

RTPI NEWS

The RTPI News pages are edited by
**Nancy Hammonds at the RTPI, 41
Botolph Lane, London EC3R 8DL**

Editorial fax
Email

020 7929 8199
rtpinews@rtpi.org.uk

RTPI (switchboard)
Fax

020 7929 9494
020 7929 9490

Registered charity number 262865
Registered charity
in Scotland SC037841

Prime leaders award candidates set stage for celebration of excellence

Regional nominations for the Today's Leaders and Tomorrow's Leaders Awards are in full swing and show that there is plenty to celebrate in the vision and dedication of planning professionals, writes *Charles Veal*

Planning needs people with vision who can shape the places and spaces of today and tomorrow. However, planners and the profession have not been as celebrated for their achievements as they deserve.

Thus the Today's Leaders and Tomorrow's Leaders Awards have been introduced to put outstanding planners in the limelight. Throughout the year, the RTPI regions and nations are inviting nominations and casting votes for members with leadership potential.

RTPI South West is the first region to hold a competition and its nominees include high-calibre planners from both the public and private sectors. The breadth and variety of their work is impressive, ranging from reorganising a planning department to take it out of standards status to managing teams processing more than 1,500 applications a year.

Good management and skilled teams mean that projects can be delivered on the ground. Nominees have been involved in key schemes including wind farms and major developments such as a 54,000m² mixed-use project. Planners are starting to work in many different types of organisation. In one partnership they have led the regeneration of the deprived post-war Hartcliffe and Withywood estates in Bristol.

New techniques and legislation and constantly changing issues also need to be understood. RTPI planners have helped to develop and roll out award-winning training programmes. Voting has now closed and the region's winners will receive their certificates at the RTPI South West annual dinner and presentation being held next week.

The next RTPI branch to hold its competition is Wales and once again a broad spectrum of applications has



Awards: nominees have delivered major projects including wind farms



Nominees include high-calibre planners from both public and private sectors — the breadth of their work is impressive

been received. Nominations for the Today's Leaders Award include Planning Officers Society Wales chairman Phil Williams, the author of formal guidance for the Welsh Assembly Government on planning obligations and the smoking ban in the country.

In the academic world, Cardiff University city and regional planning school senior lecturer Neil Harris has guided students through the transition from study to workplace, always emphasising the importance of developing the qualities of a critical practitioner.

Vale of Glamorgan Council head of planning and transportation Rob Thomas was the lead officer in bringing the Defence Technical College to St Athans. This major application involved working with the government, the Ministry of Defence, a development consortium and consultants. It also required the promotion of the site through the adoption of a development brief and

detailed involvement in the master-planning and pre-submission processes over the past two years.

Looking for Tomorrow's Leaders Award winners, the expansion of planning courses over the past few years has meant that the profession has benefited from the intake of talented newcomers.

Vale of Glamorgan Council lead officer Victoria Abraham is responsible for all aspects of performance relating to section 106 obligations. At university, Wayne Reynolds has demonstrated a keen academic understanding of planning, which is coupled with practical experience gained from his part-time work in development control.

After graduation, Lucy Hill was recruited to develop Enviro's waste planning and health capability. Charged with leading its planning capability in Cardiff, she has developed positive leadership skills, initiative and business acumen. Voting by RTPI Wales members ends today.

From taking a lead in private consultancy to managing change in local authorities, planners deliver major projects and significant improvements to the places and spaces where we live. The Today's Leaders and Tomorrow's Leaders Awards initiative is about raising awareness and celebrating good planning. So if you know of someone who deserves to be recognised in either category, get in touch with your RTPI regions and nations representative — and please vote.

Charles Veal is the RTPI's member service manager who works with the English regions. For more details of the South West nominees and their achievements, please visit www.rtpi.org.uk/rtpi_south_west. For the full statements of RTPI Wales nominees, visit www.rtpi.org.uk/rtpi_cymru

Time to speak up for good planning

Young planners' moves to promote interest, involvement and image are vital to put the profession on the map, explains *Charles Collins*



Collins: need to change perception

What is being a decent planner all about? Do we think enough about the value we get from our job and how, collectively, we can make a difference? More importantly, do we shout enough about the benefits of good planning? The RTPI has some 23,000 members — imagine the influence we can all have on the perception of town planning.

