

PLANNET



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE RTPI NORTH WEST REGION

Winter 2009

Network Yourself through the credit crunch

Brushing up on Planning Skills

Local Development Frameworks

The Water Framework Directive and River Basin Management Plans

The 'Net' Bit

Welcome to the first PLANNET edition of 2009. To entertain you through the long frigid nights this edition introduces our new Regional Chair, Sarah Foster, and her new radical(ish) agenda for the Region. Try her new Planning, Trivia and Random Nonsense Quarterly Quiz (page 2) – answers to follow in the next edition.

This edition also focuses skill development including practical advice on how to network your way through the worst Credit Crunch/ Recession/Depression for the last 10/60/100 years (delete as appropriate!). The edition also highlights good practice in Local Development Frameworks and River Basin Management Plans

Thanks
Chris Wilson

This newsletter has been brought to you courtesy of the RTPI NW. Any comments or articles should be directed to: PLANNET c/o 91 Draperfield, Chorley, Lancashire, PR7 3PN

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Greetings from the Chair



"Welcome to my first PLANNET contribution as Chair. I received my big necklace (i.e. the chair's medal) at the AGM at the FACT Centre in Liverpool in December. It was nice to see a good turnout of members and award winners at the event and thanks go to all the speakers".

My Chair's theme for the coming year is 'Adapting to Change' with two priorities:

- The NW Update Programme
- Education and Careers

The NW Update Programme is a great value source of CPD with a regional focus. I hope that you will continue to attend the events that have been organised for the coming year in order to keep abreast of changes to the planning system and maintain up to date CPD records. All events are organised by local members who spend a great deal of time sourcing relevant and interesting speakers and your support is much appreciated.

The RAC has an education and

careers task group which is currently reviewing the materials that we have available for marketing planning as a career choice. For many years now, our display boards have been the subject of some ridicule (mainly from me). Although they are an interesting historical artefact showing how life was in the 1980s, planners with curly perms and shoulder pads don't exactly draw in the crowds at careers fairs. We are therefore hoping to have some new display boards and matching flyers very soon.

Planning Showcase

Linked to Education and Careers, 11 planners from the region will be visiting the University of Manchester in February to hold a 'Planning Showcase', designed as an informal networking session. Many different sectors and specialisms within planning will be represented and students will have the chance to chat to planners about their 'real life' experiences. I imagine that there will be several requests for tips as to how to secure a graduate job in the current climate. Answers on a postcard please...

Liverpool John Moores University

I visited LJMU in January with immediate past RTPI president Janet O'Neill to meet the staff and speak to post-graduate students about the RTPI and the benefits of membership. I had the chance to see some projects that had been undertaken by planning students working in teams with project management, surveying and architecture students. The results were impressive and the students apparently gained a lot from this kind of interprofessional team working exercise (although I am convinced there must have been infighting somewhere...).

President's Visit

I'm looking for ideas for this year's president's visit. Martin Willey will be coming to the region on 16th and 17th July and we need to ensure that he is impressed by the North West! It would be nice to have a good mix of private and public sector input. Any suggestions for tour visits/ themes and venues can be sent to Bev Watson.

Sarah Foster

RTPI NW Chairman

The Planning, Trivia and Random Nonsense Quarterly Quiz.

Rearrange the first letter of each answer to spell out the Chair's favourite Greater Manchester town (where Mohammed Ali once opened a Safeway).

No prizes (apart from your pride). Answers in the next edition of PLANNET.

Rating: Easy (it's a warm up)

- *The brand of motel where Alan Partridge once resided (in an out of town location, highly accessible by car).*
- *Surname of the author of a North West classic in 1984?*
- *Proposed south western site of a tidal barrage.*
- *The third of these at Heathrow is causing controversy.*
- *Middle Quinton is the location of a proposal for one of these.*
- *Tall buildings may interfere with this entertainment medium.*
- *Regeneration and -----*
- *It's not controlled,*
- *it's managed*
- *Westlife were once doing this without wings.*

RTPI NORTH WEST REGION 5-A-SIDE FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT

Sponsored by White Young Green & North West Planning Aid

Saturday 28th March 2009
@ **Bolton Arena**

For further details contact:
northwest@rtpi.org.uk

Cost per team will be £42
(inclusive of referee, match balls,

scoreboards/fixtures, bibs, first aid and buffet).

Squads of up to 7 players will be allowed.

Teams must be at the stadium ready to play by 12:45 hours.

Cheques payable to the "RTPI North West Region" for the full amount, to be sent to:

Bev Watson, RTPI North West Region, Friars Court, Sibson Road, Sale, M33 7SF by Friday 20th March 2009.



