

Cynllunio

The Journal of RTPI Cymru

Autumn 2024



2024 so far...

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Croesawn erthyglau yn y
Gymraeg.

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Contents

4	RTPI Cymru Awards for Planning Excellence
5	Wales Planning Conference
6	PCUK Wales and RTPI Cymru Tour of Wrexham
7	RTPI Cymru at the Eisteddfod
8	Wales Planning Consultants Forum/ Welsh Government Update
9	An Update from The Planning Officers Society Wales (POSW)
11	Placemaking Wales Charter
13	Unblocking The Phosphates Problem Through Collaboration
16	Case Note: Bradbury v. Brecon Beacons NPA
18	AI and Planning- benefits and downsides
19	Public Map Platform Project- an overview
21	RTPI Cymru Research Update/ Join the RTPI Cymru Executive Committee
24	Applications for the RTPI Cymru Policy and Research Forum
	Volunteering with Planning Aid Wales
27	RTPI Cymru Upcoming events

Front Cover: Summer Party and Wales Planning Conference pictures - Nick Treharne

Editorial

Welcome to the latest edition of Cynllunio. It has been a year of change for RTPI Cymru, which is why our first 2024 issue is slightly delayed. I started my new role as RTPI Cymru Director in March, and I have spent the last 6 months meeting members throughout Wales. If you would like to meet to discuss all things planning in Wales and how the RTPI can best support planners, please get in touch.

It has been an action-packed year already. I have written to the new First Minister Eluned Morgan MS setting out key asks for the planning profession and offering to meet, followed by a similar letter to our new Cabinet Secretary Rebecca Evans MS. In the next few days we'll be responding to WG's newly published Priorities for Government. In June we held our RTPI Cymru Planning for Excellence Awards ceremony and Wales Planning Conference over two days. Combining these events allowed more people to attend from further afield and created a real buzz. Thanks to our event sponsors Savills and FTB, to all the speakers and delegates, and to WSP for sponsoring post-conference networking drinks. More information on both events is featured in this edition. It is never too early to think about nominations for next year's Awards - let's celebrate our profession's achievements with pride. We also have a short write up about our presence at the Eisteddfod, and a look back at our joint tour of Wrexham with Place Collective UK. Still to come are the Spring Conference in North Wales (delayed to 2nd October due to the timing of my start), the Planning Enforcement Conference, the Professor Tony Hall lecture and the Autumn Briefing, at which RTPI President Lindsey Richards FRTPI will welcome this year's newly Chartered planners.

The RTPI elections for Vice President, Board of Trustees Nations and Regions representative and General Assembly have now closed and results will be announced imminently. Nominations for the RTPI Cymru Executive Committee are open until 27 September and I encourage you to put yourself forward to help shape RTPI Cymru's activities. We're also seeking members to join our Policy and Research Forum.

Finally, a big thank you to all our contributors for this edition. Please contact us if you would like to contribute content for our next edition in December.

Mark Hand,
Editor

Congratulations to our latest Chartered Town Planners

Congratulations to our latest members elected in Wales



Chartered:

Gethin Beynon
Gemma Carrieri
Jake Choules
Abbie Connelly
Megan Douglas
Alice Gardner
Luke Harrell
Margaret Henderson
Imogen Holgate
Leo Horton-Taylor
Sian Husband
Elen Jones
Jamie Lewis
Amy Longford
Cerys Matthews
Ffion Middleton
George Milburn
Joshua Morgan
Louis Pannell

Thomas Quille
Sion Roberts
Tobias Robinson
Darryl Rowlands
Nathan Slater
Sarah Smith
Catrin Stephens
Max Webb
Adeline Wilcox

Associate:

Hong Chung
Jack Collard
Rhiannon Harrop-Griffiths
Osian John
Michael Tuthill

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

www.rtpi.org.uk/membership/assessmentof-professional-competence/

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

Join us at the RTPI Cymru Autumn Briefing 2024

Newly Chartered and Associate Members have been invited to our Autumn Briefing event, now in its third year. We will be joined by Lindsey Richards, current RTPI President as part of her two day visit to Wales. This event will showcase Best Practice in Planning through presentations from some of our RTPI Cymru Awards for Excellence 2024 winners and celebrate newly Chartered members in Wales. We will also announce RTPI Cymru Awards for Academic Excellence winners for 2024. A light lunch will be served and the event is expected to finish around 2.30pm.

Tickets are available here: <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/events/2024/october/rtpi-cymru-autumn-briefing-2024/>



RTPI Cymru Awards for Planning Excellence



Now in its third year, RTPI Cymru Summer Party held in Morgan Arcade in June saw RTPI Cymru Executive Committee Chair Allan Archer MRTPI announce the winners of the RTPI Cymru Awards for Planning Excellence.

The Awards for Planning Excellence celebrate outstanding plans, projects and people that demonstrate the power of Planning. The Awards highlight exceptional examples of how planning and planners have a positive impact on our quality of life in creating exceptional places and protecting our environment.

Congratulations to our 2024 winners:

- **Excellence in Planning for a Successful Economy – Cardiff University Spark|Sbarc** submitted by DPP Planning
- **Excellence in Planning for a Successful Economy (Commended)- Phase 3, St. Modwen Park Newport** submitted by St. Modwen Logistics and Savills
- **Excellence in Planning for the Natural Environment -Llanwern Solar farm** submitted by Lighthouse Development Consulting Ltd
- **Excellence in Plan Making Practice –Wrexham Digital Place Plan** submitted by Owen Davies Consulting
- **Wales Small Planning Consultancy of the Year - Lighthouse Development Consulting Ltd**
- **Wales Small Planning Consultancy of the Year (Commended) - Amity Planning**
- **Wales Young Planner of the Year - Nia Roberts**



Left to Right: Allan Archer with Lighthouse Development Consulting Ltd, Nia Roberts, and St Modwen Logistics



Left to Right: Allan Archer with Owen Davies Consulting, Amity Planning, and DPP Planning. All pictures: Nick Treharne

Wales Planning Conference 2024

This year's Wales Planning Conference, held the day after our Awards ceremony, looked at how planning can contribute to a resilient and sustainable future through decarbonisation. The Conference discussed the impact planners can have in terms of where development is located, how modal shift can be supported, how planning can help reduce the carbon footprint of buildings, as well as decarbonising energy supply and construction.

We were pleased to welcome back the then Cabinet Secretary for Housing, Local Government and Planning Julie James MS who delivered a keynote speech in which she highlighted the vital role planners play in delivering essential outcomes that everyone needs such as affordable homes. She also invited the audience to 'blank-sheet thinking' how the planning system could be- a project which RTPI Cymru is currently working on.

The Conference also had sessions exploring the role of planners in decarbonisation by locating development in sustainable and well-connected locations, facilitated by Strategic Development Plans, Regional Transport Plans, placemaking at a local level, setting ambitious net zero policies in LDPs, sustainable tourism, decarbonisation of Listed and Heritage Buildings, but also looked at the economic impact of decarbonisation, and decarbonisation of energy supplies.

RTPI Cymru is grateful all the speakers and workshop facilitators who collectively covered an incredible amount of subjects which crucially included viewpoints from both planners and non-planners. We would also like to thank our sponsors - Savills and Francis Taylor Building (FTB) – their generous support as well as their contributions to the Conference are much appreciated. This year we also held a post-conference networking event sponsored by WSP which was a great success and an opportunity to keep the discussion going.

We were very pleased to see around 200 people attend the conference this year and the feedback we received has been very positive. The Wales Planning Conference next year will be on 19 June 2025 and will mark the 25th anniversary of RTPI Cymru- this will be one not to miss.

Pictures of the Conference: Nick Treharne



PCUK Wales and RTPI Cymru Tour of Wrexham

The Wrexham walking tour took place in August and had 6 main locations. The tour explored Wrexham's past, present and future with placemaking. Organised by Place Collective UK in partnership with RTPI Cymru, the event was hosted by Wrexham Council and Owen Davies Consulting.

