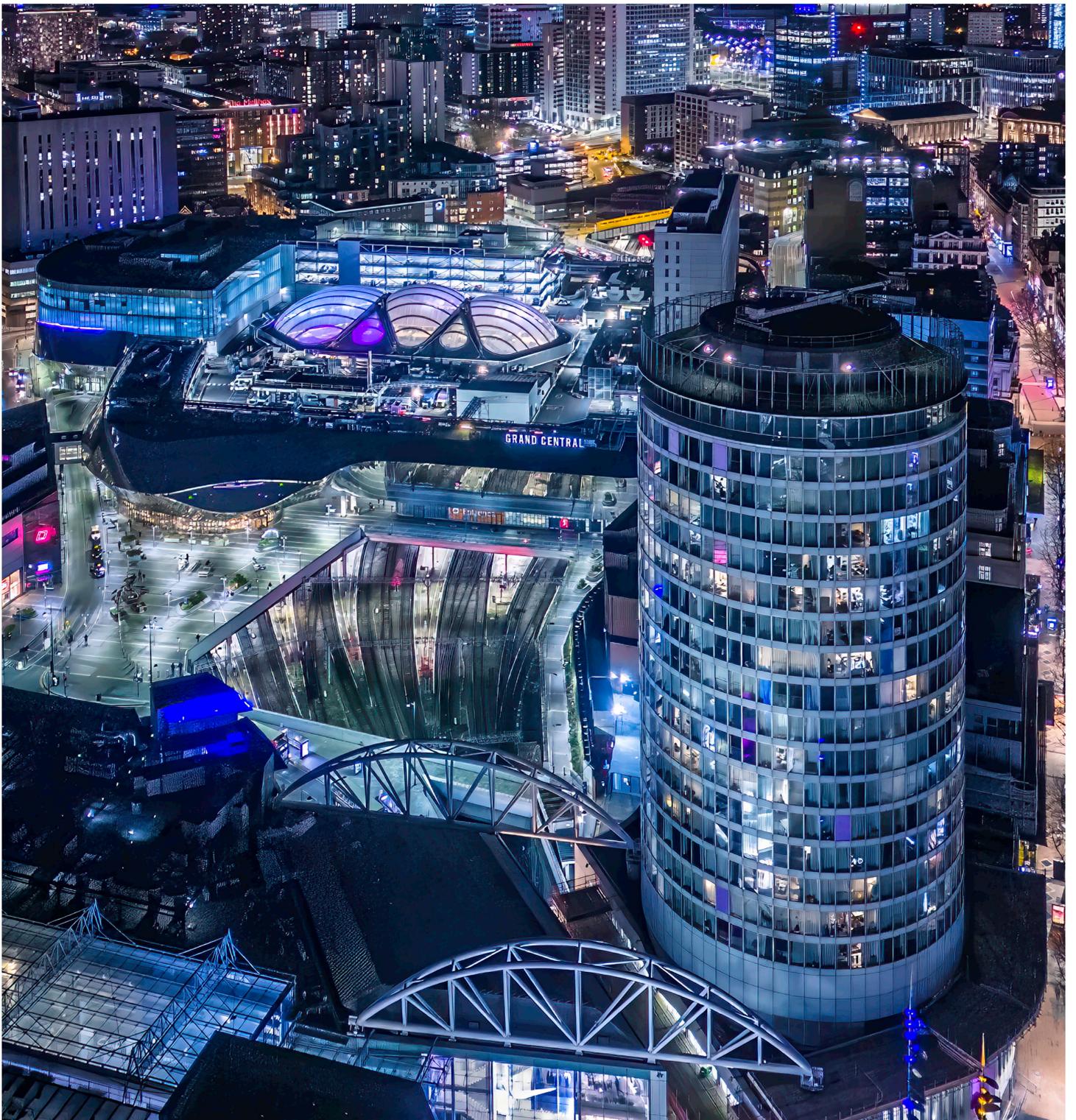


MAGAZINE FOR THE RTPI WEST MIDLANDS

# TRIPWIRE





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Cover Photo:  
Birmingham City  
Centre,  
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[Photography](#)

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Inside cover image:  
Hong Kong today  
  
(Source: Information  
Services Department,  
HKSAR Government)

# Tripwire Editorial

**Well it's issue 111, or “eleventy-one”, as my South Birmingham neighbour-from-another-era, J.R.R. Tolkien, wrote it in his famous trilogy. A number that is also considered unlucky by some as a score in sport. But fear not readers, for Tripwire returns in full health, and fatter than ever, for your delectation.**

In this issue we're delivering your usual RTPI updates, which include a motivational prep talk on the importance of planners and the future ahead of us by the current RTPI president, Lindsey Richards. We're also signposting upcoming events, and I especially look forward to seeing many of you at the Winter Reception in November (which is worth it for the venue alone and the stunning views across the city skyline of Birmingham, not unlike the one on our front cover for this issue).

## ... we go the across the globe to the sweltering and highly developed climes of Hong Kong ...

This issue also brings back two popular features which we kicked off in the Spring/Summer edition: It Takes Planners & ... and Global Voices. For the former feature, this time it's Asima Adnan's turn to tell us all about her story and pathway into planning, offering a not-normally-understood perspective on profession, while for the latter we go all the across the globe to the sweltering and highly developed climes of Hong Kong to learn all about how planners there interact with the public, handle some of the most important assets in the world for transport, and all the while balance the impacts of development on the remaining rural communities and the natural areas of their archipelago.

We'll bring you back to the home region with an article on our comparably humble home-grown heritage, taking you through the history of a park you've possibly overlooked in Walsall, to learn about it's detailed history, and all about the life and work of the visionary architect who helped bring his vision to the town.

And finally, we take you back in time again with Tripwire Time Capsule to marvel at the advancement of renewable technology over the last 20 years, and the contribution of wind power from the West Midlands.

