



THE NORTH WEST PLANNING YEAR
A REVIEW OF
2023

Mayfield Park



RTPI North West
Royal Town Planning Institute

rtpi.org/uk/northwest

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Chair's Review of the Year

During this time, the RTPI North West volunteers have been busy supporting members across the region. We have had a jam-packed year of social activities and CPD events across the North West, with round tables, talks, networking events and so much more. In the following pages we'll delve into the highlights of the year, celebrate the accomplishments of the North West's amazing planning community, express our gratitude to the outstanding volunteers who made it all possible, as well as set the stage for what's to come in 2024.

A constant throughout this year has been engaging with our wonderful members. We have had great discussions with members from across the region coming together for a range of events. The year started off where I had the pleasure of chairing two round table discussions in January with planners from across the North West coming together to share views as part of the RTPI's response to the latest NPPF consultation.

Later in June, Keiran Blaydes, immediate past Chair and LPA Engage lead, chaired a roundtable to explore challenges facing local planning authorities and to help identify potential areas for where the RTPI can provide further support.

Throughout the year, we have also given talks at both Liverpool and Manchester Universities, attended local school careers fairs and have continued to run our Coffee with a Planner initiative to help students and those early in their professional careers to build their professional networks.



Welcome to our 2023 Annual Review!

As I look back and reflect on what a phenomenal year it has been, I can't believe how fast these past twelve months have flown by! 2023 has been a pivotal year for everyone within the planning profession; with the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act now law, exploring how we can deliver Biodiversity Net Gain and tackling nutrient neutrality, to name only a few of the challenges and opportunities being added to the already complex planning landscape this year.

One of the most unforgettable moments of the year for me was the North West's Annual Dinner at the Kimpton Clocktower Hotel. It was an amazing night filled with laughter and insightful conversations. It was great to speak with so many friends across the North West – as well as celebrating the regional award winners! It was, without a doubt, a personal and professional highlight for me and an evening I will always remember fondly.

Another exceptional moment of 2023 was the President's visit in September to the Isle of Man. It has been a few years since the President has visited this part of the region and we are keen to continue working closely with the planners living and working on the Isle of Man in the future! Following an early morning flight from Liverpool, we were lucky enough to explore regeneration projects in Castletown, discover heritage conservation work in Douglas, tour the Tynwald building (the oldest continuous parliament in the world) and visit the Laxey Wheel! The following day, we were fortunate enough to attend the Isle of Man Government Conference. This conference was a valuable opportunity to learn more about the Island's future and it was a privilege to listen to Sue speak about the crucial role of the planning profession.

I would like to take a moment to share my thanks and gratitude to the volunteers on the Regional Activities Committee, the Regional Management Board and Bev Watson – our amazing regional co-ordinator. Without your dedication, enthusiasm and hard work, all of the phenomenal events and work we've achieved this year would simply not be possible without you all!



It gives me immense pleasure to hand over both the metaphorical reins and the actual medal to our incoming Chair, **Matt Dugdale**. I have every confidence that he will be an exceptional Chair, bringing years of his volunteering experience with the RTPI and innovative ideas to the role. I look forward to seeing what Matt accomplishes during his year!

In closing, I hope you enjoy reading this review! For me, 2023 has been an amazing year, it has been an honour to serve as your Chair and I am so grateful for the experiences this role has given me. As we move into the new year, I am excited thinking about the opportunities that lie ahead for planners, and together, I am sure we will continue to make a positive impact across the North West.

Emily Kitching Bower
RTPI NW Chair 2023

Thank you to this year's...

Sponsors:

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- Preston City Council
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- Fairhurst Design Group
- University of Liverpool
- University of Manchester
- Pinsent Masons
- Shoosmiths
- Liverpool City Region Combined Authority
- DLA Piper
- CMS
- Profolk

Regional Life

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In this section we look at what the North West Region, its planners and volunteers, have achieved in developing and rewarding, best practice in 2023

RTPI North West Awards for Planning Excellence 2023

Testament to the increasing popularity of our prestigious Regional Awards, we received a record number of 28 entries in 2023 (up from 18 in 2022).

Following a rigorous assessment process, a total of 16 entries were shortlisted across the following categories:

- ★ Excellence in Plan Making Practice
- ★ Excellence in Planning for Communities
- ★ Excellence in Planning for Health and Wellbeing
- ★ Excellence in Planning for Heritage and Culture
- ★ Excellence in Planning for a Successful Economy
- ★ Excellence in Planning for the Natural Environment
- ★ Planning Authority of the Year
- ★ Small Planning Consultancy of the Year
- ★ Young Planner of the Year

The 'Small Planning Consultancy' and 'Young Planner' categories were the most hotly contested this year with five entries each, reflecting the high quality and diversity of our excellent small practices and young professionals operating across our region.



Owing to the sheer number of entries, two minibuses were despatched on 2 May to transport our judges to the site visits; one travelling around Merseyside and Greater Manchester, while the other ventured up to Preston via Warrington, Chester and Haydock. Virtual interviews were held on 3 May (via MS Teams).

Our fantastic judging panel included representatives from across the public and private sectors:

- **Matt Dugdale** Chair; Richborough
- **Ben Vickers** Self Employed/South Ribble Borough Council
- **Chris Findley** Retired
- **Hannah Carney** Liverpool City Council
- **Hannah Payne** Cheshire Constabulary
- **Holly Froggatt** Homes England
- **Jade Corcoran** Salford City Council
- **Jake Crompton** Stonebond
- **James Warrington** WSP
- **Jo Gregory** Urban Imprint
- **Joanne Harding** HBF
- **John Copestake** Freelance Consultant to the Public Sector/Tutor at Manchester School of Architecture
- **Kathryn Brindley** Halton Council
- **Kathryn Donnelly** Arup
- **Melanie Lamb** Wigan Council
- **Nia Borse** Fisher German
- **Paul Shuker** LSH
- **Ross Sutherland** GMCA

★ WINNER

Excellence in Plan Making Practice

Living Lakes – Your Local Plan 2020-2035 (submitted by Lake District NPA)

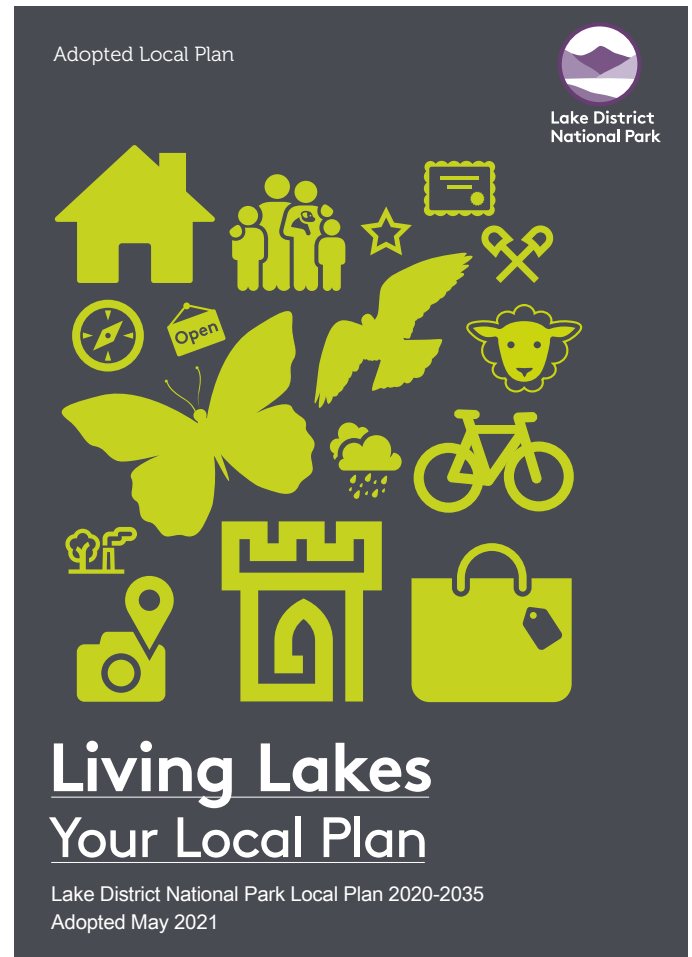
The winners were announced at our Annual Dinner on 23 June (at the Kimpton Clocktower, Manchester), and kindly sponsored by Lambert Smith Hampton.

Living Lakes – Your Local Plan 2020-2035 (adopted in May 2021) provides strategic planning policies and land allocations for the Lake District. The Plan enables decisions on planning applications to be made with a high degree of predictability and efficiency. It succeeded in delivering the brief to establish a concise and easy to understand suite of strategic policies which received high levels of public support. A creative and innovative online and in person public consultation, supported by a social media campaign, drew consultation responses from more than 2,700 people (equivalent to seven percent of the area's population) generating over 4,600 responses.

“The judges were impressed by the awareness raising, consultation and community engagement techniques that the National Park Authority chose to use as part of the preparation of Living Lakes – Your Local Plan 2020-2035.

The document is considered to be leading planning practice through the use of innovative and creative approaches to the development of planning policy particularly around establishing a concise and easy to understand suite of policies, improving inclusivity, promoting feedback from young people, and around partnership working. The judges also considered that Living Lakes provided good examples of policy interventions such as local occupancy and energy reduction and took full consideration of the planning balance required when working in a National Park.

Overall, a worthy winner of this category and the whole team are to be congratulated.”



★ Commended

Excellence in Planning for Communities - Large Schemes of 50 or more
Woodford Garden Village (submitted by Lichfields)

Woodford Garden Village ('WGV') in Stockport offers a vibrant, diverse community providing a range of opportunities including employment and community facilities, which sit alongside a mix of housing types and tenures. Through the adoption of the traditional Garden Village principles, an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable community has been created for both the existing residents of Woodford and the new residents of WGV.



★ Commended

Excellence in Planning for Communities - Small Schemes of 50 or less
Richmond Street, Manchester (submitted by Watch This Space)

This compact gritty brownfield site has been transformed. Formerly a car park and bin store area, the redevelopment has delivered much needed housing in the city centre; drastically improved the streetscene and the setting of nearby heritage assets; whilst improving safety on this back street through natural surveillance. The modern design uses sympathetic materials and re-establishes the building line lost in the 1950s with the removal of a 19th Century terrace. Bringing city living back into central parts of Manchester also helps to support vibrancy of the area and the economy (outside of the working week and night-time economy).



