

MAGAZINE FOR THE RTPI WEST MIDLANDS

TRIPWIRE



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Cover image: A morning off-peak Class 323 train bound for Lichfield Trent Valley arrives at Longbridge Station, 1 November 2023.
Credit: @NathLei_F1 via 'X' (formerly Twitter)]

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Tripwire Editorial

The nights are closing in after the falling back of daylight saving time, and named storms are upon us. The darker evenings lend themselves to introspection and reflection, with many of us set to turn to reading, study or any mix of modern media. Befitting this mood is a trip down memory lane to the very origins of Tripwire in a joint article from our previous Editors Mike Vout and John Acres.

The history of this publication stretches further back than most would imagine, with the title adapting and shapeshifting through different designs and formats to become what it is today. The 2016 prediction by John Acres of future planners “in the firing line” (featured in Issue 92 of Tripwire, Winter 2016) and noted by Mike Vout has proven very cogent indeed in the current era.

In the last few months we have all seen or experienced distrust, accusation, conspiracy and even guerilla action from some citizens who now routinely resist attempts by planners to plan for the public good, calling into question their professional abilities and core motives. A campaign known as ‘It Takes Planners &’ spearheaded by Victoria Hills, RTPI Chief Executive, launches on World Town planning Day on 8th November - to help tackle misinformation and champion the profession. It’s a good job then that here in this issue we have so much to spotlight and celebrate: the professionalism of our members, the showcasing of our region during the RTPI Presidential Visit, national event hosting and award nominations.

The Autumn is conference season, and not only for the political parties: In Mid-October came the Young Planners Conference, a two-day weekend spectacular hosted in the city-centre inside and out, in defiance of seasonal showers.

We have a detailed look-back at both of these significant events for the region in this edition, including a look ahead to yet another regional showcase: The National Planning Conference.

In early October the region hosted RTPI President Sue Bridges, with a whistle-stop tour of the faces and places across our region that represent the profession’s work and impact, we explore a little of what was covered at those events and the many people from all walks of the sector involved in the hosting. In this edition we also have the usual updates on CPD, member services and other Autumn/Winter RTPI events for your diaries, including a Winter Reception in celebration of all of our members - and you’re all invited.

Looking back at the year too will be Clair Eggington as she enters the Autumn of her year as RAC Chair, presiding so far over what has been an incredibly eventful 2023 calendar for the region under her stewardship. Claire took up the reins as Chair at the same time that I became editor of Tripwire back in December 2022, so I too reflect on my first year as Editor of the magazine over three editions. Helping us along the way has been Heidi Smith, even newer to her role and yet through her friendliness and hard work from the outset has become very much part of the fabric of the membership already.



Finally from me, the start of September heralded the final-Dissertation deadline for the RTPI-accredited postgraduate degree programmes of Urban and Regional Planning MSc at the University of Birmingham and Planning in Built Environments MA at Birmingham City University.

I want to say a big congratulations to all submitting full and part-time students, as well as my fellow Degree Apprenticeship students at UOB, who have balanced full-time work as planning practitioners alongside a packed study schedule. There is still work to do in pursuit of MRTPI accreditation and I wish all of you the best of strength towards it in 2024 and beyond.



— **James Hoskinson**
Tripwire Editor and
RTPI West Midlands
Regional Activities
Committee Member

CHAIR'S COMMENT

WM Region's Chair for 2023

So, I come to the end of my turn in the role of Chair of West Midlands RTPI and as is customary I wanted to reflect back on a busy and highly rewarding year. Firstly though, I wanted to consider what it means to be a volunteer. I start this piece off in this way because of challenges any charitable cause faces in recruiting, motivating, retaining volunteers when everyone is so busy spinning plates in the circus that is real life.

I have been a volunteer ever since I can remember. I was the keen school kid (you know the type) sorting a stall for the Blue Peter Bring and Buy sale. I was the first to sign up to far too many activities at the university Freshers Fair, settling (after a brief and failed attempt at sailing) on the Conservation Volunteers which eventually led me, in a convoluted way, to town planning. Many moons later, when truly immersed in Motherland, I naïvely offered to run a tombola at the school Christmas Fair and lo and behold ended up as PTA chair for four years. I have always been a strong believer in 'giving back' if you have benefitted from a service and support its broad aims and objectives.