And if all of this leaves you inspired, ready to pick up the scale ruler and set to repairing the myriad 'bads' in our 'public good' as a planner should, then consider our Call Out on the final page, and whether you may be able to help showcase the work of your peers at home and abroad through your own ideas, research and writing skills.

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



## CHAIR'S COMMENT

# Chair's Introduction

**Wow, what a whirlwind the past 6 months have been! Not only has time passed more quickly than a formula one car crossing the finishing line, but we are now in the full depths of Autumn – the darker mornings and nights, crisp leaves falling to the ground, changing colours around us, there is much to love about the season.**

When I think about the past 6 months, I think of what else has ch-ch-ch-changed (as I sing rather badly to myself). Probably most notably is the change in Government. After many years of governance by the Conservative Party (and I've count of the number of Prime Ministers), we are now governed by the Labour Party who have outlined a radically bold vision for town planning which promises to reshape communities and promote sustainability. Housing (including affordable housing), green spaces and infrastructure development are some of the key themes which Labour aim to address the most pressing challenges faced by our communities.

True to their word, a consultation on the proposed changes to the NPPF was published in the early days of their tenancy, a consultation which I hope many of our members have contributed to regardless of whether you work in the public or private sector. But what will this mean for the profession moving forward? The lack of mention of transitional periods is somewhat worrying and may halt many Local Plans in the early stages of their plan-making process, or indeed stall those which are further along the process, past Regulation 19 stage. How much this will impact upon local planning in the short term is yet to be seen, and much like with the introduction of biodiversity net gain, will most likely be a learning curve for all involved.

For me, during my tenure as Chair of the West Midlands RTPI, I love this season of change – it gives me the opportunity to reflect on what I have implemented ready to pass the baton on to Maria Dunn, our current Vice Chair.

We've held many successful and well attended CPD events on a wide range of topics which has been compiled from results of what our members would like to see on the calendar. I've attended various STEM events to promote planning as a profession to school children. We held the regional Awards and Ball which was a huge success and I awarded my Chairs Award to the beaver project at Trentham Gardens. The project went beyond the realms of planning for a beaver enclosure and drove to the heart of the project which was to encourage people to get out and about, visit Trentham, enjoy dawn chorus walks and get back to nature. For me, that meant improving our physical and mental well-being – a core theme for me this year, as I eluded in Spring's edition of Tripwire.

Following on from this, we have our upcoming Winter Reception, held at Shoosmith's offices where we will focus on the key highlights of this year, celebrate all those that have passed their APC, and look forward to the year ahead. It is the opportunity for us to say thank you to our members for their continued support and to network with our colleagues and peers. I do sincerely hope to see many of you there, please do come and say hi, I promise I don't bite!

—  
**Victoria Lane**  
MRTPI  
*RTPI West  
Midlands Chair*



## RTPI PRESIDENT

# Report from the President's Reception



**In October, the RAC and RMB had the pleasure of welcoming the RTPI President, Lindsey Richards FRTPI, to the West Midlands Region. The two-day programme included visits to both planning schools in Birmingham, a guided tour of the new University Train Station, the STEM facilities at Birmingham City University and the re-development of the University of Birmingham Campus. This was followed by visits to the HS2 development in Birmingham city centre and a round table discussion with Sandwell Council.**

Tripwire reports on the RTPI President's speech at the University of Birmingham. In this article, we see a vision that chimes with Asima Adnan's work (see *It Takes Planners*, below) in getting young people into planning. Lindsey Richard's message for the undergraduate students in the room: Planners are critical to the country's future, the public sector is calling, and better prospects are on the horizon.

Surrounded by the bones and fossils that adorn the exhibits in our unique setting of the Lapworth Museum of Geology, Charles Goode opened the evening's event with a welcome to the students, staff and RTPI members to that unique museum set in the Aston Webb crescent, the original redbrick architectural icon at the heart of the University of Birmingham campus.

The West Midlands Chair Victoria Lane MRTPI followed with a brief outline of her focus for her tenure in this post: mental health in planning, and welcomed the RTPI President Lindsey Richards FRTPI, to the speaker stand. Lindsey opened with question; "who would want to be a planner?" The profession is surrounded by negativity, with damning headlines, critical social media, and misinformation all abundant.

Lindsey stated there was work to do in equalising the planning profession as well. There are 22,000 planners in the UK, of which 40% are women, although the male/female split evens out in the under 43. This outperforms RIBA, who reach only 29%, RICS, at just 18%, and lastly highways and transport, at a distant 10%. Meanwhile, only 5% of planners are from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Lindsey noted that Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) remain the largest employer sector but that planners are increasingly leaving it, especially in their mid to late career. Much of this was down to the very criticism set out above, on top of strained resources, delays in the planning process, and flatlining rates of pay. These statements will not be lost on our readers and the RTPI members in the room, given that in recent editions of Tripwire we have highlighted these very challenges in the last year.

Lindsey moved then onto the details of the pay divide: If salaries had followed inflation since 2005, the median planner should be making close to £50,000 per annum, when in reality they earn much closer to £30,000 on average today. The total number of LPA planners was also said to be declining: From 2013 to 2020, a quarter of planners will have left the public sector.

Despite these challenges, Lindsey assured the mostly student audience in the room that LPAs were a great place to start their career. While resources are tighter than ever, planning is more complex than ever. The skillset honed in the halls of local Councils helps one become a better planner in many areas, and the tide is turning too, with the new government making moves toward improving and growing the public sector planning function, noting that ministers were in listening mode, and were keen to bring the RTPI to the table early in their government.

Lindsey also wanted to turn the tide of social media opposition, citing a need to challenge the negativity, to promote planning as a positive enabler, mirroring Angela Raynor's description of planning officers as agents of change in driving growth, which Lindsey noted was a positive message that goes some way to redress the language against planners in recent years. Planners can proactively change the narrative by becoming their own social media planning influencers.