Wrexham has a Placemaking Plan that was approved in July 2023. It identifies the following locations as opportunity areas:

- Wrexham Gateway
- Regent Street Gateway
- Island Green
- Lord Street / Queens Square
- Market Quarter
- Brook Street / Bridge Street

This tour started at Wrexham General Station where Wrexham Gateway was discussed. Currently the station sits opposite an area of vacant land and has limited transport links. Wrexham Gateway plans to provide office space, a transport hub and a new stand for the stadium. Along with this there are ideas of providing a plot for a high-end hotel to support the football stadium. Connectivity is limited, for example the roundabout which is too small for a bus to turn around meaning buses are unable to go to the station. This would be improved under Active Travel plans and the Transport Hub.

The next stop was at Wrexham Museum. On route the need for better active travel was highlighted. There are places where priority is given to traffic limiting walking and cycling ease. The plans are to make Mold Road corridor optimise active travel. Regent Street corridor also has the same issues and the proposed solution here is one-way traffic and cycle lanes in some areas as part of the active travel scheme.

Wrexham Museum provided a positive insight into work being done; it was an active construction site for "the museum of two halves". As well as a usual museum this introduces a new football museum, which is the first football museum in Wales. The museums will promote heritage even with so much change taking place. Here it was explained that Island Green is an opportunity site with a multi-storey car park not fit for purpose. We temporarily stopped at a beautiful archway on Hope Street where there was a thatched cottage in the middle of a city centre. Despite the cottage seemingly in an unusual place, it displayed the uniqueness that Wrexham has in the built environment and is a good example of why future developments must respect these variations in character, which many built up areas experience.

We then carried on to Queens Square, outside the library and council office where technology encourages visitors to use the city centre, Wrexham uses the VZTA (Virtual Zone Town App) platform. The VZTA platform and app, aims for a "Smart Town Ecosystem" and it is designed for visitors, local authorities and consumers, providing information about the place you are in. For businesses and Local Authorities live data can be collected which can be used to encourage more visitors. The app for visitors displays places to eat, stay and visit in the city also allowing for business to be promoted.



Furthermore, the council has digitalised posters as they found the public are much more likely to look at a screen than a paper poster, encouraging more people to use the centre for activities. Also, sensors have been dotted around to collect data on footfall through sending out a radio signal. This shows high usage places and can help work out what about the place increases footfall, further helping the shops and businesses. For example, “x street” is busy at 6pm which may encourage a business to try staying open longer for these potential customers. The technology is slightly more detailed than this, but it shows the positive use digitalisation can have on a city centre.

Then it was Henbals Street and “the Ryan Rodney Reynolds memorial park” and the plan is to have an outdoor cinema where the hippodrome used to stand. Positively it draws upon the history of the site by having an outdoor cinema meanwhile being innovative and creating more outdoor seating, being adaptable to the local shops and users. This would assist the general market as this is being regenerated to provide a range of shops, revitalising the market quarter.

Town Hill allowed us to see works in the making. The design of the new streets gives visual marks to pedestrian priority. One option originally had railings on either side of the street which was not chosen as the concept was to make Wrexham easier to walk around. These proposals here aim to enable businesses in this area to adapt to changing nightlife habits.

The next stop was by St Giles Way where we viewed some difficulties experienced in the regeneration, with an area of land may not be suitable for housing due to new policies of flood risk. This raises the question- what should be done with land like this- where there is not one clear solution. Such scenarios are not uncommon.

The tour ended at Tŷ Pawb. This is where the information point for tourist was relocated (originally at Queens Square) which had tourist souvenirs. The market is joined with an art gallery and has some lovely shops including some food markets. This has now created a hub for activities.

The Wrexham tour was insightful into what can be done to positively improve a place and encourage more use by the public meanwhile ensuring the pre-existing character remains. The proactive approach being used in Wrexham provides a good example of how new technologies can benefit a place. A special thanks to all who spoke on the tour and the other organisers of the event.

Georgina Nee is the Planning Policy Assistant for RTPI Cymru.

RTPI Cymru at the Eisteddfod

RTPI Cymru in partnership with Planning Aid Wales held engagement sessions with the public over the first weekend of the Eisteddfod in Pontypridd.

Using a map provided by Planning Aid Wales, attendees were invited to design their ideal place to live with stickers representing various places as well as selecting conservation areas. The aim of these informal sessions was to engage with the general public and showcase Planning and Placemaking.

Thank you to Cardiff Capital Region, Planning Aid Wales and Savills for supporting this event.



Wales Planning Consultants Forum

The Wales Planning Consultants Forum (WPCF) is a voluntary group of town planners representing the planning profession within the consultancy sector with a growing membership of town planners from both independent and multinational consultancies working across Wales. The purpose of the Forum is to bring together the expertise and knowledge of its membership to help shape the future of the Welsh Planning System by actively engaging with its planning partners and other stakeholders.



The key aims of the Forum are:

- To support the improvement of the planning system and its delivery to ensure it has the ability to offer an effective and efficient system to all users;
- To collaborate with a range of partners and stakeholders in order to seek to have a positive influence on the on-going vision and direction of the Wales Planning System. This includes the Welsh Government, PEDW, Senedd Cymru, RTPI Cymru, Design Commission for Wales, Natural Resources Wales and other planning representative bodies such as Planning Officers Society Wales (POSW), and other groups involved with the built environment in Wales;
- To provide constructive feedback and comment on planning issues and consultations, including early engagement, on approaches to planning policy and practice in Wales based on the extensive day to day practice, knowledge, skills and expertise of its members;
- To highlight good practice within the planning system, in both the public and private sector, for the overall improvement of the system generally;
- To provide a support mechanism to ensure that its members can share practice and seek advice on a range of planning issues affecting them on a daily basis in their development as professional planners

The Forum meets four times a year, with the option to attend in person or online.

Email wales@rtpi.org.uk to join.

Welsh Government Update

On 12 June 2023, the then Minister for Climate Change, Julie James MS introduced the infrastructure (Wales) Bill (now Act) into the Senedd. At introduction the Minister said:

"This Bill introduces a modern and simplified regime for the consenting of significant infrastructure projects in Wales, both on the land and in the territorial sea. Having an efficient and effective consenting regime is vital to the timely delivery of important infrastructure projects in Wales that make a positive contribution towards our social, economic and environmental prosperity and net-zero ambitions."



The Act undertook this through:

- establishing a unified infrastructure consenting process for specified types of major infrastructure, including energy, transport, waste, water and gas projects.

- replacing, either fully or partially, a number of existing statutory regimes for the consenting of infrastructure projects and rationalise the number of authorisations required to construct and operate such development into a single consent (to enable the development to be implemented)

Senedd scrutiny on the Act, from the overarching principles to detailed provisions, took place between 28 June 2023 and 19 March 2024. Numerous amendments were tabled during this time. The Act retains the key purposes as set out at introduction, and amendments have primarily strengthened the detail on the face of the Act and made changes to accommodate open floor hearings. This process culminated in approval by the Senedd on 16 April 2024 and Royal Assent on 3 June 2024.

Next steps

Prior to stage 4, two consultations were issued to gather evidence on the pre-application consultation requirements and fee system. 85 responses were received on the pre-application consultation requirements and 25 responses were received on the charging of fees. Officials have also engaged directly with a number of stakeholders and are considering the evidence.

In the autumn a comprehensive consultation paper covering the subordinate legislation to underpin the whole process will be published. It is intended to be able parties to see how the process will affect them, including the public, statutory consultees, and developers.

The Welsh Government will continue to work with stakeholders to inform the content of the subordinate legislation as we work towards implementing the new regime.