Saturday 28th
March 2009
@ Bolton Arena

Network yourself through the credit crunch with Women in Property

In the current economic climate, it is more important than ever for businesses to raise their profile and meet potential new customers. Women in Property is a national organisation which was established 22 years ago and has over 1400 members, 250 of whom are based in the North West. We host a variety of events, ranging from sporting activities, lunches, site visits and seminars. Our annual dinner, held in May at the Midland Hotel is a highlight of the events calendar, with this year's speaker Gerald Ratner, providing us with some invaluable business advice!

Networking doesn't come naturally to everyone, at Women in Property, we are a friendly organisation who like to think we make it easier to network, particularly for newcomers. Here are some top tips when out networking;

Attend the right events

There is a big networking industry out there now, so there is no shortage of events to attend. However, choose quality over quantity, and select networking groups that will include members that you have a genuine chance of doing business with. With companies cutting expenditure on networking, it is important to be selective and attend events that are most prevalent to your industry.

Be Confident

Nobody likes going to a new place on their own, and often people go to networking events with colleagues. This helps you feel more comfortable in a different environment, but the danger is you spend all your time talking to colleagues rather than making new contacts.

Research the people you'll be meeting

Find out who else will be attending the event, and do some research on their business so that you can engage with them more effectively. This will also give you an idea of who you should be targeting to meet at the event. Don't hesitate to ask the event organizers to point out people you want to talk to, or even to facilitate the introduction. That is what they are there for.

Remember why you're there

The complimentary food and drink is very nice, but focus on who it is that you would like to speak to. Remember names, collect and give out business cards. Talk briefly, but effectively, and don't bore people!

You scratch my back...

Don't hesitate to introduce others to each other when appropriate. It may not have any immediate advantage to you, but people remember these things, and will

return the favour at a later date.

Look the part

First impressions count, so dress appropriately in work attire. If you are unsure of the dress code, contact the event organizer.

7) Following up

It is pointless collecting a dozen business cards and then simply leaving them in your desk drawer. It takes seconds to make a quick phone call or drop your new contact an e mail.

8) Enjoy it

If you don't, it will come across to others, and you will be unable to project the positive image you want.

For more details, visit our website www.wipnet.org or contact Caroline Kingsley, Kingsley Associates, Northern Branch Chair

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North West Event Brushes up on Planning Skills

Over 60 North West planners, representing 21 local planning authorities and 14 private consultancies, attended the first CPD event of 2009 at the Foresight Centre in Liverpool on 21st January.

The event was designed to assist delegates, shortly to experience the Examination in Public (EIP) process, to understand the procedures involved with both Section 78 Appeals and the more recent Local Development Documents (LDDs) at public examinations.

Speakers included Duncan McCorquodale from 4NW, Maurice Brophy from Lancaster City Council and Richard Evans from Cumbria County Council, all of whom have recently guided planning policy through the EIP process. Jonathan Easton from Kings Chambers explored the lawyer's perspective of EIPs, while Peter Nesbitt from Eversheds and Paul Singleton from Turley Associates focussed in contrast on Section 78 Appeals; the inquiry process; the roles of advocate and witness and good practice tips.

EIPs.

Likening the EIP to a series of acts unfolding in a play, speakers were able to offer a helpful practical insight into preparing for the EIP; the EIP itself and waiting for the Panel Report:-

- *The mindset to adopt was one of 'yes, we can do it'.*
- *Careful, not to say meticulous, evidence preparation beforehand pays dividends, including reading and digesting all the available guidance, especially that from the*

Planning Inspectorate (PINS) and the Planning Advisory Service (PAS). It is important to ensure that policy is transparently linked to the evidence base.

- *Understanding the process is more important than the detailed content, since the examination is focussed on testing for soundness.*
- *The EIP participatory framework is a positive one, with both the appointed Inspector and the relevant Government*
- *Office wanting to see the local planning authority (LPA) succeed.*
- *The use of mock examinations and other positive training sessions with a team of colleagues is well worthwhile. Presentational and even theatrical skills can be important in getting across points that you want to make to the wider issues under discussion.*
- *Although EIPs are formal examinations, the presence of legal cross examination is no longer as strong a feature as it used to be. A round table style is much preferred and although less daunting for many planners, it can remain challenging depending on the level and complexity of questioning by the Inspector.*
- *Ensure that the process is made as easy as possible for the appointed Inspector who will firmly lead the EIP.*
- *Ensure that the 'big three' are very early consultees in the whole process. - Natural England, Environment Agency*

and English Heritage. Their agreement and support is crucial in taking forward policies to an EIP.

