the RTPI and represent the membership in a wide range of activities and events including top level discussions with Government, Agencies and industry bodies and contact with the media. I have already had some taste of the latter with a couple of appearances on TV news and items in the national press. An important responsibility is to Chair the RTPI's General Assembly which meets 4 times a year and is the principal forum for the development of RTPI policy. In addition, I will be visiting each of 13 RTPI Regions throughout the UK and Ireland - each visit normally takes 2-3 days and can include activities like meeting groups of planners and employers, presenting planning Awards, chairing conferences and events, meeting local politicians and so on.

Through my visits to the Regions, I will be seeking to meet as many members as possible including young planners, student planners and those thinking of a career in planning. I want to hear and discuss their views and any concerns they have on

the current state of planning and the RTPI and future directions.

### What is your Presidential Theme?

As President I will be promoting the key role that planning has for our success as a nation. I believe that planning should be at the very heart of sustainable development, and that for a successful nation we need to plan for a sustainable future that will help us compete and prosper in the 21st century. I will be arguing that there can be no sustainable development without sustainable communities, and no sustainable communities without good planning. Good planning **now** is the key for a great future for generations to come.

I believe we need to 'get real' about sustainable development and sustainable communities. There are many bold statements from Government about the importance of Sustainable Development and its commitment to help deliver a more sustainable future. But how sustainable is the Government's Communities Plan with its focus on the South East? Who thinks the Government's Air Transport policy is consistent with sustainable development? Is market driven housing supply a sustainable approach? Climate change is arguably the biggest challenge we face as a nation and yet we do not have a planning policy statement on the topic. Planning has a major role in addressing the causes and impacts of climate change through managing flood risk, reduced energy use in buildings, reduced emissions, and delivering renewable energy - there is much good and best practice in these areas – but we need to achieve more. Innovative approaches to



## ... an interview with Clive Harridge

reducing energy use and emissions should become the norm – Government policy should be stronger and have ‘teeth’.

### What will you be campaigning for as President?

I will be pressing for a national spatial strategy and for stronger planning policy in relation to sustainable development and climate change.

I will be encouraging more effective ways of community involvement so that we get beyond the ‘usual suspects’ and effectively engage with hard to reach individuals and groups. Related to this I will be promoting the work of Planning Aid by encouraging all Local Authorities to sign up to the Planning Aid Concordat and inviting planners to serve as volunteers (Planning Aid is a great way to get CPD).

I will be encouraging young people in schools and university to take up careers in planning.

I will be explaining to employers why their planning staff should be RTPI members and demonstrating the good value employers get from paying subscriptions.

I will be encouraging all RTPI members to participate in at least one of the 10+ RTPI Networks and Associations. These provide very effective ways of sharing experiences and keeping in touch with developments in specific areas of planning. Being free they provide good value for money! If you are not already a member, go on to the RTPI web site to find out more.

I will be promoting stronger links between planning and health. The very origins of planning were based on tackling health issues and yet the link between planning and health has been largely lost. A sustainable community is a healthy community. Through improved access to health facilities, open space, employment and recreation, planning has a major role in tackling problems of poor health.

I will be promoting the role that good planning has in tackling global problems of slum development and poverty. As one of the world’s foremost planning organisations with many international members, the RTPI has a significant international role. Over the last couple of years as Vice President I have developed close links with planning organisations in Europe, USA, Canada, and Australia and, through the Commonwealth Association of Planners, with planners in many other parts of the world. We are currently working with UN HABITAT to prepare for the World Urban Forum to be held in July in Vancouver. A major stream of action at the Forum will demonstrate the role of good planning in helping tackle the huge international problems of slum development (eg. 70% of Africa’s urban population lives in slums), global poverty and post conflict and post disaster

recovery (eg. the RTPI was closely involved in providing aid to planners in Sri Lanka following the tsunami).