Neil Hemington MRTPI is Welsh Government's Chief Planner

An update from The Planning Officers Society Wales (POSW)

The Planning Officers Society Wales (www.posw.wales) provides the collective voice of Chief Planning Officers across Wales who are responsible for delivering planning services at Local Government level. We maintain a strong commitment to working collaboratively right across the public sector, and also alongside key commercial stakeholders, in order that we can be successful in addressing the difficult challenges that we all face in ensuring great places are delivered. In this regard, POSW has identified what we consider the five highest priority goals to work towards over the year ahead:



1. Significantly improved resources within planning authorities to enable effective service delivery, including increases in planning fees for services to operate on a full cost-recovery basis and a renewed focus on the recruitment of young planners into the profession;
2. Placemaking principles driving decision making across all Authorities and disciplines, including by those at the heart of delivering supporting infrastructure such as drainage and highways;
3. Increased rates of delivery of high-quality, sustainable forms of development – in particular new homes – achieved through improved collaborative working across disciplines and learning from best practice;
4. Resolution of matters relating to flood risk and phosphate/nitrate constraints, ensuring these do not affect the ability to deliver sustainable forms of development that are responsive to climate and nature emergencies;
5. Improved coverage of emerging replacement Local Development Plans that have reached advanced stages of preparation, with resources and delivery frameworks in place to enable preliminary work on Strategic Development Plans to commence.

POSW recently wrote to Julie James MS as the then Cabinet Secretary for Housing, Local Government and Planning to highlight these priorities. Regular, positive dialogue is now essential

to identify the steps that need to be taken to ensure solutions are agreed and changes made. This will be resumed once the new First Minister has confirmed her Cabinet in September. There is no doubt that collaboration between organisations is the only way to ensure that the difficult challenges we face in Wales are met, and the actions and decisions of the Welsh Government will be key to that.

In terms of securing **enhanced resources and increasing planning fees**, POSW has lobbied strongly about the need for a significant rise in statutory fees to be implemented in Wales. The then Cabinet Secretary expressed support for this in the Senedd which is certainly encouraging, and it does seem clear there is a will within Government to deliver the changes desperately needed in this regard. It remains critical that there are no further delays in bringing in these changes as soon as possible. In order to avoid further adverse effects on the ability of planning authorities across Wales to deliver an efficient and effective planning service, the short-term immediate priority must be to implement a significant percentage increase to statutory fees that recognises the years 'lost' to significant inflation increases. Following that, POSW is strongly of the view that there must be a commitment to annual increases above inflation to soon achieve the goal of a full cost-recovery planning system in Wales. This approach is in line with the recommendations of the work previously commissioned by the Welsh Government and published by Arup in January 2021.

When it comes to **increasing rates of delivery of new homes, including affordable homes**, POSW very much supports the work being progressed by the Welsh Government on this. It is critical we understand the reasons for low delivery rates and to identifying where changes and interventions are needed. Our priority goal in this area emphasises the importance of collaborative working and sharing best practise to address this. POSW is clear that, whilst there will undoubtedly be opportunities for improved ways of working within planning authorities, it is the need for improved alignment between planning and complementary disciplines that remains the most important area to see improvement.

Aligned to the issue of rates of delivery is the critical goal of ensuring placemaking is embedded more holistically across all sectors and disciplines that are fundamental to the delivery of sustainable development. POSW's priority goal in relation to placemaking specifically highlights the need for greater buy in of those disciplines delivering key supporting infrastructure, particularly drainage and highways. Whilst placemaking is undoubtedly driving decision-making within Local Planning Authorities more than ever, decisions made by Local Highway Authorities, SuDS Approval Bodies and other departments are often less guided by placemaking objectives when undertaking their functions. POSW will continue to do all it can to move this agenda and secure changes in approaches within Authorities. This will require support from Welsh Government, for example through changes to national policy and grant funding mechanisms, but also the private sector to ensure development proposals entering the planning system are founded on the principles of placemaking.

Throughout 2023 POSW highlighted strongly that the unresolved matters relating to flood risk constraints was a priority national issue to be addressed in terms of its impact on the future of development in Wales. Significant resources were committed to work collaboratively with NRW, the Welsh Government, and other partners to address significant issues arising from the proposed new TAN 15. This included facilitating work to consider revisions to the wording of the policy such that it will be capable of enabling sustainable development, resilient to climate change such as on appropriate brownfield regeneration sites and to deliver necessary infrastructure proposals. There is overall optimism about the nature and form of changes that POSW anticipates will be made to the TAN, having regard to the discussions held during the engagement process. There clearly remain concerns however regarding ongoing uncertainty across the industry surrounding the implementation of the new TAN, and the implications on development of any specific requirements that the new version will contain. This is continuing to have negative impact in respect of important investment decisions and regeneration projects, as well as on local authority development planning and funding activities. It is vital therefore that clarification is provided as soon as possible regarding the future publication of the new TAN15, including the anticipated publication date.

Finally, in regard to **phosphate/nitrate constraints** POSW supports the national commitment to

improving water quality within lakes, rivers, and streams, which of course must be balanced with the need to allow sustainable development to support our rural communities. Significant progress has been made since the First Phosphate Summit. POSW welcomes the Action Plan and the 'Team Wales' approach to collaborative working to ensure we seek appropriate mitigation measures that enable sustainable development to be constructed, such as much needed affordable housing. Notwithstanding this, it must be recognised that the unexpected introduction of NRW's Phosphate Planning Guidance in 2021 did have a significantly detrimental impact on the planning system in Wales and resulted in the progress of new development plans being halted and development proposals stalling for a number of years. Going forward there will be additional planning policy measures developed in relation to Marine SACs. It is critical that the launch of such measures and Marine SAC planning guidance is done in a manner that provides time for the development industry to adapt to these new measures accordingly. Specifically, it will be important that plenty of notice is given of any planning policy changes, and that there is a 'soft launch' and lead-in time to avoid the negative consequences that was experience on the introduction of NRW's Phosphate Guidance. Providing LPAs this lead in time would be consistent with taking a collaborative approach to identifying appropriate mitigation measures that will enable development to be delivered in accordance with any new guidance.

Tom Evans is the current chair of POSW (Planning Officers Society Wales).



Placemaking Wales Charter

Jen Heal is the Deputy Chief Executive of Design Commission for Wales. Mark Hand is the RTPI Director of Wales, Northern Ireland and Planning Aid Wales

In December 2018, Planning Policy Wales put placemaking at the heart of Welsh National Planning Policy. This signalled a commitment to placemaking from a strategic level down:

'Everyone engaged with or operating within the planning system in Wales must embrace the concept of placemaking in both plan making and development management decisions in order to achieve the creation of sustainable places and improve the well being of communities.'

Planning Policy Wales edition 12 para 2.1

Although the requirement was clear, there was still uncertainty about what placemaking was and how different organisations should go about it.

In 2019, the Welsh Government and Design Commission for Wales brought together a group of representatives from different built environment disciplines, including RTPI Cymru, in what became known as the Placemaking Wales Partnership. The group met several times in 2019 and 2020 to discuss the challenges and opportunities for placemaking in Wales and undertook various exercises, ultimately culminating in the co-creation of [the Placemaking Wales Charter and accompanying guidance document](#).

What is Placemaking?

"Placemaking" is a holistic approach to the planning and design of development and spaces, focused on positive outcomes. It draws upon an area's potential to create high quality development and public spaces that promote people's prosperity, health, happiness, and well-being in the widest sense.

Placemaking considers the context, function and relationships between a development site and its wider surroundings. This will be true for major developments creating new places as well as small developments created within a wider place.

Placemaking should not add additional cost to a development, but will require smart, multi-dimensional and innovative thinking to implement and should be considered at the earliest possible stage. Placemaking adds social, economic, environmental and cultural value to development proposals resulting in benefits which go beyond a physical development boundary and embed wider resilience into planning decisions.

Planning Policy Wales edition 12 page 14

The Placemaking Wales Charter identifies six principles that signatories agree to promote within their work. The headings of the principles are: People and Community, Location, Movement, Mix of Uses, Public Realm, and Identity. This has helped to move away from the idea that placemaking is just about public realm design as, without the early planning and design considerations such as location and the mix of uses of development, the conditions will not be right to achieve the desired public realm outcomes.