- *Support each other closely as a team and ensure a good backup team, including programme officer; note taker; a good venue and quality seating at the round table!*
- *Remember that especially at the EIP itself, many questions will be asked by the Inspector and a list of 'homework' will need attending to each evening, in readiness for the following day.*
- *The EIP process is not perhaps as simple or quick as may have been hoped for from the outset. It is very process and procedure driven and in the case of a Core Strategy, has a time frame of around 14-15 months from beginning to end.*
- *The purpose of the EIP is not to improve on a submitted LDD, but to find out if it is sound.*
- *It is good practice to undertake a SWOT analysis of the EIP process when completed, in order to identify important lessons for the future.*

A number of important questions were raised following the presentations:-

- *How feasible is it to use the EIP oral recordings for future EIP professional training?*
- *How much good practice does PINS hold, based on the collective experience of Inspectors to date, and is this disseminated to local planning authorities?*

- *How far is updating the evidence base during and after the EIP seen as a strength or a weakness in terms of soundness?*
- *Given the rapidness of current change, are documents at least partly out of date by the time that they have completed the EIP process and if so, what can be done about this? How likely is it that the current recession will have blown many Core Strategies off course?*

While planning lawyers might express some disappointment at the limited role of legal representation at EIPs, it was suggested that they can still be useful in giving advice on robustness of DPDs; advising on evidence; testing some policies through cross examination and in the event of judicial review. It would be helpful to research just how useful lawyers have been in those EIPs already completed on DPDs.

Section 78 Appeals.

In the case of Section 78 Appeals and the inquiry process, 10 top tips were identified for delegates:-

- *Ensure that the inquiry route is the correct option.*
- *Know and understand the procedure throughout.*
- *Brief the advocate at key points in the process.*
- *Use the skeleton proof to ensure that you are on the right track and that all proofs dovetail.*
- *Know and understand your evidence thoroughly as part of preparation. Draft your evidence personally, so that you will fully understand it and use numbered paragraphs for ease of reference.*

- *Ensure your advocate knows both the good and the bad points.*
- *Plan your preparation conferences to get the best out of attendees.*
- *In re-examination, think carefully about what your advocate is trying to elicit.*
- *Listen carefully to the Inspector's questions, which are important.*
- *Ask for feedback from your inquiry team and advocate to help with future cases.*

In focussing on the planner as a witness, the following advice was felt to be useful:-

- *Remember your professional role to assist the inquiry/inspector.*
- *Assess that you are the right person to be a witness and prepare for it using coaching, guidance, and mock-cross examinations with colleagues.*
- *Prepare the case early and know it thoroughly from all perspectives.*
- *Write out your evidence first, as this will help you to think about it and get to know it.*
- *Draft it as many times as necessary and check it carefully with colleagues.*
- *At the inquiry, arrive early to help you settle; know the programme for the day; maintain concentration and listen carefully to all evidence and questions; avoid any distraction, such as texting or using mobile telephones.*
- *Keep fully alert during re-examination and in answering any questions*

from the Inspector, which can be vital. You can lose it at this late stage.

- *Appear calm and assured, even if you do not feel it, and look the part!*

Further details of the current programme, together with copies of the papers produced by the speakers at this event, can be obtained from Beverley Watson, North West Regional Administrator, on

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RTPI North West Update: Local Development Frameworks – The Next Generation

Over 50 planners representing 21 local planning authorities and 9 private practices attended the opening event of the 2009 season at the Foresight Centre in Liverpool.

Following a previous event covering planning skills, at the end of last season, this one provided an opportunity for reflection, updating and a look forward to the future for Local Development Frameworks (LDF). It was organised and chaired by Mark Baker from the University of Manchester Planning School. Speakers included Chris Bamber, senior planner at Government Office North West (GONW); John Baker, one of the founders of Baker Associates; Michael Gallagher, Director of Planning, Transport and Housing at 4NW. Maurice Brophy from Lancaster City Council provided a case example.

Chris Bamber gave an overview of the LDF process and highlighted current concerns.

Local authorities were urged to make better use of available LDF support, including the Planning Inspectorate (PINS), whose updated 'Lessons learned...' document is expected in the spring, and the on-line manual provided by the Planning Advisory Service (PAS). Vision was increasingly important in the new spatial planning system, whose key concerns focussed on the amount of evidence being gathered and the lack of local distinctiveness in many Development Plan Documents (DPDs). While vision was improving, the way forward should be towards an issue focussed spatial portrait, tailored to different parts of a local authority area. DPDs are one important element of corporate place making, which must be seen alongside other elements

such as the Community Strategy. While public involvement should be continuous, there is fear of over consulting. Reasoned alternatives must not be avoided in the interests of a single option. Publication of a DPD is NOT another stage in the consultation process.

While some 38 Core Strategies (CS) have been adopted, PINS have yet to identify 'good practice' that can be widely recommended. The strategic content makes a CS interesting and significant, and the policy element is only the means of achieving this. In order to maintain flexibility in times of uncertainty and especially where large strategic sites might be involved, the presence of a fallback 'Plan B' can be helpful.