★ WINNER

Excellence in Planning for Health and Wellbeing and Excellence in Planning for the Natural Environment **Mayfield Park (submitted by Deloitte)**

Provision of Planning Consultancy services by Deloitte and landscape masterplanning by SEW in the delivery of the Mayfield Park, Manchester city centre's first new public park in more than 100 years. Mayfield Park is a leading example of successful regeneration of brownfield land to create a sustainable, accessible space which promotes health and wellbeing improves the natural environment through enhancement.

“The judges were very impressed with what is an exemplary and iconic scheme for Manchester city centre. The submission scored very highly against the majority of the judging criteria as a result of the inclusivity and sustainability-led approach to planning as well as the commitment to maximising accessibility and safety to benefit as many users of the space as possible.

The submission clearly demonstrated the benefits of having stable, long-term leadership to ensure that key stakeholders are aligned in the delivery of a major development project and highlighted how a planner-led team in the application process were multi-faceted and significant to its success. The entry also demonstrated strong links to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, working to existing constraints (such as topography) and the sustainable re-use of materials alongside new landscaping features to embed resilience to climate change and reduce carbon emissions. Given that the children of today will be the future inhabitants of such a space, the inclusion of children in the community engagement exercise, in particular the ‘Mayfield Classroom’ forum to discuss and shape the proposals, demonstrated an innovative approach to engagement and is a concept that could be adopted in other developments.



Overall, the judges recognised the scheme displays the highest levels of community engagement, leadership and team working to transform a large brownfield site with numerous constraints into a highly sustainable public park – the first of its kind in the city centre for over 100 years which has the potential to leave a lasting legacy and benefit generations to come. Indeed, the scheme is already delivering, and will continue to deliver, significant public benefits for inhabitants and visitors of the city by increasing access to open space, promoting city centre living, encouraging healthy and active lifestyles and better connection with the natural environment in an urban context. A deserving winner in both the Health and Wellbeing and the Natural Environment categories.

Congratulations to all involved.”

★ WINNER

Excellence in Planning for Heritage and Culture

Shakespeare North Playhouse (submitted by Knowsley Council)

A ten-year vision to deliver a world class cultural venue in the small market town of Prescot and showcase the town's fascinating, but little known, connections with William Shakespeare became a reality thanks to a collaboration between Knowsley Council and Shakespeare North Trust. This partnership's shared vision and infectious enthusiasm for this project secured the support of Dame Judi Dench and Dame Glenda Jackson (to name just a few!). Now the Shakespeare North Playhouse is attracting thousands of people into Prescot, providing an engaging cultural programme, creating hundreds of jobs and contributing a major boost to the local economy.

"It is difficult to put into words just how impressed the judges were by this entry; a problem Shakespeare himself thankfully did not have. Not only is the project truly exemplary, but the submission itself is also exceptionally well written and scored very highly against all criteria. This was surpassed only by the site visit – the strong leadership and vision from the various partners involved shone through. The only regret the judges had was that they were unable to see a performance – but they look forward attending a live event soon.

The judges were extremely fortunate to get a VIP backstage tour of this fantastic building. It was fascinating to hear the inspiration for bringing a Shakespeare theatre to the north of England and to experience first-hand the replica of Henry VIII's Cockpit-in-Court and Inigo Jones' designs. The space and the craftsmanship in the joinery is a sight to behold; the ability to flexibly transform the theatre between two seating and stage formats is ingenious. The incorporation of the Sir Ken Dodd Performance Garden is a nice touch and a fitting tribute to his career and contribution to the project. However, Shakespeare North Playhouse is much more than a theatre; it is the beating heart of the community.

It is a remarkable multi-purpose and agile building, with various spaces and meeting places for a wide variety of users. It is both a magnet and a catalyst for the regeneration of the Prescot, helping to drive footfall and spend in the town centre.

Crucially, planning and the planners played an integral role in the delivery of this project. A decade in the making, it is a genuine plan-led scheme, enshrined in an SPD and secured through subsequent applications. Thankfully the final built out scheme retained many of the original design features and weathered the value engineering phase many projects suffer from. It is a true asset to the people of Knowsley, the wider North West, and the whole performing arts sector.

**A truly outstanding winner of this category.
Congratulations to all involved."**



★ WINNER

Excellence in Planning for a Successful Economy

University of Central Lancashire Student Centre & University Square, Preston (submitted by University of Central Lancashire)

The University of Central Lancashire ('UCLAN') transformed its physical linkage with the City of Preston, providing a 'front door' to the University and a safe community space for students, staff and residents. The conception, planning and delivery of the project was a triumph in large-scale partnership working which involved many overlapping and moving elements, and unique complexities, all tackled innovatively, purposefully and professionally by the University, Lancashire County Council ('LCC') and Preston City Council ('PCC'), with support from many more partners besides. Over 2 million working hours were committed to delivering this ground-breaking programme to regenerate an area of over 10,000 sqm, with a value of more than £80m.

"The judges recognise UCLAN's investment in an out-dated student facility has made a significant fiscal, educational and social contribution to the third city of the North West of England. The project has help re-pivot the city centre and has led to significant and further investment as part of an improved place agenda that is re-defining a previously car borne built environment to a people orientated city centre. The introduced new educational community and teaching buildings have created a striking flagship architectural response to an area previously defined by poor highway infrastructure, and inferior building structures, with new live event space, retained cultural building, and place sharing areas where people can congregate in a safe, animated, and welcoming built environment.



The building is undeniably designed to respond to energy efficiency and carbon removal whilst retaining design integrity and aesthetic interest.

The vision for the scheme was spearheaded by a clear planning and development vision that was developed through effective leadership by UCLAN, PCC and LCC that has created transformational change at this important built part of the city. The vision narrative was clearly communicated through effective public and community engagement, an exemplar outreach programme and positive peer review mechanism throughout all development stages. The social value philosophy delivered through the construction process was also ahead of its time.

The physical changes to this part of city have led to increased confidence in the wider city centre in recent years, which is now experiencing improved investment as part of its city centre masterplan mandate. This is centred on reducing the need to travel by private vehicle through the city centre, reduction in road space and improved place and active travel, these collectively bring significant environmental and climate change benefits. The UCLAN investment was interventional beyond their traditional further educational remit and their ambitions has led to the comprehensive and transformational repurposing and regeneration of key gateway location. The vision has led to a wider impetus confronting a wider and complex political, social and economic agenda, such as contributing to the delivery of Northern Powerhouse, Levelling Up Agenda and Future High Street initiatives which all seek to create a successive and resilient economy.

A worthy winner of this category - congratulations to all involved."



★ Commended

Excellence in Planning
for a Successful Economy

**Time Square (submitted by
Warrington Borough Council)**



Time Square is a new £142 million mixed-use scheme that has revitalised Warrington Town Centre. This fantastic new scheme has created a unique family-friendly shopping, restaurant and leisure/cinema experience, including a modern contemporary home for Warrington's famous market, and modern centralised office accommodation for the local authority. The multi-award-winning market provides Warrington with more than 50 independent traders selling a wide range of fresh food, home-made goods and services. You will also find the fantastic Cookhouse who provide a huge variety of hot and cold dishes alongside two independent bars.

★ Commended

Excellence in Planning
for a Successful Economy

**Chester Market (submitted by
Cheshire West and Chester Council)**



After many years of planning, Chester's new Market in the heart of the city's historic core only opened in November 2022 yet is already transforming the city centre with over 860,000 visits since opening; and has been the most significant development in Chester for over 40 years. Given Chester's history, much consultation, care and planning went into protecting the archaeology of the site, which was once one of the largest Roman fortresses in Britain. Despite finding over 10,000 Roman artefacts, the works disturbed less than 3% of the remains, with the buildings designed to 'float' above the archaeology.

★ WINNER

Planning Authority of the Year Sefton Council

The planning service at Sefton is underpinned by shared core values which motivate staff to go above and beyond.

Through transformational leadership they responded uniquely to the challenges of Covid. The service has developed highly effective partnership working with agents, politicians and other stakeholders, and is willing to take risks. The service constantly looks for new ways to respond to the needs of its customers whilst ensuring it is creating great places to live. The planning service is at the forefront of the Council's regeneration agenda and is highly respected both within the Council and in the Liverpool City Region.

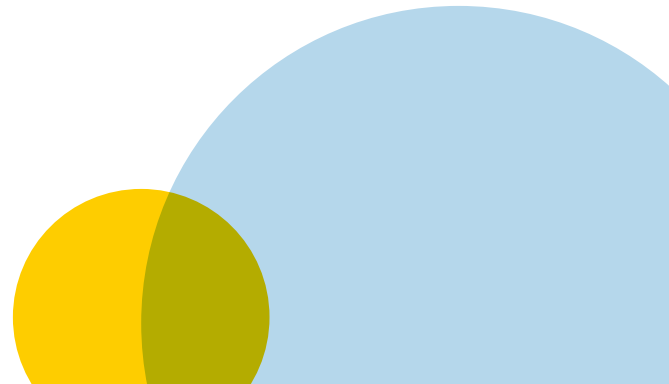
“The judges were impressed by the range of special measures adopted to respond to the pandemic and support the economic recovery of the Borough. Especially given Sefton were able to successfully balance all of this while consistently delivering an excellent planning service and despite being under-resourced as a department. These are clear traits of a proactive and responsive local planning authority and are reflected by the positive feedback from customers.

The decision to bid for the first phase of the National Design Code Pilot was a positive step to address good design in an area with viability constraints; an issue that is a significant challenge for regeneration schemes. The judges were interested to hear the findings from the Pilot are already influencing pre-application discussions and they look forward to seeing them reflected in the Area Action Plan for Bootle. The judges were also impressed that Sefton Council have factored in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion into their everyday processes and working environment. Its focus on mental health is embedded in the organisation's work culture.



Overall, Sefton Council are a good example of how local planning authorities can be flexible and proactive when operating in a constrained environment. The RTPI North West would be delighted for Sefton to share their experiences and approaches with other local planning authorities, as a good example for others to follow.

Very well done Sefton, and congratulations on your Award.”