People and Community	Location	Movement
The local community are involved in the development of proposals. The needs, aspirations, health and well-being of all people are considered at the outset. Proposals are shaped to help to meet these needs as well as create, integrate, protect and/or enhance a sense of community and promote equality.	Places grow and develop in a way that uses land efficiently, supports and enhances existing places and is well connected. The location of housing, employment and leisure and other facilities are planned to help reduce the need to travel.	Walking, cycling and public transport are prioritised to provide a choice of transport modes and avoid dependence on private vehicles. Well designed and safe active travel routes connect to the wider active travel and public transport network and public transport stations and stops are positively integrated.
Mix of uses	Public Realm	Identity
Places have a range of purposes which provide opportunities for community development, local business growth and access to jobs, services and facilities via walking, cycling or public transport. Development density and a mix of uses and tenures helps to support a diverse community and vibrant public realm.	Streets and public spaces are well defined, welcoming, safe and inclusive with a distinct identity. They are designed to be robust and adaptable with landscape, green infrastructure and sustainable drainage well integrated. They are well connected to existing places and promote opportunities for social interaction and a range of activities for all people.	The positive, distinctive qualities of existing places are valued and respected. The unique features and opportunities of a location including heritage, culture, language, built and natural physical attributes are identified and responded to.

The Charter was launched at the 2020 RTPI Cymru conference and now has nearly 150 signatories from across the built environment disciplines. All three National Park Authorities and approximately half of the local authorities in Wales are currently signed up.

Local Authority Charter Signatories	
Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority Bridgend Council Carmarthenshire Council Eryri National Park Authority Monmouthshire Council Neath Port Talbot Council Newport Council	Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority Swansea Council Torfaen Council Vale of Glamorgan Council Wrexham Council

Given that placemaking is not the responsibility of any one particular discipline or department, it is important that local authorities sign up as a whole, rather than just the planning department. This helps to signify a collective approach internally and a way of doing things that leads to better placemaking outcomes.

A recent meeting of the Placemaking Wales Partnership identified encouraging and supporting the remaining local authorities to sign up as a key aim. If your organisation has not yet signed up to the Placemaking Charter and you would like to find out more, please contact placemakingwales@dcfw.org.

Unblocking The Phosphates Problem Through Collaboration

Throughout May and June 2024, RTPI Cymru hosted a series of webinars regarding the high levels of phosphorus in rivers in Wales. A variety of speakers addressed the cause, impacts, solution and future. Few people would have expected a single nutrient to become such a large-scale issue.

Phosphorus is a naturally occurring chemical that is vital to an ecosystem, however human activity has increased the levels in the delicate system. Phosphorus from human activity is released into the rivers through spreading and fertiliser use, treated sewage outflows from Wastewater Treatment Works (WwTW), untreated sewage from Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) or malfunctioning cesspits and septic tanks and through highway drains. Overabundant levels of Phosphorus causes eutrophication, where overproduction of algae occurs. This damages the water quality and reduces oxygen levels vital to plants and animals.

Why is it a planning issue? A very brief history

In 2016, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) recognised that the elevated level of phosphorus in some rivers was harming the environment, and introduced new phosphorus targets that were 50% to 80% stricter. It subsequently identified that five of Wales' nine Special Area of Conservation (SAC) rivers were failing to meet these new targets:

- the Rivers Cleddau, Usk and Wye were experiencing widespread or severe failings, with 88% of the River Usk affected;
- the lower reaches of the River Teifi; and
- localised failings affecting 38% of the River Dee.

In 2019 the Court of European Justice ruling on the Dutch Nitrogen Case established Appropriate Assessment (AA) is required to confirm the impact on water quality of a plan or project prior to permissions granted. This stage confirmed 'nutrient neutrality' was required for new developments proposals and water discharge permits have no net increase of nutrients for new developments.

How did this affect the planning system?

There are three ways a new development will not lead to further deterioration of SACs:

1. The development is not a source of phosphates.
2. More phosphates cannot enter a SAC river.
3. A measure is in place for 'nutrient neutrality'. (i.e., development does not cause a net increase in phosphorus entering the SAC river environment).

NRW communicated phosphate issues to the Chief Planning Officer at the affected Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) in January 2021, resulting in an abrupt halt to decisions on planning applications and a pause on Local Development Plans (LDPs). Without clarity of the scale of the issue, the solutions or the timescales, planners could not advise Elected Members, applicants, agents or other stakeholders.

Key actions and solutions

Gathering evidence:

To better understand the geographical extent of the problem, NRW provided LPAs with GIS mapping to pinpoint the affected river catchments. DCWW provided mapping of the areas served by different Wastewater Treatment Works (WwTW) and the location of their discharge points. This clarified which planning applications were within scope and which were unaffected.

DCWW undertook extensive sampling to identifying the causes of phosphate pollution in each river. It published its Source Apportionment GIS (SAGIS) evidence in February 2023. With the exception of the Teifi, agricultural activity was found to be the primary cause of phosphate pollution.

While providing clarity, this evidence also resulted in disquiet that planning applications for new homes and infrastructure were stalled despite causing minimal phosphate loading, while most agricultural activity continued seemingly unchallenged with the exception of new or enlarged intensive poultry units. This is because most agricultural activity does not require planning permission.

Phosphate Summits:

The then First Minister provided welcome leadership from the Welsh Government by calling a Phosphate Summit in Summer 2022, following which funding was confirmed for Nutrient Management Boards (NMBs). The NMBs were tasked with producing Nutrient Management Plans by March 2025. Further summits were held in Spring 2023, Winter 2023 and Spring 2024.

River Catchment Action Plan:

The March 2023 Failing SAC River Catchment Action Plan set out eight actions, which are being implemented:

Infrastructure investment:

DCWW mapped Wastewater Treatment Works against phosphate stripping capability and proposed growth areas in adopted and emerging LDPs. This allowed planned and additional investment to be targeted where it would have most impact. DCWW's action plan includes £100m investment (£40m to reduce CSOs and £60m to upgrade WwTWs). By 2030, DCWW expects to have removed at least 90% of its 'fair share' load in SAC rivers, with 100% achieved by 2032.

Phosphate calculators:

The DCWW investment is supplemented by phosphate calculators to take a catchment-based

approach. The West Wales Nutrient Management Board has led on the development of a nutrient calculator for the whole of Wales to ensure a consistent approach. However, the calculators themselves are place-specific and depend on factors such as soil composition and water quality in each river.

Future credit-trading might assist where there are no possible on-site solutions or infrastructure improvements within the vicinity of the development. This approach might align with a long-term emphasis on providing more nature-based solutions, working with other biodiversity schemes to introduce plants that naturally reduce phosphates along with the appropriate use of wetlands. This reflects the approach being taken in England.

Permit reviews:

To complement the above work, NRW is due to complete its review of permits in summer 2024. This review has looked at all WwTW environmental permits to review the acceptable level of phosphates allowable against existing discharge levels, to explore where there is appropriate 'headroom' to facilitate new development. However, it is acknowledged that this does not provide a long-term solution to improving water quality

Recent updates

June 2024 saw the case of *CG Fry & Son Ltd v Secretary of State for Levelling Up & Communities and Anor* [2024] EWCA Civ730 ruling the need for AA with outline, reserved matters and discharge of pre-commencement conditions decisions, even when the condition does not relate to drainage matters.

The recent ruling of *Bradbury v. Brecon Beacons NPA* [2024] EWHC 1242 (Admin) held that Planning Committee has an evaluation role including the Appropriate Assessment (AA) and needs to have the opportunity to see the AA before making its decision.

What are the future concerns?