### What is your day job and will you still be doing it as President?

I am a Director in **Entec** based at the company’s Leamington Spa office. During my time as President I will still be doing the day job although not to the same level as normally. However, I will be continuing with my project work for clients such as English Partnerships, the Greater London Authority, the Crown Estate, the Black Country Consortium and Bristol Airport. My employers **Entec** have been very supportive of me becoming President for which I am very grateful – without their support none of this would have been possible.

### Do you get paid to be President?


No. Being President is a honorary position and there is no payment.

### When did you first get involved in the RTPI and why?

I first became involved in the RTPI back in the 1970’s when I took on my first job at West Midlands County Council. I was strongly encouraged and inspired by Alan Cave who was my boss at the time and involved in the West Midlands Branch. I began with organising a few social events including a visit of the Grotton Road Show (if you don’t know what that is ask any planner aged over 50!). I then went on to become a Planning Aid volunteer and eventually Branch Chair in 1995. My theme as Branch Chair was ‘Europe’; I established the Europe Group and helped develop contacts with Lithuania and elsewhere. I am pleased that the Group has continued to expand under the leadership of Christina Mannering.

I became involved with the RTPI because I wanted to pursue my interests in planning beyond the confines of my job, and through work with Planning Aid to help less privileged members of our society.

### Can members contact you if they wish to discuss the RTPI or want further information?

Yes! I would be delighted for members to contact me. It is important to me that I get to hear the views of members and to help members wherever possible. I would particularly welcome comments on the views expressed in this article. 

### Clive Harridge

President of the Royal Town Planning Institute

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## West Midlands Region highlights tensions in PPS3

The Government's new housing policy document (PPS3 Housing) is raising some interesting tensions between national and regional planning policy in the West Midlands. A task group of planners has studied the document and has sent its comments through to the Institute.

PPS3 heralds a 'step change' in housing provision to ensure that *'Everyone has a home that they can afford in a community in which they wish to live.'* The essence of PPS3 is therefore that housing need and demand will be satisfied broadly within the same housing sub-market area (however this may be defined) and hence that demand cannot be deflected from one area to another. This contrasts with the policy in the current West Midlands Spatial Strategy which seeks to focus most development in the Major Urban Areas of Birmingham, Coventry, the Black Country and the Potteries – with a much more restrictive approach in the rural areas. Indeed, the shire county authorities have had limits imposed on housing development with the figures viewed as 'maxima'.

This has raised interesting discussions in view of the specific request from ODPM that the West Midlands volunteers potential *growth areas* for housing. Clearly without some flexibility outside the MUA's there is nowhere for them to go. The RTPI region has sought some clarification from ODPM on this aspect. It would seem that something clearly has to give.


The RTPI region has also commented on the merits of the 'top down' approach to providing housing and the effect of housing distribution on rural communities. Some planners feel there ought to be a more sensitive

way of responding to local needs, particularly for affordable housing, to replace the current dilemma where the RSS restricts housing numbers, yet Housing Needs Surveys and Market Assessments show a pressing need for additional homes.

The group was also concerned about the narrowing of the definition of 'affordable housing' and the danger that without including 'low cost market housing' within the *Intermediate* category, housebuilders would be discouraged from building smaller housing units. Design remains a key issue. A separate group within the Institute Branch is focusing on this aspect.

Above all however, the group highlighted a critical problem of resources. If local authorities are to produce the full range of Housing market assessments, housing land availability assessments, as well as delivering Local Development Frameworks on a rolling timetable and maintaining targets for the approval of planning applications, there will need to be a substantial additional injection of resources and manpower.

Furthermore, the implications will not just fall on the public sector. The private sector, including representatives of the landowners, house-builders and developers will have to work much harder in future to scrutinise the many Housing Market and Land Availability Assessments, Community Strategies and Supplementary Planning Documents as well as undertaking pre-application discussions and consultation with the public.


All in all, it looks like being a busy time for planners! 