It should not be the intention to work slavishly through all the DPDs in a LDF, but to get the important ones in place first, such as the CS, and then select from the others to help support and achieve the CS, for example, Action Area Plans or a Site Allocations DPD. Delivery is the key to DPDs and evidence should be proportionate, with more evidence likely in the larger conurbations and less in quieter rural areas. At present, too much evidence is being gathered in case it MAY be useful at some future date. Instead, first identify the key spatial issues and then decide on the evidence that is necessary. It may be that using a non-technical summary would help to clarify and show the relevance of evidence. CSs should be supported by that physical, social and green infrastructure is needed to enable proposed development to take place. An implementation framework is essential in setting out who will do what, when, and

what are the resource implications. Annual Monitoring Reports (AMRs) are improving, with more comprehension and better focus. They remain vital in assessing where we are with policy delivery. Forward plans teams should be properly

In summary:-

- *The CS is a key document for the health and wellbeing of a district and goes beyond being purely a planning document.*
- *Starting with a sound spatial portrait, the vision and objectives should flow from it.*
- *The evidence base should include the Sustainability Appraisal (SA)*
- *Use plain English and get a non-planner to read it.*
- *To comment that the faster the DPDs are produced, the fewer times the goal posts can be moved, was both amusing and unsettling!!*

resourced and make the most of the current 'quiet period' for getting LDFs and their DPDs up to scratch for any upturn, when it comes. John Baker opened his session with a revealing statistic, indicating that 20% of adopted DPDs have been produced by 3 local planning authorities (LPAs)! Although the process is slow in the North West, it is not untypical. The LDF is essentially a set of tools to enable planners to do their job and is by its very nature an evolving process, whereby LPAs identify the task and then select the appropriate tools. The process is slow for a number of reasons:-

- *Because the job is not yet fully understood by many planners.*
- *Because of a limited commitment to the need for change through strategic plan making.*
- *Because of the limited capacity of people with the right skills, which must ring alarm bells in the planning schools and the RTPI education department?*

The crux of planning is to identify the needs of future communities and indicate what kinds of places we want to live in. Then we must decide how to achieve necessary changes through the influence of the plan.

The CS is the lead DPD and should be in place as soon as possible, because it demonstrates the big picture and includes the strategic development areas. Development management (DM) colleagues should be involved from the outset and the CS can also be a tool for delivery, for example in Mendip.

Action Area Plans(AAPs) are also seen as essential tools to integrate the implementation of managed growth, but, the seeming enthusiasm for Supplementary Planning Documents(SPDs) should only be used sparingly(e.g. for design) and should NOT come before the CS.

LPA's should, from the outset, work closely with members, stakeholders including service providers and the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), and communities. A LDF working party is useful and should be both cross-party and include the holder of the planning portfolio. It is about how we use development to meet community needs and make places. Options should be used as a basis for dialogue over what is wanted and how to achieve it. Vision drives the

strategy and local distinctiveness needs to be a part of the vision. Plymouth is quoted as an example.

Evidence is the single most critical matter for plan making. It should be gathered progressively as the plan develops from the initial issues to a deliverable strategy. The need for more evidence will only unfold as the plan itself unfolds, and it should cover all possible and desirable options and needs to link strongly with the plan.

In summary:-

- *LPA's should focus on CS's, because they will achieve the greatest impact.*
- *Work closely with other LPA's on cross boundary issues, but remember that progress will only be at 'convoy speed'.*
- *Be efficient in obtaining and using evidence.*
- *Plan the engagement strategy from the outset.*
- *Involve DM colleagues from the outset.*
- *Engage widely across the local authority, stakeholders and communities.*

One of the weaknesses in the planning system is the current position and status of the RSS and its relationship with the Regional Economic Strategy(RES). This requires fixing and under the 'Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill', currently going through Parliament, there is a proposal to develop a single Regional Strategy to replace both the RSS and RES.

Michael Gallagher from 4NW

indicated that they are already working with North West Development Agency colleagues on initial work, but until new proposals are implemented, the RSS responsibility will stay with 4NW as regional planning body.

Regional consultation on a 'Principles and Issues Paper' will take place between February and April. The current recession should help with fresh and innovative thinking, with a view to considering different economic models and new assumptions including a low carbon economy. The whole question of assumptions, challenges, aims and key issues will be open for debate, with an independent analysis of themes and places. 4NW are currently looking for 8 assumptions; 13 aims and goals; 8 unique facts about the region, and 15 challenges.

Issues will include securing energy supplies against climate change; nuclear waste; identifying successful urban locations; sustainable transport infrastructure and connectivity over the long term; local distinctiveness; food security and rural landscapes and the future direction of the economy. Where once work was a key determining factor in where people lived, today it is more likely to be school selection that determines where people live and work. Local NHS Trusts; local authorities and colleges/universities are now the key employers in many areas and influence future development patterns.

Please get involved NOW in this free thinking period and visit the website at <http://www.nwregionalstrategy.com/>

A number of helpful points emerged from the delegate discussion session:-

- *There was general agreement over a reasonably high profile for LDFs amongst senior officers and politicians. The*

Chief Executive was the key person to get on board.