There was a similar call by Lindsey to expand efforts to ensure that planning is an early career choice, not just a profession that they fall into (many readers I'm sure can attest to falling into planning from a myriad of directions and former study topics). Lindsey wanted to focus not only on the inflow, but the outflow too, by improving public sector resources, stating that if we support the public sector, the public sector in turn supports the private sector.



–  
**Lindsey Richards**  
FRTPI

*RTPI President to  
the West Midlands  
Region*



In pointing to a report commissioned by the RTPi back in June, which revealed that planning reform and increased housing development [could miss out on over £70 billion in additional value by not investing in planning](#), Lindsey added that the RTPi is investing in new skills routes into planning, increasing the number of bursaries in England and Scotland to encourage multidisciplinary talent and launching the BALANCE initiative, [a new toolkit for planners to take engagement into schools](#) and act as ambassadors and champions for the profession. One particular programme was given the spotlight, one that the lecturers and students in the room would recognise well: the Level 7 Degree Apprenticeship. To date there have been 700 enrolled apprentices across 11 planning schools – resulting in 67 chartered apprentices so far.

Readers may be interested to hear that discussions in the networking session following the talk revealed that Labour has since announced plans at their most recent autumn conference that funding for Level 7 apprenticeships may change, with employers asked to take on a greater share. Let's hope this path into planning can continue to be sustained, as to date it has proven a vital conduit for fresh entrants into fast chartership (including one grateful and recent degree apprentice - the very Editor of this magazine!).

In summarising her message, Lindsey said planning covered a wide range of subjects and skills, with planners also working as negotiators, mediators, and problem solvers, utilising presentation skills, empathy and supporting effective community engagement all through.

You can [read more](#) about Lindsey Richards, her [path into planning](#) and follow her on [LinkedIn](#).

*If you want to learn more about the planning sector by numbers, and how your conditions, pay and career progress compares in the data, see the very insightful [State of the Profession report](#) published by the RTPi in 2023, from which Lindsey drew much of her data points for this talk.*



# It takes Planners & ... Asima Adnan



In a continuation of this feature from the Spring-Summer edition, this time we meet an unsung planner from within the West Midlands region who works to promote planning. Asima is a planning professional and profession advocate with over a decade of experience in the sector, ranging from administrative support to a planning team to leading engagement sessions with young people to inspire them to consider a career in planning. This time we meet Coventry Planner & STEM Ambassador, Asima Adnan.

## Q1. How many years have you worked in the planning sector, and doing what previous roles?

Town Planning started for me at the age of 16, when I started work at my Local Authority as a Business Admin Apprentice. My role started with compiling the committee agenda, registering applications, sending out neighbour letters, consultations and decision notices, all the back-office work that holds the Planning Team together. I then spent time in the Policy Team assisting the adoption of the Local Plan, thereafter, back to Development Control duties. I worked in planning admin for 12 years, I admired what planning officers did, approving large regeneration projects, watching new estates come to life. I was inspired by the difference the planning profession makes to the places we work and live in. I gained a lot of appreciation for the career, a path that I did not know existed.

The head of Development Management, Policy and the Strategic Lead were all women, which also greatly inspired me. Years later during Covid I decided that I wanted to pursue a career in Town Planning, I did an access course in Social Science and Humanities and then a year later applied for my undergraduate course at Birmingham City University.

## Q2. How many years have you been a volunteer in planning?

I soon realised that the planning profession was underrepresented as a career path. I therefore decided to join the West Midlands RTPI Regional Activities Committee (RAC) in 2023, my plan was through this group to educate young children about the career path. I now work alongside other RAC members on the education side of the profession.

## Q3. Where do you work now and what does this work involve?

I now work as a Town Planner at Coventry City Council where I determine applications. I have an amazing support network at Coventry, they have believed in me, even when I didn't believe in myself. I once said to my line manager, "I'm not sure I can do this" he replied, "you can do it with your eyes closed". Coventry has helped me grow and be who I am today. During Covid while working through my college exams I entered a competition which gave me the opportunities to become a STEM Ambassador and win a scholarship for my Undergraduate course. Many people may be aware that the UK has a long-standing gap with developing a workforce of professionals in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths professions. Being appointed as an ambassador has given me the platform to encourage STEM Careers. I now participate in career events where up to 1000 school children attend. Many Planners may not realise that our profession is a STEM subject, which vastly improves the economic growth and the fulfilment of wider policy goals within the UK. Being a STEM ambassador has given me the opportunity to be vocal about our planning profession.

## Q4. How do you feel you make a positive impact on the community you serve, any recent examples?

My goal is to educate young children about the profession, help them understand why places they live in are designed the way they are and how they can make a difference with a career in Planning. I love my role as a Planning Officer and really look up to my senior officers, my tutors and the professionals within the Built Environment. My work allows me to make a positive difference to the way people live. I believe that our profession should be recognised more, careers advice needs to be improved and more funding should be available to our profession because we too are a STEM career. We deliver to aid the crisis the world is currently facing, we work hard to meet housing, sustainability, flooding and many more UK targets.

## Q5. As a planner, what piece of advice, philosophy and/or motivation can you offer other planners?

I was doing my undergrade degree, working full time to provide for my children and pursue my role as STEM ambassador, all at the same time. The advice I have always given to my fellow students and colleagues is that "if I can do it with so much going on, so can you". You just have to be passionate about what you do and how you want to deliver it, we need to focus on the end goal, obstacles are there to overcome and strengthen us.

Years later, and I am still amazed by how much planners shape the world we live, work and socialise in. Every one of us should be proud of the difference we make.



