



# RTPI

mediation of space · making of place

## PLANNING WITH COMMUNITIES NETWORK ANNUAL REPORT 2008

### Overview

The year has been notable for the much closer working between the Planning with Communities Network and RTPI Planning Aid. This has allowed each to play to its strengths – Planning Aid’s community outreach and the Network’s abilities to keep people in touch. However, the Network continued to work closely with the Community Planning Project, now being run from within the CLG, and building working relations with other organisations such as Urban Forum, with whom we hope to run a joint Seminar in 2009, and NALC (the National Association of Local Councils) for whom we have been sourcing speakers on planning topics.

Membership numbers have risen dramatically. The largest part of this increase has been from Planning Aid volunteers who were mailed in bulk and pleasingly the vast majority have seen the value of joining and increasingly participating within the Network. Through the Member survey 2008 it was revealed that nearly 10% of respondents had already taken up the offer of Associate Membership of the RTPI; there is obvious potential for continuing to build on the good reputation of the Institute through the Network.

There was a member survey in 2008 which revealed that the most popular overall ‘rating’ for the Planning with Communities Network was 7/10 and over 90% of respondents gave a rating of 5/10 or above. Some 88% of those responding felt that the present fortnightly circulation of the Member Bulletin was ‘just about right’ and a similar proportion felt the same about the content of the Member Bulletins. The most popular section of the Bulletin was the topical news and updates, and the least popular was the section on Awards – so the latter is retained as website content only. Approximately 70% of respondents felt that useful additional website content would be ‘summaries of relevant publications’ – and so a link to RTPI publications of relevance has been made and a broader list of useful publications begun. The web pages have also been improved with a listing of links useful to the Network Members.

An abiding topic of interest with members, shared with members of the Politicians in Planning Network (PIPA), has been the role of Parish Councils in planning. PIPA has a substantial number of parish and town Councillors amongst its membership and they naturally share community-based interests in planning. And of course the year saw Government initiatives to potentially expand the number of localities covered by such a Council. One PIPA Network member carried out some research on this tier of governance and, in return for sharing his survey findings, a number of contacts were made through both Networks for him to ‘ground’ his research in the real experience of those involved day-to-day.

It was pleasing to note that the Summerfield Eco-neighbourhood that had attracted so much interest amongst Members in 2007 received an Energy Award in 2008 – no doubt helped by the word-of-mouth reputation from the 70+ Network trip attendees!

At the beginning of the year a decision was made to cease meetings of the Network ‘Core Group’. It had proved difficult both to get a group reflective of very disparate interests and to find shared meeting dates. The closer working with Planning Aid – which has its own oversight arrangement – has proved a much more practical way to ensure that the Network’s efforts are

appropriately focused and via the membership as a whole there is a wealth of advice and assistance that can be called upon without overburdening any individuals.

We are aware that membership is not as proportionate as it should across the whole of the UK and we will be working in 2009 with the RTPI local staff and the local Planning Aid services to redress any imbalance.

**Membership profile:**

Figures current at 31.12.08

**Total members: 1086**

(For comparison: Members 2006 - 157; 2007 - 218)

**RTPI members on register:** roughly 50% (membership data has been accumulated in such a way that this figure is difficult to derive more accurately at present)

**Core Group**

Our sincere thanks to the following who served admirably as the Network's 'Core Group' until it was agreed in 2008 that the Group should cease:

Don Alder (Chair)	Consultant (retired)
Jas Atwal	Consultant in Community Engagement – resigned 2008
Mike Hayes (corresponding member)	Consultant
Stephen Hill	C <sub>2</sub> O futureplanners
David Levitt	Levitt & Bernstein
Sheena McCambley	Ballymun Regeneration Project
Craig McLaren (corresponding)	Communities Scotland (now incorporated within the Scottish Government)
Louise Waring	CLG Community Planning Project

**E-bulletins**

E-bulletins have been distributed fortnightly, with special editions for any topics of urgency.

**Unsolicited Feedback received in 2008**

“A valued source for updating”

“I find the whole thing really useful ... it's the only bit of the RTPI that delivers any value to me!”

