

Cynllunio

The Journal of RTPI Cymru

Winter 2023



**Grange Hospital wins at Planning
Excellence Awards 2023**

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Gymraeg.

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Front Cover: Grange Hospital. Image by Michael Whitestone

Editorial

This edition of Cynllunio continues the Big Conversation with a report by Neil Harris at Cardiff University on findings from research undertaken this autumn on building capacity in the current system. There is a continuing survey looking for ideas for meeting this. If you have ideas you want to share please do respond by the deadline of 22nd December. There is also a link to resources available to get involved with our Planners& campaign, which aims to overcome some of the misconceptions about planning.

Congratulations to our new bumper list of Chartered Town Planners, it is so good to see so many becoming Chartered.

Congratulations also to BDP who went on from winning at the Wales Planning Excellence Awards to winning their category at the RTPI's Awards for Planning Excellence, announced in November. Congratulations also go to the two entries from Wales who were selected as Finalists: Kew Planning - Small Planning Consultancy of The Year and Caernarfon Island Site entered by Purcell - Award for Excellence in Planning for Heritage and Culture.

We hosted Sue Bridge, RTPI President, in October when she had the opportunity to meet with a number of RTPI members, including at the Autumn Briefing. Thank you to everyone who made her visit a success.

I sign off this edition of Cynllunio by saying farewell, as I move on to a new role with Cardiff Council. I would like to take this opportunity to say a huge thank you to everyone who has supported me over the 16 years I have been Director of RTPI Cymru. The RTPI Director role has been incredibly rewarding and has given me the opportunity to work with so many fantastic people across Wales - and beyond. The next Director will be Mark Hand, who will start on 1st March 2024. Mark is currently Head of Placemaking, Highways and Flooding Monmouthshire County Council, and brings with him over 20 years of experience as a planning practitioner. I wish Mark every success in the role.

*Roisin Willmott,
Editor*

Grange Hospital wins

After winning at the RTPI Cymru Awards for Planning Excellence, the Grange Hospital submitted by BDP, went on to win the Planning Excellence for Health and Well-being category at the 2023 RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence. The winners were announced on 21 November at our national ceremony in London.

BDP's long-term planning strategy adopts a plan-led approach to deliver a state-of-the-art hospital and enable the remodelling of healthcare in the area.



The judges' comments:

"This submission demonstrated a sustained planning-led approach to a complex health project over several years. It is an impressive example of how a long-term planning strategy can provide a high-quality essential medical facility for the local community."

Congratulations to our latest elected Town Planners

Congratulations to our latest members elected in Wales:

- Steffan Baker, Lighthouse Development Consulting Limited
- Victoria Hughes, London Borough of Lambeth
- Sam Jones, Improvement and Development Agency
- Gayle Lister, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority
- Samantha Redfern, Isle of Anglesey County Council
- Nia Roberts, Arup
- Ceiri Rowlands, Vale of Glamorgan Council

(Note those more recently elected will appear in the next edition of Cynllunio).



Employers recognise the high quality of skills and experience that are held by Chartered Town Planners. They know that they can rely upon the designation as a sign of professionalism.

www.rtpi.org.uk/membership/assessment-of-professional-competence/

Have you recently changed your job, address, email or phone number? Make sure your details are up to date by going to 'Login' on the RTPI website so we can stay in contact.

www.rtpi.org.uk/profile

Building Capacity through Collaboration and Change

The planning system in Wales is experiencing a critical lack of resources to deliver on the place-making agenda, and respond to climate and nature emergencies. Neil Harris identifies what planners are doing to make more effective and efficient use of existing resources - and the potential to collaborate and change within the parameters of present resources.

A series of published reports over the past few years paint a disconcerting picture of the planning system in Wales. These reports document recruitment challenges, skills deficits, declining spend in council planning departments, and planning services stretched to the point of risk of failure. The range of issues and the scale of challenge that the planning system in Wales is expected to address nevertheless continues to increase.

This all leads to a situation that Audit Wales in its 2019 report, *The Effectiveness of Local Planning Authorities in Wales*, described as a system “neither ‘fit for the future’ or able to deliver what is needed” (paragraph 2.20). In a more detailed report on Powys County Council’s planning service earlier this year, Audit Wales stated the Council’s planning department “is having to deliver more for less” (2023, p. 4). The constraint on resources is not limited to local planning authorities either – but extends to Welsh Government and the wide range of public bodies and agencies engaged in the planning system in Wales.