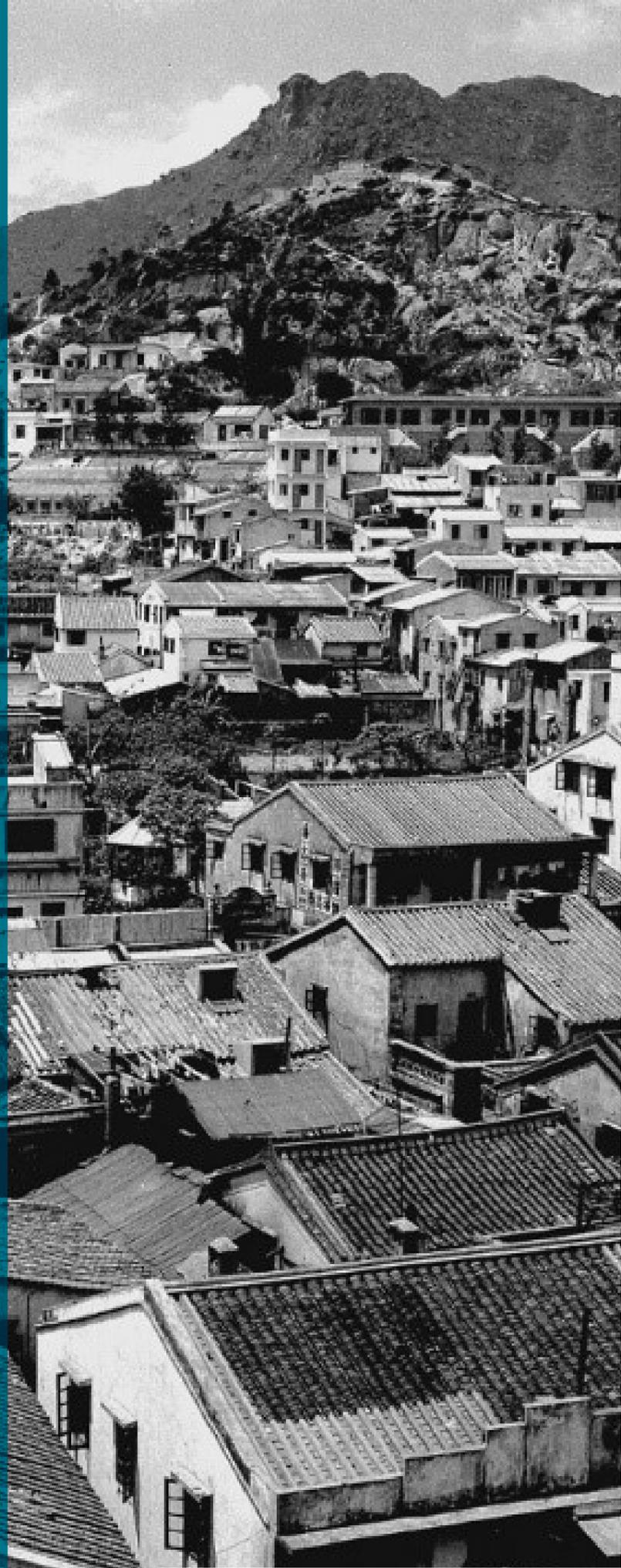
Asima Adnan  
Coventry City Council &  
STEM Ambassador

 **Connect with Asima via LinkedIn.**

# Global Voices

## Hong Kong

In a return of our new feature for 2024, Global Voices takes you across the globe to another city far from our own, to another planning team operating in very different circumstances, and yet in many ways, very familiar as well. For Global Voices this time, we interviewed Tracy Wong, Senior Town Planner at the Planning Department for the global city of Hong Kong. Hong Kong is an incredibly complex and compelling planning context, where east and west overlap, through the territory's history and through its planning approaches, shaped by the city's century of administration formerly under the UK<sup>1</sup>.



Source: Lands Department, HKSAR Government

Hong Kong is now a global powerhouse, planning far into the future for its fast-growing communities on many fronts, in the regeneration of areas of the urban core, renewing their globally and regionally important infrastructure, to the nature-conscious, careful expansion of the city's periphery, and fostering links with communities over the Greater Bay Area in Guangdong Province of Mainland China.

1. Firstly, for UK readers who may not be familiar with your city, can you briefly paint a picture of Hong Kong's planning history, contemporary context and future challenges?

### Planning History

Town planning principles were applied to the planning of urban area since the 1922-23 Town Planning Scheme and 1948 Preliminary Planning Report (the Abercrombie Plan). Since then, the planning paradigm gradually moved from planning for shelters, physical growth and infrastructure development (e.g. the 1972 Colony Outline Plan and 1979 Hong Kong Outline Plan) to planning for sustainable development in economic, environmental and social terms, as shaped through the 1984 Territorial Development Strategy and its Review conducted in 1996. Progressive efforts were further made to broaden the scope of strategic planning from urban development to territorial development encompassing local, regional and global dimensions, as earmarked in the Hong Kong 2030: Planning Vision and Strategy announced in 2007, as well as the Hong Kong 2030+: Towards a Planning Vision and Strategy Transcending 2030 ("Hong Kong 2030+") promulgated in 2021.

#### Hong Kong in 1950

Source: Lands Department, HKSAR Government

<sup>1</sup>Contrasting to the UK where freehold system prevails, urban planning in Hong Kong runs alongside with the leasehold land administration system where the government owns all the land in Hong Kong, except the St John's Cathedral in Central. All private business and residential units are developed on land under leaseholders (referred as "land owners" in the context of Hong Kong). The effect of urban planning applies to the entire territory.



As for the planning system, the existing Town Planning Ordinance (“TPO”) was first enacted in 1939 to promote the health, safety, convenience and general welfare of the community. Ever since, major amendments have been made in responses to the evolving environment and aspirations of the community, including the introduction of a planning permission system in 1974, the introduction of planning enforcement and the setting up of planning committees and Town Planning Appeal Board in 1991. In addition, an enhanced transparency of the planning system and strengthened enforcement against unauthorised developments in the rural New Territories in 2004, and streamlined town planning procedures in 2023.

