

## **NAPE Annual Report 2021**

This year marks my fourth and final annual report as NAPE Chair and the London & the East representative, having now been an elected member of the NAPE committee for 6 years (the maximum allowed under the NAPE terms of reference). I have enjoyed my time on the committee immensely. During my time as Chair have achieved a number of specific goals; raising our membership to an all time high, relaunching the NAPE Enforcement Handbook, and continuing to raise the profile of and level of interest in enforcement.

Over the past 12 months it has once again been a pleasure to work alongside fellow management committee members Craig, Dawn, Tom, Craig, Chris and Liam. We have also welcomed Richard Marshall to the committee, having been elected as the Midlands regional representative. He has been an excellent addition to the team.

I am pleased to report that 2021 has seen a further increase in the NAPE membership with numbers currently standing at 1065. Continuing to increase our membership year on year is one of our key targets moving forward, as we believe this goes hand in hand with helping to build a stronger network which best represents and promotes the planning enforcement profession.

Over the past 12 months we have continued to publish our monthly newsletter which contains expert opinion on relevant enforcement court cases, links to enforcement related media reports, and links to enforcement training events among other things. We have also continued with our monthly 'ask day', however have expanded the format of this so that each month, rather than a specific day, a member of the management committee is available to answer questions from our members on enforcement issues. I am pleased to report that this has resulted in an increased uptake from our members, resulting in the provision of more assistance to members by the committee who are able to aid in finding solutions to enforcement related questions.

Ordinarily, throughout the year, members of the management committee would be speaking at various planning related conferences on enforcement. However, this year, once again, saw the cancellation of many events. However, in 2021 we were able to hold our annual NAPE Enforcement Conference virtually on the 15<sup>th</sup> of November 2021. Despite some early technical issues it was a great success. This year, for the first time, we were able to link up with RTPI Cymru, RTPI Scotland and RTPI Northern Ireland and offer sessions tailored to our members from these countries which focused on specific enforcement issues which enabled NAPE to offer greater support to members across the UK. The feedback which we received from this was overwhelmingly positive and it is an approach we will look to replicate at future conferences.

As part of the conference NAPE was very pleased to welcome RTPI Vice President Tim Crawshaw, who gave opening and closing remarks on the day. The committee

would like to thank Tim for his interest, support and understanding of the important role of enforcement within the planning system. It is hoped that NAPE will continue to collaborate with Tim when he becomes RTPI president in 2022.

Following the launch of our Enforcement Handbook for England in 2020, which was funded by MHCLG (now DLUCH), further funding was secured to enable the network to publish 'NAPE's Beginners' Guide to Planning Enforcement' which focused on providing support to enforcement officers working for local authorities who are at the beginning of their careers.

The guide project team lead by Jenny Devine and NAPE Vice Chair Craig Allison did a fantastic job bringing all of the chapters of the guide together in a user friendly manner, making the document easily accessible to those starting their journey in planning enforcement. I would like to thank the project team and all the authors of the guide for their efforts in bring the document to fruition.

The beginners guide was formally launched on the 14<sup>th</sup> of December with a virtual event where members of the NAPE committee who authored the guide, spoke about their chapters and their experiences as enforcement officers. We were pleased to joined again by RTPI vice president Tim Crawshaw. The beginner's guide is now available to download from the NAPE page on the RTPI's website.

As we look forward to 2022, NAPE's main aim will continue to be to raise the profile of the planning enforcement profession at both a local and national level. This new year is likely to bring with it reforms to the planning enforcement system, following the publication of the Government's 'Planning For The Future' white paper in August 2020, which included discussions on enforcement as a key area. The NAPE management committee contributed to the RTPI's overall response to this document, and I am pleased to report that members of the NAPE Committee will be meeting with DLUCH to discuss proposed reforms to the planning enforcement system. It will be interesting to see whether NAPE's proposal have been taken into consideration.

Another aim for 2022 is for NAPE to strengthen its ties with other planning related organisations to enable us to promote the importance of enforcement. For instance, NAPE will be looking to strengthen its relationship with the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC).

In 2021 it should be noted that many local authorities have continued to struggle with the recruitment and retention of enforcement officers and this, along with inadequate funding of planning teams as a whole, is seen as a major constraint for the delivery of an effective enforcement service. NAPE will be doing all it can throughout 2022 to ensure that these particular problems are highlighted to the Government and to ensure that enforcement is kept at the front and centre of any future decisions on the planning system.

I would like to thank the members of the Management Committee for their continued input and support, in addition to their day jobs over the last 12 months. Also a special thank you to our now former network manager Jenny Devine, who has worked really hard throughout the year to ensure that the NAPE continues to flourish. We all wish her the best of luck with her new role at the RTPI. At the end of 2021, the NAPE committee were very pleased to welcome Madeleine Bauer as our new network manager and we look forward to working with her throughout 2022. The management committee would also like to extend its thanks to the RTPI for its ongoing interest and support.

Finally, I would like to thank all our members for their continued interest and contributions in what has been another challenging year. NAPE is here for our members and will continue to support them as best we can and speak up for enforcement at all times.

Neill Whittaker

NAPE Chair

Jan 22