

South West planners welcome RTPI President's visit

RTPI President Ann Skippers visited Plymouth, Weymouth & Portland and Poole on 14th and 15th July at a pivotal time for both the planning system and the profession. The regional level of planning has just been abolished and councils across the South West are making town planners redundant in the face of central government budget cuts.



Ann, who as President of the RTPI is the figurehead of Britain's town and country planners, addressed an RTPI South West conference, attended by over 90 delegates, at Plymouth University on Wednesday 14 July, whilst on Thursday 15 July she visited the Weymouth & Portland National Sailing Academy – venue of the Olympic Sailing events in 2012 – and a pioneering waste management & renewable energy facility at Canford, as well as meeting with planning professionals from across Dorset.

Ann Skippers & Brett Spiller, RTPI SW Chair

She sought to boost morale and put across the case for the positive impact that planners' skills can have in fostering economic recovery and achieving value for the limited money now available for public investment.

Brett Spiller, RTPI South West Chair 2010, said:

"This presidential visit is a great opportunity to showcase some of the positive things that have been promoted and facilitated by planning professionals in our region. We also hope that it will boost morale in the South West just at a time when this is especially needed."

Plymouth is a beacon of innovative planning in which the community are closely involved and is in the van, both nationally and in the region, in terms of having up to date policies in place. The conference held at the University's Roland Levinsky Building, considered the future form of our development plans and the ability of local authorities to produce them; opportunities and issues in the wake of the new Government's abolition of the entire regional planning system ; lessons from Cornwall on community engagement; and, by Ann herself, how the RTPI can apply the contents of its new ['Shaping the future' manifesto](#) to helping the new Government to improve the planning system.



Simon Williams of Weymouth & Portland Council & Ann Skippers

Positive planning work viewed by the President on the following day included the Weymouth & Portland Regeneration Area (including Osprey Quay, the National Sailing Academy and the Weymouth Pavilion & Ferry Terminal). Following lunch at the National Sailing Academy, Ann took part in a question and answer session with a focus on planning issues in Dorset.

Her last stop at the end of a busy day was a visit to the New Earth Solutions Group's Mechanical Biological Waste Treatment and renewable energy facility at Canford, Poole. This pioneering plant plays a key role in diverting waste away from landfill.



Ann with Robert Asquith, Planning Director at New Earth Solutions Group