## Opening the flood gates

A new draft planning guidance on Planning and Flood risk in PPS25 is debated, new investment is occurring in Herefordshire to stem potential flooding on the River Wye.

In Hereford, a long-awaited flood prevention scheme has taken a major step forward to reality with the approval by DEFRA of a £4million funding package to build flood defence barriers south of the Wye. The Environment Agency has given the go-ahead to start the works in 2007, with an additional £2m of funding coming from ASDA for the development of their new superstore at Belmont.

Elsewhere in Ross on Wye, another flood alleviation project has been progressed to prevent the devastating floods of 2000 re-occurring. The scheme, estimated to cost £5million will involve the building of a 350 metre long tunnel, to channel water away from the brooks which caused the 2000 flood and also a large flood storage area east of the A40.


The scheme will involve acquiring land from landowners, if necessary through compulsory purchase. About half of the cost will come from DEFRA with the remainder being funded through Herefordshire Council. 

## Government clamps down on motorway advertising

The West Midlands, as the hub of the country's motorway network, is likely to be targeted for a new purge on illegal roadside advertising. Early in the new year, Yvette Cooper, the Housing and Planning Minister, announced new measures to control sporadic roadside advertising which both spoils the appearance of the countryside as well as creating a hazard for drivers.

In future, local authorities will be expected to come down hard on landowners and operators who allow trucks and trailers to display hoardings advertising anything from kitchens to loan sharks.

New guidance is being issued to Councils to give greater clarity and advice. *'Some people think they can get round the planning system by putting these ads on trailers in fields'* she said. *'They can't. It doesn't matter whether it is on a trailer or a hoarding, if it is stuck in a field by the side of the road it should be treated in the same way'.* *'Most of these ads are dangerous as well as being an eyesore. It's time local authorities clamped down'.*

Does your Council suffer from roadside advertising. If so, what is your approach to dealing with it? Write to Tripwire. We would be interested to find out. 

## Outstanding Service Awards for three long-serving members

Three of the region's longest-serving Institute members - Bob Stokes, Peter Lindsell and George Goodall – are each to be awarded RTPI 'Outstanding Service Awards'.

The awards mark a fitting end to the West Midlands Branch, as it changes to a Region at the beginning of this year. Between them, the three stalwarts have served the Branch for nearly 100 years and have had a major impact on the profession and in helping planners – in their own particular ways.

**Bob Stokes** has been a member of the Branch Executive Committee since 1971 and was Branch Chairman in 1990. He jointly edited the award winning book 'Region and Renaissance' published by the Branch in its Golden Jubilee year in 2000 and has been involved in the Programme Group from the late 1980's. Formerly a planner with Solihull and Warwickshire County Council, Bob now works part-time in consultancy and when not on holiday, can be spotted serving as a Programme Officer at Local Plan Inquiries. Well done Bob.

**Peter Lindsell** has been a member of the Branch Executive Committee from 1980 to date. He was Branch Chairman in 1992. He served as the Membership Secretary between 1987 and 1992 and has been the Treasurer of the Branch from 1994 until the present day. As the most senior Branch Treasurer he has been particularly successful in holding the purse strings

whilst bidding for funds for the West Midlands. Peter lives and works in Bridgnorth District. Thank you Peter.



*Bob, Peter and George - spot the deliberate mistake!*

**George Goodall** has been a Member of the Branch Executive Committee since 1982 and was Branch Chairman in 1989. He was a Branch Representative on the National RTPI Council between 1999 and 2004 and has been the Membership Secretary since 1993. He was Chair of the Planning Aid Steering Committee between 1998 and 2002. George is well known to generations of students of Coventry University as well as being an outspoken representative on the former National Council. By George! 🏠

## Most promising newcomers!

Laura Royle and Keir Price have received prizes as the 'Most Promising First Year Planning Students' in the West Midlands.