★ WINNER

Small Planning Consultancy of the Year **P4 Planning**



P4 Planning provides proactive, pragmatic advice to help developers, housebuilders and landowners navigate the complex town planning system. The team offers fresh thinking and a strategic outlook, informed by a robust understanding of our ever-changing planning system, in order to achieve their clients' goals and P4's vision of making better places.

Projects range from complex Green Belt sites, large-scale industrial and logistics proposals and detailed asset management. P4 also has a particular focus on advising charitable and educational establishments.

"The judges are delighted to announce that the 'Small Planning Consultancy of the Year' category winner for 2023 is P4 Planning and what a worthy winner!

P4 Planning is a small consultancy with big vision and a strong commitment to encouraging and nurturing members of the team. It doesn't stop there; that support extends to clients and those entering a career in planning. Professionalism, personability and pragmatism run through this submission and an imaginative and tenacious approach was clear in the varied and complex projects showcased. The commitment of P4 Planning to sound principles of good planning and an inclusive operation is impressive and highlighted in their dedication to unique solutions bespoke to the needs of their clients. The company foster strong links with the RTPI and planning educators through numerous voluntary activities and contributions. It was this prioritising of and investment in people (and planners) that particularly stood out and has made them extremely deserving of the top spot this year.

Congratulations to P4 Planning, and we wish the whole team continued success in all their endeavours. We would also like to invite a representative from P4 to become involved in the RTPI North West by joining the Regional Activities Committee and/or the Young Planners Committee and to present at future CPD sessions, so that they can help shape the profession from within and inspire the next generation of future planners."

★ Commended

Small Planning Consultancy of the Year **Hive Land & Planning**

Hive Land & Planning (Hive) is a consultancy with an approachable 'can-do' attitude and a firmly held belief that the sum of all of its efforts is better through partnership and collaboration.

Hive offers a planning and surveying consultancy service and the team has experience of working for both public and private sector clients on a variety of development-related instructions across most sectors including Residential (both strategic and immediate land), Industrial and Logistics, Office, Energy, Retail and Leisure, Corporate and Mixed-Use schemes.

Encouraging career progression, CPD and work/life balance are at the heart of Hive's core values.



★ WINNER

Young Planner of the Year

Jo Rogers (Ethical Partnership)

Jo is a chartered planner with a passion for combining academia, equity in planning and specialist knowledge to create better outcomes for all of society. Her natural flair for communications enables better participation in planning through demystifying jargon and processes. She is committed to peer mentoring within her team and to inspiring emerging planners through her visiting lecturer role. She has shadowed the Office of Health Improvement and Disparities and was a 2022 Planner Woman of Influence. She juggles all of this while participating fully in her local community, hosting two Homes for Ukraine scheme guests and being a mum.



“The judges found Jo to be a unique candidate. She combines her planning consultancy role with being a visiting Lecturer at Newcastle University, where she teaches on modules such as Planning Ethics, Green Infrastructure and Planning Sustainability. Within the ‘day job’, Jo leads on complex planning projects including multi-million-pound transport and rail infrastructure developments which sees her use her knowledge of planning legislation to enable these major schemes to be developed on the ground.

Jo is a fantastic role model for planning professionals, demonstrating not only ability within her profession but beyond this within education, volunteering and charity work. The judges admired Jo’s commitment to communities; she has given hours of her own time to charities and faith groups to allow them to understand their opportunities with their land and facilities through the planning process.

She plays a key role in CPD sessions and participates in the RTPI Chief Planner of Tomorrow Initiative showcasing her absolute commitment to not only professional development personally, but that of others within the planning industry. The enthusiasm of the planning profession and the industry as a whole shone through during her interview. Her dual role as a lecturer and a planning consultant makes her an exceptional advocate in planning. She is clearly dedicated to improving places through planning and is equally dedicated to the profession, inspiring the next generation.

Jo is an exceptional Young Planner of the Year 2023, and we wish her continued success.”

★ Commended

Young Planner of the Year

Dominic Holding (Lichfields)



Dominic is an enthusiastic individual who has gained a thorough understanding of the planning system from working on an impressive range of challenging projects. Dominic has become particularly enthusiastic for regeneration and the benefits this can bring, including the need to conserve and enhance the historic environment. He uses his specialist expertise in heritage-led planning to bring forward challenging developments that protect and secure the future of heritage assets. Dominic is also a compassionate individual who generously gives his time to support the development and wellbeing of other young professionals, as well as supporting the wider planning profession.

★ WINNER

Best in Region

Shakespeare North Playhouse (submitted by Knowsley Council)

2023 saw some truly outstanding plans, projects and people of the very highest calibre. However, after much deliberation, our judges had to ask, “To be, or not to be? That is the Question”.

*And so, we are delighted to announce **Shakespeare North Playhouse** as overall winner of the ‘Best in Region’ award, presented by Victoria Hills, Chief Executive of the RTPI.*

Congratulations to everyone involved.

RTPI NW Awards Task Group Leader Matt Dugdale, commented:

“The North West really has some of the best planners in the country, as evidenced by the exceptional achievements celebrated in our awards. I would like to thank everyone who made a submission, and of course our judges who volunteered their own time to assess a record number of entries this year. My congratulations go out to everyone who received an award or a commendation.

In addition, I’m ecstatic to hear that the region celebrated further success at the national RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence in London on 21 November 2023, with Shakespeare North Playhouse (submitted by Knowsley Council) winning the Heritage and Culture category and Mayfield Park (submitted by Deloitte) for winning the Natural Environment category, as well as picking up the overall award; the highly coveted Silver Jubilee Cup. These are truly amazing feats by our members, and I hope it helps inspire others to achieve success in future years.”



**The RTPI North West
thanks Lambert Smith
Hampton for sponsoring
this year’s awards.**

**Lambert
Smith
Hampton**

Education, Careers and Mentoring Task Group 2023

It's been a challenging yet fulfilling year for the Education, Careers and Mentoring Task group, as members have prioritised broadening the reach of our engagement events to a larger audience throughout the region. Ambassadors have continued to attend events in educational facilities and communities throughout the region, in places where we have previously established links, as well as other locations that were recognised as under-represented. It is hoped that this type of outreach and engagement will help us set the foundations of a stronger network regionally and assist in meeting emerging guidance from the institute, supporting our aspirations in relation to the BALANCE (Build A Legacy and New Community Equality) project.

Feedback from events that have been attended this year have shown clear misinterpretations of planning as a profession. Participation in relevant career events has shown that many attendees do not fully appreciate the diversity of the career options within planning, with most expecting a career in planning to primarily be based around development management. This has led the group to identify and prioritise certain resources to provide greater understanding around the options and skills that planning as a career can provide. Taking this information into consideration the group are now also looking to make our offering at these events more engaging as well as providing clearer supportive material and information. The more events that our volunteers attend, the greater the understanding we are building around the way in which our profession is perceived. This is helping us develop better resources that will better equip our ambassadors at future events.



University of Liverpool and University of Manchester Engagement

As identified in last year's review, the task group also wished to build on the strong relationships that had developed with the accredited planning schools within the region and seek to further engage directly with the students. As a consequence, we have seen more Ambassadors supporting lectures and presentations at both University of Liverpool and the University of Manchester than ever before. By the end of 2023, our volunteers will have attended numerous events with undergraduate and postgraduate cohorts at both planning schools. This included a presentation from our own regional Chair and former representative of the task group, Emily Kitching Bower, who presented to postgraduate students at the University of Manchester in September.

To date, these events have been very well received by the academic staff and all involved, who have found this an incredibly valuable process, with students seen to be incredibly engaged and very forthcoming with questions about the RTPI, membership and their future career.

One other project that has flourished and exceeded our expectations this year is our involvement in the undergraduate assessed task at the University of Liverpool. Supported by the University's careers team, we have been involved in a planning based career module aimed at first year students.

This provided an opportunity for our ambassadors to work alongside representatives of the Young Planners to introduce the RTPI and present a lecture where we set a challenge for the students, relating to sustainability policy within the city region. The outcomes of this work were then assessed by the academic department via a group presentation and a logbook which was submitted a few weeks later. Fortunately, this was so well-received that the task group are already working with the university on this year's project, which is expected to be presented to the students in early 2024.

Further to the above, in the new year, we are also looking to support the region's Young Planners by attending events at relatable courses at the University of Salford and Manchester Metropolitan University. Both of which have shown a keenness to develop a closer relationship with the institute. It is hoped that this type of engagement will provide the opportunity to inform their students of the membership options and support that the institute offers.

Agent Plan-It

Although, we have scaled back our engagement at primary schools within the region, predominantly as a consequence of resources, we are still finding ways to promote the profession at this level. The Agent Plan-it comic, is one of these options that we have utilised. This magazine allows readers to follow the character Anna, as she discovers important issues that affect the environment and the places around them. The comic provides challenges, allows the student to build their own town and offers them a history of planning, as well as offering information about planning as a career.

This year the task group has managed to further distribute this valuable resource at careers events throughout the region, as well as within School library's – such as the one pictured at Springfield Primary School in Sale.

Should you wish to view the comic yourself or have an idea of any schools that may wish to take some copies, please feel free to get in touch. Electronic versions of these resources are also available online as well <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/become-a-planner/resources-for-teachers/agent-plan-it/>





Acknowledgements

The task group would like to use this opportunity to extend our thanks to the volunteers and our Ambassadors that have supported the task-group during the last twelve months; attending careers events and presenting at various schools throughout the region. It is also great to acknowledge and thank the judges of the Moss Madden Awards: Georgina Blackburn and Ben Vickers for their continued support and willingness to be involved in the awards.

Could you be an Ambassador?

The Ambassador group has worked tirelessly this year and attended a variety of events throughout the region. However, we are still always looking for RTPI members to volunteer themselves and become an Ambassador. As part of the institutions Future Planners initiative, Ambassadors will be asked to attend educational events, such as careers fairs, to work alongside teaching staff and promote the profession of planning.

If you would like to represent the RTPI and are comfortable talking about your career in planning, then please get in touch **beverley.watson@rtpi.org.uk** These roles can be extremely rewarding and offer you the opportunity to provide an insight into your day to day job to students who may not have even considered or heard of planning before.