“Many thanks for your assistance and advice”

“I rely on the Bulletins”

“[The Network] remains a beacon in a dark planning world!!!

“This is the first Communities Network update I've seen. If they're all as good as this, I hope they keep coming”

“That's a really good newsletter! Looking forward to getting involved in the Network”

## **Policy consultations:**

Network members have been invited to contribute to consultations on the following during 2008:

**Heat Call for Evidence** - BERR with Defra and CLG  
**National Planning Framework for Scotland** – Scottish Government  
**Wales Spatial Plan** – Welsh Assembly  
**Improving surface water drainage** - DEFRA  
**Cohesion Guidance for Funders** - CLG  
**Sustainable Communities Act 2007: draft regulations and statutory guidance** - CLG  
**Wind Energy Development in Northern Ireland's landscape: draft supplementary planning guidance** - DOE NI  
**The future of flood risk management in Scotland** – Scottish Government  
**A discussion paper on tackling poverty, inequality and deprivation in Scotland** – Scottish Gmt  
**Modernising planning appeals** – Scottish Government  
**SPP 23: planning and the historic environment** – Scottish Government  
**Renewable energy route map for Wales** – Welsh Assembly  
**Brownfield Skills** - English Partnerships and the Academy for Sustainable Communities  
**River Basin Planning** - Environment Agency  
**Environmental Damage** - DEFRA  
**Permitted Development Rights for Domestic Microgeneration Equipment** – Scottish Government  
**Communities Next – Taking Communities First Forward** – Welsh Assembly  
**Participatory Budgeting Strategy** - CLG  
**Implementing the Water Environment and Water Services (Scotland) Act 2003: Promoting an Integrated Approach** – Scottish Government  
**Single Equality Scheme** – Welsh Assembly  
**Eco-towns: Living a greener future** - CLG  
**Draft Marine Bill** - DEFRA  
**Lifting the burdens from local economic development and regeneration** - The LtB Task Force  
**Housing (Scotland) Act 2006: Consultation on Draft Guidance and Regulations** – Scottish Gmt  
**Northern Ireland Consultations**  
**Belfast City Centre Northside Urban Village Draft Regeneration Framework** – DSD NI  
**Model Scheme of Establishment of Community Councils and Code of Conduct for Community Councillors** – Scottish Government  
**RTPI Education Review** - RTPI  
**The Growth Fund 2008-2011** - CLG  
**Fair Play** - DCSF  
**TAN 12 - Design** – Welsh Assembly  
**Protection of World Heritage Sites** - CLG  
**Towards a strategy to support volunteering in health and social care** - DoH  
**Gypsy & Traveller Draft Site Design Guidance** – Welsh Assembly  
**Local Development Frameworks streamlining** - CLG  
**Consultation on A Practice Guide Companion to PPS25** - CLG  
**Affordable housing delivery plans: consultation on draft guidance** – Welsh Assembly  
**RTPI Survey on Job Evaluation and Public Sector Performance** - RTPI  
**RTPI Good Practice Advice** - RTPI  
**UK Renewable Energy Strategy** - BERR  
**The Next Steps: EPCs and the establishment of the Green Homes Service** - CLG  
**Ensuring the sustainable management and conservation of wildlife - towards a Wildlife Management Strategy** - DEFRA  
**Proposals for Resourcing for Planning Service** – Welsh Assembly  
**Further Consultation on Planning for Climate Change** – Welsh Assembly  
**The Empowerment Fund: Consultation** - CLG  
**Adapting our Ways: Managing Scotland's Climate Risk** - Scottish Government  
**Meeting Housing Needs in Rural Areas** – Welsh Assembly  
**Improving Local Accountability** - CLG  
**Belfast City Centre Northside Urban Village Draft Regeneration Framework - Equality Impact Assessment** – DOE NI