- It is important to explain spatial planning to members, since motivation and interest can help build 'ownership'.
- There remains a lack of understanding about what is a LDF by others in local authorities and members. Some confusion also remains about the planning system amongst the public and community sector. The best understood planning agenda is currently that based around local areas.
- There remains a language barrier in getting across the meaning of 'soundness' to professional planners, let alone a wider audience.
- The collective skills of small policy teams was discussed, with the conclusion that better guidance skills were necessary particularly on the amount of evidence; keeping it up-to-date and synchronising it.
- The cost of Examinations in Public (EIP) were a concern to LPAs and perhaps better use of local authority barristers would help reduce costs?
- The value of PINS visits pre-EIP was championed, while the power and influence of individual inspectors at EIPs was also mentioned.
- Since members were often key drivers behind the SPDs, how can they be persuaded to give the CS first call on resources?
- It is important to explore how best to achieve interdepartmental and inter-authority cooperation.
- Vision is a difficult thing to

achieve in good times, but in the current circumstances, it needs to be flexible enough to cope with adversity.

- Lead times were mentioned as important considerations in retraining DMs to policy planners and in persuading other sections of the local authority to input into the LDF.

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The Water Framework Directive and River Basin Management Plans

The Water Framework Directive introduced the concept of integrated river basin management based on each of the 11 River Basin Districts in England and Wales (one of which covers cross-border river basins between England and Scotland); it identifies and characterises the water bodies and protected areas that fall within them.

For each River Basin District, the Environment Agency has been leading on work to prepare River Basin Management Plans which will set out in general terms how the water environment will be managed. They will also provide a framework for more detailed decisions to be made. Each plan will include information on the characteristics of the River Basin District, a summary of the significant pressures and impacts upon water bodies and the economics analysis of water use, and a summary of the programmes of measures required for the River Basin District to achieve Water Framework Directive objectives.

The plans will:

- *establish a strategic plan for the long term management of the River Basin District;*
- *set out objectives for water bodies and in broad terms what measures are planned to meet these objectives;*
- *act as the main reporting mechanism to the European Commission; and*
- *summarise the programme of delivery actions.*

River basin management is based on six-year cycles of

planning and action, so River Basin Management Plans will be reviewed every six years. In preparing the River Basin Management Plans, the Environment Agency has been working with the River Basin District liaison panel in each of the 11 River Basin Districts. The liaison panel represents the main sectors involved in river basin planning (4NW and its predecessor the North West Regional Assembly has been

involved on the liaison panels for the three River Basin Districts which cover the region – Dee, North West & Solway-Tweed). 4NW has directly inputted into their preparation to ensure that the plans take account of the types, scale and location of future development up to 2021 as set out in the North West Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS).

The first plans will be approved by Ministers in December 2009, but before then the Environment Agency issued the draft River Basin Management Plan for consultation. The consultation started on 22nd December 2008 and runs until 22nd June 2009. The individual Draft River Basin Management Plans can be found on the Environment Agency website at <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/planning/33106.aspx>

The three River Basin Districts which cover the North West are (for maps of the boundaries see - http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/static/documents/Leisure/rbds_ew_1661654.pdf)

Dee River Basin District

The Dee River Basin District covers an area of 2,251

km² of North-East Wales, Cheshire, Shropshire and the Wirral. It ranges from the mountains and lakes of the Snowdonia National Park in the upper part of the basin, through the Vale of Llangollen in the middle reaches, to the open plains of Cheshire and the mudflats of the Dee Estuary in the lower basin.

North West River Basin District

The North West River Basin District is home to over 6.6 million people and covers an area of 13,140 square kilometres from Cheshire in the South to the Lake District in the North.

Solway Tweed River Basin District

The Solway Tweed River Basin District straddles the England-Scotland border. When the Water Framework Directive was transposed into UK legislation, separate provision was made for the Solway Tweed River Basin District. Under the Solway Tweed Regulations the Environment Agency and Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) are working jointly to deliver a co-ordinated approach to river basin planning in the district. 4NW has been involved with the Solway Area Advisory Group as part of the process.

How will the Water Framework Directive and River Basin Management Plans affect spatial planning and development decisions?

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) and River Basin Management Plans will have implications for spatial planning and development decisions. Development can contribute to an

improved water environment, but can also have an adverse impact.

Spatial planning bodies can help deliver the WFD objectives by adopting policies that contribute to or support measures that need to be put in place to achieve 'good status'. For example, new developments (such as new housing) when proposed, could be assessed against:

- *available water resources*
- *existing capacity for sewage treatment*
- *the potential environmental impacts discharges of treated effluent might have on receiving water bodies*

The Environment Agency, Royal Town Planning Institute, the Local Government Association and the Welsh Local Government Association have produced some initial guidance on the WFD and spatial planning as a first step in a process of increasing awareness amongst spatial planners of the WFD and its implications for planning. It highlights the key elements of the Directive and outlines some of the potential implications for those involved in spatial planning. Copies can be accessed at http://publications.environment-agency.gov.uk/pdf/GEHO0306BKJL-e-e.pdf?lang=_e

Three key ways in which spatial planning and WFD planning should interact

1. Tackling Existing Pressures

In places where there is risk of water bodies failing to achieve good status spatial planning policy can contribute to, or support, the measures that will have to be put in place to deliver that status.