Time is precious however, and we all have to achieve a balance in life which is why, when people do volunteer it is so important to recognise that they are freely giving of their own time in whatever way they can to help others, because they are passionate about the cause. Yes, we are 'do gooders', a phrase which is often said with contempt in the wild west of social media, but a label I personally wear with pride - what on earth is wrong with wanting to do something good, decent, helpful in your own time! The world is a strange old place.

Leading a group of volunteers and keeping them motivated and knowing they are appreciated can be a very fragile thing though. If they do not feel valued for what they do, volunteers will drift away and it will become harder to recruit and retain, and those remaining will face an increasing workload, or will simply deliver less because they will just not have the capacity to do more.

So, I want to say a huge thanks to those fantastic volunteers who have worked with me throughout 2023 on the Regional Management Board for the West Midlands. It is the job of the RMB to manage the formal business of the region and make sure stuff is delivered in line with our business plan.

I also want to say a massive thank you to everyone on the Regional Activities Committee who work so hard to deliver that business plan, and to all those other individuals and organisations who have supported us over the last year to arrange such a varied programme of events and activities for our local members, the awards and ball, CPD events, blogs, debates and round tables, public sector support, education and awareness raising, socials, the list goes on.

I also want to extend a heartfelt thank you to our amazing Young Planners. They have their own Chair and committee of course, and over the last year they have worked incredibly hard to deliver events and activities and indeed they bid for and successfully delivered the hugely prestigious national Young Planners Conference 2023 in the West Midlands. What an inspiration to new generations of planners they are.

When I began my year as Chair, we were without a regional co-ordinator as our previous, excellent co-ordinator, Katy, had left us for pastures new. The role is so essential to the smooth operation of what the RTPI delivers locally but Sarah, Lucy and Shona from head office proved excellent at keeping things moving and providing great support while recruitment was



underway and our new co-ordinator, Heidi, deserves such credit for hitting the ground running – sprinting really - as the ball and awards were just about to take place when she joined! Thank you Heidi, for all your ongoing hard work and support.

I'm aware that this is starting to sound a bit like a rambling Oscars speech, so I'll shut up in a moment. It has been a genuine pleasure to be the WM Region's Chair for 2023, and as I sign off I would just like to welcome all of our new members who are joining our band of volunteers and, of course, wish our incoming Chair, Victoria Lane, all the very best in the role for 2024. We have an exciting programme of events being planned and we hope to see as many of our members as possible attending and supporting everything we are doing.

Finally, at the time of writing, it seems a little early to be saying this, but I hope you all have a great Christmas, and a happy and peaceful new year.



Clare Eggington MRTPI

RTPI West Midlands Regional Activities Committee & Regional Management Board Chair

RTPi West Midlands

A Story of a Regional RTPi Magazine

The following was greatly helped by (some might say plagiarised from) an article written by John Acres for the 100th edition of Tripwire.

There have been several people at the helm of Tripwire. John was by far the longest serving editor from January 2001 until Winter 2016 and (possibly to the despair of Jenny his partner), ‘custodian’ of historic copies of the magazine (he has copies dating back to April 1990 ...almost 30 years).

Michael Vout’s tenure was very short in comparison, initially presiding over ‘guest’ editor editions following John’s departure (to become the President of the RTPi) and then as editor.

Both shared the same approach to Tripwire; a magazine which was genuinely informative, providing an opportunity for considered opinion and reporting (especially in an age of immediate ‘knee jerk’ social media) and very importantly, that it should not take itself too seriously.

“A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away....”

The name ‘Tripwire’ is believed to be an anagram (of sorts) of RTPi following a competition to name the magazine.

John Acres is attributed to editing Tripwire No.1 in 2001 ...but if one wishes to be pedantic (and one does), this is not strictly accurate. Adopting a description used in the film industry to produce a lucrative earlier ‘back story’ movie to a successful film franchise, there is what might be termed an earlier ‘Tripwire Origins’.

The origins of the magazine begin as far back as the 1980’s under the editorial direction of Dr Alison Millward (and later Sheena Terrace) with first editions from Peter Lindsell, overseen by an Editorial Committee.