There is clearly a need for a better-resourced planning system if the system is to deliver on the economic, social and environmental agenda for Wales. Resources are stretched – not only in planning, but in many other areas too – and the challenges we face in planning for the built and natural environment are not going to go away. So, where does this leave us in advance of securing more resources? We will need to find ways of using our existing resources in more effective and efficient ways – and this is the focus of RTPI Cymru’s report on ‘Building Capacity through Collaboration and Change’.

The report’s title emphasises the importance of a wide range of stakeholders in the planning system in Wales coming together to deliver a more efficient and effective system. This includes sharing experience and knowledge to sustain planners’ skills and abilities, designing more efficient ways of producing information for users of planning services, and potentially developing shared services to enable higher quality inputs to plan-making and decisions.

A key aim in producing the report has been to try and stay positive – to recognise the reality of the resource constraints planners and others are working within, and continue to press for better resourcing, while exploring new and different ways of working. The implementation of the ideas and actions in the report will require political leadership and professional brokerage – and will, of course, require some dedication or diversion of resources. An important message from stakeholders in workshops was that Wales is a small country – and that with appropriate facilitation it should be possible to collaborate to deliver an improved planning system.

You can access the report here - and there is opportunity to continue to get involved in the conversation on making more effective and efficient use of existing resources.

Neil Harris is a Chartered Town Planner and a planning academic in the School of Geography and Planning at Cardiff University.



The key findings of the **desk-based review** include:

- There has been a **significant decline in resources** in the planning system and this has impacted on the capacity of the planning system
- There is a lack of capacity in some local planning authorities due to **difficulties in recruiting and retaining planning staff**
- There are increasing demands of the planning system and an increase in stakeholder expectations – the planning system has been **trying to ‘do more with less’**
- There is a **skills deficit** in some important but specialist areas of planning
- There is a need to improve some local planning authorities **performance data and other workload information** to secure better and more focused use of their resources

Key areas for developing **good practice and identifying solutions** to resource constraints

- **Ensuring quality applications and decisions** – for example, helping landowners and developers bring forward suitable sites for inclusion in Local Development Plans, and supporting applicants and agents to provide good quality information when submitting planning applications
- **Building expertise and capacity** – for example, identifying those areas of specialist expertise that are in limited supply and exploring shared service models to sustain this expertise, as well as building planners' expertise and confidence more generally
- **Communications and information** – including making it easier for users of the planning service to find key information, managing planning enquiries in a more efficient way, and making planning and other data more accessible to the public and external users
- **Support systems and workload management** – for example, using systems that promote more timely and efficient management of staffing and other resources, as well as building better insight into how well planning services are performing
- **Strategy and prioritisation** – including working out what to focus on when resources are under pressure, as well as how planning services can connect with corporate priorities and their wider organisational context

Be part of the conversation...

We want to involve our members and others in a **continuing conversation** about how to make more effective and efficient use of current resources in the planning system in Wales.

We are **looking for interesting and innovative ideas** - from within Wales or elsewhere - that can deliver an efficient and effective planning system. You can participate in the project and **send us your ideas** – simply go to the following link and have your say. We will ask you just **three simple questions** and it will take you no more than a few minutes.

You can access the survey through this link: forms.office.com/e/m3LSQsjhQm

Send us your ideas **by Friday 22nd December 2023** – and we will collate your ideas and report back in early 2024.



**YSGOL AEAF
CYNLLUNIO DIGIDOL** **DIGITAL PLANNING
WINTER SCHOOL**

EICH CYFLE I FYND I'R AFAEL Â CHYNLLUNIO DIGIDOL

Ymunwch â'n Hysgol Aeaf Cynllunio Digidol ddwys ym Mhrifysgol Caerdydd ar **23 a 24 Ionawr** i ddysgu gan arweinwyr yn y maes. Cynhelir y cwrs, a luniwyd ar gyfer gweithwyr proffesiynol ym maes cynllunio cyhoeddus, gan Brifysgol Caerdydd ar y cyd â Sefydliad Cynllunio Trefol Brenhinol (RTPI) Cymru a chaiff ei gydnabod yn DPP cenedlaethol craidd gan y Sefydliad.