2. Future Development and its Impact

Changes in land use and new developments can affect ecological and chemical quality and physical characteristics of water bodies. New development may bring further pressure on the water environment and threaten the achievement of WFD objectives.

Plan policies should influence the design and location of new development to ensure they do not create adverse pressures on the water environment that could compromise our ability to meet WFD objectives. Under the WFD, development must not result in any deterioration in the status of surface water bodies.

3. Provision of Information to the Environment Agency

Emerging development plans will be an important source of information on future pressures that can help the Environment Agency, especially for new development that has not yet been reflected in water company plans. It is particularly important to identify development that may cause deterioration in water status, or which may prevent water bodies reaching good status.

Michael Gallagher

Director of Planning, Transport & Housing, 4NW – the Regional Leaders Forum

Places with personality: Introducing the role of branding in planning

The phenomenal growth in social networking sites on the internet is one expression of how today's generations are increasingly forging and promoting their own identity. Identity gives us confidence. And in our fast globalised world, it also engenders a degree of stability and sense of belonging. This is equally applicable to places.

The rise of global brands, 'clone town' shops in our town centres and the ubiquitous nature of architecture has in part led to sterile, 'anywhere' places, lacking in distinctiveness. As planners, I believe we should share the blame (and not 'the system'; we are part of it after all).

My academic and early professional grounding in London taught me much about the importance of engaging with the culture we're in, but all too often as a keen graduate I found myself frustrated at how slow many of my co-planners responded to cultural change. After all, we were supposed to be place shapers not paper pushers. Whilst planning has moved on considerably since the mid-1990s, it remains a puzzle to me that on the whole we rarely seem to openly engage in and learn from popular culture and the world of business.

This is particularly the case with branding, synonymous with today's culture. Whether consciously or not, we all brand things whether it's a person's character, the reputation of a restaurant or the image of a city. Regrettably, it is often considered the 'fault' of planners that a city gains a poor image. Any given brand operates through four principal vectors. Where you are positioned will depend on your product, service or audience. But if you are not monitoring and proactively managing all aspects of your brand, you could get caught out. This is all the more so in tough economic times, when a poor image can lead to decline or at worst bankruptcy.

As planners we are uniquely placed to help manage such decline and address the weaknesses that could lead to such a scenario. To take a business analogy, we need to understand the 'brand' and the context within which it operates, and subsequently how to plan, manage, market and develop it.

You see when the going gets tough, the best get going.

So if you want to be the best, you need an image of quality and innovation – ‘added value’. Think about it, take a basic service such as laundry, in tough times if the cheaper supermarket brand powder washes as well as the premium brand powder, does it matter? Probably not, unless you can’t live without that aroma of Oriental Lilies seeping through your clothes! But when it comes to a more complex decision as to what restaurant to go to tonight, price starts to compete with other decision factors such as the ambience, the quality and freshness of the food, the attentiveness and efficiency of service, the location and so on. Your experience, or those of others, forms the image and therefore your choices. The same can be true of a place.

Remember Kevin Lynch’s Image of the City?

This is what we can learn from brand management.

Brands that do well tend to be those that have what I call ‘personality’. Think about brands like Virgin, Apple, Wii, Asda... even your local independent restaurant where you know the owner. You know what they’re about and even though

they may be a global brand, you can relate to them.

Delve a little deeper and these brands are smart at how they manage their reputation consistently and holistically. As a result, the consumer gets the sensation of adding value to their everyday lives as they literally ‘buy into the brand’. Essentially, that should also be our objective: to enhance people’s lives through the shaping of places.

So applied to a town or city: imagine you are an admired developer or an innovative investor. You want to make your mark; you want to create value and therefore a good return on your investment. Where do you invest? It should go without saying that you are more likely to invest in a place that portrays a consistent image; factors such as place character, quality of infrastructure, effective governance, supportive leadership, financial incentives, coordinated planning, the list goes on.

How you trade off between different factors will depend on the image you wish to portray and wish to be positioned relative to others. This is where we as planners can take a leaf out of the brand management approach. You see if we are to get away

from ‘clone town’ Britain, we need to rediscover our multi-dimensional ‘upbringing’ as planners. Remember sociology, economics, politics, cultural studies, urban design, environmental policy...? Well, maybe I just went to a particularly ‘politically correct’ university but believe me, it’s done me proud. We need to understand the places we are planning in all their dimensions; appreciate and define their intrinsic character and use that as a driver to create distinctive places that have clear identity among the jostling for position.