A few of us volunteer for the RTPI. However, active involvement means so much more, whether that is talking up the job with friends over a beer, volunteering for Planning Aid or spending a little extra time on a project to ensure that the final development really is a decent place to live.

I recently watched a series of BBC TV debates on second homes, empty housing, immigration and the quality of development. Not once did planning or the role of planners feature positively. We have to change this. How? Well, it starts young.

The way we communicate our job is vital. That is why the young planners network (YPN) is to start campaigning actively with younger members to put planning on the map. As a next step, involvement with the new young planners expert panel (YPEP) comprising 2007 and 2008 Young Planners of the Year, other award finalists and key YPN advisory group members will provide one way of promoting the campaign's themes — interest, involvement and the image of planning.

Good planners are committed and interested people. The best talent must be attracted by decent career and promotion strategies. The planning profession must have a higher standing if institute membership is going to be worthwhile.

The assessment of professional competence is raising standards, but the system needs a makeover to ensure that it is more compassionate, respected and easy to understand. Why not offer a ceremony on successful completion?

The RTPI is the second largest planning institute — and probably the most respected — in the world.

Members should want to get involved or at least feel that their membership is value for money.

In their day job, planners should regularly question whether they are gaining the most useful experience. No two days are the same, so whether members work in the public or private sector, there are no excuses for being bored.

Those with management responsibility are mostly over 35. In my view, they have the responsibility to create the conditions for well-rounded young professionals. This requires a breadth of major and minor project involvement. Too many younger planners lose interest through being assigned hundreds of conservatory extensions.

The image and perception of planning can be enhanced though media publicity. But perhaps more important is ensuring that the positive attributes of the system are directly understood by others. This includes such issues as the openness and democracy of planning and the spatial awareness, mediation and negotiation skills of planners.

Young planners have an opportunity to continue the renaissance of the profession well into the 21st century. The issue of climate change cannot be tackled or mitigated effectively without sound planning. We should designate champions to promote the cause of good planning, question the critics and defeat the causes of cynicism.

Charles Collins is the 2009 young planners representative on the RTPI executive board and a principal planner at Savills Planning and Regeneration. The views expressed are his own. For more information on the YPEP, please visit www.rtpi.org.uk

Bulletin Board

Urban Initiatives emerge as London network quiz winners

Twenty teams competed to be crowned champions at this year's London young planners quiz, which took place at the Longacre in Covent Garden last month. Questions ranged from sport to how many hours of continuing professional development RTPI members are required to take. The winners were Urban Initiatives, closely followed by DPP and EDAW. All three received prizes donated by Anders Elite.

Award nominations invited to celebrate young members' talents

Nominations are open for the Young Planner of the Year Award, which aims to seek out the brightest younger planners in practice, innovation, enterprise or philosophy. The prize is a trip to the American Planning Association's national planning conference in New Orleans next April, with all flights and accommodation paid for. The winner will also gain a place at next year's Planning Summer School to talk about their experiences, a place at the next RTPI Planning Convention and a chance to speak at the annual young planners' conference. The award will be presented at the London Hilton on Park Lane on 4 February 2010. For more information, please visit www.haymarketevents.com/awardRegistration/214/rtpi-planning-awards. The deadline for entries is 28 September.

Rural planning training event launches Kent and East Sussex group

The Kent and East Sussex young planners network has recently been set up to give those new to the profession or undertaking their assessment of professional competence in the two counties the opportunity to socialise and share knowledge and experiences in an informal environment. The network has already run a successful training event on rural planning issues with South East Planning Aid and the next event will be in Ashford on 16 July.

For more information, please email kentyoungplanners@googlemail.com

Events

Speed Networking in Birmingham

30 June. YP Westmids. Bushwackers, Edmund Street, Birmingham. This informal session will give individuals the chance to make more contacts by chatting to other young planners for three minutes before the buzzer sounds. Participants can then carry on networking for the rest of the evening. Don't forget to bring lots of business cards. Cost: Free.

For more information, please email ypwestmids@googlemail.com

Go Wild for Sustainable Design

9 July. Old Ship Hotel, Brighton. There is a consensus that the global climate is changing, with potentially catastrophic consequences unless we can adapt to more sustainable lifestyles. This continuing professional development and social network event explores these issues. Speaker is wildlife consultant and star of Channel 4's *Wild Thing I Love You* Dusty Gedge. Cost: Free.