The ability of planners throughout the sector (LPAs, NRW, DCWW, consultants, developers, HBF) to collaborate and find solutions has been key to facilitating development proposals whilst safeguarding the environment. However, there are some continuing concerns. For example, the approach described above applies only to fluvial SAC areas: are other areas affected too? The focus to date has been on phosphorus: are there other pollutants? What is the long-term funding for Nutrient Management Boards? Can resource-stretched LPAs and expert advisors (such as ecology officers and NRW) sustain the increased workload in reviewing additional information and undertaking Habitat Regulations Assessments?

"We've worked really hard in reviewing the evidence and proposing potential solutions. What we need now is the will and the drive to implement them."

Gail Pearce-Taylor, West Wales NMB

The work to date has succeeded in freeing-up much needed development while avoiding environmental harm. However, the long-term solution requires rivers to be cleaned up which will require a variety of actions, many of which sit outside of the land use planning system. The long-term solution lies not in dealing solely with the symptoms of the problem, but in dealing with the causes.

"Phosphorus in the watercourses is a bit like flooding and climate change. It's a point at which something as abstract as the nature emergency becomes tangible as an emergency in the everyday. It's a sign that ecological systems are out of balance and reaching a dangerous tipping point...we're using an essential resource at a totally unsustainable and damaging rate and threatening ecosystem integrity as well as damaging our own health and wellbeing. Like climate change, we are the unwitting architects."

Helen Lucocq, Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority

With thanks to our guest speakers, whose presentations helped provide the content for this article:

- Annabel Graham Paul, Barrister at Francis Taylor Building
- Barrie Davies MRTPI, Director at Asbri Planning
- Craig O'Connor MRTPI, Head of Placemaking at Monmouthshire County Council
- Emmeline Brooks MRTPI, Principal Planner and Harrison Moore MRTPI, Senior Planner at Arup
- Gail Pearce-Taylor, Programme Manager for the Teifi, Cleddau and Tywi Nutrient Management Board
- Helen Lucocq MRTPI, Strategy and Policy Manager at Bannau Brycheiniog National Park
- Ryan Norman, Development Growth Manager at Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water

Georgina Nee is the Planning Policy Assistant for RTPI Cymru. Mark Hand is the Director for RTPI Cymru

Would you like to contribute to a future edition of Cynllunio?

The copy deadlines for the next 3 quarterly issues of Cynllunio are:

- **Thursday 28 November 2024**
- **Thursday 27 February 2025**
- **Thursday 26 June 2025**

Email wales@rtpi.org.uk for more information

Case Note: Bradbury v. Brecon Beacons NPA

In **R (on the application of Dr Rosalind Bradbury) v. Awdurdod Parc Cenedlaethol Bannau Brycheiniog (Brecon Beacons National Park Authority) & anr.** [2024] EWHC 1242 (Admin), Mr Justice Jay considered the correct procedural approach to carrying out Appropriate Assessments under the Habitats Regulations when granting planning permission, in particular where a Planning Committee takes place before Appropriate Assessments are finalised and signed off. The decision is important for local authorities where routine practice has been to hold Planning Committees before Appropriate Assessments have been finalised, for example because they are awaiting a response from Natural Resources Wales.



The case concerned two agricultural developments within the River Wye Special Area of Conservation. It was not in issue that the Wye suffers from phosphate pollution and the developments required Appropriate Assessment under Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

Appropriate Assessments for both developments were prepared by the National Park's ecologist. They were an update from previous Appropriate Assessments which had been conducted in respect of the same developments (planning permission having been quashed by consent on two previous occasions for different reasons), in light of NRW's July 2022 revised Advice to Local Planning Authorities for planning applications affecting phosphorus-sensitive river SACs. The Park's ecologist completed the third version of the Appropriate Assessments on 3 March 2023. The Appropriate Assessments concluded no likely significant effects on the SAC, with mitigation. They were checked on the same day by the Park's Principal Planning Officer and sent to NRW for comment (in

accordance with the mandatory requirement to consult the nature conservation body under Regulation 63(3)). Members of the public were not consulted on the Appropriate Assessments, which was perfectly lawful, as public consultation is discretionary (Regulation 63(4)).

In the run up to the Planning Committee meeting, on 17 March 2023, Fish Legal, a not-for-profit organisation, wrote to the National Park voicing concerns about the previous Appropriate Assessments dated May 2022 which had been published in the context of the quashed planning permissions. They were concerned that the developments would introduce higher numbers of livestock leading to further stripping of the surface area towards the watercourses and urged that NRW were re-consulted.

On 20 March 2023, the National Park's Planning Officer emailed the Fish Legal letter and a cross-compliance report on the farm to NRW and asked them for their comments.

Planning Committee was held on 21 March 2023; Members having carried out a site visit on the previous day. Members could read from the officer's reports that there had been Appropriate Assessments in relation to the previous applications but they were not provided with copies of those. Neither were they provided with copies of the March 2023 versions of the Appropriate Assessments which were still in draft. They were told that the Appropriate Assessments had been updated and sent to NRW for review and, at the time of drafting the agenda, the response was awaited.

During the course of the Committee meeting, NRW emailed planning officers stating that their understanding was that there would be no increase in livestock numbers and that, on that basis, they were content with the Appropriate Assessments. The email was orally communicated to Members. It was thus obvious to Members that, as regards the substance of the matter, the Appropriate Assessments as 'signed off' would be stating that there would be no adverse effects to the integrity of the River Wye SAC, provided that the recommended planning conditions were in place. Members went on unanimously to resolve to grant planning permission for both developments.

The Head of Planning authorised the Appropriate Assessments on 21 March, after the Planning Committee had concluded. She emailed the relevant department requesting that the Appropriate Assessments be uploaded to the National Park's website, which happened on 23 March, along with the planning decision notices (which had been issued on 22 March).

The Claimant claimed that officers had failed to publish the Appropriate Assessments online within three clear days before the Committee Meeting held on 21 March 2023 (contrary to s. 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 as 'background papers'), and / or the decisions were procedurally unfair in that the failure to publish the Appropriate Assessments deprived interested parties of the opportunity to comment in circumstances where the nature and scope of the Appropriate Assessments were highly controversial, and officers deprived members of the Committee of highly material evidence upon which their decision to grant planning permission necessarily depended contrary to Regulation 63(5) of the 2017 Regulations. Regulation 63(5) provides that the competent authority may agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site.

Jay J found that there had been a technical breach of Regulation 63(5) because, whilst it is not a requirement to consult members of the public on the content of Appropriate Assessments, the Planning Committee needed to be able to form an "evaluative judgement" as to whether their conclusions were correct. He commented that a Planning Committee could lawfully disagree with the conclusions of the assessment. Even though the National Park's Planning Committee knew that there were draft Appropriate Assessments and what their ultimate conclusion would be, they were only referred to in general terms and the Committee Members were not appraised of the details. He also found that it was axiomatic that they should have been background papers to the Committee Report and so there was a breach of s. 100D of the 1972 Act. He said that the drafts should have been published online in advance of the meeting or, alternatively, they should have been ignored altogether and the Committee Meeting deferred.

Jay J declined, however, to quash the planning decisions because a modicum of reality needed to enter this discourse. Two previous Appropriate Assessments had entered the public domain and the issues were straightforward and well-known. The Planning Committee's decision would obviously have been the same and the breach was entirely technical.

In terms of practice going forward, Jay J did not rule out a Committee Meeting taking place before an Appropriate Assessment is finalised, commenting that it might be possible to provide a Committee with a draft Appropriate Assessment which had not been formally signed off for them to consider as part of their decision-making process and subsequently sign it off at officer level before issuing a decision notice, having received appropriate delegation from the Committee to do so, so long as the signed-off version was not materially different. What is important, however, is that the Committee (and, with them, the public) are able to form a judgement on the substance of the Appropriate Assessment itself. It is not a freestanding ecological exercise upon which Committee members can have no input.

Annabel Graham Paul is a Barrister for Francis Taylor Building who acted for the National Park Authority.

AI and Planning- benefits and downsides

What does artificial intelligence (AI) mean for planners? At Cardiff University, as part of our work on digitising the planning system, we've been exploring the upsides – and downsides - of AI for planning.