**Community Infrastructure Levy** – Welsh Assembly  
**Third Sector Partnership Board** - CLG  
**The making and enforcement of certain byelaws in England** - CLG  
**A Refocused Post Office Development Fund** – Welsh Assembly  
**Draft London Climate Change Adaptation Strategy** – London Assembly  
**Action on Climate Change: Proposals for improving the energy performance of existing non-domestic buildings** - Scottish Government  
**Standing for Office: Time-Off Entitlements** - CLG  
**Consultation Code of Practice** - BERR  
**Implementing the Mobile Homes Act 1983 on local authority Gypsy and Traveller sites** - CLG  
**Community Land Trusts** – CLG  
**Design Pact** - CABE  
**A framework for the development and deployment of renewable energy in Scotland** – Scottish Gmt  
**A Review of Land Management Actions Under Axis 2 of the Rural Development Plan for Wales** - Welsh Assembly  
**The Working Neighbourhoods Fund 2009-2011: Revising the Third Criterion** - CLG  
**Eco-Standards** - CLG  
**Community Asset Transfer Fund** – Welsh Assembly  
**Delivering a Sustainable Transport System: Planning for 2014 and Beyond** - DoT  
**PPS21: Sustainable Development in the Countryside** – DOE NI  
**Householder Permitted Development Rights** – Scottish Government  
**One Wales: One Planet: a new sustainable development scheme for Wales** - Welsh Assembly  
**World Heritage** - DCMS  
**Revised Circular on Costs Awards in Appeals and other Planning Proceedings** - CLG  
**Changing Council Governance Arrangements: Mayors and Indirectly Elected Leaders** - CLG  
**Definition of Zero Carbon Homes and Non-Domestic Buildings** - CLG  
**Investing in Affordable Housing** – Scottish Government

#### **Requests to/from Members:**

The Planning Inspectorate launched a **pilot scheme to fast track householder appeals** and through the Bulletin members were invited to suggest further authorities to participate in the pilot.

As an integral part of the Planning Convention programme an expanded **Exhibition of Good Practice** and Members were invited to participate and nominate at least one project or initiative.

Network members the Building & Social Housing Foundation (BSHF) called on Members to press the Government to address the **accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers** in the new Housing and Planning Delivery Grant (HPDG).

Yorkshire Planning Aid organised a community training seminar on the subject of **Section 106 Agreements**, jointly with the Ethical Property Foundation and Integreat Yorkshire. They asked Members for examples of S106s attached to planning permissions where they contain real community benefits as a result of the involvement/impact of a local community or community/voluntary group or body.

Network member Barry Pearce wrote two articles on **‘Cost effective community involvement in planning’** for the TCPA Journal and these proved extremely popular with Members.

Members were invited to contribute to the RTPPI’s response to the Community Empowerment White Paper launch document **‘Unlocking the Talent of our Communities’**.

Members were invited to help a fellow Member writing a dissertation which was looking to find out whether loss of areas of the **Green Belt** is inevitable and/or whether the Green Belt has served its purpose and should be amended/updated?

Via 'Rethinking Cities' Members were invited to express opinions on what the **Ramblers Association** could be doing in urban and suburban contexts in the next 3 – 5 years.

The Planning Inspectorate requested Member help via an on-line questionnaire with finding out what might attract or deter someone from **applying to be an Inspector**.

Network members were invited to share their experience of how the growing demand for **on-site generation of energy from renewable resources** (the "Merton Rule") is being met.

The RTPI was asked to present a list of twenty ways to improve the planning application process to the **Killian & Pretty Review** and asked Network Members to come forward with their suggestions.

A Networks Member appealed to Members for examples of good practice with **systems to monitor S106 agreements** including disseminating information to officers, members and community groups.

The CASS Centre for Charity Effectiveness Trust invited Members to trial their innovative on-line **knowledge-sharing website** on how to run voluntary/nonprofit organisations.

Members were asked to contribute from their experience to a student dissertation on '**Planning & Play**'.

Members were invited to contribute to a **research project at the LSE** that sought to gauge attitudes towards various aspects of mixed communities policy – eg measures to incorporate a greater mix of housing types and tenures within new and existing residential areas.

**The Consultation Institute** sought Member help in locating potential speakers on a range of topics broadly relating to community engagement.

A student studying for an MA requested help with a dissertation on the subject of '**active leisure provision in urban communities**'.

A student studying for an MSc requested help with a dissertation on the subject of '**public participation in the planning process**'

Members with experience of **Parish Council involvement in planning** were invited to contribute to a Member's dissertation for an LLM.

