

# snapshot

the Newsletter of North West Planning Aid

Engaging Communities in Planning



www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk

Spring 2009

## A warm welcome...

**The New Year saw a new structure to the RTPI and from 1st January changes have been made which impact on Planning Aid.**

The service now sits within the directorate for Professional Services, led by **Sue Percy**. As a corporate Member of the RTPI, a Planning Aid volunteer and member of the SE Planning Aid Steering Group, Sue has a real passion and belief in what Planning Aid does.

Sue says: "As a member of the RTPI's Executive Team for the past three years, I am aware of the incredible work Planning Aid



Above: Sue Percy

"I am really looking forward to building on... past success and supporting you all in your Planning Aid roles." – Sue Percy

undertakes and the way in which the service has greatly expanded in recent years, something that was publicly recognised by ministers with the award in 2008 of significant new funding. I am really looking forward to building on this past success and supporting you all in your Planning Aid roles."

With plans to visit NW Planning Aid in June, where she will be a guest at our Volunteer Week event in Manchester, Sue will be able to meet staff and volunteers and find out for

herself what makes NW Planning Aid such a successful service!

## ...and a fond farewell

**The changes have meant the redundancy of Debbie Sorkin's post as Director of Programmes and Services to which Planning Aid formerly belonged.**

Planning Aid staff have worked very closely with Debbie in recent years; she was a staunch



Above: Debbie Sorkin

supporter of Planning Aid, working hard to promote the service and instrumental in winning the continued funding from Communities and Local Government. Debbie was a much-liked and well-respected colleague - we wish her well in her future career.

## We're back for more!

**Welcome to the Spring 2009 issue of snapshot – North West Planning Aid's newsletter for staff, volunteers, friends, partners... indeed anyone interested in our work and activities!**

We had lots of encouraging comments on the first issue of **snapshot** and we are pleased it has been so well received!

The Spring edition includes news on our 2009 volunteer training programme and activities on our Community Programme. We hope you enjoy this issue and welcome any comments or ideas for future features and articles!



Above: Volunteers at a recent training event

## news in brief

### NWPA Volunteer short-listed for Young Planner of the Year 2008

Well done to Jamie Birtles, an enthusiastic community volunteer who was recently shortlisted for this prestigious RTPI award!



### Volunteering works both ways as graduates flock to NWPA

The impact of the 'credit crunch' on planning jobs motivated many soon-to-graduate planners to join North West Planning Aid as volunteers to help them gain valuable, practical experience in a variety of planning-related activities whilst also helping communities to understand and influence local and regional plans.

"The volunteer impressed us with his quick grasp of the situation." – A service user comment

# We salute you!

**Forgive us for repeating ourselves, but we really can't say it often enough - without the support and commitment of volunteers there would be no Planning Aid!**

North West Planning Aid has fantastic support from the region's planners with over 160 volunteers including Chartered planners with

many years experience, Licentiate planners building their careers and students studying for the profession.

During 2008 they volunteered hundreds of hours to casework, community training, consultation and engagement and activities with young people.



## New member joins Steering Group

**NW Planning Aid Steering Group's newest member is Jordan Kenison (pictured right).**

A keen and active volunteer since 2007, Jordan is a valuable addition to the Steering Group and has already



made a positive contribution. Jordan has been involved in a variety of Planning Aid activities on the Community Engagement programme, particularly those involving the challenge of working with young people!

# Inductions help our new volunteers

**Induction is an important part of volunteer development and all volunteers are expected to attend a session within six months of joining Planning Aid!**

Induction introduces new volunteers to the Planning Aid structure and aims, helping put their role into context.

As well as giving you an opportunity to find out more about casework, community projects and other activities you can let us know



Above: Staff and new volunteers at a recent Induction session

what you are interested in! Sessions are relaxed and informal and usually held in the evening in central Manchester.

If you joined us at Planning Aid over 6 months ago and haven't yet attended - or have had difficulty in attending - an Induction session, please contact Jan or Rita for details of the next session or for further advice!

**Contact details:**  
Rita Codd, 0161 969 3672 or  
Jan Beaumont 0161 969 3672

"It's nice to know there is someone impartial we can contact." – A service user comment

## FREE Seminars & Events

# Volunteer development

**At North West Planning Aid we take volunteer development seriously and are committed to providing a range of FREE seminars and events.**

We are supported in this by volunteers at Eversheds and Kings Chambers and acknowledge their expert help.

Forthcoming dates for your diaries:

**Monday 01 June 2009**  
Eversheds, Manchester  
**\*National Volunteer Week Event\***  
National Policy Statements

**Monday 14 Sept 2009**  
Eversheds, Manchester  
**Consultation Guidelines**

**Weds 09 December 2009**  
Eversheds, Manchester  
**\*Christmas Event\***

A light-hearted review of planning 'highlights' from 2009 plus Planning Quiz!