### Contemporary Context

Hong Kong’s planning system comprises development strategies at the territorial level and various types of statutory and departmental plans at the district/local level. The Territorial Development Strategy aims at providing a broad planning framework to guide future development and provision of strategic infrastructure in Hong Kong. It also serves as a basis for the preparation of district plans. At district level, statutory plans namely Outline Zoning Plan (“OZP”) and Development Permission Area (“DPA”) Plan are prepared and published by the Town Planning Board under the provisions of the TPO. These plans which show the land use zones, development restrictions and major road systems of an individual planning area provide planning control and development guidance . There are also Departmental Plans known as Outline Development Plans and Layout Plans which are prepared within the framework of the statutory plans. With a much larger scale, these departmental plans show more detailed level planning parameters e.g. site boundaries, location of access points and footbridges, specific types of government or community uses to facilitate the coordination of public works, land sales and land reservation for specific uses.

<sup>2</sup>This zonal land use system, where if a site is marked for a particular land use zoning on the statutory plan, then we have certain types of uses which are always permitted called ‘Column 1 uses’, and others that require permission through application called ‘Column 2’ uses. Future Challenges

<sup>3</sup>The 14th Five-Year Plan has supported the development of Hong Kong in eight key areas (“eight centres”), including the international financial centre, international innovation and technology centre, East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange, international trade centre, international shipping centre, international aviation hub, centre for international legal and dispute resolution services in the Asia Pacific region as well as regional intellectual property trading centre.



Source: Information Services Department, HKSAR Government

## Being located close to the Mainland, the Northern Metropolis will become a new international innovation and technology city integrating quality of life, promising industries and culture and leisure.

### Future Challenges

The future planning of Hong Kong would be more emphasised to strengthen our positioning under the National 14th Five-Year Plan of our country and to foster closer integration with the Greater Bay Area . Currently the feasibility studies for two significant projects are underway at full steam to serve as the growth engines for Hong Kong. Being located close to the Mainland, the Northern Metropolis will become a new international innovation and technology city integrating quality of life, promising industries and culture and leisure. With the provision of a substantial amount of newly reclaimed land in close proximity to the existing urban area, the Kau Yi Chau Artificial Islands will enhance Hong Kong’s economic competitiveness and serve as a decanting space for redevelopment of the old urban area as well as a gateway between the Mainland and the world. Besides, to cope with the “double-ageing” phenomenon of a rising elderly population and dilapidated building stock, we strive to create liveable communities and capacity for growth under the principle of enhancing quantity, speed, efficiency and quality for land supply.

<sup>4</sup>The Greater Bay Area (GBA) comprises the two Special Administrative Regions of Hong Kong and Macao, and the nine municipalities in Guangdong Province (Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Foshan, Huizhou, Dongguan, Zhongshan, Jiangmen and Zhaoqing). The total area is around 56 000 km<sup>2</sup> and the total population is over 86 million. Collectively, the GBA represents a vibrant economic force with a GDP of over RMB 14 trillion in 2023.

## 2. Can you tell us a little about how city planning departments are structured in Hong Kong?

The Planning Department (“PlanD”) is established under the Development Bureau of the HKSAR Government. PlanD is operationally divided into Territorial Planning Branch and District Planning Branch. Territorial planning covers strategic planning, studies and research, cross-boundary infrastructure and development, planning standards and guidelines and information technology. The District Planning Branch oversees seven District Planning Offices for statutory and district planning and development control matters. It conducts land use planning studies, coordinates housing and office land supply, evaluates urban design and landscape proposals, and conducts enforcement and prosecution. PlanD is also the executive arm of the Town Planning Board (“TPB”), which is a statutory body responsible for formulating, monitoring and reviewing statutory town plans and considering planning applications.

## 3. What was your route into planning and is this typical for planners in Hong Kong?

### Typical Routes into Planning in Hong Kong

I attained the Master of Science in Urban Planning conferred by the University of Hong Kong (HKU) for two years of full-time postgraduate education. I was chartered as a Full Member of the Hong Kong Institute of Planners (MHKIP) after accumulating two years of relevant work experience. This is a typical route for local planners as the HKU programme was the only postgraduate course recognised by the Hong Kong Institute of Planners. This course was also recognised by RTPi leading to attaining MRTPI, enabling some local planners to attain the UK qualification as well. Similarly to the UK, since there is no prerequisite undergraduate degree for enrolling the masters level town/urban planning course, planners may come from different undergraduate disciplines like geography, engineering or architecture.

Some of the planners in PlanD obtained their planning degrees from overseas universities including the UK, US and Australia.

The planning courses were recognized by the respective overseas planning institutes and at the same time by HKIP. For those who obtained the relevant academic qualifications local or overseas, they can apply for the Registered Professional Planner (RPP) qualification to practise in Hong Kong. RPP members can also seek recognition for the PRC registered urban planner qualification to practise in Nansha district of Guangzhou and Qianhai district of Shenzhen in Mainland China to facilitate cross-boundary collaboration and development.

## 4. What is public perception toward planners like in your city, and how does this affect your work?

With wide public participation in the planning system and enhanced consultation on the major strategic studies and development proposals, like the developments in Northern Metropolis, the public has been increasingly aware of the important role of planning in shaping their living environment, resulting in a high expectation and demand on planners for responding to and addressing their views and concerns. Being a small place with limited developable land but competing demand for different land uses, planning for Hong Kong is an enormous challenge requiring planners to strike a proper balance among the conflicting views and considerations. The public likely have a mixed perception over us.

On the positive side, they may view us a facilitator, collecting their views in formulation of planning proposals. In this regard, we maintain and operate an efficient planning system as embodied in the TPO with allowance for public participation in various stages and processes. In processing planning applications, the public are consulted with views submitted to TPB together with the applications; for OZP amendments, representatives are invited to the TPB to express their views direct to the TPB – this allows the TPB to have a balanced view towards land use planning. On the development side, planners maintain constructive dialogues and effective communication with project proponents of the future developments.