To register, please email Patrick.griffin@horsham.gov.uk



Urban Initiatives: team celebrates London competition victory

Cash flow questions point to members' recession dilemma

Non-payment of fees can be problematic but the RTPI offers advice on reducing risk, says *Chris Sheridan*

Monitoring cash flow is a crucial area if a business is to get through the tough economic climate. This is one priority highlighted in the RTPI's management factsheet *Key Issues in Running your Business*, which points to building client loyalty and diversifying your customer base.

However, ensuring prompt payment of fees can be easier said than done. The Planners in the Workplace (PIWP) service receives enquiries from members seeking guidance over pay disputes with clients and from clients regarding fees charged by RTPI members. The code of professional conduct is clear. Members must ensure that their terms of engagement have been confirmed in writing with their clients and satisfy themselves that these terms have been accepted.

Building client loyalty requires careful consideration of terms. Recently, a consultancy had no option but to accept revised fee scales proposed by its biggest client. The situation was compounded by the fact that the firm had worked for the client for nearly five years and had offered a discounted fee on the understanding that it would receive bonus payments for certain schemes — a promise that the client was no longer able to honour.

What can members do to reduce the risk of non-payment? The RTPI offers a range of management fact-sheets on this issue. It is important to try negotiating solutions to disputes where possible. If clients have raised concerns over an invoice, then discuss this with them. However, some debtors will resort to all kinds of tactics to avoid paying the full amount they owe.



Sheridan: guidance on disputes

A member of the RTPI's independent consultants network (ICN) shares her experience: "I secured planning permission for my client, but the development stalled. After I submitted my invoice and then had to chase, I was asked to send a revised invoice for substantially less."

The member decided to hire a debt collection agency. In this particular case, she felt that it saved her time and money and she made additional savings by representing herself in court. The advice she offers is: "Make sure that you keep a record of all your correspondence and telephone calls."

Perhaps the final word should go to a member who responded to the ICN survey in 2007: "Be persistent in chasing debts with letters and telephone calls and do not let outstanding fees build up."

Chris Sheridan is the RTPI's PIWP manager. For more information, please visit www.rtpi.org.uk/member_services/piwp

RTPI Bulletin Board

Planning Convention sees launch of climate change commitments

More than 600 participants from the UK and overseas attended the RTPI Planning Convention in London last week, where the institute's president Martin Willey launched seven ground-breaking commitments for action on climate change. Housing and planning minister John Healey made his public debut in the role with his keynote speech. *For a convention catch-up, including session reports, podcasts, video interviews and photos, please visit www.rtpi.org.uk/item/2662&ap=1*

Members warned over insurance breach in conduct panel decisions

The RTPI's conduct and discipline panel has recently found two consultant members to be in breach of the code of professional conduct for failing to be insured against claims for breach of professional duty as town planners, in accordance with the compulsory professional indemnity insurance (PII) regulations. Both matters were brought to the panel's attention as a result of the RTPI monitoring process to check for PII cover.

One member worked part-time as a self-employed planning consultant without PII from January 2007 until February this year. The panel noted that the consultant member has now obtained the necessary cover. The member was found to be in breach of clause 9 of the code. The panel agreed that the member shall be warned without being named in the published report. The member was also asked to obtain retrospective cover for the uninsured period.

Member Betty Siu-Fong Ho, director of a town planning consultancy, has been working as a planning consultant for several years without professional indemnity insurance. The panel noted that Siu-Fong Ho had arranged insurance cover from January 2009 onwards, but she has been asked to obtain retrospective cover for the past six years. She was found to be in breach of clause 9 of the code and the panel agreed that she shall be warned and named in the published report. *For more information on the code of professional conduct, please email sandra.whitehead@rtpi.org.uk*

Notice of members' deaths

The institute notes with regret the death of DS Campbell (Scotland), RA Collier (East of England) and D Elliott (East of England). We offer our condolences to their family and friends.

Events

Delivering in a Recession

1 July. RTPI Regeneration Network. Peter's Court, City Road, Peterborough.

This event will look at how urban regeneration company Opportunity Peterborough has tackled its expanded role as the local delivery vehicle for growth covering the whole unitary authority area. In the downturn, it has used fresh solutions such as special purpose vehicles. Cost: Free; includes lunch, booking essential. Non-network members welcome.

To book, please visit www.rtpi.org.uk/ct/EVENT/787/11/events/787



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UPDATED FOR 2009

Tel: 0845 082 1171

e-mail: services@rtpiconferences.co.uk

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