The first version of Tripwire that we have come to love and respect appears to have been produced in April 1990 and had a front-page article entitled ‘Affordable Rural Housing in Practice’ heralding an all-day CPD event in Shifnal. It is noticeable that many of the same issues keep on returning!

Prior to 2001 the magazine was produced in black and white on a monthly basis.

The change in editorship in 2001 provided an opportunity to experiment with the frequency and format of Tripwire and it was decided to produce a two-monthly magazine, to ‘liven it up a bit’ and to introduce a splash of (a) colour. Red was the colour of choice as John was working for Redrow Homes in Tamworth at the time and because the new ‘red hot Tripwire’, as it was described (!) was introduced with ‘What is black and white and read all over – the answer of course is Tripwire’. (I sense that this ‘joke’ has not dated well).

Set against the background of serious flooding in the Midlands, the front page of Tripwire No.1 included a picture of the River Severn having burst its banks and the City of Worcester under water, this only 2 years after the notorious 1998 Easter Floods.

The issue of ‘climate change’ was not the topic it is today and was not blamed for the deluge. Instead, the question posed by the magazine was, ‘Are the planners to blame?’ Is the flooding due to development on flood plains or is it caused by changes in farming practices? A more obvious answer, that it had rained rather a lot didn’t seem to feature as a reason, let alone why.

On the RTPi news front, Mike Beazley was just taking over as Chair from a very boyish looking David Chapman and the December 2000 AGM had been held at the Barber Institute at Birmingham University, continuing the practice at the time of incoming Chairs hosting a reception on their ‘home ground’.

Since those early days Tripwire has gone from strength to strength, introducing more colour, more illustrations and more ‘flair’ (whatever that is) with occasional ‘special editions’ on specific themes, sponsored by local consultants. This gradual evolution in the product and presentation has continued (with a hiatus during Covid), regenerating ‘Doctor Who’ like yet again under the editorial guidance of its new, incumbent editor in January 2023.

One of the robustly debated changes over past years was the move from its production and distribution as hard paper copies, to hard copies and electronic copies



Tripwire No. 1 2001

to fully electronic copies. Whilst many (John and I included) continued to support the production of hard copies (the lovely tactile ‘real world’ experience of receiving a physical thing), one must accept and appreciate not only the electronic communication times we live in but the sustainable benefits. Maybe it’s an age thing ...

When John started, the Internet was still in its infancy. While it is possible (though highly unlikely) that early editions were produced by scribes on parchment and papyrus, John reliably tells me that they were captured on ‘floppy discs’ (which I recall were curiously not that ‘floppy’), which have long since become obsolete.

A Story of a Regional RTPI Magazine (continued)

In John's final edition as editor, he 'signed off' with an extended editorial in Issue 92 (Winter 2016) commenting on the dramatic political changes going on both in Britain (with the vote to leave the EU) and in the USA (with the arrival of Donald Trump as President). With a degree of despair, he described the move towards populism and the decline of the 'experts' and how it seemed that the planners would increasingly find themselves in the firing line. This seems as true today as it was in 2016.

As for the future of Tripwire ...

I often wonder why people choose the planning profession and the qualities that make for a good and successful planner. Planning involves so many different topics and issues ranging from the highly technical to the highly conceptual, so in that sense there is no one 'type' of planner. However, it does seem that there is a common thread; curiosity about the way the world works (or doesn't work) and the ways in which it could be made to work better. Curiosity, interest and sometimes concern about what people and communities need and want to be healthy and happy, what makes finance and commerce successful for individuals and the common good, understanding and respecting the natural environment - and finally a fascination in and the capacity to see how all of these things interact with each other.

Tripwire provides an excellent platform for members to express themselves. It provides an opportunity to report on events and the ability to highlight particular topics and concerns as well as the practical purpose of providing RTPI news, forthcoming events etc.

The editorial reins have been passed to the very capable hands of James Hoskinson. We wish him well and ask that members support the magazine by providing articles, comments and opinions...and communicating their passion for planning.



Michael Vout



John Acres



Complete EAP, health & wellbeing support

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- ✓ Childcare support
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Wellbeing Support

Pressures on planners are ongoing, including the recently well-publicised budgetary pressures on Local Authorities in the region, as well as warnings from others about continuing challenges facing statutory services generally.

Work related stresses on RTPI members is a key focus for the RTPI. As a member, you have free access to well-being support.