Laura, who is studying at the University of Birmingham and Keir who is at the University of Central England received their awards from the Chairman of the West



Midlands region of the Institute, Hector Pearson, at the very first meeting of the Regional Affairs Committee on 30th January at the Joint Stock in Birmingham.

We wish them both well in their future studies and in their planning careers. 🏠

## 'Planners in the Workplace' a new initiative from the Institute



The new Programmes and Services Directorate at the RTPI is dedicated to improving the range and quality of services and support that the Institute provides for its members, and to developing new initiatives, so that the Institute can be an organisation which provides services that are truly useful and valuable for members.

One of the key initiatives we are currently putting into place is *Planners in the Workplace*, an idea that the RTPI has long wanted to get off the ground. *Planners in the Workplace* is a service designed to support planners in their roles at all stages of their professional careers, helping them develop as planners, managers and leaders and advising them on complex workplace issues.

As it develops over time, *Planners in the Workplace* will become a co-ordinated and continuous source of easily accessible oral and written advice, guidance and professional support on workplace, career development and professional issues. It will provide clear benefits not only for planners, but also for employers in terms of developing skill levels and improving staff retention. It stops short of turning the Institute into a trade union or trade association, but it will be there to provide many of the elements of support that members most want and need, when and where they need it.

Components of the service will include:

- A directory of members.
- Professional and careers advice available via a telephone/email hotline and a national network of professional advisors.
- Good practice guidance and updates, including guidance on workplace queries relating to the Code of Professional Conduct a telephone hotline for legal and employment advice.
- Multi-disciplinary action learning sets.
- Email discussion groups.
- Links to CPD and *Planning Matters*.
- Factsheets on management/workplace issues, available online.
- Other web-based support, such as an "Agony Planner".

In particular, we know from cases that we already deal with that access to speedy advice on dealing with practical workplace issues, such as the effects of job evaluation schemes, probity issues or potential conflicts of interest is a service particularly valued by members. In some cases, the situations can't be resolved. In others, we can provide advice that mitigates the position and helps those involved. We know from the feedback we receive that whatever the outcome, planners in such situations really appreciate the Institute providing help, being a friendly and supportive voice and source of advice, and taking a stand – in other words, being there for its members when it matters to them.

A dedicated *Planners in the Workplace* Manager will be available to deal with queries via a telephone hotline. At the same time, there will be a regional network of voluntary advisors to whom issues can be passed and who can take up cases close to home. The advisors will be drawn from a range of RTPI members who have experience of working across the public, private and academic sectors. Members will also provide oversight of the programme via a Steering Group, which is being chaired by Mike Haslam and which has just had its first meeting.

We will be looking to involve all the Regions, including the West Midlands, in developing *Planners in the Workplace*, so that we can be sure that we are implementing the programme in a way that supports the Regions in their expanding role and ensures that they are fully informed.

At present, we're at the stage of recruiting our embryo network of advisors and recruiting the *Planners in the Workplace* Manager, with a view to launching the service publicly later this year. We are already dealing with workplace cases: if you have a query, please contact Chris Sheridan on 020 7929 9483, or via [chris.sheridan@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:chris.sheridan@rtpi.org.uk). In the meantime, if you're interested in any aspect of *Planners in the Workplace*, would like to find out more or are interested in becoming an advisor, please contact me at the Institute.

[debbie.sorkin@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:debbie.sorkin@rtpi.org.uk)

### Debbie Sorkin

Debbie Sorkin is Director of Programmes and Services at the Institute. RTPI, 41 Botolph Lane, London EC3R 8DL. Telephone: 0207 929 9470

## Planning Aid Volunteers wanted!

I hope you have all spotted the flyer in this edition of Tripwire. If you have thought about becoming a volunteer please at least complete the form and request the pack to see what the new service is all about.

Volunteering is not just about giving advice to neighbours on planning applications, we have a wide range of cases and activities which you could take part in as volunteer. Don't forget getting involved in Planning Aid can count towards your CPD as well as give you a different viewpoint on planning.