Moss Madden Awards

Following on from a comprehensive assessment from the judging panel, the region's education task group is now delighted to take this opportunity to announce the winners of the Postgraduate Moss Madden Award for 2023:

★ WINNER

University of Manchester

Ryan Finnigan

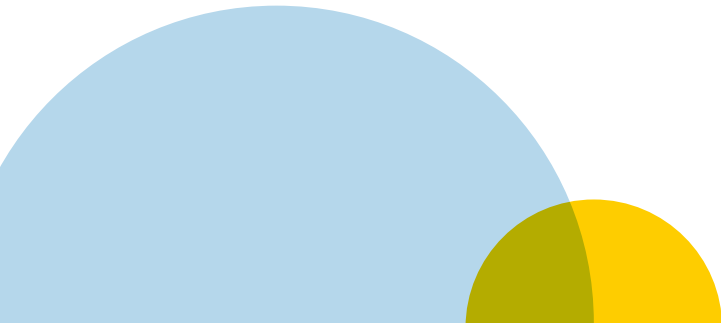
*'Second-Home Tourism and Sustainable Rural Communities in North Wales:
A Case Study of the Llanengan Community'*

The judges were impressed on this in-depth perspective on the topical issue of second homes in North Wales. The principal objective of this well written research project was to interpret and assess the perceived influence of second home tourism on the sustainability of a rural community, alongside understanding how well planning and policy interventions have been seen to address these impacts.

Underpinned by a case study approach, the student employed the use of interviews with representatives from different areas of governance. The research used this anecdotal information alongside GIS and secondary data analysis to provide an element of data triangulation, producing their own diagrams to explain the concepts that were being discussed.

The outcome of the research recommended that greater control and management of second homes were necessary in order to achieve sustainability community-wide, this included the suggestion that policy should empower local communities and allow them to contribute towards locally informed thresholds.

It recommended regulating second-home numbers alongside locally informed tax interventions in order to levy the number of second homes through deterrence or provide an avenue to fund the communities that were worst affected, instead of reintroducing housing on to the local market at inflated prices.



Runner Up

University of Liverpool

M Abdel Ghani

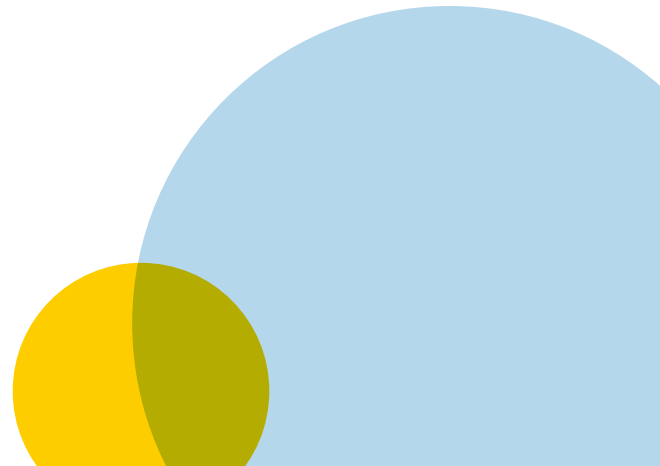
Planning for Children: The Challenges of having child-friendly public spaces, a case study approach of Egypt

From the judge's perspective this dissertation offered an intriguing discussion on children's experience of the built environment. In particular, the researcher sought to evaluate the impact planning policy had on the wellbeing of children in the city of Cairo in Egypt. As was outlined by the author within the literature review, there is a lack of attention towards 'Child Friendly Cities' within Middle Eastern policy and a lack of prioritisation towards children's health and wellbeing within public spaces.

Overall, the researcher conducted seven interviews, in order to gather deeper analysis and to understand stakeholder's perceptions of the barriers preventing advances towards more child-friendly public spaces within the city. Participants were from both the public and private sector and worked in various development or design based professions within the city.

The judges were impressed how this well-structured piece developed, providing strong evidence towards the need to create places that are more child friendly, whilst also identifying a clear gap in literature and research, especially within the middle east.

The writer constructed the research clearly outlining the principles of child friendly cities and drew on relevant literature and international case studies to come to a well-rounded and informed conclusion. The work identified and recommended a need for greater child integration and engagement alongside more legislation that support Child Friendly City principles.



Congratulations to our newly elected Chartered Members!

Christian Barton Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

Holly Beavitt-Pike Stephenson Halliday Ltd

Abigayle Boardman Acland Bracewell Surveyors Limited

Rachel Bottomley Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council

Olivia Carr P4 Planning Ltd

Andie Cizkova Hyas Associates

Andrew Collis Gladman

Daniel Cremen Avison Young

Rebecca Crockett Arup

Joe Davis Pegasus Group

Oliver Eyre Deloitte LLP

Clarissa Forshaw-Murphy Jones Lang LaSalle Ltd

Meghan Gleeson Zerum Consult Limited

Lee Greenwood LJG Planning Consultancy

Will Hopcroft Ribble Valley Borough Council

Eleanor Huddleston Lancaster City Council

Laura Hughes CBRE Ltd

Cerys Huston Peel L and P Group Management Limited

James Oliver Ketley Euan Kellie Property Solutions

Daniel Levers Mott MacDonald

Edwin Mawdsley AECOM

Milly McDermott Deloitte LLP

Atefeh Motamedi Atkins Ltd

Ruth Owen Cushman and Wakefield

Mandy Pang Salford City Council

Joshua Parkinson Burnley Borough Council

Victoria Parsons Perry Williams Limited

Charlotte Pinch South Lakeland District Council

Josh Plant Gladman

Samuel Platt Mitie

Cameron Radford Deloitte LLP

Timothy Sanders CBRE Ltd

Eleanor Scrafton Deloitte LLP

Nicola Simpson Avison Young

Sophie Stanton NJL Consulting Ltd

Nicholas Unwin The Planning Inspectorate

Eleanor Wattam Sellafield Ltd

Joshua Webb WSP Group

Victoria Welch WSP Group

Connor Wigley Broadgrove Planning and Development Ltd

Evan Williams RSK ADAS Ltd

Grace Wilson Lancashire County Council

Chloe Wootton Cumberland Council



RTPI North West Dinner 2023

As in 2022, the Annual Dinner took place in the Summer, reflecting changes to the annual award process. So, once more everyone donned their dinner attire on a hot June night to deliver a successful formal event, underpinned as always by our capable organiser Bev Watson.

The evening saw more than **340** people gather at the Kimpton Clock Tower, Oxford Road, Manchester, to network, socialise and enjoy themselves, force down that three-course meal and enjoy some fabulous entertainment. The Dinner also saw the celebration of the RTPI NW Regional Awards, with many in attendance receiving awards for the work they had been doing over the previous year. More details of the awards and the winners can be found above.

We would like to thank all of our sponsors without whom we would not be able to provide such an amazing social event, so huge thanks to:

- Headline Sponsors **CMS and Landmark Chambers**
- Entertainment Sponsor **Pegasus Group**
- Dinner Sponsors **Kings Chambers, PlacesMatter, and Curtins**
- Table Favours Sponsor **Howdens**

And finally, a massive thank you to all of you who turned out for our Annual Dinner. We hope that everyone who attended enjoyed themselves and we look forward to seeing you all again in 2024.



Find more information on next year's Annual Dinner at the RTPI Events Page: [RTPI | NW Annual Dinner](#)



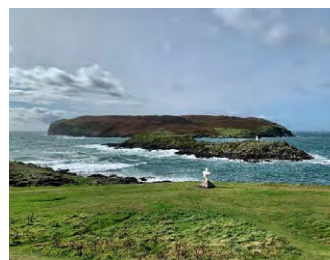


RTPI President's Visit 2023 – Isle of Man

We had a wonderful visit by **Sue Bridge**, this year's President, in September to visit the Isle of Man and the phenomenal planners based on the Island. It has been a few years since the President has visited this part of the North West and we were excited to explore the island, find out more about the Manx planning system and meet with the town planners practising on the Island.

Following an early morning flight from Liverpool, we met representatives from the Cabinet Office and together travelled to Castletown where we had a tour around Market Square, Parliament Square, and the Quarterdeck. We heard about their recent heritage-led regeneration, efforts to revitalise the town centre, the creation of new public realm and the way these regeneration projects have enabled different communities to come together.

We then headed to the other side of the island to see the Calf of Man – a 600-acre nature reserve, where we saw local seals enjoying the sunshine. Whilst sat nearby in the Sound Café, we spoke with the Planning Policy team about the differences between the English planning system and the Manx planning system, including their environmental legislation, policies on biodiversity, and third-party rights of appeal. Renewable energy projects are a hot-topic issue on the island, with the Manx government considering the future of wind and solar farm developments. Much like in other parts of the UK, they are exploring the best ways to transition to entirely renewable energy sources whilst maintaining the beautiful landscape of the island.

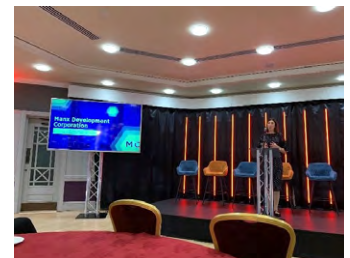


Afterwards, we headed to the Isle of Man Government Conference where we received a fantastic welcome and heard from Dane Harrop, Managing Director at the Manx Development Corporation. He gave us an insightful presentation on brownfield regeneration projects they are currently involved with. With limited space on the island, it was great to see the key principles of town planning in action – optimising the re-use of previously developed land, considering how buildings can be retrofitted and re-used instead of the more carbon-intensive demolition and rebuild, and meeting the different types of housing needs for an aging population whilst also trying to attract new and younger residents to the island by building suitable affordable housing. We were also able to have lunch with many of the Island's planners at the conference, with everyone sharing their experiences of working within the planning profession.

We then toured the Laxey Wheel, the largest working waterwheel in the world. It was recently restored by Manx Natural Heritage, and we heard about the ongoing extensive restoration work as well as the history of the wheel and the Manx miners, who were considered some of the best in the world. We also heard about the social, environmental, and economic impacts of the rise and fall of the mining industry on the island.