Comparison with a **Dutch Network for Community Planning** was invited.

Cranfield School of Management and the Cranfield Trust invited eligible Members who are voluntary sector managers to apply for two scholarships worth £28,000 each to study the part-time, **two-year MBA at Cranfield**.

Members and their employers were invited to explore the use and value of **Collaborative Working Groups** with an offer of RTPI funding.

Members were asked whether they had issues to raise at the **Planning Inspectorate's Annual Stakeholder Meeting**.

**The Planning Aid Co-ordinator** in the South Wes invited interest in a network for all those working in local authorities (and possibly the private sector) as 'community planners'.

INTA the International Urban Development Association approached Network Members with a view to locating two planners experienced in the **development of eco-neighbourhoods** who could share their experience in planning and managing this type of development.

When the Government introduced changes to the regulation around **householder consents**, Members were invited to address the question: 'Do you think that the changes will help or hinder good local planning? And Members made some strong points.

The new **Homes & Communities Agency** invited Network Members to attend its regional sessions which explained the work and ambitions of the Agency.

Members were invited to contribute to the RTPI response to the Government consultation on **Community Land Trusts**.

Members were invited to contribute to a report '**Faith in Affordable Housing - use of churches' land and buildings for affordable homes**', by indentifying where local authorities would waive charges for pre-application consultation if conversion of a redundant church (rural or urban) to 100% affordable housing was being proposed.

Members were asked for their help in identifying good practice on **gypsy & traveller provision** for 2/3 events at which Councillor delegates could find out first hand how best practice has made a success of provision.

A Member requested help to identify where best practice was being developed – at least before the current market hiatus - with **bundling up small sites** and negotiating with the developer on the whole lot together?

The RTPI invited Member participation in **World Town Planning Day** by thinking of the *one thing* which you could do or put forward in your day-jobs which would help to alleviate or adapt to climate change.

Members were invited to contribute to a **dissertation on the provision of affordable housing** on exception sites in rural areas - looking at whether the exception site policy is working well and at Community Land Trusts and how these are working.

Members were invited to take part in an **RTPI survey** about employer (Council or Consultancy) offers of a bonus scheme, market supplement or market premium payment to reward, incentivise and retain skilled planning professionals.

Member attention was drawn to the publication '**The Community Planning Event Manual**' by Network Member Nick Wates.

## **Task Groups**

There have been no task groups as such but members have been invited to contribute case-studies to build the good practice resource at [communityplanning.net](http://communityplanning.net)

## **Events:**

Date: 27<sup>th</sup> February 2008

Event: The Planning Bill – a Networks consultation

Venue: London  
Participants: 25(from across a range of Networks)

Date: 9<sup>th</sup> May 2008  
Event: Eco-towns – a Networks consultation  
Venue: London  
Participants: 25(from across a range of Networks)

A Report from this event is available in the members' area of the website.

Date: 15<sup>th</sup> May 2008  
Event: Joint Network Meeting with the Planning for Housing Network  
Venue: Milton Keynes  
Subject: Community Engagement  
Participants: 12

A Report from this event is available in the members' area of the website.

Date: 6<sup>th</sup> June 2008  
Event: Sub-national Review of Economic Development and Regeneration (SNR) – a Networks consultation  
Venue: London  
Participants: 25(from across a range of Networks)

Date: 26<sup>th</sup> June 2008  
Event: learning from...@symes community centre  
A Joint event with the RTPI Regeneration Network  
Venue: Bristol

Date: 16<sup>th</sup> July 2008  
Event: Joint event with East Midlands RTPI Region & Planning with Communities Network  
Venue: Sherwood Energy Village, Newark  
Participants: 25(from across the Region & Networks)

Date: 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> September 2008  
Event: National Regeneration Convention  
Venue: Glasgow  
*Footnote: This annual RTPI event was scheduled but then postponed to a date yet to be resolved.*

Date: 19<sup>th</sup> September 2008  
Event: A Networks Consultation  
Venue: London  
Subject: Towards a Nuclear National Policy Statement  
Participants: 16

**Andrew Matheson**  
**PwCN Network Manager**  
**January 2009**

RTPI, a charity registered in England 262865 and Scotland SC 037841