GET TO GRIPS WITH DIGITAL PLANNING

Join our intensive Digital Planning Winter School at Cardiff University on **23rd and 24th January** to learn from leaders in the field. Designed for public planning professionals, the course is run by Cardiff University with RTPI Cymru and will be recognised as core national CPD by RTPI.

Addressing the Nature Emergency through the Planning System: Updated National Planning Policy for Chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales

The Minister for Climate Change has written to all heads of planning in Wales to inform them of updated policy for Chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales (PPW).

The Minister continues to drive forward progressive policies on green infrastructure and biodiversity following the challenges laid down by the Global Biodiversity Framework agreed at COP15 and the Welsh Government's own Biodiversity Deep Dive recommendations.

The main changes to policy can be summarised as follows:

Green Infrastructure: stronger emphasis on taking a proactive approach to green infrastructure covering cross boundary considerations, identifying key outputs of green infrastructure assessments, the submission of proportionate green infrastructure statements with planning applications and signposting Building with Nature standards.

Net Benefit for Biodiversity and the Step-wise Approach: further clarity is provided on securing net benefit for biodiversity through the application of the step-wise approach, including the acknowledgement of off-site compensation measures as a last resort, and, the need to consider enhancement and long-term management at each step. The use of the green infrastructure statement as a means of demonstrating the stepwise approach is made explicit. A simplified diagram of the policy approach has been developed (which will be further refined in the consolidated version of PPW12). The importance of strategic collaboration to identify and capture larger scale opportunities for securing a net benefit for biodiversity is recognised.

Protection for Sites of Special Scientific Interest: strengthened approach to the protection of SSSIs, with increased clarity on the position for site management and exemptions for minor development necessary to maintain a 'living landscape'. Other development is considered unacceptable as a matter of principle. Exceptionally, a planned approach may be appropriate where necessary safeguards can be secured through a development plan.

Trees and Woodlands: closer alignment with the stepwise approach, along with promoting new planting as part of development based on securing the right tree in the right place.

The updates will be consolidated in the next version of PPW, version 12. This is due to be published in the coming months.

Welsh Government will continue to work with stakeholders to provide further guidance to support the changes in planning practice which are necessary to implement the policy and embed green infrastructure considerations and the stepwise approach towards securing a net benefit for biodiversity in the planning process.

The full details can be read here: www.gov.wales/addressing-nature-emergency-through-planning-system-update-chapter-6-planning-policy-wales

Jack Pugsley provides a reflection on the changes on the next page.

Infrastructure (Wales) Bill

The Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee laid its report on the general principles of the Bill on 24 November 2023. Details of the Bill and the Committee's consideration can be found here: business.senedd.wales/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=41502

RTPI Cymru submitted its response to the Bill to the Committee and can be read here: www.rtpi.org.uk/media/15367/rtpi-cymru-response-to-the-infrastructure-wales-bill.pdf



Minister for Climate Change publishes biodiversity policy updates for Wales

On 18th October, the Welsh Government announced key policy updates on biodiversity ahead of its publication of edition 12 of Planning Policy Wales. The Welsh Minister for Climate Change, Julie James, published key updates to Chapter 6 of the Government's national planning policy, which are effective immediately. The updates cover how planning policy will address the challenges set out at COP15 with changes relating to green infrastructure, net benefit for biodiversity, protection for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and trees and woodlands.

Although the release of Planning Policy Wales – Edition 12 is not expected until later this year, having consulted on proposed changes in the spring, the Minister chose to finalise and confirm the updated policy with immediate effect. The main changes include a stronger emphasis on taking a proactive approach to green infrastructure. This includes, but is not limited to, a focus on cross-boundary considerations and the submission of green infrastructure statements, proportionate to the scale and nature of the development proposed. In the case of minor developments, green infrastructure statements can consist of a short description and should not be an onerous requirement for applicants.