Even if you think that you do not have time to be a volunteer you may have a specialist knowledge which other volunteers could use or be available for the community planning events, hone up your presentation skills by giving a training session on the planning system, or help at an event with school children.

In 2005 the Planning Aid Service dealt with over 600 requests for assistance which have resulted in volunteer case work as well as undertaking many other community planning activities. These included; running workshops for community groups on the planning system and helping parishes develop their Parish Plan. WMPAS also ran 4 volunteer training events in 2005 including a 'Planning Law Question Time' and an exercise on planning for telecommunication masts.

If you are interested or would like to find out more about becoming a volunteer please return the slip on the flyer to the WMPAS office or just give us a ring.

### Sheena Terrace

## Triptease

The result of our second 'Triptease' Competition was somewhat topical, in view of the fact that it emerged just before Christmas.

The questions (and answers) were:

1. Who won the 1980 Olympic Gold Medal in the 100m for men? **Answer:** Alan WELLS.
2. Which schoolboy featured in the books written by Anthony Buckeridge? **Answer:** JENNINGS
3. Which battle fought in July 1644 is considered to be a major turning point in the English Civil War in favour of Cromwell? **Answer:** MARSTON Moor.
4. Who married the Indian Princess Pocahontas? **Answer:** Captain JOHN SMITH.
5. Who was the 1st actress to demand and receive a fee of \$1 million for a single film role? **Answer:** Elizabeth TAYLOR.
6. Which Area of Outstanding Natural beauty was designated in 1971 and straddles the English - Welsh Border. **Answer:** WYE VALLEY.

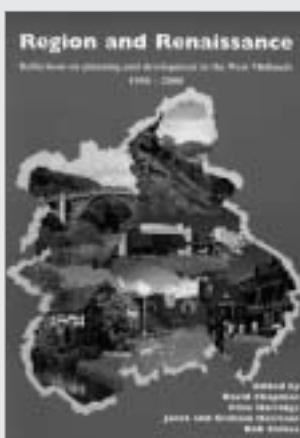
The common theme which links all 6 questions is of course **breweries!**


The winner of the prize: A copy of the award winning book 'Region and Renaissance' was our own Hon. Branch Secretary, Paul Harris. Who was the only person to get all the questions right. Well done Paul.

The questions in this edition of 'Triptease' are:

1. Who was the architect of St Paul's Cathedral?
2. Which Comic started 14th April 1950?
3. What is the literal meaning of the word "Subbuteo"?
4. In which film did Sidney Greenstreet make his film debut?
5. Who wrote "The Red Badge of Courage"?
6. What was the name of the character played by Dirk Bogarde in the film "Doctor in the House"?

What is the common theme which links all 6 answers?



Once again, there is a copy of 'Region and Renaissance' for the first correct answer by Email or post to the usual Ripon Cottage address. Good luck! 



**Judd Farris**  
property recruitment

### ✦ LONDON

020 7494 2555

### ✦ MANCHESTER

0161 834 8666

### ✦ BIRMINGHAM

0121 200 0800

### ✦ BRISTOL

0117 974 2000

### ✦ SYDNEY - AUSTRALIA

00612 9232 8188

### ✦ HONG KONG - ASIA

00852 2802 8062

## Plan ahead with Judd Farris

### Senior Regeneration Planner

✦ BIRMINGHAM - Up to £45k + Bens

International consultancy who provide a comprehensive range of planning, management and environmental services seek a Senior Regeneration Planner to join their team. The role will involve working on an eclectic range of interesting projects throughout the Midlands region and further a field. You will be RTPI qualified with at least 4 years PQE combined with a proven track record in Regeneration. The role offers a fantastic salary, impressive benefits and the opportunity to work within one of the finest organisations in the region.