If in the 21st Century, in our ever-increasing complex world, we do not refresh and update our skills to respond to the latest thinking and multi-dimensional practices, we are betraying our professional duties.

Applying an understanding of brands and lifestyles can help create places with personality.

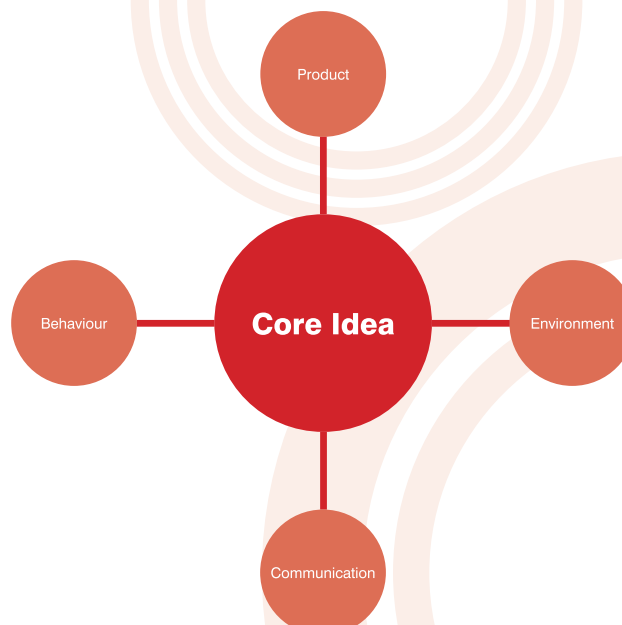
In the next article I will be exploring this in more detail with some practical examples.

Andy Spracklen

Tel: 07809 566558

andy.spracklen@urban8.co.uk

The Vectors of a brand



Profile of a Planner: Andy Spracklen

When the Planning Director at EDAW in Manchester announced he was setting up a south-east Asian restaurant with his Malaysian-born partner, you can imagine the reaction. That was in 2006; yet two years later – thanks to the masterplanning firm's flexible working practices – Ning Restaurant has established itself as a reputable, independent, thriving eatery in Manchester city centre's Northern Quarter, which even includes a Malaysian Cookery School and event catering service.

Andy Spracklen has since left EDAW to lead a truly urban entrepreneurial life. Also living in the same locality, he is currently establishing his own consultancy, Urban8 Consulting Ltd, in the Northern Quarter. His vision is of a creative urban planning studio that is home to thriving, innovative,

open-minded professionals that bridge the skills of town planning, urban design, economics, business, branding and marketing. Drawing on his wide-ranging skills as an urban planner, strategist, marketer, critical friend, advocate, facilitator and trainer, combined with his experience of running a restaurant business, he is passionate and knowledgeable about the rejuvenation of urban areas in a way that promotes European-style urban lifestyles and entrepreneurialism. Inspired in a sense by the notion of the 'creative city', he is particularly interested in applying lessons from brand management to the field of town planning.

As a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, Andy would be pleased to hear from anyone who wishes to explore such an interdisciplinary approach with him.



Royal Town Planning Institute North West & "White Young Green" Planning Achievement Awards for 2009

The call is going out for nominations for the "RTPI North West & White Young Green Planning Achievement Awards for 2009". As in the last four years, the scheme is to be run alongside the national award scheme. The Regional Awards are free to enter and a great way to celebrate Regional planning achievement.

The Award scheme represents an ideal platform for promoting best practice amongst fellow planning practitioners and raising the profile of good planning across the North West. Past winners have gone on to publicise the fact when attracting potential new employees - to great effect!

All we need from you is a 1500 word submission accompanied by illustrations of a particular planning project that you have been involved in, or that you are familiar with. The projects may range from desk-based publications, strategies, masterplans and neighbourhood consultation exercises through to implemented schemes, and include examples from the built environment through to the natural environment.

The closing date for submissions is has been extended to Sunday 31st May. Please send your submission(s) to:

Beverley Watson
RTPI North West Region
Friars Court
Sibson Road
Sale
Cheshire
M33 7SF

Email: beverley.watson@rtpi.org.uk

The Regional Judging Panel will draw up a short-list of submissions in June and carry out site visits in the summer months, duly selecting the winning projects. Each entry will be considered on its merits and awards and commendations will be ascribed accordingly. The overall winner of the Planning Achievement Awards will be announced and presented at the RTPI NW Dinner,

North West Development: Liverpool One

The Site - Liverpool One



The Development Liverpool one



The Development Liverpool one



Liverpool One - The paradise project



The Development Liverpool one



Date for your diary:

Friday 2nd October 2009

RTPI North West Annual Dinner

**Hilton Hotel, Beetham Tower
Deansgate, Manchester**

SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES & TABLE
BOOKINGS NOW AVAILABLE

Please contact Beverley Watson for details on
0161 969 3815

Wednesday 1st April 2009

RTPI Update Event:
Planning for Sustainability & Well Being

Liverpool Marriott

The Government has been 'talking the talk' on sustainable development. Planners have to put that into effect. How do we best manage the "Green Infrastructure" to upgrade our communities, to increase health and well being and to underpin a sustainable future society?