In line with the policy direction in England, the updated Chapter 6 provides further clarity on securing net benefit for biodiversity. This will be through both applying the step-wise approach and the Diversity, Extent, Condition, Connectivity, and Aspects of ecosystem resilience (DECCA) framework. Together, these are the means of demonstrating the steps which have been taken towards securing a net benefit for biodiversity. Crucially, the updated policy states that 'where adverse effects on biodiversity and ecosystem resilience cannot be avoided, minimised or mitigated / restored, and as a last resort compensated for', it will be necessary to refuse planning permission'. This places the onus on Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) and applicants to ensure that biodiversity and ecosystem resilience considerations are taken into account early on in plan-making and formulation of development proposals, respectively.

Other notable changes to the policy include strengthened protection for SSSIs and closer alignment with the step-wise approach with regard to trees and woodlands. Importantly, the Welsh Government is placing a requirement for LPAs to notify the Welsh Minister where they are minded to grant planning permission against the advice of Natural Resources Wales. The revised policy also recognises that solutions for net benefits may not necessarily fall in the administrative boundary where a planning application is lodged, encouraging cross-boundary dialogue, regional co-operation and co-ordinated approaches on a spatial scale.

Jack Pugsley thinks that: "The decision to publish this new policy now signals the Welsh Government's continued commitment to respond to the nature emergency they declared in 2021. The introduction of terms such as creative and innovative in delivering biodiversity net benefit gives applicants the latitude to create site and project specific enhancements."

Jack Pugsley is Associate Director at Savills



It takes Planners &

Building on the Big Conversation, on World Town Planning Day in November, the RTPI launched its campaign to tackle the misconceptions about planning and celebrate the vital role that planners play as partners in our planning system.

It's a campaign you can join in with too - information on how to get involved can be found here: www.planningyourworld.org.uk/get-involved/



RTPI President's Visit to Wales

The RTPI President, Sue Bridge, visited Wales in October. Read below her reflections from her two day visit.

Day 1 of my visit to Wales and a glorious day. First - off to Pontypridd, home of the Eisteddfod 2024, to meet the planners from Rhondda Cynon Taf council visiting the town centre regeneration projects. The regeneration started with the reclamation and renewal of the National Lido in Ynysangharad War Memorial Park. This is a great example of how interventions by the local authority in the right place at the right time can result in a step change to the vitality and viability of a town centre. Many thanks to Simon Gale Emma Halford Jim Bailey Giles Howard and Martine Morgan-Evans.



Then off to a complete contrast in Newport to the Maindee Triangle to see the commended (in the RTPI Cymru Planning Awards for Excellence) community led regeneration scheme. A small but highly significant improvement scheme to turn a derelict former public toilet building and open area to a cafe and community garden in a deprived area of the town. Thank you John Hallam, Alison Starling and your wonderful team of volunteers.

Yes, the sky was really that blue!

Day 2 of my visit to Wales was a complete contrast to the previous day. First a presentation by Cardiff University Neil Harris and Matluba Khan. We frequently worry that we are not reaching young people and involving them in the future planning of their locality. This research project, Grangetown A place to Grow Up In, shows us one way of doing this, through structured play and age appropriate engagement. Important lesson for the adults - listen.

Then onto RTPI Cymru Autumn Briefing, hearing about some of the projects in the RTPI Cymru Awards for Planning Excellence including Maindee Triangle which I saw the day before. We also welcomed the new Chartered members 2023 and I wish you every success in your chosen profession.

Events like the autumn briefing would not be possible without sponsors, thank you C2J ARCHITECTS & PLANNERS for your support.



Aarhus Convention

The Royal Town Planning Institute in Wales (RTPI Cymru) marks the 25th anniversary of the Aarhus Convention, a ground-breaking international treaty that has played a pivotal role in promoting environmental democracy worldwide. As RTPI Cymru reflects on the quarter-century journey since the convention's inception, it acknowledges the profound impact the Aarhus Convention has had on shaping planning practices, fostering community engagement, and advancing sustainable development.

The Aarhus Convention, formally known as the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making, and Environmental Justice, is an important international treaty that came out of Rio The Earth Summit came into existence in 1992. Named in Denmark where it was adopted, the Convention seeks to promote environmental democracy by ensuring public access to information, participation in the decision-making process and opportunity having to challenge decisions that affect the environment.