After being treated to a fantastic dinner in Douglas, we had a walking tour from the Planning and Registered Buildings Team. We heard about the huge land reclamation that happened in Douglas Bay in the mid-late 19th century and the erection of the Tower of Refuge in the bay. It was built by Sir William Hillary, who used to witness ships getting wrecked in storms and wanted to build somewhere sailors could swim to and await rescue. Following his work on the Island, Sir William later went on to establish the RNLI. It's now a Registered Building (similar to a Listed Building) and lights up with changing colours at night, a vital part of the Douglas landscape.

As part of the tour, we also saw some stalled regeneration projects and explored familiar struggles with retail planning and supporting local high streets. The following day, we attended the second day of the Isle of Man Conference where Sue gave a speech about the value of planning and the important role of town planners have in helping to achieve the future aspirations of the Island. We are keen to continue working closely with the Manx town planners and we hope to be able to visit other areas of the North West together in the future to help share best practise. We would like to thank the Isle of Man team for such a wonderful welcome and exceptional itinerary for our trip.



North West Planning Aid in 2023

2023 has been a big year for Planning Aid England (PAE). This year marked the 50th anniversary of PAE. Beginning in 1973, Planning Aid England is built on the principle that everyone should have access to the planning system, regardless of their ability to pay. Our work in the North West is delivered by over 50 dedicated volunteers with a range of skills, interests, and expertise.

At the start of the year, the PAE NW Task Group published the results of their annual development plan monitoring research. This is the sixth year that a team of PAE volunteers has compiled information on Neighbourhood Plan support offered by authorities and the preparation progress of all Neighbourhood and Local Plans in the region.

This past year has seen the continued decline in Neighbourhood Plan groups contacting Planning Aid England (PAE) for advice and assistance. This is likely due to a number of reasons – many communities interested in forming a Neighbourhood Plan have already pursued it, either successfully or unsuccessfully. Other communities interested in neighbourhood planning in the region have been unable to form and maintain a quorate forum group. Some groups have also faced political resistance to the localism agenda, and simply given up.

Some Local Plan preparations have also paused as a result of government action (or inaction) on proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework. However, it has been positive to see the Wirral Local Plan progress through examination with a high attendance and response rate from members of the public and community groups following previous PAE community engagement workshops. There has also been consistent interest in PAE support across the region for a variety of other topics, including ongoing project support for the Knowsley Kitchen project with Feedback Global and advising community groups concerning the Huncoats Garden Village development.

PAE Task Group members, Benjamin Vickers and Darren Muir, were invited to join the presidential delegation to the Isle of Man, accompanying RTPI President, Sue Bridge, for a two-day tour of the island. This enabled the Task Group to build relationships with planners in the Cabinet Office in the Manx government, in the hope of assisting with future projects and sharing skills and experiences.

PAE volunteers were invited by Blackpool Council to present at a community event in Stanley Park organised by the Civic Society. The purpose of the event was for PAE to deliver training to attendees on how to respond to planning consultations. Darren Muir and Kenneth Jim delivered a presentation giving an overview of the planning system, and going into detail on what constitutes a material planning consideration for the purposes of responding to a planning consultation – whether it be in relation to a development, or the preparation of a development plan document.



Planning Aid England
Engaging Communities in Planning

The Task Group Chair was invited to attend 'The Future of Public Participation in Planning' in London in September – part of the 50th anniversary celebratory panel discussions. At the event, they were able to meet volunteers from other regions and share knowledge and experiences.

Looking forward to 2024, the PAE Task Group is already in discussions with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority regarding assisting with the community engagement for the Spatial Development Strategy, due to begin consultation shortly.

Planning Aid England in the North West looks forward to a busy 2024.

Become Involved

If you want to be involved in supporting local people with planning issues, then why not become a Planning Aid volunteer? To do so you first need to register on the RTPI website using the following link:

<https://www.rtpi.org.uk/planning-advice/volunteering/how-to-apply/>

If also you want to help organise Planning Aid activities in the Region by being part of the Task Group, then contact **[Bev Watson](#)**

EDI Champion Update

The end of 2023 brings me to the end of a two year period of being the North West RTPIs Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Champion. The role of Regional EDI Champion was a board role created in the North West Region by then outgoing Chair in 2020, Kim Cooper to work with the regional RMB and alongside the newly appointed national EDI Manager, Machel Bogues to help improve the equality, diversity and inclusion of our professional body and the wider profession.

Since the role began, the RTPI have begun to make strides in the right direction and has published an action plan, alongside fellow professional institutes (including Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB), Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE), Landscape Institute (LI), Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS)) which sets out in detail how we will deliver a more diverse, equitable and inclusive sector and ensuring it is more representative of the society it serves.

The action plan seeks to deliver the promises of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which those 6 member organisations have committed to (collectively representing around 350,000 members). The key focuses of our work are:

- Standardising member data collection to fully understand our collective membership and help to formulate a clear picture of the wider built environment sector and inform targeted action to improve EDI outcomes.
- Understanding the transition from education into employment to develop a robust, evidence-based understanding of the disparity between the diversity of students that start on institute-accredited courses and those that join the workforce
- Raising the sector's standards of EDI knowledge, behaviours and practice to develop understanding and guidance for the sector and support organisations, individuals and institutes to develop, improve and maintain high professional standards; and to explore ways to collate and share relevant collateral to support all professionals working within the built environment.

In the North West we have sought to support the RTPI and our wider profession in delivering change in those key areas of focus. Our Regional Activities Committee has EDI firmly on its agenda and aims to make improvements in everything it does.

This year, our Young Planners and Education and Careers Groups have worked across the region to deliver presentations and information to schools and careers fairs and focussed on schools which have previously been harder for us to reach. The teams have twinned this with working with our Regions Planning Schools to promote the delivery of Apprenticeships in planning as well as promoting contact between planning students and professional planners (through 'Coffee with a Planner' and mentoring help) to try and narrow the gap between planning students and professional planners. We are also working in partnership with the BAME Planners Network to enhance the RTPIs diversity of thought and membership.

Our Planning Ambassadors (many of whom are already working with Young Planners and our education team) have been integral in delivering the RTPIs EXPLORE programme which works with our school contacts to provide work experience across our sector to local secondary school students.

The programme focusses on reaching members of our committee who are currently underrepresented in our profession and who had previously had little or no understand of planning as a potential career path. We have has great success in our earlier years of the programme with the majority of students completing the programme commenting that they would now consider a career in planning!

As a regional body we have also made great strides in how promote EDI in our training and continued professional development (CPD). We have made consistent improvement in the diversity of our speakers and hosts at CPD events as well as reviewing our practices in terms of ensuring our venues and events are inclusive for all of our members. We have also sought to provide CPD and training which helps improve our understanding of EDI across the profession, including our CPD session on Inclusive Design and Neurodiversity in the Built Environment.

I'm delighted with the progress we have made as an institution and the work we have done in the north west as we embark on this long and ongoing journey. I wish Emily Kitching-Bower, the current outgoing chair, and next EDI Champion, the best of luck in coming year.

LPA Champions

Introduction and Background

After the rebirth of the LPA Champions in 2022, the LPA Engage Business Plan was published in June of that year to pave the ways the region can seek to support planners working for local planning authorities. The LPA Engage Business Plan can be found here <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/find-your-rtpi/rtpi-english-regions/rtpi-north-west/lpa-engage/lpa-engage-business-plan/>

This Business Plan identified four key areas where support is needed: Staff Recruitment & Retention; Training; Promoting the Public Sector & Championing the Value of Planning; and Health & Wellbeing. This was based on the feedback received from a roundtable held in February 2022.

2022 also saw the production of the LPA Best Practice Case Studies across the North West which can be viewed here <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/find-your-rtpi/rtpi-english-regions/rtpi-north-west/lpa-engage/lpa-best-practice-case-studies/>

In 2023...

This year saw increased traction with the initiative. The first step was the formation of a task group comprising several members working mostly in the public sector and other partner organisation such as the HBF, Public Practice, RIBA and PAS.

Training Programme

Three specialist training events were held in the first few months of the year. The events were £30 for members and aimed at early to mid-years planning officers. The events were fully booked and provided by specialist trainers proving to be a success.

- Written Communication: hosted on the 1st of March at Burnley Town Hall by CMS Law, the event focused on how to use the most appropriate and legally sound written language for drafting planning policy, planning reports and when communicating with the public or consultees.
- Politics in Planning: hosted on the 23rd of May at Preston Town Hall by BECG. The session focused on the role of politics in the planning system and expert insight into how councillors operate and how planning officers can be more aware of this.
- Introduction to Planning: hosted on the 13th of June at Wigan Town Hall by Hive Land & Planning to provide an overview of the planning system and the key function of each planning department within local planning authority such as enforcement, planning policy and development.

Roundtable

On the 28th of June, the task group hosted a roundtable session attended by a dozen LPA Champions. The purpose of the roundtable was to discuss general challenges facing planning officers and any potential research topics the task group could explore. It was also to introduce Public Practice and their upcoming opportunity to apply for a temporary member of staff through their 2023 placement scheme. The key feedback in terms of what area of research may be considered were that aspects around Job Evaluations and evidence to propose increasing salary bands, whilst welcomed, would be controversial particularly with other departments within local government. Research into areas such as how pay scales contrast nationwide, or the sharing of Job Descriptions and publishing guidance for hiring managers may be most welcomed and have greatest impact.

The Planning Advisory Service also offered the opportunity to LPA Champions to form part of a pilot to test the implementation of the new PPA and Pre-app guidance. Discussions are ongoing between GM authorities and PAS on this, and we welcome any other local planning authorities who would be willing to work to PAS to implement this guidance.

And In 2024...

Next year is another great opportunity for the task group to press ahead with the delivery of the Business Plan. Here is a snapshot of what we have in stall:

- **Update to the LPA Engage Business Plan:** this will reflect the latest roundtable and provide a clearer roadmap for 2024.
- **LPA Training Programme:** we intend to re-run the training programme with three tailored sessions in the first six months of the year.
- **LPA Design Training Programme:** Following on from the tailored LPA Training Programme, which is being delivered in early 24, a design focused training programme is planned for the second half of 24. This will look to address some of the more technical skills around assessing and improving the design of new development.
- **Mental Health and Wellbeing Support:** The RTPI NW are making plans to provide a mental health and wellbeing course in early 2024 for LPA staff.
- **Research Project:** In 2024 we will explore potential research options for Job Descriptions and how salary bands differ across each local planning authority.