£85 + 15% VAT including lunch.
Please contact Beverley Watson for details on 0161
969 3815. Email: beverley.watson@rtpi.org.uk

Young Planners' Network North-West representatives

Get involved at www.rtpi.org.uk/young_planners_network/
Jamie Birtles, Senior Consultant, Faber Maunsell, Manchester
(Regional member of national young planners steering group)
Under 35 or relatively new to planning?

Each of twelve Regions in the UK has a representative on the national young planners' network steering group. In the North West Jamie Birtles returns to this role in 2009/2010. His aim is to represent the views of younger planners and help realise the key aims of the network including:

- *Promoting the RTPI and the planning profession amongst younger people;*
- *Ensuring younger planners' get the most out of their RTPI membership and campaign to keep the RTPI relevant;*
- *Helping support students/ licentiates with the APC process; and*
- *Facilitating & organising events for younger planners' across the North West*

He also seeks to support the North West Regional Activities Committee.
Contact Jamie on 0161 601 1728 or jamie.birtles@fabermaunsell.com
You can also contact the other four members of the North West Young Planners

Hannah Brumfitt (Planning Officer, Lancashire County Council)

Hannah.brumfitt@lancashire.gov.uk

Katie Wray (Planner, Arup) katie.wray@arup.com

Liverpool Sub Group –

Alex Naughton (Planner, Merseytravel) alex.naughton@merseytravel.gov.uk

Michael Dinn (Senior Strategic Research Policy Officer, Staffordshire County Council) micheal.dinn@staffordshire.gov.uk

The group is currently interested in establishing steering sub-groups in the Lancashire and Cumbria regions let Jamie know if you would be interested in establishing and convening a sub-group.

University of Liverpool Department of Civic Design Centenary Events

Join the Celebrations!!

The Department of Civic Design is celebrating its centenary in 2009 and is hosting a range of special events and activities to mark this important milestone. We look forward to you joining us for some stimulating discussion. These events are open to everyone free of charge.

For further details see <http://www.liv.ac.uk/civdes/Centenary/index.htm> Events between March and June 2009 include:

Thursday 12 March

4pm, Lecture Theatre 1 Department of Civic Design
'Power and Governmentality in Planning Theory and Practice'
Margo Huxley, University of Sheffield

Tuesday 17 March

4pm Leggate Lecture Theatre, Victoria Gallery and Museum
'The Liverpool City Region in its North West, National and International Context'
Ian Wray, Chief Planner, North West Development Agency

Tuesday 28 April

4pm Leggate Lecture Theatre, Victoria Gallery and Museum
'New Approaches to City Region Development in a Changing Property Market'

Thursday 07 May

4pm, Lecture Theatre 1, Department of Civic Design
Max Nathan (DCLG, Centre for Cities)

Tuesday 12 May

4pm Leggate Lecture Theatre, Victoria Gallery and Museum
'Accessibility and the Future City Region'

Thursday 14 May

4pm, Lecture Theatre 1, Department of Civic Design
'Housing Market Renewal and Social Class'
Professor Chris Allen, Manchester Metropolitan University

Thursday 21 May

4pm, Lecture Theatre 1, Department of Civic Design
'The Self-Image of Local Authority Planners'
Andrew Inch, Oxford Brookes University

ADVERTISE YOUR VACANCIES HERE

The Region now has the authority to advertise regional vacancies in its Newsletter. If you want more details, please contact Bev Watson on:

0161 969 3815 or beverley.watson@rtpi.org.uk

Plan for the future with Judd Farris

Director of Planning

...❖ MANCHESTER - £60k + Package

Our client is a well-known planning consultancy with a UK wide presence looking to develop further. You will have a strong consultancy background with a solid list of clients and contacts, ideally with some work to bring with you.

You will have experience of working across a portfolio of commercial, mixed use, and residential projects, with some knowledge of the public sector market. Fantastic opportunity to develop your career. VT/13757

Regeneration Consultant

...❖ MANCHESTER - Up to £28k + Car + Benefits

A highly-regarded consultancy is currently looking for an experienced Regeneration Consultant to join their Manchester office.

You will be involved in area regeneration frameworks, masterplanning, policy and strategic option appraisals for complex regeneration projects.

You will ideally be professionally qualified or approaching qualification and will have experience of working in a consultancy environment. Strong report writing skills and the drive to succeed are essential. VT/13760

To apply, please contact Vicky Tipper on 0161 834 8666 or email vicky.tipper@juddfarris.co.uk quoting the job reference above.



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