Look out for email alerts for these events or contact Jan or Rita for more details.

**\*\*\*Seminars at Kings Chambers\*\*\*  
to be confirmed soon.**

We endeavour to provide varied and relevant seminars aimed at supporting the professional development of our volunteers. Seminars are well-attended with positive feedback!

## case study: Burnley

**In partnership with Burnley planners we supported a number of sessions for Burnley residents to encourage local input into a Development Brief for the future of key areas in the town centre.**

Staff and volunteers were involved in consultation activities including information events for local community stakeholders, engagement with townspeople via a consultation bus and market stall, and an event for students from a local high school. The valuable feedback will be used to create the Development Brief, ensuring local opinion and needs are used to inform future planning decisions!

**Below: three generations of a Burnley family**



**Left: Kings Chambers barrister Eric Owen expertly unravels the complexities of the 2008 Planning Act for the benefit of volunteers and staff at our 2008 Volunteer Christmas Event!**



## Building for Life seminar 'homes in' on issues

**In association with the Commission for the Built Environment (CABE) we have held two seminars on 'Building for Life' – a CABE toolkit devised to ensure good design quality and sustainability for developments.**

The first seminar, held in Sept 2008 in Liverpool, proved so popular that a second event was held in Dec 2008, hosted by consultancy Building Design Partnership (BDP) at their new state-of-the-art Manchester studios.

Attended by 25 volunteers, the Manchester seminar included an



**Above: Nick Johnson**



**Above: Islington Square**

inspiring talk by Nick Johnson, Deputy CEO of development company Urban Splash, before a presentation on the BfL principles and a visit to nearby housing development Islington Square.

Once a curious resident knew why we

were 'snooping' round we were invited into his home to see the interior workmanship and design which he felt did not match up to the promises of the developer!

This provided an interesting contrast and the balance of information obtained provided a good foundation for the afternoon session, applying the BfL toolkit to a real-life development, facilitated by the experts from CABE.

Volunteers said this was a useful, well-organised training session that will benefit them in volunteering activities and in their professional development.

# Community Planning update

**Jackie Dibley** continues to blaze the Planning Aid trail in Lancashire and Greater Manchester with activities including a Sustainability community training event in Manchester, Core Strategy consultations in Bolton and a range of community capacity building sessions.



Supporting women in planning

Our involvement with gender-related planning issues continues; staff and volunteers participated in the recent International Women's Day event hosted by Manchester Town Hall where we facilitated discussion groups raised awareness of planning and the support Planning Aid can give.

Meanwhile the addition of **Claire Senior** to the NW Planning Aid team has already had a positive impact on outreach and activity in Merseyside and Cheshire with a number of activities already completed in Liverpool and Ellesmere Port.

Claire is keeping busy with outreach and partnership-building, particularly with projects agreed in Sefton for youth engagement and Cheshire for community training.

**Please contact Jackie or Claire if you would like further information on the Community programme.**

## Community Training programme

Two community workshops have been included on our 2009 Training Programme to help raise awareness of the new Regional Strategy, in partnership with 4NW and the regional Development Agency. If you would

like further details of these or other events on our community training programme, such as Introduction to Planning and Section 106 Agreements, please contact Jackie or Claire.

## Casework and Helpline Service

Recent changes to the planning system include alterations to 'permitted development' rights that outline what changes to property can be made without planning permission. The Planning Portal has useful advice for householders – please visit [www.planningportal.gov.uk](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk) for more details.

Planning Advisor **Michael Mansell** says calls from people across the region involve an increasing range of enquiries and our staff and volunteers continue to provide valuable **FREE** advice. Contact our regional **Helpline 0870 850 9804** to see if you can obtain free planning advice. The helpline is now available Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm.

## casefile

### Angling for success!

**Urmston Angling Club members were struggling with limited facilities which consisted mainly of a storage container for tackle and maintenance equipment. A lottery grant to upgrade facilities and encourage local young people to get involved in the sport was approved, with the new building incorporating a classroom, toilets and storage area.**

Volunteer Christine Ellis met club members to review the situation and advise on their planning application, which included a Design and Access statement, and preparation of representations for Planning Committee. To club members' delight permission was given and they are going ahead with their improvement plans. The classroom will be used to instruct youngsters in using angling equipment and techniques, health and safety issues etc before they participate in practical activities. The premises will also host club meetings, annual presentations and other events.

Christine enjoyed supporting the group, and the opportunity to do a piece of work that was outside her usual job role.

Club member Mr Evans said without Planning Aid's help they could not have produced the level of information necessary for the application and the support they received was 'second to none!'

## contact details

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For further help or information please contact the team:

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