Any of this sound interesting? We'd be delighted to welcome on board anyone who feels they want to help out and make a genuine difference. Get in touch with [Bev Watson](#) for an initial discussion and let's see what we can achieve in 2024!

RTPI North West Young Planners 2023

“At the start of my first meeting as Chair, early in January, I set the challenge to arrange a calendar of events to entice regional planners back out into the real world, particularly aiming to be more inclusive of the wider region than the Manchester-centric core. I’m really pleased to say that the group has risen to the challenge - and I’m even more pleased to report that our Young Planners Network has responded in kind, by coming along to engage with the events in the calendar.

We’ll finish the year with more than 10 events delivered, along with three newsletter mailouts, and plenty of new connections with the region’s universities, local authorities, development industry leaders, and other young professional groups.

Here’s our rundown of our year, coining the words of our committee volunteers and event attendees...”

Ian Pennington

Chair of the Young Planners

The first outing was in May, as Jemma Brabrook arranged for 10 young planners to attend a site visit to the Co-Op Live arena in Manchester. The site visit was led by BAM and provided insight into the planning and construction considerations around delivering the Oak View Group’s (OVG) new 23,500 capacity indoor arena at the Etihad Campus in East Manchester. It included a walk around of the innovative smart bowl design and provided insight into the cutting edge visual and acoustic technology to be delivered.

OVG are seeking to create a new world class arena for Greater Manchester, with 32 bars and restaurants as part of extensive F&B and leisure spaces that provides wrap-around entertainment opportunities. The visit was such a success that we repeated it in July.

The second annual UKREiiF conference and networking event took place in sunny Leeds from 16-18 May. The RTPI were offered tickets by the event organisers and North West Young Planners committee members Ian Pennington, Thomas O’Kane, and Emily Bates went along to represent the region’s planning profession.





The event also provided opportunity to catch up with contacts and meet new people across the built environment industry.

Back in the North West, Ian Pennington arranged and chaired a seminar and social on Friday 26 May that focused on the regeneration of Stockport's Old Town area. Our guest speakers presented on 20-minute neighbourhoods research (Caglar Koksal and Florence Hewett), event-led regen and area branding (Cllr Joe Barratt), and heritage-led regen (Paul Kelsall), before a short walking tour of the Old Town and socialising at the monthly Foodie Friday event that has helped to energise the area. Look out for a follow-up walking tour event next year to hear about the Stockport Interchange project and Town Centre West Strategic Regeneration Framework.

We heard from RTPI President Sue Bridge speaking about short-term and long-term actions that could resolve issues with the planning system - primarily focusing on public sector funding - and also joined an RTPI lunch reception along with fellow members who were attending the event.

There was a good range of CPD sessions to select from, with sessions delivered by high-profile speakers on topics such as major infrastructure projects and future ambitions, the planning system, climate change, and engagement methods.



Another of our key aims for 2023 was to improve engagement with the region's RTPI accredited universities. So, in June we teamed up with the University of Manchester's Planning, Landscape and Urban Management Society (PLUMS) for a double-header event, including a seminar on the theme of Designing in Access for All, followed by the summer social at Kro Bar in Manchester.

The CPD event - co-organised by Ian Pennington and PLUMS' Thomas Rogerson - focused on how we design our public realm and movement networks to ensure that they do not exclude large proportions of the population. Guest speaker Lily Feasby spoke about Transport for Greater Manchester's Streets for All design guide, which will help to deliver a context sensitive design approach to re-humanise our most plentiful public spaces: public highways. Susannah Walker then dialled in to tell us about Make Space for Girls' important work towards redressing the 'default male' (see Invisible Women by Caroline Criado Perez) inputs and outcomes in planning, policymaking, and design of our parks and public realm. The presentations inspired a lively Q&A, before attendees headed across to our summer social, arranged by the NWYPs' Zoe Reynolds.

Attendees at this year's Annual Awards Dinner in June may have seen the Young Planners committee and guests on Table 10, kindly sponsored by Places Matter.

July saw a pair of events as part of the RTPI's Coastal Week. First up was a walking tour of Southport's regeneration plans, starting at Southport Market and taking in the Marine Lake Events Centre and Surf Beach Hotel. Jemma Brabrook arranged for Sefton Council to lead it, while Michael Atkinson-Smith reprised for the NWYPs on the day.



The next Coastal Week tour was organised by Olivia McQuaid and took in both Liverpool Waters and Wirral Waters. Ian Ford and Bill Devereux led a group of planners around the sites and showcased how the schemes are putting sustainability and communities at the forefront.

Both developments acknowledge and enhance the sites' assets such as their waterside locations and rich heritage by including heat pumps, opening up access to water and parks for sports/leisure, expanding the opportunity to travel from the docks, and restoring heritage features – all contributing to supporting a sustainable environment.



Alistair Peet arranged for a group of Young Planners to be shown around some of Salford's key locations in September, starting with a guided tour of Energy House 2.0 at the University of Salford. It's the largest energy efficiency laboratory of its kind and leads the way in the exploration and research of low/zero carbon housing and retrofitting tech. It was a bit nippy inside, to create the wintry conditions needed for its tests. This was followed by a tour of the Salford Crescent masterplan area, led by Dan Welsh of Salford City Council, taking in the university campus and halls of residence, Peel Park, and several infrastructure and building proposals. Thanks to our guides for their time and insights.

We celebrated World Town Planning Day with an event on the theme of Liverpool City Region's sustainable transport offering and ambitions, organised and chaired by James Shoemith-Evans. The event discussed Liverpool's current and future transport infrastructure and the planning system's major role in its development, ultimately questioning if Liverpool is striving towards sustainable and integrated transport. Many of the questions were put towards the three speakers on the panel: Rachel Cornfoot, Alex Naughton, and Chia-Lin Chen, who provided a variety of responses from their private sector, public sector, and academic perspectives, respectively.

At the time of writing, we also have a collaborative event scheduled with the Forum for Tomorrow (FFT) wing of the Forum of the Built Environment (FBE) group (23 November), at which two NWYPs committee members - Thomas O'Kane and Ryan Killeen - will be presenting to a multi-disciplinary audience on A Day in the Life of a Planning Application. And, finally, our annual winter social, organised by Zoe Reynolds and Alistair Peet, falls on 28 November, when there will be opportunity to roller skate and catch up with planning peers.

Communicating all of this to our Young Planners Network has been paramount, and Maisie Boyes has stepped up to support with collation of the information that the region's Young Planners have been receiving in newsletters through the year.

We also bid farewell to two long-standing members of the committee - current Vice Chair Thomas O'Kane, and Emily Bates. Thank you for your contributions over the years.

**Until then, we hope you all
enjoy the rest of 2023.**



Regional Research and Good Practice

.....

The achievements of North West Planners on
influencing policy and implementing good practice

Policy and Research Task Group Report 2023

Nationally, the planning reform agenda has continued in 2023, with some major consultations emanating from central government, culminating in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act gaining royal assent in October.

There have been several consultations undertaken by central government throughout 2023. These include:

- **Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill:** reforms to national planning policy: This consultation ran from December 2022 to March 2023 and sought views on how the government might develop new and revise current national planning policy. This sought to support the reforms set out in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill that was going through parliament at the time and the Levelling Up White Paper from 2022.
- **Increasing planning fees and performance:** technical consultation: This consultation ran from February 2023 to April 2023 and sought views on proposals to increase planning fees and to improve performance of Local Planning Authorities.
- **Technical consultation on the Infrastructure Levy:** This consultation ran from March 2023 to June 2023 and set out the technical aspects of the Infrastructure Levy. The proposals considered how the Infrastructure Levy can replace Section 106 contributions to secure developer contributions for infrastructure.

- **Permitted Development Rights:** This consultation ran from July 2023 to September 2023 and sought views on proposed changes to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, as amended. The consultation proposed to extend permitted development rights in several areas, including the change of use from hotels to residential and changes around agricultural buildings.
- **Plan-making reforms:** consultation on implementation: This consultation ran from July 2023 to October 2023 and sought views on implementation on the plan-making process, as set out in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill. The consultation set out further details on the plan timeline, digitisation of plan-making, community and stakeholder engagement, new 'gateway assessments' and the monitoring of plans.

In January of this year, we held a roundtable event with local members to help inform our national response to the consultation on planning reform published by the Government on 22nd December 2022. The feedback from the roundtable discussion fed into the England Policy Committee's formal consultation response. The roundtable discussed the chapters on Planning for Housing, "a Planning System for Communities", Environment, Climate Change and Energy, Transitional Arrangements, National Development Management Policies, and the Future NPPF.

In August, the task group held another roundtable on the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill: consultation on implementation of plan-making reforms, published in July.

The roundtable was coordinated around the key topics of timescales, examination, engagement, supplementary plans, and community land auctions. Our regional members' comments from the event fed into the England Policy Committee's consultation response, submitted in September.

In terms of spatial planning, both the Liverpool and Manchester city regions sought to progress their strategic plans during 2023, although announcements of potential changes at the national level have had a knock-on impact, with delays to the local plan process in a number of cases.

Consultation for an early phase of the Liverpool City Region Spatial Development Strategy was undertaken in 2021, however recent Government announcements about potential national changes to spatial planning have led to a pause in the process. The most recent update states that "the Combined Authority has decided that, before consulting further on the SDS, it needs to gain a greater understanding of the Government's policy direction, timing and implications on matters such as:

- the recently announced Investment Zones;
- the implications for a more simplified planning regime;
- calculating housing numbers; and
- the awaited updates to the national planning policy framework.

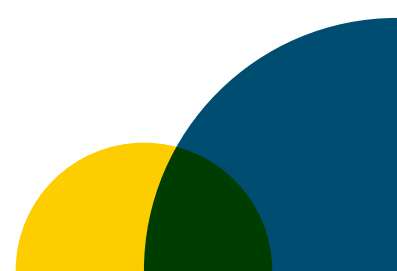
Work will therefore continue on the SDS and specifically on key tasks that will ultimately support its delivery, namely:

- to further develop the supporting evidence base for the SDS and continue to jointly progress the Combined Authority's work on spatial policies and priorities; and
- to produce a non-statutory Place Focused Strategy which will reflect collective strategic place priorities and embed these into the Combined Authority's approach to place making and funding across the city region.

