



RTPI

mediation of space · making of place
cyd drefnu gofod · creu cynefin

RTPI Cymru Annual Review 2008

Introduction

2008 has been the first full year RTPI Cymru has been supported by dedicated staff resources. This has enabled much more activity to take place in Wales, which has been further enhanced by members across Wales – thank you to everyone for their support. Our work has also benefited from strong support from a number of organisations, including the Welsh Assembly Government's Planning Division and the Wales Spatial Plan Unit, as well as the Design Commission for Wales, Planning Officers' Society for Wales (POSW), and the Planning Inspectorate (PINS).

It has been very positive to have private companies increasingly involved by attending and supporting events and the growing interest in RTPI Cymru sponsorship opportunities. This review of 2008 provides an overview of the past year and the various activities and developments. The emphasis has been on providing a link between policy and practice with activity, with a smattering of social networking.

Policy

Policy is central to RTPI Cymru's objectives. The Policy and Research Forum, chaired by Owain Wyn of BURUM based in Caernarfon, has been very active in 2008 discussing and responding to a number of national policy consultations (listed below). All of the responses can be found on the RTPI Cymru web pages.



Above: Planners discuss the Wales Spatial Plan update, Bangor

- Investigation into the Groceries Market, Competition Commission
- Wales Spatial Plan Update, Welsh Assembly Government
- Renewable Energy Route Map for Wales, Welsh Assembly Government
- Draft Minerals TAN 2: Coal, Welsh Assembly Government
- Limited Revision to TAN 12: Design, Welsh Assembly Government
- Resourcing the Planning Service, Welsh Assembly Government
- Community Infrastructure Levy, Welsh Assembly Government
- Planning for Climate Change (Further Consultation), Welsh Assembly Government
- Supporting Sustainable Development in Rural Areas, Welsh Assembly Government

The Forum has also started work on developing a number of policy papers around issues which are pertinent to planning policy and practice in Wales. At the Wales Planning Conference held in July, the opportunity to discuss various policy topics with a diverse group of planning professionals was taken during the workshops.

Reports from the various workshops were published on the RTPI Cymru web pages on: Housing, Planning for Climate Change, Sustainability and Design, Regeneration, Waste and Minerals and International Development.

Profile building

It has been important to raise awareness with members of the Institute particularly of the benefits of membership and ways in which members can be involved. This has started through a number of activities, and specifically through what we call 'RTPI Roadshows'. In June Debbie Sorkin, RTPI Director of Programmes and Services and Roisin Willmott, RTPI Cymru National Director, visited staff at the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority to explain about the services members can benefit from. In October, Roisin visited Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC and others are planned in the near future.



The revamp of RTPI Cymru's quarterly newsletter, renamed Cynllunio (Planning for the non-Welsh speakers), was a major achievement. The new full colour format, with regular features, is regarded as an extremely important service to planners in Wales. It provides the medium in which to keep in contact with members across Wales, as well as providing the opportunity for members to raise issues and profile case studies with fellow planners. We are thankful to James Davies who provides the design services for the newsletter and to EDAW to be the first company to take out sponsorship and advertising.

The RTPI also carries out work to raise the profile of the importance of planning to a wider audience and to improve knowledge of the different system operating in Wales to planners based outside Wales. In 2008, RTPI Cymru has had a number of articles in Planning magazine which has profiled work taking place in Wales.

RTPI Cymru was also represented at the Planning Convention in London and the winner of the 2007 Wales Planning Award, Galeri Caernarfon Cyf, was included in an exhibition of good planning practice across the UK at the Convention.

The Wales Planning Award is an important vehicle through which to showcase good planning practice in Wales. The Welsh 2008 entries were at record levels to both the UK and Wales Awards. The UK Awards will be announced in February. The Wales Planning Award, Ebbw Valley Railway, is featured elsewhere in this edition of Cynllunio, along with three Highly Commended schemes – The Works Regeneration Proposals at Ebbw Vale, Cardiff City Centre Strategy 2007-10 and Area Appraisals and the Cardiff Fitzhamon Embankment Public Art Scheme. All of the schemes entered have good elements and these will be drawn out in a publication during 2009.

For the first time, RTPI Cymru held a reception at the 2008 National Eisteddfod held in Cardiff in August, with guest speaker Huw Thomas from Cardiff University, who spoke about the need for Welsh medium training for planning. RTPI Cymru took up exhibition space at one of the Excellence Wales events – Our Economy in Cardiff, providing the opportunity to raise the profile of the profession with local government peers.



Above: Galeri Caernarfon Cyf, winner of the 2007 Wales Planning Award



The first Wales Planning Conference, sponsored by NLP's Cardiff Office, held in Cardiff in July, proved to be a real success and RTPI Cymru has agreed for this to be an annual event. The Conference provided an excellent opportunity to bring together all parts of the profession from across Wales.

The Conference was principally attended by planners from within Wales, but delegates also came from England and from non-planners to learn about planning in Wales. RTPI Cymru, with particular support from this year's Chair – Jon Fox, also took the opportunity to upgrade the annual Dinner. The Dinner provides the opportunity for the profession to come together socially and take its position as a profession to be proud of and to shout about.

Left: Conference Panel at the first Wales Planning Conference

CPD

Continuing professional development (CPD) is an integral part of any profession (would you be happy if your doctor didn't keep up to date with developments in health?), and RTPI Cymru is developing a programme to support members in Wales. Conscious that there are a variety of sources for CPD, not least the commercial training companies, RTPI Cymru has focused its attention on filling the gaps. 2008 started off well, supported by a grant from the Welsh Assembly Government, to provide negotiation skills training for supporting S106 discussions, with a particular focus on affordable housing, jointly to local authority planning and housing staff. Four two-day events were held across Wales in Abergavenny, Dyffryn in the Vale of Glamorgan, St Asaph and the National Botanic Gardens, near Carmarthen, with 80 people attending.