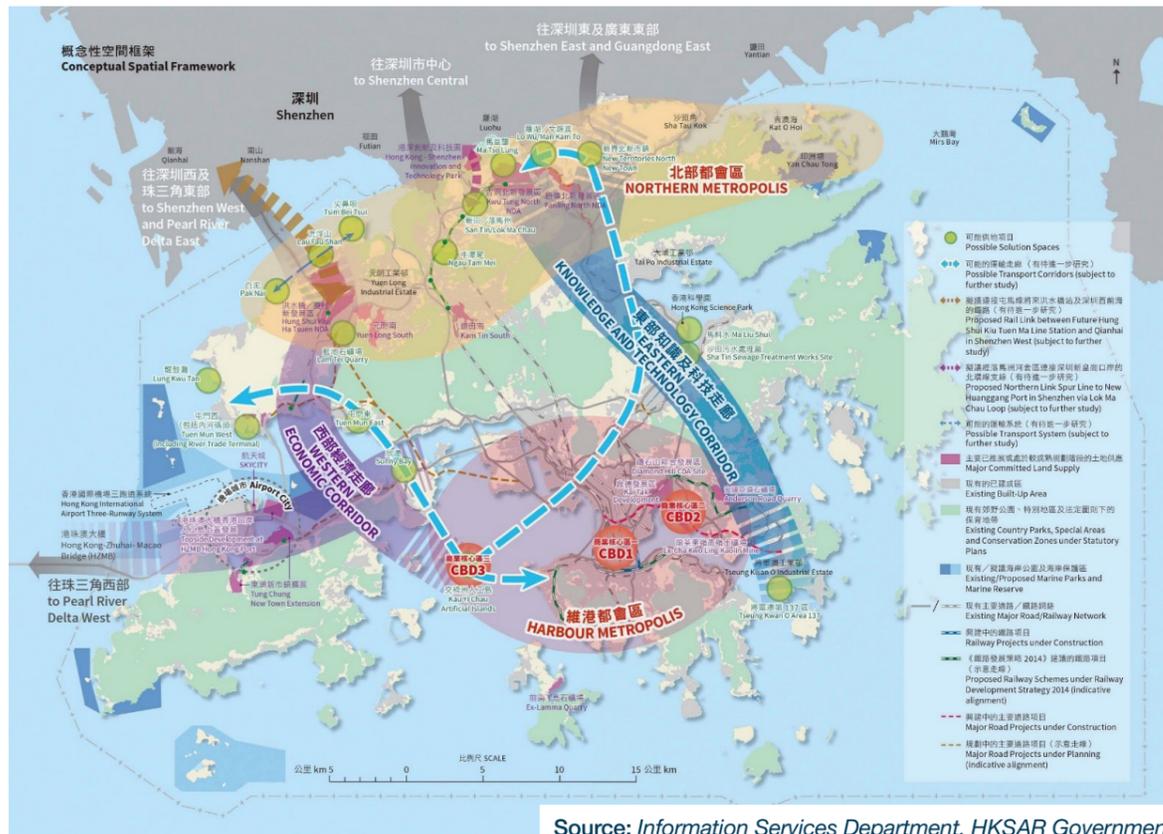
Source: Information Services Department, HKSAR Government

Applicants could seek views from planners through pre-submission meetings arranged by PlanD to understand more specifically the requirements and to address potential public concerns before submission of planning applications. With regard to territorial planning, different consultation activities would be organised to collect public views on the preliminary proposals of planning studies in order to revise the planning and land use proposals and improve multi-stakeholder collaboration during the study process. By tapping into public comments together with other planning and technical considerations, planners can be gatekeepers to assess and address possible impacts from future developments and to bring in planning gains for the community.

## Being professional planners, we are obliged to carefully consider the overall public and long-term benefits of the planning proposals ...

For some large-scale and controversial planning and development proposals, there are bound to be different voices from the community. Being professional planners, we are obliged to carefully consider the overall public and long-term benefits of the planning proposals which may not be easily visualised by some people at the earliest formulation phase of the a development, with a vanguard role to make use of comprehensive planning considerations and sound technical justifications to address the concerns raised and establish the genuine need of forward planning proposals for the good of the whole city.

## Hong Kong 2030+ Conceptual Spatial Framework: A Territorial Spatial Plan of Infrastructure-led, Capacity-creating Approach



Source: Information Services Department, HKSAR Government

## Northern Metropolis: Development Positioning Supported by Industry-driven Land Use Planning

[nm.gov.hk/en/action-agenda](http://nm.gov.hk/en/action-agenda)



Source: Information Services Department, HKSAR Government

## 5. What key infrastructure is vital to Hong Kong's links to the mainland, and to the globe?

Currently the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge provides 24-hour land transport route to the western part of Pearl River Delta. The 55km-infrastructure is the longest bridge-cum-tunnel sea crossing in the world. The Guangdong-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link has also linked up Hong Kong into the broader high speed rail network across the Mainland China. Looking forward, the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Western Rail Link is proposed to connect

Hung Shui Kiu/Ha Tsuen (the future high-end professional services and logistics hub in the north-western New Territories of Hong Kong) to Qianhai (the Modern Service Industry Cooperation Zone in Shenzhen of Mainland China). Hung Shui Kiu/Ha Tsuen will also be connected via Hong Kong Island West-Hung Shui Kiu Rail Link to the Kau Yi Chau Artificial Islands and further east to the traditional Central Business District on Hong Kong Island. These infrastructure projects will enhance the mobility of people and goods and the exchange of ideas and services between Hong Kong and other cities in the Greater Bay Area.