Greater Manchester's Places for Everyone strategic level plan covers the Greater Manchester areas with the exception of Stockport. The process is still ongoing, with the intention that the plan will be adopted by Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Salford, Rochdale, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan in 2024. Stockport Council is progressing its own Local Plan, work on which commenced some years ago in parallel with the then GMSF. Consultation on the Plan was due to commence in January 2023, however this was postponed following the publication of a ministerial statement in December 2022 addressing housing targets.

Another combined plan being developed in the region is the Central Lancashire Local Plan by the three Planning authorities of Preston, Chorley and South Ribble.

Consultation on the Local Plan Part 1 Preferred Options Document was held between December 2022 and February 2023 and will be followed by a Part 2 consultation. Adoption of the combined plan is timetabled for summer 2025.



There has been progress in Local Plans with Wyre Borough Council adopting their updated Local Plan in January, Blackpool's Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan being adopted in February and Warrington's Local Plan was found sound in October. A number of other Local Plans are being progressed, with several Local Plan examinations including at Blackburn with Darwen, Copeland (now within the Cumberland Local Planning Authority area) and The Wirral continuing.

A report by the House of Commons Levelling Up Committee in July 2023 acknowledged that the differing proposals for national planning policy reform since 2019 had resulted in uncertainty among local authorities and other key stakeholders. This, the Committee found, has had an impact on the production of Local Plans, which has consequently made the delivery of a national target of 300,000 homes per year more challenging.

The Environment Act 2021 has made Biodiversity Net Gain mandatory for planning applications, which will come into effect over the next few months. This will represent a challenge to the preparation of planning applications; and to resources in local planning authorities but also presents significant opportunities. The preparation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies will take place in five different areas of the region: Cumbria, Cheshire, Greater Manchester, Lancashire, and Liverpool City Region. These strategies will help agree priorities for the natural environment and ensure these are reflected in planning decisions.

2023 has seen the introduction of a new statutory consultee in the Development Management process. Active Travel England (ATE) became a new statutory consultee in June 2023, with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) (Amendment) Order 2023 (DMPO) identifies ATE as a statutory consultee for planning applications that meet or exceed the thresholds of 150 residential units, 7,500 sqm of floorspace or 5 hectares in area. This is to support the government's objective for half of all journeys in towns and cities being walked, wheeled, or cycled by 2030, as set out in the 2020 Gear Change strategy.

It is likely that there will be further updates on planning reform in the next year, including further detail on the content of National Development Management Policies and amendments to the National Planning Policy Framework.

The RTPI NW monthly Planning Newsletter would welcome short articles on our activities. Please contact **Bev Watson** if you require further information about the newsletter.

Levelling Up in the North West

In 2023, North West Planners were asked to highlight their best practice achievements in taking forward the Levelling Up agenda, i.e. in securing funding from the Levelling Up Fund (LUF), UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), and other related funds, and implementing the projects funded. Oldham Council and the newly formed Cumberland Council responded, highlighting two diverse projects:

Oldham's Green Technology and Innovation Network

Oldham Levelling Up Fund

Oldham Council were successful in the Levelling Up Fund (LUF) Round 2 bid and were awarded £20 million to help them deliver three projects as part of their Green Technology and Innovation Network.

The bid comprised three projects:

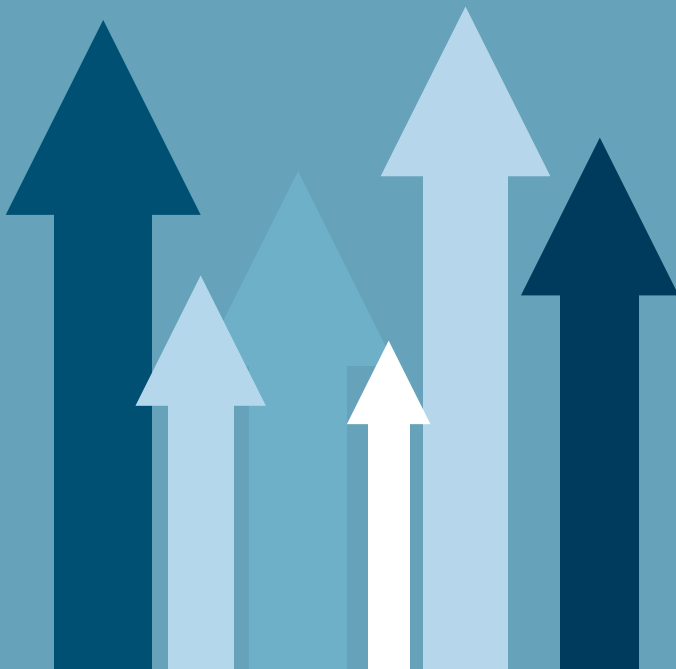
- The Green Shoots Centre – an incubation hub for startup Green Technology Businesses.
- Northern Roots Learning Centre – a learning centre to enhance local green skills.
- Oldham Greenway and Jubilee Park – an active travel network and new park.

Arup were appointed by Oldham Council to write the LUF bid for the Green Technology and Innovation Network bid in Summer 2023. This article will explore how the Council and Arup worked collaboratively to successfully gain the LUF funding and the significant benefits the projects can bring to the local communities.

The Foundation of Oldham's LUF bid

Oldham has a rich heritage as a cotton town and its key role in the Industrial Revolution has shaped both the physical infrastructure and the local identity of the town.

Relative to other towns in Greater Manchester, Oldham's economy has struggled to diversify from its industrial heritage leading to a low skills base. Only 27 percent of working age residents within the borough are qualified to NVQ4+, whilst 13 percent have no qualifications. Oldham is ranked the 19th most deprived local authority in the UK and the borough has high levels of unemployment which is exacerbated by the challenge of accessing the labour market without any qualifications.



Oldham's industrial legacy, resulting in high levels of deprivation and a low-skilled workforce, has meant existing levels of private investment are insufficient in addressing the acute levels of deprivation in the town. The potential of Oldham cannot be maximised unless these barriers to growth are addressed.

However, Oldham has the opportunity to lead the way in the net zero carbon era. In their Green New Deal Strategy, Oldham Council has set an ambitious target for the borough to be carbon neutral by 2030. This commitment sets Oldham 8 years ahead of the GM target, demonstrating Oldham's ambitious vision 'build back greener' by cutting their carbon emissions and shifting to a green economy.

Furthermore, this LUF bid would be in combination with the ongoing proactive steps the Council are taking to transform Oldham's town centre. This includes the successful Town Deal worth £24.4 million from the Towns Fund programme, the ongoing town centre regeneration works including the renovation of the Spindles complex and the Accessible Oldham programme to improve roads, footpaths and public areas, as well as plans for a £30m low carbon district heat network.

Developing the Projects

The LUF bid was set within the context of the Council's ambitions for carbon neutrality, the need to address the high levels of deprivation and act as a catalyst for inclusive green growth across the borough.

To achieve this ambition, it was found that supporting the Green Technology and Services (GTS) businesses and address their current lack of suitable facilities for existing businesses could help transform Oldham. GTS businesses are defined as industries that produce goods and services aimed at addressing environmental objectives, including reducing carbon emissions.

The proposed Green Shoots Centre was developed to provide affordable incubation hub for local GTS businesses and accelerate economic growth. The Centre will be a net-zero carbon building, powered by renewable energy sources and hopes to provide free energy for local GTS businesses in the future. Investment in the Centre will contribute to addressing the lack of suitable workspace in Oldham, removing this existing barrier to growth. Realising this opportunity will help to alleviate the deeply embedded patterns of deprivation and disinvestment within Oldham by becoming a green innovation hub; subsequently supporting economic recovery through attracting private investment and creating local jobs.

To enable Oldham to realise its green ambitions, there is also a need to tackle the green skills shortage in the borough. Northern Roots is 160 acres of urban greenspace 15 minutes from Oldham town centre and is being developed by the Northern Roots charity and the Council to become a destination for learning, leisure, nature and growing. Therefore, the bid comprised funding for the proposed Learning Centre within Northern Roots; with existing strong links with Oldham College, the Learning Centre will be used as an educational facility to help strengthen green skills through offering vocational courses. Investing in the Northern Roots Learning Centre will improve learning opportunities in the borough and further embed 'green' skills through vocational courses; this will offer a pathway for low-skilled workers to re-train and create job opportunities in the green economy.



Indicative image of the future Green Shoots Centre.

Finally, the bid proposal also supported the development of the Oldham Greenway, a public realm improvement project supporting Oldham's low carbon 20-minute neighbourhood. This network will help establish Oldham as a sustainable destination, enhancing its green infrastructure network, facilitating a modal shift to active travel and making the Green Shoots Centre and Learning Centre more accessible to the local population. One of the key destinations on the network will be the new Jubilee Park which will provide a new green heart to Oldham Town Centre. This green infrastructure network would provide high quality green space, improve connections between communities, encourage a modal shift to active travel modes and address poor air quality and health and wellbeing inequalities.

The proposals combined, will encourage inclusive economic growth and support future net zero carbon opportunities in Oldham whilst supporting economic recovery, access to green space, reduced health inequality, improved air quality and enhanced connectivity.

Our Approach

Arup advised Oldham Council on the best strategy to help secure funds as part of the Levelling Up agenda, as well as preparing the bid document on their behalf. Arup has extensive experience supporting councils through LUF bids and our work with the Government on their Towns Fund where we are their lead advisor supporting the wider delivery of the project and providing advice to DLUHC and Local Authorities on the development of their Town Fund Investment Plans.

Core to successfully winning the funding was working collaboratively with multi-disciplinary colleagues with expertise in project development, business case development, economics, design, planning and regeneration with Oldham Council officers in order to have a targeted approach to each section of the business case, ensuring we made the strongest case for investment to give Oldham Council the best opportunity for success. This ensured that the bid was robust, sensible but ambitious, sustainable, believable, and ultimately deliverable.

We developed a comprehensive theory of change and projects focusing on the addressing the barriers to growth within Oldham. These projects utilised Council resources effectively for example Council-owned land and extensive stakeholder engagement already completed and combined with the growing GTS business sector within the borough, aligning with the proactive transformative town centre work already underway.