Simply download the [RTPI Plus app](#) for:

- ✓ Online health checks
- ✓ Free 24/7, 365 confidential helpline
- ✓ Access wellbeing resources such as webinars, podcasts, articles, videos and guides
- ✓ 4-week self-help programmes



YPC Contribution

Planning for Legacy

A Report from the RTPI Young Planners Conference 2023 in Birmingham

This year's Young Planners Conference took place in Birmingham with a two-day event exploring the topic of 'Planning for Legacy: Regeneration and Place in the West Midlands.' The event was held at Millennium Point, bringing together approximately 200 young planners within the first 10-years of their career from all over the United Kingdom. As a member of the West Midlands Young Planners Committee, my fellow 12 committee members and I worked for over a year to organise and deliver an excellent event on behalf of the RTPI.

Millennium Point was a fitting venue for the conference, originally built on a large brownfield site in 2001, acting as a catalyst for regeneration in the Eastside of the City Centre. The building now overlooks the proposed location of Birmingham Curzon Street Station, the first brand new intercity terminus station built in Britain since the 19th Century. The new High Speed 2 (HS2) rail interchange will also improve access to different modes of transport, such as the Midlands Metro - a topic included in one of Friday's auditorium panel sessions entitled 'Unlocking Regeneration through Transport'.

Tim Fawcett (Mott Macdonald), Sandeep Shingadia (Transport for West Midlands) and Mel Jones (Birmingham City Council) offered a great insight into the changing world of transport and how improvements are being made on a national and local level, to help create thriving places. Following the main sessions, the West Midlands Young Planners Committee delivered

five breakout sessions covering green infrastructure, large-scale housebuilding, biodiversity net gain, logistics planning, and planning for renewables.

I chaired the green infrastructure session with two speakers from Carter Jonas, Mark Russell and Glen Richardson, alongside Simon Needle from Birmingham City Council. I particularly enjoyed learning about the future of Birmingham City Centre and their vision for Local Nature Recovery Networks.

Birmingham has some big challenges to tackle with issues such as deprivation, air pollution, flooding and a significant demand for housing. I believe green infrastructure has the capabilities of mitigating these stresses and providing a better-quality living environment for all residents, including young people, especially as Birmingham is one of the youngest cities in Europe.



Gala Dinner at the Birmingham Council House

The Friday afternoon included six study tours visiting Perry Barr, the Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham’s canals, Paradise Circus, Digbeth and Coventry City centre. Delegates braved the rain with their coats and umbrellas and enjoyed some of the lesser seen sights of the West Midlands. I walked with 40 delegates lead by Nicki Schiessel Harvey (Birmingham City University) around Birmingham’s canal network. Nicki - a canal boat dweller for over 20 years - provided a brilliant insight into the practicalities of canal-side life and it was great to take a trip together on the tourist boat from Brindley Place.

CPD sessions went into Saturday morning with the staple legal update from Landmark Chambers, while the event was topped off with the Gala Dinner on Friday night at the Birmingham Council House, a beautiful venue with lots of guests embracing the Peaky Blinders theme.

The West Midlands Young Planners Committee and I are extremely proud of what we delivered and look forward to adding ‘Event Coordinators’ to our CVs! I would encourage all Young Planners to get involved in their local regional networks because it has provided me with some excellent opportunities and some lovely friends. Applications for the West Midlands 2024 Committee will be open soon!



—
Frances Keenan
RTPI West Midlands Young Planners
Committee Member

You can find more about the the [RTPI West Midlands Young Planners Committee](#) online, including how to get involved.