Improving understanding

Ever-increasing amounts of data tell us where things are, how people move, what resources are being used. Planners, however, lack the tools to make best use of this data. AIs can analyse vast volumes of data, very quickly, and identify patterns, trends, and anomalies. For example, historical planning data can be interrogated to make more informed decisions about future development needs, infrastructure requirements, and community impacts.

Architects and designers are using AI-powered 3-D modelling and virtual reality to create hyperrealistic immersive environments. Better visualisation of a proposed development (through interactive 3-D models rather than 2-D PDFs) allows planners, stakeholders, and the public to better comprehend the potential impacts of proposals.

Enhancing engagement

Chatbots and virtual assistants are getting better all the time and could instantly answer common questions, signpost to relevant services, and provide information about planning proposals. Chatbots and natural language processing could facilitate public consultation, asking questions in different formats and on different platforms, and then analysing the responses. AI-enabled insight from this feedback could then allow public authorities to spot common concerns and to prioritise their responses.

Increasing efficiency.

AI can streamline tasks, enable speedier turn-around, and reduce costs. AI algorithms could rapidly analyse planning applications, checking for completeness and compliance, identifying common issues, and shortening assessment and reply times. Many tasks and decisions in planning are repetitive and could be automated and Southwark Council's Find out if you need planning permission is a good example of the way forward. And when it comes to compliance, the ability of AI to rapidly analyse data and images (from cameras, drones, or satellites) allows automated or better-targeted enforcement. All this would reduce the workload on planners and allow more time to focus on

strategic tasks. Human oversight and decision-making will, of course, remain crucial. AI should be seen as a tool to augment human expertise, to help planners do their jobs better.

Overcoming the barriers

There's huge potential from AI, but, as planners will know, there are significant barriers to overcome. Some of these barriers are common to the whole public sector. AI models are only as good as the data they're trained on and can perpetuate or amplify existing biases, leading to unfair or discriminatory outcomes. There is a lack of transparency in the use of AI - some algorithms can be "black boxes" - making it difficult to understand or explain decisions. And AI may struggle with nuanced, context-dependent aspects of life that humans understand intuitively.

The planning system needs to get the basics right in data standardisation and data quality. This is the foundation on which streamlined systems or AI-driven efficiencies will be built. England is moving forward on standardisation (planning.data.gov.uk) and it would seem sensible for Welsh initiatives to be consistent with this.

Then there's resourcing. Local authorities and their planning departments have faced years of cuts. Harnessing digitisation, big data and AI, could be transformative, but this does need investment in technology, software and data infrastructure. Better sharing of systems and learning from leading local authorities can help, but there is a strong case for investment to drive future productivity.

Finally, we need increased awareness and skills in the profession. Senior leaders need to understand the possibilities and support change. Individual planners need to make capabilities in big data, digital systems, and AI part of their professional toolkit. And the RTPI and University planning schools, like ours, need to ensure that this is an integral part of our research and support and of planners' education.

Professor Peter Madden, OBE is a Professor of Practice in Future Cities, School of Geography and Planning, Cardiff University

If you would like to stay informed about our regular CPD sessions on digital planning for professional planners, please email gandpenquiries@cardiff.ac.uk

Public Map Platform Project- an overview

Based on Ynys Mon / Anglesey, and working with stakeholders on the Island, the Public Map Platform (PMP) (<https://publicmap.org/en>) is a two-year research project, which started in autumn 2023, concerned with enabling individuals and local communities to map the places which are important to them using digital tools. Maps have traditionally been the domain of organisations, such as local government, who plan and regulate access to various natural and social resources, and maps are an intrinsic part of the lexicon of planners and decision makers (<https://digital4planning.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/A-Digital-Future-for-Planning-Full-Report-Web.pdf>). But the emergence of digital tools and technologies and the move towards open-data is shifting who can map, and what can and should be mapped, particularly at the local level (<https://www.stantec.com/content/dam/stantec/files/PDFAssets/UK/better-places-social-value-toolkit-stage-one-report.pdf>). The PMP project is exploring how these new digital technologies and data can be used by local communities to map their local areas. By doing so, the PMP project will help them engage and participate more fully in the planning process and input directly into the decision-making that affects them.



An important part of the project is a focus on children and young people whose views are often overlooked but, as the future generation of Wales, they will be affected the most by the current decisions made by policymakers and planners. Although we are using a wide range of engagement approaches, especially with children, digital tools are the principal methods for collecting a whole range of mapping data. We have adopted an open-source approach and are using several free but powerful open sources tools, as well as developing our own. OpenStreetMap (OSM) is the mapping ecosystem which will host the bulk of the PMP mapping data and provide resources for communities to map their own data (<https://publicmap.org/en/blog/we-can-all-now-be-mappers>).



We have developed a range of training resources to help mappers use OSM and PMP mapping tools. School-based activities, Lle Llais (Voice Place) events (<https://publicmap.org/en/blog/designing-and-building-the-rural-roaming-room-lle-llais>), and other community and citizen science activities (<https://publicmap.org/en/blog/how-measuring-air-quality-can-help-us-to-build-a-healthier-environment>) during the summer and autumn of 2024 will expose and promote the PMP project across the Island and encourage and facilitate the general public to become community mappers. We are working with Anglesey County Council, Natural Resources Wales and other stakeholders who collect data about the Island, to ensure existing datasets are also mapped on the platform.

The PMP website will be launched at the end of the summer 2025 and will be an exciting and innovative platform to display and interrogate the wide variety of data collected during the project using bespoke symbology and multimedia alongside more conventional cartographic designs. There will be an emphasis on creating map mashups of data from existing datasets and those collected by the local communities. By carefully curating the data, and adding relevant metadata tags, we hope to begin to map variables and metrics relating to the Wales Well-being of Future Generations Act at the local level, getting local communities to fill in some of the data gaps. We will also be investigating new ways of searching the map, including using AI to facilitate more natural language search terms and to bring together different types of data onto the map.

Professor Scott Orford is a Professor in Spatial Analysis and GIS at the School of Geography and Planning, Cardiff University and Co-Director and Cardiff lead of the Public Map Platform Project.

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Make sure your details are up to date by going to 'Login' on the RTPI website so we can stay in contact.

www.rtpi.org.uk/profile



RTPI Cymru Research Update

‘Scoping the potential for digital planning to ease resource pressures and improve planning outcomes’

RTPI Cymru are pleased to be working with Dr Ruth Potts and Dr Brian Webb from Cardiff University on a project that will explore the current capacity of Local Planning Authorities to engage in digital planning in Wales.

The work will look at digital planning tools currently in use in across Wales, digital skills and skills gaps within planning, along with good practice in Wales.

It is hoped this work will provide a baseline and form the foundation for further work in this area, with the broader aims of easing resource pressures in planning and improving planning outcomes.

We look forward to keeping RTPI Cymru members updated as the research progresses.

If you are interested in finding out more about our RTPI policy, practice and research work, please email walespolicy@rtpi.org.uk or visit <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/find-your-rtpi/rtpi-nations/rtpi-cymru/policy-and-research/>

Rhian Brimble is the Policy Officer for RTPI Cymru and can be contacted by e-mail: rhian.brimble@rtpi.org.uk



Join the RTPI Cymru Executive Committee

Are you passionate about shaping the future of planning in Wales? Joining our Executive Committee is a fantastic way to be involved.

The Executive Committee's remit includes to:

- supervise, promote and direct the Institute's relations in Wales on planning issues (other than education and membership), whether with Welsh Government and local government, other professional bodies, pressure groups or the general public
- implement and monitor the EC's policies for the development of planning thought, to review those policies from time to time; to recommend any modifications or changes; and to develop related policies within Wales
- support and assist the National Director in undertaking their duties
- inform the Board of Trustees of issues that the Committee considers that it should be made aware of
- support members in their professional activities

We are keen to encourage a wide and diverse leadership so that the views, experience and knowledge of all of our members will continue to enrich our work.