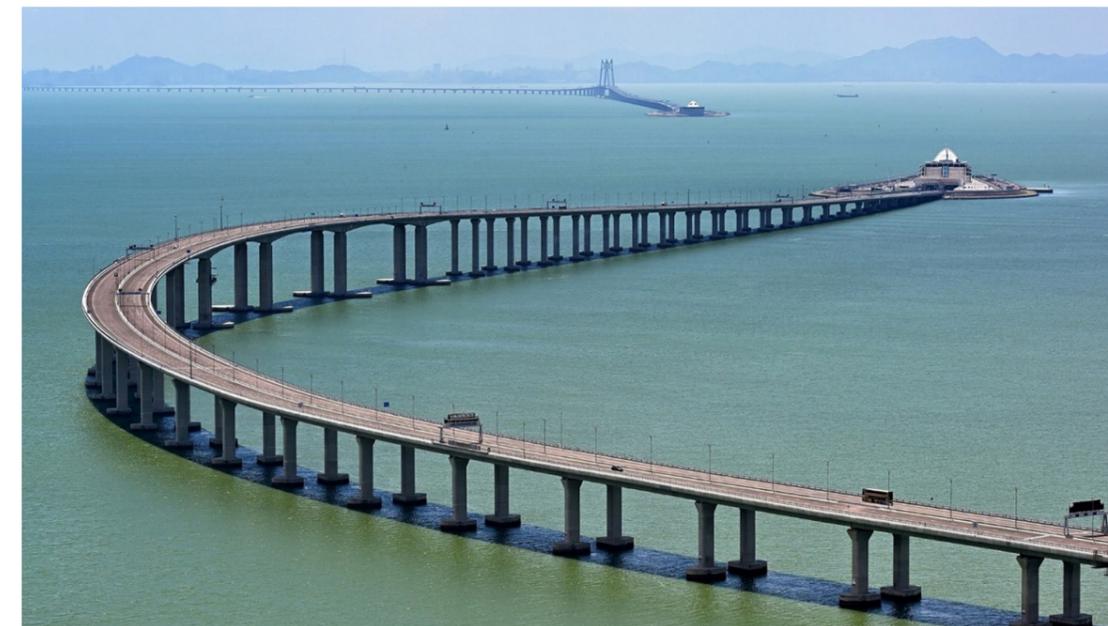
### Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link

Source: Information Services Department, HKSAR Government



### Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge

Source: Information Services Department, HKSAR Government



## The Three-Runway System



Source: Airport Authority Hong Kong

Hong Kong International Airport is one of the world's best airports for intermodal connectivity. It provides flight service with around 220 destinations worldwide by about 120 airlines, reaching half of the world's population in five hours flying time. The Three-Runway System is developed to strengthen Hong Kong as an international aviation hub, which is one of the eight centres positioned under the National 14th Five-Year Plan. With the third runway commissioned in 2022, other facilities of the System, e.g. Terminal 2 expansion, a new automated people mover system and new baggage handling system, will commence operation by end 2024. These new facilities can cater for the long-term air traffic demand and further enhance the passenger and cargo capacity.

With the said highly efficient transport infrastructures, the role of Hong Kong as a super connector between the Mainland and the world will be enhanced.

### 6. What role does technology play in urban planning in Hong Kong? Are there any innovative tools or methods being used to enhance planning processes?

PlanD have proactively applied different technologies to analyse, collect and release spatial planning information, such as satellite remote sensing techniques, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), 3D modelling, photogrammetry software and Small Unmanned Aircraft (a.k.a. drones) to enhance the accuracy of data collection, proficiency in spatial analysis and work efficiency.

We also encourage the public to submit and retrieve planning applications on the statutory planning portal website and to provide public comments electronically during the consultation/exhibition period. PlanD also joined efforts with other departments to streamline and optimise the processing of planning and land development-related applications using digital tools.

### 7. How do you approach housing affordability and availability within your planning frameworks?

About half of the Hong Kong population are residing in the public housing units built by the Government. To demonstrate our staunch commitment to provide more housing to meet the community need, the Government will prepare a long term housing strategy annual progress report to present our housing supply target in the next 10-year period. In parallel, with a view to illustrating the Government's efforts in land creation and facilitate monitoring of progress, a forecast of 10-year supply of developable land (i.e. spade-ready sites) will also be updated on an annual basis.

Planners help improve housing affordability through the planning and provision of more housing land and housing supply for public and private housing developments. In particular, a stable supply of new developable land for housing and other purposes can be secured through the planning for the various New Development Areas (NDAs).

Apart from NDAs, the Government will adopt a multi-pronged approach to increase supply of housing land through different sources, e.g. increasing development intensity of housing sites, rezoning brownfield and greenbelt sites for residential zones, etc. In addition, the approval procedures for planning applications and statutory plan-making have been streamlined to expedite the development process. Flexibility is also injected into urban renewal projects for conversion between domestic and non-domestic floor spaces. We also play a proactive and facilitating role to ensure the smooth implementation of the Land Sharing Pilot Scheme and the Private Sector Participation Scheme introduced by the government in recent years. These schemes aim to speed up the provision of subsidised housing through leveraging private sector resources.

### 8. Which sites will be the largest regeneration areas for your city in the current plan period?

PlanD enables the statutory Urban Renewal Authority ("URA") to undertake projects in old districts in the metro area, with Yau Ma Tei and Mong Kok district ("Yau Mong") (about 212 hectares) as the largest scale regeneration areas in the coming years.