The Convention recognizes the fundamental right of individuals to access environmental information held by public authorities. These policies empower citizens to inform the state of their environment, the actions of government agencies, and the impact that certain activities may have on the environment is the duty of government to be transparent and timely for providing a culture of environmental awareness.

Aarhus places great emphasis on public participation in environmental decision-making. It encourages governments to involve citizens in decisions that may affect the environment, allowing citizens to voice their concerns, ideas and knowledge. Citizen participation is viewed as key to achieving sustainable development and ensuring that decisions reflect the diverse perspectives of affected communities.

The treaty guarantees citizens the right to challenge decisions that violate environmental laws. This accomplishment of justice empowers individuals and NGOs to hold public officials accountable for their environmental actions. The legal framework provided by the Convention ensures that citizens have effective remedies for violations of environmental laws.

The Aarhus Convention received widespread international recognition, with more than 45 countries and the European Union becoming parties to the Convention has influenced national laws and policies, leading to global progress toward environmental governance a transparency and participation are encouraged.

One of the notable impacts of the Aarhus Convention is its influence on the development of the Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. This principle, inspired by the Aarhus Convention, also emphasizes access to information, public participation, and access to justice in environmental matters.

The Aarhus Convention stands as a beacon of environmental democracy, enabling citizens to actively participate in decisions that affect the planet. Through transparency, public participation and access to justice, the Alliance contributes to building sustainable and resilient global communities. As the world grapples with complex environmental challenges, the principles outlined in the Aarhus Convention continue to be a vital guide towards a more equitable and environmentally conscious future.

Sion Mainwaring, RTPI Cymru Policy Assistant



Inaugural Annual Professor Tony Hall lecture 2023

The inaugural Professor Tony Hall lecture was held in November 2023, at the Council Chamber, Glamorgan Building Cardiff by Catherine Mealing-Jones, Chief Executive of Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority. The lecture was entitled "Saving the world through planning – a perspective from Bannau Brycheiniog National Park" and gave a wide perspective on the 'Future Bannau Thinking', and how the National Park as stewards of an evolving landscape are managing it for the future. If you would like to see a recording of the lecture, please e-mail wales@rtpi.org.uk

Right: (left to right) Catherine Mealing-Jones and Victoria Hills, RTPI Chief Executive



Autumn Briefing

The RTPI Cymru Autumn Briefing was held on 26th October at Cornerstone in Cardiff and was attended by RTPI President, Sue Bridge, as part of her visit to Wales. Our thanks to C2J Architects and Town Planners for their sponsorship of the event.

The Autumn Briefing incorporated presentations from past RTPI Cymru Award winners, sharing experiences from projects delivering public infrastructure and included Judith Jones on the Merthyr Tydfil Transport Interchange, South Point School by Marcus Goldsworthy and Charlotte Raine from the Vale of Glamorgan Council, Martin Jones of BDP shared details of the Grange Hospital in Cwmbran and John Hallam and Alison Starling, Maindee Unlimited spoke on Maindee Triangle in Newport.

The Autumn Briefing was also the opportunity to Award the student prize (see below) and to welcome the newly Chartered and Associate Members to the Institute.



RTPI Cymru Awards for Academic Excellence

Each year RTPI Cymru awards two Prizes for Academic Excellence for excellence in examinations and coursework in the first year of the two undergraduate RTPI accredited planning courses at Cardiff University.