steve.simmonds@juddfarris.co.uk Ref: SS/16394

### Client side Opportunity

✦ WARWICKSHIRE - Up to £36k + Bens

A client side opportunity exists within a national organization for an experienced Policy planner. This varied role will include advising on Planning Policy issues whilst promoting the organization and their guidelines to external agents. You will be RTPI qualified with at least 5 years experience and possess strong communication skills. Any Utilities experience would prove advantageous. An impressive benefits package along with competitive salary are available for the right individual who wishes to move from a LA or consultancy background.

steve.simmonds@juddfarris.co.uk Ref: SS/16326

### Legal Firm seeks Exceptional Planner

✦ EAST MIDLANDS - Up to £35k

Highly successful legal firm in the East Midlands seeks a senior level Planner to join their highly property team. Working on a both mixed use and retail projects, this role offers unrivalled prospects and would offer an accomplished Senior Planner the chance to make a positive and exciting next career move. You require AT LEAST 2 years PQE preferably from a consultancy background supported by excellent communication skills and strong commercial acumen. A very impressive salary and benefits package is on offer.

steve.simmonds@juddfarris.co.uk Ref: SS/16410

### TEMPORARY OPPORTUNITIES

Town Planner ✦ STAFFS - Up to £18 p/h

Experienced Town Planner required to work within the Development Control as a Senior /Principal Planner. Ideal candidate will have at least 2 years Local Authority experience.

Policy Planner ✦ WARWICKS - Up to £18 p/h

Policy Planner required for busy Local Authority department. Ideal candidate will have at least 2 years of Policy experience with Local Authority environment.

Development Control ✦ SHROPS - Up to £16 p/h

Development control opportunity exists within Local Authority in Shropshire for up to 6 months. At least 2 years experience in similar role is required.

✦ For more information on these and other opportunities, contact our Birmingham office on 0121 200 0800.

✦ For our latest vacancies please visit [www.juddfarris.com](http://www.juddfarris.com)

tripwire

## Events • Events • Events • Events • Events

### REGIONAL PROGRAMME

Non-members of RTPI welcome to attend.

#### WEDNESDAY 1 MARCH GYPSY SITE PROVISION

##### - PROPER PLANNING versus PUBLIC PREJUDICE

Speaker: Stephen Bate, Robert Doughty Consultancy

Venue: The Council Chamber, **Nuneaton** CV11 5AA

Time: 4.30pm – 6.30pm

Cost: **£10 incl VAT** (concessions £5)

Further details & to book meal:

Sue Griffith-Jones Tel: 0121 705 0136

Email: [rtpiwestmids@btinternet.com](mailto:rtpiwestmids@btinternet.com)

#### TUESDAY 14 MARCH 2006

##### PLANNING & HOUSING UPDATE

##### Why does the West Midlands Matter? - the value to the nation of investing in the region's homes & communities

Joint conference with CIH

Current housing policy has been caricatured as concreting the south and bulldozing the north. Whilst in reality, the truth is much more complex, the Midlands does not appear to feature as much as it should in the national debate.

This conference stresses the many benefits and opportunities for investing in West Midlands and the contributory benefits for the country as a whole.

Speakers:

Mary Harpley, AWM

Steve Forrest, WMRA

Alan Cave, Black Country Consortium

Howard Farrand, Whitefriars Housing Group

Venue: Auditorium, Wolverhampton Science Park, Glaisher Drive, **Wolverhampton**

WV10 9RU

Cost: **£35.25 incl VAT & lunch**

Time: **10am – 1.30pm**

(registration from 9.30am, lunch 1pm)

Details & booking: Sue Griffith-Jones

Tel: 0121 705 0136

Email: [rtpiwestmids@btinternet.com](mailto:rtpiwestmids@btinternet.com)

#### WEDNESDAY 15 MARCH 2006 PLANNING BASICS

Joint conference with RTPI East Midlands

A day conference providing an explanation of the planning system for non-planners.

Suitable for planning support staff, councillors, those working alongside

planners, representatives from voluntary organisations etc.