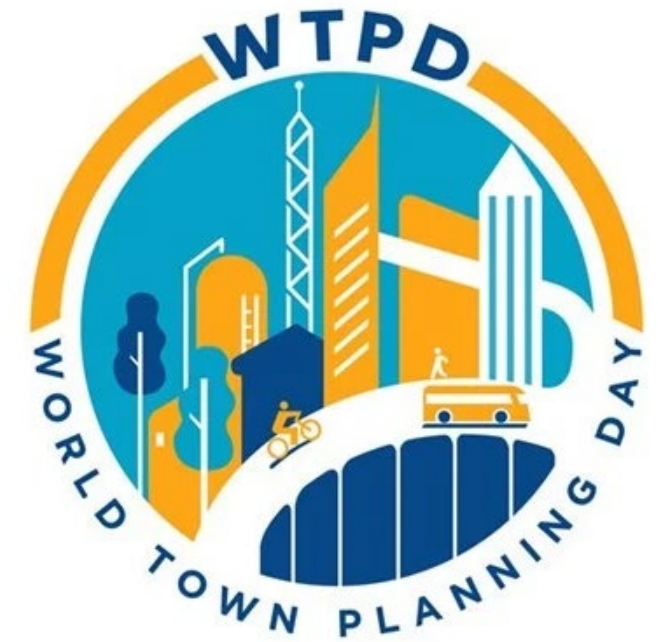
The Planning Conference 2023

Birmingham this week on 9-10 November 2023

This year’s Planning Conference will be hosted in Birmingham this week on 9-10 November 2023 at the Birmingham Conference and Events Centre.

The two-day schedule includes presentations, panel discussions and networking sessions across many topics, including the delivery of homes, community engagement, digital and international planning, and sustainable development goals. Speakers include representatives from Local Authorities, governmental institutions (from both Ireland and the UK nations and regions), international consultancies and other private sector organisations.

You can check out the [dedicated website](#) to learn more, as well as a review of last years’ conference. Unfortunately, all tickets are now sold out, but you can follow the action on social media by searching the hashtags #NationalPlanningConference2023 and #NPCUK23, or keep an eye on the website for a review of this years’ conference in the coming months.



World Town Planning Day

Visit the RTPI Website to find out more about this year’s campaigns on 8th November when we will be celebrating and championing all things planning, including a FREE full-day special conference programme online and the launch of the ‘It Takes Planners &’ an anti-misinformation campaign, defending and championing the work we do.

[Find out more here >](#)

RTPI West Midlands Events

In-person CPD Programme

The regional team are working really hard behind the scenes to put together a fantastic 2024 CPD and events package for our members and hope to be able to share this early in the New Year.

As always, a big thanks to our partners at Savills, Pegasus Group and Shoemiths as well as others in the region who kindly host events for members in their excellent venues. Networking in a spread of organisational offices offers attendees a chance to visit the working environments of different organisations in the sector.

Local Authorities Planners on the Front Line

Date: 08 November 2023 at 5.00pm-8.00pm

Venue: Savills UK Ltd, 55 Colmore Row, Birmingham

This free event will commemorate World Town Planning Day with the West Midlands Young Planners at an engaging panel discussion with past and present winners of the RTPI Young Planners of the Year Award. This panel discussion will offer an insight to the Young Planner of the Year process, along with inspiring discussions about the panellist's careers and any advice they would give to their past self. Places are limited so please book your tickets now.

[BOOK NOW](#)

Design Coding - Lessons learned from the recent National Model Design Code Pathfinder Programme

Date: 13 November 2023 at 11.30am-1.00pm

Venue: Online

This interactive webinar will explore a number of case studies from the Office for Place's recent Design Code Pathfinder Programme, to explore lessons learned and emerging good practice.

With a focus on the practicalities of preparing codes, the session will recap on the requirements of the National Model Design Code and then look at how a number of local authorities and Homes England are applying its requirements.

There will be time for participants to discuss issues, challenges and opportunities with the speakers, providing an in-depth insight into an increasingly important topic for all planners.

Speakers to be confirmed. Places are free to RTPI members and are £25 to non-members.

[BOOK NOW](#)

RTPI Ask an Expert: Water in a changing world and the implications for Planning and Built Environment

Date: 14 November 2023 at 5.30pm-7.00pm

(followed by drinks and networking)

Venue: Pegasus Group, Phoenix House, 1-3 Newhall Street, Birmingham

Human water use, climate change, and land conversion have created a global 'water crisis' that threatens billions of people and endangers ecosystems worldwide. The collective ability of humanity to ensure adequate water for society and the environment depends on understanding how our water cycle is changing across different scales and geographical contexts. This talk by Professor David Hannah will showcase how colleagues at the University of Birmingham and collaborators work together on water related issues and the UN Sustainable Development Goals at a time of unprecedented global change.

Places are free but limited to RTPI members or staff and students and the University of Birmingham.