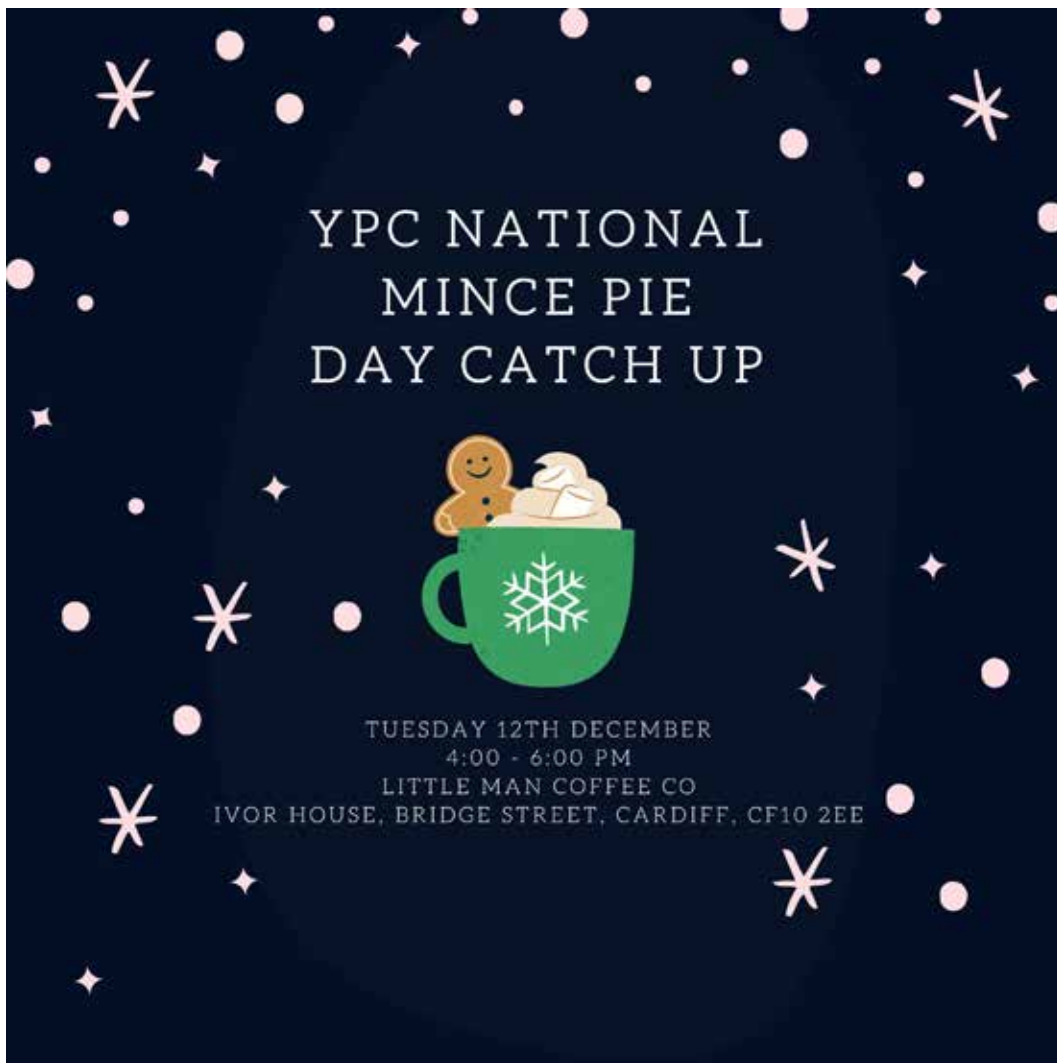
In 2023 the Awards were made to Nadia Ishmael (pictured right) in the BSc in Urban Planning and Development at the School of Geography and Planning, and Samuel Whitehead in the BSc in Urban Planning and Development.

Right: (left to right) Nadia Ishmael, Sue Bridge, RTPI President and Joe Ayoubkhani, RTPI Cymru Chair



Autumn Briefing





RTPI Young Planners Cymru have had a busy few months!

In September we hosted a wine tasting evening at Nighthawks. The event was a sell out and saw 25 delegates enjoy an evening sampling wines from across the world paired with a delicious selection of cheeses.

A CPD event was held at Newport Market in November, on one of the wettest and windiest days of the year! The CPD event focussed on Newport Market (the largest indoor market in Europe!) and gave an in depth and existing review of the project, focussing on lessons learnt, planning considerations and future regeneration of the City. Speakers included individuals from Asbri Planning, Newport City Council, Loft Co, EWA and Austin Partnership.

Our next event is on Tuesday 12th December (National Mince Pie Day!!) where we will be celebrating Christmas with mince pies, mulled wine and plenty of conversations with new and old faces. Please do join us at Little Man Coffee Co in Cardiff from 4pm onwards.

Following on from this, our AGM will be held on Thursday 11th January at the RTPI Cymru offices. Please do come along if you are keen to understand more about RTPI YPC and how you can get involved/ secure a place on the Committee. If anyone would like to informally discuss this then please do contact Imogen at iholgate@hallamland.co.uk