The following roles are available:

- Junior Vice Chair (2025) – and progressing to Chair in 2027
 - Representative on General Assembly (2025 and 2026)
 - Chartered Member (2025 and 2026) – three vacancies
 - Licentiate/ Student (2025 and 2026) – two vacancies
- Associate or Legal Member (2025 and 2026) – one vacancy

To submit your nomination click [here](#) - nominations close on 27 September at 5pm.

Emma and Tom, two members currently on the Executive Committee share their insights below. Read on to be inspired.

Emma Watkins MRTPI (General Assembly Representative)

I'm proud to say that I have been volunteering for RTPI on and off for well over 25 years; it spans my whole education and career in planning. It all started on the MSc in City and Regional Planning at Cardiff University (last century!) when we all had the opportunity to have free student membership of the RTPI. It was a no-brainer to join planning's professional institute.



Shortly after joining, I volunteered to be one of the post graduate student representatives for the MSc in City & Regional Planning on the then RTPI South Wales Branch. My first taste of getting involved with RTPI events was during the first year of the MSc. The Young Planners Conference was happening at Glasgow University, so our year borrowed a university mini-bus and drove up for the weekend. We had a great time (won't mention how we got lost despite having about 10 geography degrees between us!) and suggested it could come to Cardiff the following year. The Young Planners Committee agreed, and it was great to get involved with supporting the conference in Cardiff with the National Young Planners Committee (chaired that year by Victoria Hills, who is now the RTPI's Chief Executive).

Since my student days, I've enjoyed a variety of roles across the RTPI in Wales and at a national level including being one of the founding members of Young Planners Cymru, various positions on the Executive Committee across multiple years and was proud to be Chair in RTPI's centenary year in 2014.

Being Chair led to multiple opportunities to represent RTPI and to help raise my own profile in planning as I attended and chaired conferences, meetings, dinners and advisory groups. I've also had the opportunity to be a judge on the RTPI Planning Excellence Awards across a broad range of categories in both people and place awards at the local level in Wales and nationally and at the other end of spectrum I've worked with RTPI to encourage the next generation of planners at careers events. Most recently I've enjoyed representing RTPI Cymru at RTPI General Assembly for a second two-year term and a new position for me this year is sitting on Membership and Ethics Committee, at a pivotal time for our profession. I was also invited to represent planners in last years 'it takes planners &' campaign video which although totally out of my comfort zone, made me very proud to represent a profession I care deeply about.

The opportunities for volunteering are wide and varied, and different roles will require different levels of commitment. Something like attending a careers event could be a couple of hours to a whole morning or afternoon of your time. In contrast sitting on executive committee or general assembly would include 4 meetings a year (per committee) with some online and some in person. So, depending on where you're based this could involve travel within Wales for executive committee or perhaps to London, Birmingham or Manchester for General Assembly, with a commitment to read and review papers in preparation for the meeting. Judging the awards can vary, depending on the number of entries to the award category, but on average a couple of days of reviewing entries plus a couple of days for site visits (if judging at the local level) and another day or so for discussing with your fellow judges and for writing up your judges' comments.

If you were to ask me, why get involved, the simple answer is why not? You've got nothing to lose and everything to gain! Your professional profile will grow, and you will make new connections and friends, will have countless opportunities for networking, for influencing and you will be challenged. You will also enhance the full set of interpersonal skills, great for the CV if you're not getting the opportunities in your current role.

Volunteering also gives you an insight into the vast amount of work the RTPI does representing the profession. I too often hear people say that they don't think RTPI works hard enough, or they don't

see the benefit in membership. I promise you by getting involved your view will change. At a time when our profession is more under pressure and in the spotlight than I can ever remember if you're asking yourself what can I do to make a difference? Volunteer!

Tom Molyneux-Wright MRPTI (Corporate Member)

As a chartered planner and Associate Director at DPP, based in Cardiff, I have spent nearly a decade working in the planning profession. Since graduating from university, I've been a member of the RTPI, finding value in its resources and



network. However, it wasn't until January 2024 that I took my involvement to the next level by joining the RTPI Cymru Executive Committee. This role is my first experience volunteering with the RTPI, and it has already proven to be rewarding.

Joining the Executive Committee

My decision to join the RTPI Cymru Executive Committee came after seeing a call for new members last year. The committee comprises a diverse group of planners, each bringing different experiences and perspectives to the table. Our role is to oversee and promote the Institute's work in Wales on planning issues, support the National Director in their duties, and assist members in their professional activities. From the meetings I've attended, it's evident that we all share a common goal: to promote the RTPI and planning as a career, ensuring the profession continues to evolve and attract future members.

The role

One of the most rewarding aspects of my role on the committee has been the opportunity to engage with a broad range of planners. The meetings have not only expanded my professional network but also introduced me to new ways of thinking.

The role has also given me a deeper understanding of the RTPI's work and the opportunity to review new research and have a voice in shaping the RTPI's direction. From my interactions so far, I can see that the committee contributes to helping influence the future of our profession, ensuring it remains dynamic and responsive to the needs of our communities.

Balancing commitments

Before joining the committee, I wondered whether I could balance this voluntary role with my existing professional and personal commitments. I have quickly discovered that the role is thoughtfully structured to accommodate busy schedules. The committee meets four times a year – two meetings in person and two online. In preparation, we receive papers and an agenda, allowing us to review the material in our own time and come prepared for meaningful discussions.

Beyond these scheduled meetings, there are numerous opportunities to get more involved. Whether it's promoting the RTPI and the profession at local career fairs, contributing to research, or supporting other broader RTPI initiatives, the level of additional involvement is up to the individual. This flexibility makes the role highly manageable, and the experience and networking opportunities make it very worthwhile.

Looking ahead

Reflecting on my experience so far, I can confidently say that volunteering with the RTPI has been a positive experience. It has broadened my professional network, deepened my understanding of the role the RTPI plays in promoting the planning profession, and provided a platform to contribute meaningfully to its future. For anyone considering getting more involved with the RTPI, I wholeheartedly recommend reaching out. I look forward to continuing my journey with the committee and to seeing where this experience will lead me next.

Applications for the RTPI Cymru Policy and Research Forum (2025-2026)

It is a busy and interesting time for planning in Wales and with so much on the agenda, there has never been a better time to get involved with your professional body.

RTPI Cymru are pleased to be inviting applications from RTPI Chartered, Fellow and Associate members from across Wales to join the next RTPI Cymru Policy and Research Forum, commencing in January 2025.

RTPI Cymru's Policy and Research Forum plays a key role in the work of RTPI Cymru, including:

- Supporting the development of RTPI Cymru planning and related policy positions, including advising on responses to consultations;
- Contributing to establishing RTPI Cymru positions;
- Promoting the use of research, evidence and the good practice of planning across Wales.

We look forward to welcoming applications from Chartered, Fellow and Associate members, across Wales who have an interest and experience in the full range of planning policy issues. We encourage applications from members from diverse backgrounds and sectors. Different experiences and views are essential for generating ideas and holding effective discussion.

In turn, being a member of the Policy and Research Forum provides the opportunity to:

- Develop and share individual views;
- Form professional friendships;
- Contribute to continuing professional development (CPD).

Much of the Forum's work is carried out via email, with the majority of our work taking place between meetings. Forum members are required to join around four meetings per year, which will be a mixture of online and face to face.

Applications must be submitted by 5.00 pm on Monday 14 October 2024.

For further information and to apply please visit [RTPI | Policy and Research Forum](#)

Volunteering with Planning Aid Wales

Did you know that hundreds of planners in Wales have volunteered with Planning Aid Wales over the years?



Planning Aid Wales
Cymorth Cynllunio Cymru

When we ask new recruits why they've chosen to volunteer, we always get a slightly different answer. Some say they do it to give something back or to alleviate social exclusion, whilst others say they need to gain experience or keep in touch with planning. Whatever the reason, they all agree on is the value that volunteering with Planning Aid Wales brings.