[BOOK NOW](#)

Young Planners Ask an Expert: Politics in Planning

Date: 22 November 2023 at 5.00pm-6.00pm

Venue: CBRE Ltd, 55 Temple Row, Birmingham

This subject continues to play a pivotal role in our industry - what does it mean for us as planners?

Join us as we hear from Cavendish's Midlands' team about the latest developments around politics and its interrelation with planning. We will explore the impact of the local elections, as well as the importance of community/political engagement.

We will then reflect on what this might mean for the Midlands region - with a discussion hosted by CBRE's Midlands' team.

The session will conclude with a Q&A, drinks and networking.

This event is free for RTPI members.

[BOOK NOW](#)

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[BOOK NOW](#)

RTPI West Midlands Winter Reception 2023

Date: 22 November 2023 at 6.00pm-10.00pm

Venue: Shoemiths LLP, 103 Colmore Row, Birmingham

Join us for the inaugural West Midlands Winter Reception with Shoemiths.

Enjoy complimentary food and drink as we all focus on celebrating the planning profession and taking a look back over the last year.

We will be:

- Celebrating those who have passed their APC in the year
- Saying a massive thank you to our outgoing Chair and welcoming in the new Chair
- Recognising and celebrating any long standing committee members
- Celebrating the planning profession by networking with colleagues and contemporaries
- Reflecting on the activities of the last 12 months
- Showing our appreciation to all our members who have chosen to have a membership with us

Places are free to all West Midlands members.

[BOOK NOW](#)



IMPORTANT UPDATE FOR MEMBERS

Since 1 February, all RTPI members are required to comply with a new Code of Professional Conduct. The new code sets out updated and amended ethical standards for all members of the Institute and applies to all categories of members worldwide.

[Find out more here >](#)



Celebrating Planning Excellence in the West Midlands on the National Stage



Back in June the West Midlands Awards for Planning Excellence recognised and highlighted the best of regional planning practice in 2022/23. Since then, the national finalists have been announced in the RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence. Among the finalists from our regional winners are:

- Small Planning Consultancy of the Year - *Delta Planning*
- Excellence in Planning for a Successful Economy - *Perry Barr Residential Scheme, entered by Birmingham City Council, Arcadis and Arup*
- Planning Authority of the Year - *South Staffordshire Council*
- West Midlands Chair's Award - *South Staffordshire Council*
- Young Planner of the Year - *Joshua Singh*

Congratulations again to all of our finalists representing our region, and the best of luck to you all at the National Awards. Winners will be announced on Tuesday 21 November at The Fountain Room in central London WC1. You can book to attend the national finals on the [RTPI website](#).

Celebrating the RTPI Presidential Visit to the West Midlands

It was a pleasure to welcome our RTPI President Sue Bridge to the West Midlands on 9th and 10th October. Sue's visit started off by a visit to **Ozzy the Bull** in New Street Station, then on to visit the **Perry Barr Residential Scheme**.

Sue met with Apprentices and Professors on the Urban and Regional Planning Degree Apprenticeship Programme at The Exchange in the city centre, and finished her day up at National Highways talking to the Spatial Planning Community in an hybrid meeting with Planners across the organisation.

Sue's second day was just as jam-packed. Her first visit was to West Bromwich in Sandwell enjoying a tour and an overview of the on-going regeneration of the strategic centre, with a focus on the Regeneration Zones. Sue then finished up at the new Sandwell STEM Centre, a Towns Fund project developed in conjunction with Sandwell College. Her last visit of the trip was to South Staffordshire Council and the award-winning Community Hub, meeting Councillors and members of staff before a fantastic lunch and presentation from them.

A big thanks to all RTPI members and regional colleagues who contributed to making the President's visit such a success, helping to showcase some of the best projects and teams working in the region.



Heidi Smith
RTPI Regional
Co-ordinator for
the West Midlands

Get in touch

Tripwire is the magazine of RTPI West Midlands, produced by our members for our members. The opinions expressed are the views of the individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the RTPI. You can read all of our digital editions published from 2017 to the present on [our website](#).

If you would like to contribute a photo, illustration or article, suggest a theme for future editions or have any ideas for content please email the Editor at tripwirewm@gmail.com.

Contact RTPI West Midlands via email westmidlands@rtpi.org.uk.

You can also follow us on [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#) or see what's going on in the region on our [website](#).