Next Steps

Following the successful outcome of Oldham Council's LUF bid, the transformative projects are now being delivered. The Council is starting the initial works to construct the three projects. To support this, the Council has continued to work with Arup to develop management and business plans of the Green Shoots Centre and the Northern Roots Learning Centre. These plans provide the Council with additional financial, economic, management and operation certainty for the long-term running of these projects now the capital costs for their construction have been secured through the Levelling Up Fund. Thereby supporting Oldham to overcome their barriers to growth and positively benefit local communities.



Indicative image of the future Northern Roots

Cumberland Council - Milliom Archaeology

Unless there was one extremely careless Bronze Age woodsman living in south-west Cumberland three or four thousand years ago, the six axe heads that have recently been found around what is now Holy Trinity Church, Millom is evidence of significant human presence. The southern and western parts of the Lake District upland fells are rife with evidence of human activity from this period: stone circles, standing stones and earthworks, most of which are scheduled monuments and date from about the Late Neolithic to the Middle Bronze Age.

This is not the full extent of the finds that have been made in the fields within sight of the beautiful 12th century church, however, or the neighbouring converted peel tower and mostly 14th century Castle ruins next door, around which a new conservation area is currently being designated. Both church and castle appear to have earlier origins. Aside from the axe heads, members of Millom and District Local History Society (MDLHS) have unearthed pieces of a broken sword, a terret (a metal ring from a horse's harness), various coins and more that collectively cover a date range from prehistoric to Victorian.

Although these finds are portable, dropped or thrown away by somebody in passing, fixed evidence of settlement would draw a deeper picture of the history of this valuable and rather overlooked area. There are tantalising clues: records of a fair or market that began in the 12th century, crop marks in fields, preserved footprints on the foreshore, but to unearth the potential here, more evidence was, and is, needed.



In 2022, a geophysical survey using magnetometers was commissioned by historian Peter Barton and carried out by Peter Masters of Cranfield University on a field near Millom Castle, which contains a crop mark visible in aerial photography. Archaeological anomalies were found, and while intriguing, were inconclusive. Future surveying with electromagnetic induction or ground-penetrating radar may suit the conditions better.

Copeland Borough Council was, until April 2023 when it was absorbed into the new unitary Cumberland Council, the local authority for Millom, which sits just outside the border of the Lake District National Park on the edge of the Duddon Estuary. Via Copeland Borough Council, the Local History Society was awarded £5,500 from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund with which to carry out a geophysical survey in the area and fill in some of the gaps.

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) is the Government's flagship fund for delivery of its Levelling Up Agenda, supporting places across the UK to build pride and increase opportunity. The funding itself was part of a top-up to UKSPF allocations in order to help address issues faced by rural areas. In the case of Millom, there has been a loss of local identity since the closure of the ironworks and haematite mine in the late 1960s, ventures which the modern town was built to facilitate in the late-19th and early-20th centuries, and from which it has never fully recovered.

Using the pot awarded, MDLHS hired Greenlane Archaeology to coordinate a geophysical survey pilot with archaeologists from Phase Site Investigations. On a two-day visit in April 2023, they surveyed two fields west and north of the church and castle. A few days later, with local volunteers, a third field was completed just to the south. This activity was not just an empirical exercise in uncovering lost information but a way of uniting people around their shared heritage, and in the spirit of both of those objectives the community gathered together at the church on 24th June in order to receive the results of the investigation.



In the first field, signals were dense near what is currently a vacant mid-19th century school room, suggesting historic activity in that area. It is possible that a small vicarage once stood near this site and was replaced by the school room, or that the activity relates to the aforementioned market or fair.

Additionally, there was a line, visible as an earthwork on the ground, that may indicate a former boundary associated with the church. The second field turned up two possible ditch features, one of which is potentially connected with a visible crop mark that appears to be prehistoric. In the final field, there may be a double-ditched enclosure. All of this need's triangulation with other methods before conclusions can be drawn, but it provides focus for further investigation, possibly using test pits, and rules out areas of likely low potential.

The positivity of the response from the participants who joined in, carrying out desk-based assessment, performing the survey work itself, walking the fields or hearing discussion at the public meetings demonstrates the great value that was obtained for the sum of £5500 and the time of the organisers.

This is a great example of the Government's Levelling Up Agenda in action, as a joint undertaking between Millom and District Local History Society, the wider community, the local landowners, the archaeological profession, and the Local Authority. It helps articulate the historic and ongoing story of a place and provides valuable background information for the appraisal of a new conservation area, which will describe the character and appearance of the environs, bring it into consideration in planning decisions in a holistic sense, and giving protection to unlisted heritage assets nearby.



The New Boss

Looking Forward

After studying at the University of Liverpool (Master of Civic Design), my career began in local government back in 2007, where I was based in planning policy preparing what was then the 'new' LDF system (West Lancashire and St Helens). Like a lot of public sector planners, curiosity got the better of me, and I eventually made the switch to the private sector in 2014, where I have held a few 'client side' and consultancy roles (The Emerson Group – Orbit Developments/Jones Homes, Indigo, WSP, Nexus and now Richborough). Each job has been equally challenging and fulfilling in their own ways, and I am extremely grateful for the opportunities I've been given, and for the support I've received along the way. There's something to be said about learning 'on the job' – which you completely miss out on by working from home (and I strongly urge those at the start of their careers to venture into the office as much as possible during this 'hybrid' era). I like to think this background provides me with a unique understanding and appreciation of the daily challenges our members face, and I will be seeking to harness this insight in my role as Chair for 2024.



As a busy 2023 draws to a close, I would like to thank all our amazing volunteers for delivering another highly successful calendar of events, and to our fantastic members

for their various achievements celebrated in this annual review. Despite the excitement of the King's coronation and Eurovision in Liverpool, it's been a challenging year with a cost-of-living crisis, ongoing strikes and pay disputes, alongside the conflicts in Ukraine and Israel, which really put into context the trials and tribulations in the planning sphere. To achieve what we have is testament to Emily, Bev and the wider team. And it's great to have such confidence and positivity moving forwards, knowing we represent one of the largest and most active RTPI regions in the British Isles.

Despite becoming an RTPI member in 2006, it wasn't until 2020 that I had an epiphany; it was about time I put something back in to the profession. And so, I applied to join the Regional Activities Committee in 2021 before (with a little encouragement from Bev!) ascending to the Regional Management Board in 2022. I must admit, prior to this, I was oblivious about what the RTPI NW did (apart from arrange CPD events and host an Annual Dinner), but wow, how naive I was! It's been a real eye opener to see first-hand all the hard work that is put in behind the scenes by our volunteers to support our members and promote the profession. I feel incredibly guilty now for taking it all for granted but alas, it's never too late to get involved, and I urge as many of you to volunteer where you can. I know how precious your time is, but you really can make a difference.

Over the past few years, I've had the privilege of Chairing the Awards Task Group which has given me fantastic exposure to some of the incredible work going on in our region. Judging winners is never easy, especially when there's such fierce competition, but it's been a great honour to present the awards at the Annual Dinner in 2022 and 2023. And even better to see Shakespeare North Playhouse (Knowsley Council) and Mayfield Park (Deloitte) winning national awards! This year, I was also very fortunate to accompany the RTPI President on her visit to the Isle of Man, from which we hope to forge mutually closer links with our planning colleagues on the island and vice-versa.

Anyway, that's enough about me. It's time to talk about 2024 and what lies ahead (and I don't just mean cheering on the home nations at the Euros!). As an Institute, the RTPI is on with some important initiatives at the national level which we are rallying behind.

Ahead of the General Election, we are calling on all political parties to support planners and to realise the potential of planning as part of our 'Planifesto 2024'. We are urging them to commit to action including: funding high-quality planning services; explaining where their manifesto promises will be delivered; empowering communities through local plans; committing to net zero; and working with local leaders to avoid piecemeal development. The intention is to ensure every community has access to the homes, infrastructure and support they need to prosper.

We have also launched the 'It Takes Planners & You' campaign, to rally support for planners at a time when local planning issues have become manipulated by naysayers spreading misinformation and hatred online and on social media. Worryingly, our members are increasingly becoming targets of abuse through these channels. Our campaign aims to tackle this by raising the awareness of the pivotal role planners play. Only by showing our support for planners and tackling misinformation head-on, can we ensure that our planning system continues to create liveable, healthy communities.

In the North West, we are aiming to build on our previous success. Our top priorities for 2024 include:

- 1. Working closely with our LPA Champions, we will continue exploring ways in which we can support our members in the public sector, particularly those facing adversity from internal and external pressures, including issues with funding, resources and recruitment;*
- 2. With a shortage of planners at all levels in the region, will be seeking to retain and attract talent, including those from under-represented groups and backgrounds. We will also be looking at how we can help those re-training from other professions or up-skilling from technical and supporting roles within planning, as well as guiding our Licentiate, Associate and Experienced Practitioner members through the APC process.*
- 3. Collaborating more closely as a network of planners and with our sister built and natural environment professionals across our vast region (from Manchester to the Isle of Man, to Chester and Carlisle), to share best practice and experience, forge new connections and ultimately deliver mutually beneficial outcomes for our members and communities.*

And of course, all of this is in addition to a fantastic programme of CPD sessions, social activities, Young Planners events, regional awards, our Annual Dinner, the Presidential Visit and the Annual General Meeting, in addition to the amazing work undertaken by our various task groups.

As a region, we'll also be keeping an eye out for the long-anticipated adoption of Greater Manchester's 'Places for Everyone', alongside the advancement of the Liverpool City Region 'Spatial Development Strategy'. And with so many regeneration schemes and exciting projects in the pipeline, it's a fantastic time to be planning in our region.

I'd very much welcome your input on the above, and if you think there is something we can do better, I am always open to suggestions. And it's not too late to get involved – we welcome all members, old and new.

Either way, I look forward to meeting as many as you as possible over the next 12 months and beyond.

Matt Dugdale
RTPI NW Chair 2024





RTPI North West
Royal Town Planning Institute

THE NORTH WEST PLANNING YEAR
**A REVIEW OF
2023**

Registered Charity Number: 262865

Registered Office Address:
Royal Town Planning Institute
41 Botolph Lane London, EC3R 8DL