Above: Negotiation Skills Training, Dyffryn

With the support of the Wales Spatial Plan Unit, RTPI Cymru jointly organised two events which extended the consultation events held on the Update to the Spatial Plan during April in Cardiff and Bangor. Over 100 planners attended and contributed to the active discussion groups. Notes from each of the discussion groups were distilled and directly used to form RTPI Cymru's Policy and Research Forum's response to the Update. In September and November, SuDS (Sustainable Drainage Systems) for Planners events



Above: Visit to Mynydd Clogau Wind Farm

were held in Newport and St Asaph respectively. Speakers from organisations involved in taking SuDS forward gave presentations to encourage planners to encourage SuDS schemes in both urban and rural areas.

November saw the first in a series of CPD events organised jointly by RTPI Cymru, the RTPI's Development Management Network and the Planning Officers' Society for Wales (POSW): Development Control to Development Management held in Llandrindod Wells, opened up the concept of development management – emphasising the shift from controlling development, to managing it; a more positive concept for planning.

In September RTPI Cymru joined with BWEA to organise a seminar held at Adfa Village Hall, Powys which included presentations on current wind generated energy policy experiences from those involved with taking forward developments. The day also included a site visit to nearby Mynydd Clogau Wind Farm.

RTPI Cymru jointly organised a walking tour of the SA1 developments in September with the Young Planners Network (YPN). The Wales YPN also held a well attended climate change seminar in April in Cardiff, sponsored by RTPI Cymru. A plan for extending RTPI Cymru activity is to develop a network of Chapters across Wales, which can organise sub-regional CPD events. The North Wales Chapter already exists and RTPI Cymru supported a meeting of the Chapter in April to discuss activities.

Regeneration Skills Collective Wales

The Regeneration Skills Collective Wales (RSCW) provides the opportunity to work jointly with other built environment professionals in Wales. During 2008, RSCW commissioned Miller Research to complete a skills report to provide evidence of skills needs to deliver the Wales' regeneration agenda, with a grant from Construction Skills Wales. RTPI Cymru is using the evidence specific to planners to inform its CPD programme.

RTPI Cymru has also led a research study conducted by Cardiff University, with funding from the Assembly Government's Wales for Africa programme, on behalf of the RSCW. The study has provided information on the potential activities that the built environment professionals in Wales can undertake to contribute to achieving the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for Sub-Saharan Africa. There was a higher than expected expression of interest in being involved in this area of activity, including a good level from planners. This has been supported by workshops to develop a future programme. Leighton Andrews, Deputy Minister for Regeneration, addressed the RSCW's annual conference in September in Cardiff, emphasising the value of the professions working together. Dr Angus Kennedy, Chair of the RTPI's Regeneration Network, also spoke at the Conference, providing an interesting presentation which illustrated the complexity of achieving sustainable regeneration.

RSCW provided the technical secretariat to the Deputy Minister's task and finish group, chaired by Tim Williams of Navigant Consulting, established to consider a centre for regeneration excellence appropriate to Wales. Navigant Consulting sponsored the RSCW's exhibition at the Summit, attended by around 250 delegates, providing an opportunity to raise the profile of the RTPI, along with the other professions.

Promoting Planning Careers

Encouraging new entrants into planning is also important, as is supporting new planners. As part of the RTPI President's visit to Wales in November, a new range of leaflets were launched, including a short leaflet and activity sheet to introduce planning to primary school age children, supporting the National Curriculum in geography. A leaflet and on-line profiles promoting planning as a profession to 14-18 year olds were also launched.

Cardiff University also provided the opportunity for RTPI Cymru to speak to new planning students to promote the Institute and encourage them to think about planning as a profession, not just a job! During May, Roisin attended Licentiate briefings by Jacqui Ward of the RTPI in Snowdonia NPA Offices and Cardiff University. Jacqui succinctly explained the requirements of the Assessment of Professional Competence (APC) to Licentiate members.



Planning Aid Wales

As with previous years, the RTPI provided grant funding to support the planning aid service in Wales to Planning Aid Wales. This was extended in 2008 with funding to specifically support engagement training to support the work in delivering Local Development Plans (LDPs) in Wales. Links between PAW and RTPI Cymru have developed and the two organisations jointly invited Welsh MPs to the Planning Aid Reception in London during November. Although planning is a devolved function, it was felt important to raise with Welsh MPs that the work of Planning Aid – the English set up - is also taking place in Wales by PAW.

In support of the Wales Planning Conference, PAW organised a quiz with support from RTPI Cymru and the Wales YPN.

RTPI President's Visit

The President's visit this year took place later than normal, but was a packed agenda nonetheless. Given the timing – a full report and photos will be in the next edition of Cynllunio. Janet O'Neill, the 2008 RTPI President, had a full day exploring various aspects of the Heads of the Valleys Strategy, including a tour around Abertillery, the Works site in Ebbw Vale, and Blaenavon, rounded off with a quick dip down Big Pit! The following day involved the launch of RTPI Cymru careers materials at the Cardiff Harbour Authority with Assembly Government Minister, Jane Davidson. Janet who is herself a graduate of the School of City and Regional Planning of Cardiff University, met with current students, before wrapping the visit off with the Annual Dinner.