The planning aid service in Wales was started in 1978 by a small group of committed and energetic volunteers. Ever since then volunteers have remained central to providing a quality planning aid

service for the people of Wales.

Planning Aid Wales is a registered charity that provides information, advice and support to members of the public in Wales, and more generally promotes public participation in the planning process. We would not have been able to do this over the past 45 years without our dedicated network of volunteers who have lent a little of their time and a lot of their expertise to us to help us achieve our goals.

We offer a wide range of benefits and experiences to volunteers in return and are committed to continuously improving our standards.

We support Continuous Professional Development and provide opportunities to work in different fields of planning, and at the same time offer a range training courses, networking opportunities and social events.

We also offer a different perspective on the planning system in which communities are given a platform to help shape their own environments.

As a volunteer with Planning Aid Wales, you can choose to get involved in a variety of activities:

- We provide a telephone and email Helpline service which provides eligible callers with advice and support across the spectrum of planning issues. Much of this work is done by fully qualified planning volunteers.
- Volunteers help deliver training and other support to community groups. For this, we need experienced, qualified planners, people with facilitation, training and mediation skills.
- Planning Aid Wales produces a range of guidance publications and learning materials to explain the planning system to lay people. You can volunteer to write publications content, or as a non-planner you can help with translation, proofreading or illustrations.

Volunteers can choose how much time they want to commit and on which subject areas they want to work. Some deliberately choose to broaden their horizons by working in areas they wouldn't normally come across in their day job.

Please watch our volunteers' experience in their own words:



If you are interested in any of the roles and would like more information, visit www.planningaidwales.org.uk/volunteering or contact deb@planningaidwales.org.uk

Oeddech chi'n gwybod bod cannoedd o gynllunwyr yng Nghymru wedi gwirfoddoli gyda Cymorth Cynllunio Cymru dros y blynyddoedd?

Pan fyddwn ni'n gofyn i recriwtiaid newydd pam eu bod nhw wedi dewis gwirfoddoli, rydym ni bob amser yn cael ateb ychydig yn wahanol. Mae rhai yn dweud eu bod nhw'n ei wneud i roi rhywbeth

yn ôl neu i leddfu allgáu cymdeithasol, tra bod eraill yn dweud bod angen iddynt ennill profiad neu gadw mewn cysylltiad â chynllunio. Beth bynnag yw'r rheswm, maen nhw i gyd yn cytuno arno yw'r gwerth mae gwirfoddoli gyda Cymorth Cynllunio Cymru yn ei sgil.

Dechreuwyd y gwasanaeth cymorth cynllunio yng Nghymru ym 1978 gan grŵp bach o wirfoddolwyr ymroddedig ac egniol. Byth ers hynny mae gwirfoddolwyr wedi parhau i fod yn ganolog i ddarparu gwasanaeth cymorth cynllunio o safon i bobl Cymru.

Mae Cymorth Cynllunio Cymru yn elusen gofrestredig sy'n darparu gwybodaeth, cyngor a chymorth i aelodau'r cyhoedd yng Nghymru, ac yn fwy cyffredinol yn hyrwyddo cyfranogiad y cyhoedd yn y broses gynllunio.

Ni fyddem wedi gallu gwneud hyn dros y 45 mlynedd diwethaf heb ein rhwydwaith ymroddedig o wirfoddolwyr sydd wedi rhoi ychydig o'u hamser a llawer o'u harbenigedd i ni i'n helpu i gyflawni ein nodau.

Rydym ni'n cynnig ystod eang o fanteision a phrofiadau i wirfoddolwyr yn gyfnewid ac rydym wedi ymrwymo i wella ein safonau yn barhaus.

Rydym ni'n cefnogi Datblygiad Proffesiynol Parhaus ac yn darparu cyfleoedd i weithio mewn gwahanol feysydd cynllunio, ac ar yr un pryd yn cynnig ystod o gyrsiau hyfforddi, cyfleoedd rhwydweithio a digwyddiadau cymdeithasol.

Rydym ni hefyd yn cynnig persbectif gwahanol ar y system gynllunio lle rhoddir llwyfan i gymunedau helpu i lunio eu hamgylcheddau eu hunain.

Fel gwirfoddolwr gyda Cymorth Cynllunio Cymru, gallwch ddewis cymryd rhan mewn amrywiaeth o weithgareddau:

- Rydym ni'n darparu gwasanaeth Llinell Gymorth dros y ffôn ac e-bost sy'n rhoi cyngor a chymorth i alwyr cymwys ar draws y sbectwm o faterion cynllunio. Mae llawer o'r gwaith hwn yn cael ei wneud gan wirfoddolwyr cynllunio cwbl gymwys .
- Mae gwirfoddolwyr yn helpu i ddarparu hyfforddiant a chymorth arall i grwpiau cymunedol. Ar gyfer hyn, rydym ni angen cynllunwyr profiadol, cymwys, pobl sydd â sgiliau hwyluso, hyfforddiant a chyfryngu.
- Mae Cymorth Cynllunio Cymru yn cynhyrchu amrywiaeth o gyhoeddiadau canllaw a deunyddiau dysgu i egluro'r system gynllunio i leygwyr. Gallwch wirfoddoli i ysgrifennu cynnwys cyhoeddiadau, neu fel rhywun nad yw'n gynllunydd gallwch helpu gyda chyfieithu, prawffdarllen neu ddarluniau.

Gall gwirfoddolwyr ddewis faint o amser maen nhw am ei ymrwymo ac ar ba feysydd pwnc maen nhw am weithio. Mae rhai yn dewis ehangu eu gorwelion yn fwriadol trwy weithio mewn meysydd nad fyddent fel arfer yn dod ar eu traws yn eu swydd ddyddiol.

Gwylwch brofiad ein gwirfoddolwyr yn eu geiriau eu hunain:



Os oes gennych chi ddiddordeb mewn unrhyw un o'r rolau ac yr hoffech chi ragor o wybodaeth, ewch i www.cynllunaidcymru.org.uk/gwirfoddoli neu cysylltwch â deb@planningaidwales.org.uk

RTPI Cymru upcoming events

Don't miss out on the following events for the remainder of 2024:

- [02 October 2024- RTPI Cymru North Wales Conference- Planning for Sustainable Communities](#)

The Conference will discuss how Planning can safeguard and promote the Welsh Language, as well as ways of ensuring a sustainable future for rural communities.

Topics already confirmed: Engaging Communities when preparing LDPs; Sustaining rural communities via affordable housing delivery; Article 4 Directions - Success, Challenges and Results; Welsh Language Commissioner report- Empowering Communities, Strengthening the Welsh Language; The Value of Place Planning - Planning Aid Wales workshop

Some sessions will be delivered in Welsh- simultaneous translation will be available.

- [22 October 2024- RTPI Cymru Autumn Briefing 2024](#)

Join us for our Autumn Briefing where we will be joined by Lindsey Richards, current RTPI President as part of her two day visit to Wales.

We will showcase Best Practice in Planning and welcome newly Chartered members in Wales. We will also announce RTPI Cymru Awards for Academic Excellence winners for 2024.

- [12 November 2024- Professor Tony Hall Lecture](#)

Professor Tony Hall sadly passed away in 2022 and had bequeathed funding for the RTPI to set up a lecture series in his name, with the first one being held last year in Wales.

This year's speaker will be announced shortly. The lecture will be held at the Glamorgan building in Cardiff and will be followed by a drinks reception- but will also be available to live stream on BigMarker.

- [14 November 2024- Wales Enforcement Conference 2024](#)

Our Conference dedicated to Enforcement will be back on 14th November in Llandrindod Wells- with case studies, workshops and presentations throughout the day. Speakers and topics to be announced.

Next year RTPI Cymru will be celebrating their 25 year anniversary- how would you like to celebrate this special milestone? Let us know by emailing wales@rtpi.org.uk

The next edition of Cynllunio will be published w/c 16 December