Venue: Austin Court, **Birmingham** B1 2NP

Time: **10am – 4.30pm**

Cost: **£88.13 incl. VAT** (reduced rate £44.07)

Details: Sue Griffith-Jones

Tel: 0121 705 0136

Email: [rtpiwestmids@btinternet.com](mailto:rtpiwestmids@btinternet.com)

### OTHER EVENTS

#### Graphics & 3D Visualisation Courses for Urban Designers

Venue: Birmingham

Organiser: UCE

Details: Noha Nasser

Tel 0121 331 5110

Email: [noha.nasser@uce.ac.uk](mailto:noha.nasser@uce.ac.uk)

#### Active Planning

Day of seminars & workshops

To be held at 3 venues

**Coventry 8 MARCH**

**Stoke 26 APRIL**

**Birmingham 13 JUNE**

Organiser: Sport England West Midlands

Cost: **£10**

Details & booking: Sue Griffith-Jones

Tel: 0121 705 0136

Email: [rtpiwestmids@btinternet.com](mailto:rtpiwestmids@btinternet.com)

#### FRIDAY 24 MARCH

##### Introduction to Placecheck

Venue: **Coventry**

Organiser: UDAL

Details & booking: R99 Ltd

Tel: 08453 733 871

Email: [info@r99.org.uk](mailto:info@r99.org.uk)

#### THURSDAY 30 MARCH & FRIDAY 31 MARCH Scaling the Heights: using the principles & practices of sustainability in spatial planning

Venue: Stadium of Light, **Sunderland**

Organiser: RTPI

Cost: **£150 for 2 days**

Details & bookings: Emma Tozer

Tel: 020 7929 9489

Email: [emma.tozer@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:emma.tozer@rtpi.org.uk)

#### THURSDAY 6 APRIL

##### Environmental Quality in Spatial Planning

Venue: Armada House Conference Centre

**Bristol BS1 4BQ**

Organisers: Countryside Agency, English

Heritage, English Nature & Environment

Agency

Cost: Free

Details & booking: David Tyldesley & Assocs

Tel: 0115 9680092

Email: [gill@dt-a.co.uk](mailto:gill@dt-a.co.uk)

#### WEDNESDAY 28 JUNE – FRIDAY 30 JUNE

##### Planning Convention 2006

##### Planning - the cutting edge

Venue: Queen Elizabeth II Conference

Centre, London

Cost: **£250 + VAT** (reduced rates for

students, unwaged etc)

Details & booking: RTPI conferences

Tel: 0845 120 9602

Email: [services@rtpiconferences.co.uk](mailto:services@rtpiconferences.co.uk)

## Regional Members Survey

What do you want from your **Institute**? More important what do you want from your **region**?

The end of the West Midlands Branch and the beginning of the West Midlands Region offer an ideal opportunity to ask members what you think about the services provided at the **Regional level** and suggest how they can be improved.

In our next issue we will be focusing on the activities of the new **Region** and trying to pin down where you would like us to concentrate our limited resources;

*Do you get involved in the RTPI yourself – if not, would you like to?*

*Do you find our seminars, conferences and low cost events worthwhile?*

*Could more events be shared with other regions?*

*Are you happy with the bi-monthly newsletter – Tripwire? Could it be improved?*

*Could more information be sent out by Email?*

*Would you welcome more subject-based networks eg. on design, regeneration, housing or rural affairs?*

*Would you be keen on helping on a mentoring scheme or do you feel you would benefit from a mentor yourself?*

We would welcome feedback on all the questions and many more. If you have any immediate thoughts on the scope of our survey do please contact either our Branch co-ordinator, Sue Griffith Jones on 0121 705 0136 [rtpiwestmids@btinternet.com](mailto:rtpiwestmids@btinternet.com) or alternatively contact me at the usual Tripwire address or at [acresclark@lineone.net](mailto:acresclark@lineone.net) ☎

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CPD