In Yau Mong, the cluster of older buildings (around 50 years old or above) is rather concentrated and the number of households inhabiting in subdivided units is ever increasing, presenting great need for urban renewal. It is not a single site-based development, but rather a district-based programme with key focus areas of urban redevelopment projects, streetscape improvement works and a revamped mechanism of development control to incentivise urban renewal. The vision is to regenerate Yau Mong into a liveable, sustainable, diverse and vibrant metropolitan hub while reinforcing it as an area representing the rich local and cultural heritage of Hong Kong. One of the highlights is the Mong Kok East-Nullah Road Urban Waterway project that proposes redevelopment of aged domestic buildings, relocation of retail shops, revitalisation of blue and green open space and reprovisioning of public facilities. This project was approved by the TPB in 2024. It is expected that the project will complete in 2035-36.



Source: Information Services Department, HKSAR Government

Source: Planning Department, HKSAR Government



## 9. How does your city approach sustainability and climate change adaptability?

Strategically, Hong Kong 2030+ envisions Hong Kong to become a liveable, competitive and sustainable “Asia’s World City”. Based on three building blocks, namely (1) enhancing liveability in a compact high-density city, (2) embracing new economic opportunities and challenges, and (3) creating capacity for sustainable growth. Smart, green and resilient (“SGR”) city strategies will be adopted in the planning of new development areas to cope with climate change impacts. Some specific examples include eco-shorelines for the coastal land of the Kau Yi Chau Artificial Islands to adapt to rising sea levels, a district cooling system and charging facilities for electric vehicles. Blue-green features such as open space with flood attenuation functions would also be planned where appropriate. These measures will align with Hong Kong’s roadmap to carbon neutrality by 2050 and turn our city into a future-proof metropolis.

## 10. A significant portion of Hong Kong’s undeveloped land is protected green space, how is this factored into your planning strategies, as compared to the needs of the fast-growing city?

Hong Kong has a total land area of about 1,115 sq.km. However, only a quarter of the total land in Hong Kong is built-up area while about 40% of land is designated as country parks under the Country Parks Ordinance which prescribed that no development is allowed in the protected green areas outside the developed urban area. Under this context, balancing the need to promote development and to enhance nature conservation remains a big challenge for planners here.

To prevent further degradation of the environment in the rural New Territories, Planning Department can take enforcement action against unauthorized developments within DPAs or “Regulated Areas” according to the TPO. For unauthorized activities such as pond filling, land filling, storage and parking uses on rural land, the land owners may be subject to enforcement for reinstatement into the original condition.

## 11. Lastly, what are the most rewarding and exciting aspects about being a planner in your city?

Cultivating the citizens’ sense of belonging towards our communities through shaping the built environment and enabling public participation in the planning process. Having worked on the urban and rural area projects, I find that people from different walks of life hold a strong passion for their neighbourhood, and they generate unique ideas in how to shape their communities for the better. Their desires for a better environment to live, work and play are the important drive for me to be a planner for my city.

Readers may also find out more information from the websites below:

Planning Department: [www.pland.gov.hk/](http://www.pland.gov.hk/)

Statutory Planning Portal: [www.ozp.tpb.gov.hk/](http://www.ozp.tpb.gov.hk/)

Hong Kong 2030+ Study: [www.pland.gov.hk/](http://www.pland.gov.hk/)

Northern Metropolis: [www.nm.gov.hk/en/](http://www.nm.gov.hk/en/)



Ms. Tracy Wong  
Senior Town Planner  
Strategic Planning Section  
Planning Department

Government of the Hong Kong  
Special Administrative Region

# Call Out: Guest Editor Wanted

**Tripwire is a labour of love not just for the Editor, but also the Regional Activities Committee and the Regional RTPi team. It takes a number of people and resources to pull together, and it is ever evolving. Right now, we’re putting a call out for a Guest Editor for the editions in 2025. Could you consider giving your time, your eye for photography, your ability to pull a project together, your creativity in writing and curiosity in research to shape a Tripwire edition in your own way?**

As editor you will be responsible for choosing themes, seeking and perhaps writing article contributions, and generally ensuring that material is appropriate for the magazine. Guidance on the role, including advice on do’s and don’ts will be provided as will administrative support in terms of collating, coordinating, and publishing the final product. The regional team will also provide the regular RTPi items and key updates for members.

You’ll also be joining the ranks of many guest contributors across the years. Guest Editors and Editorial writers of the past include Hugh Lufton BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI ([Issue 93, Spring 2017](#)), Michael Vout ([Issue 95, Autumn 2017](#)), Sian Griffiths ([Issue 96, Winter 2017](#)) and more recently, Claudia Carter ([Issue 105, Winter 2021](#)).

If you would like to get involved, we’d like to hear from you, email Heidi our Regional Coordinator at [Heidi.Smith@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:Heidi.Smith@rtpi.org.uk)

# Walsall Memorial Gardens: A Secret Gem

In this special feature from the work and passion of Walsall-based Conservation Officer Devinder Matharu, we delve into the history of a heritage asset in the heart of the West Midlands, and look through the historical context for its development, the architect behind it, and the key considerations for planners when managing the legacy of such spaces.



Photograph: Walsall Archives

On 1st May 1951, Walsall Memorial Garden was officially opened by Her Royal Highness Princess Margaret, and a year later, it was opened to the public by Mayor of Walsall Tom E. Mayo. Geoffrey Jellicoe, an international renown Landscape Architect was commissioned to design the garden, as a memorial to those townsfolk who perished in the First and Second World Wars.

## Historical Overview

During medieval times, the Church of St Matthew (Grade II\* listed) was the heart of the centre of the town. The church stands on an elevated site and is still seen today from viewpoints across the town centre. By the eighteenth century the area around the church included dense built-up development, however, by the nineteenth century, the commercial heart of the town centre started to move further west away from the church towards Digbeth, Bridge Street and Park Street.

Residential properties were vacated when occupiers moved into new housing, leaving behind properties which fell into a dilapidated state. The area was cleared of built form in the 1930s, and after the second world war, the Church Hill area underwent further slum clearance. The newly cleared parcel of land was designated as an “Area of Special Development, with a high priority for reconstruction” (Church Hill Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, 2007).

## Memorial Garden Design

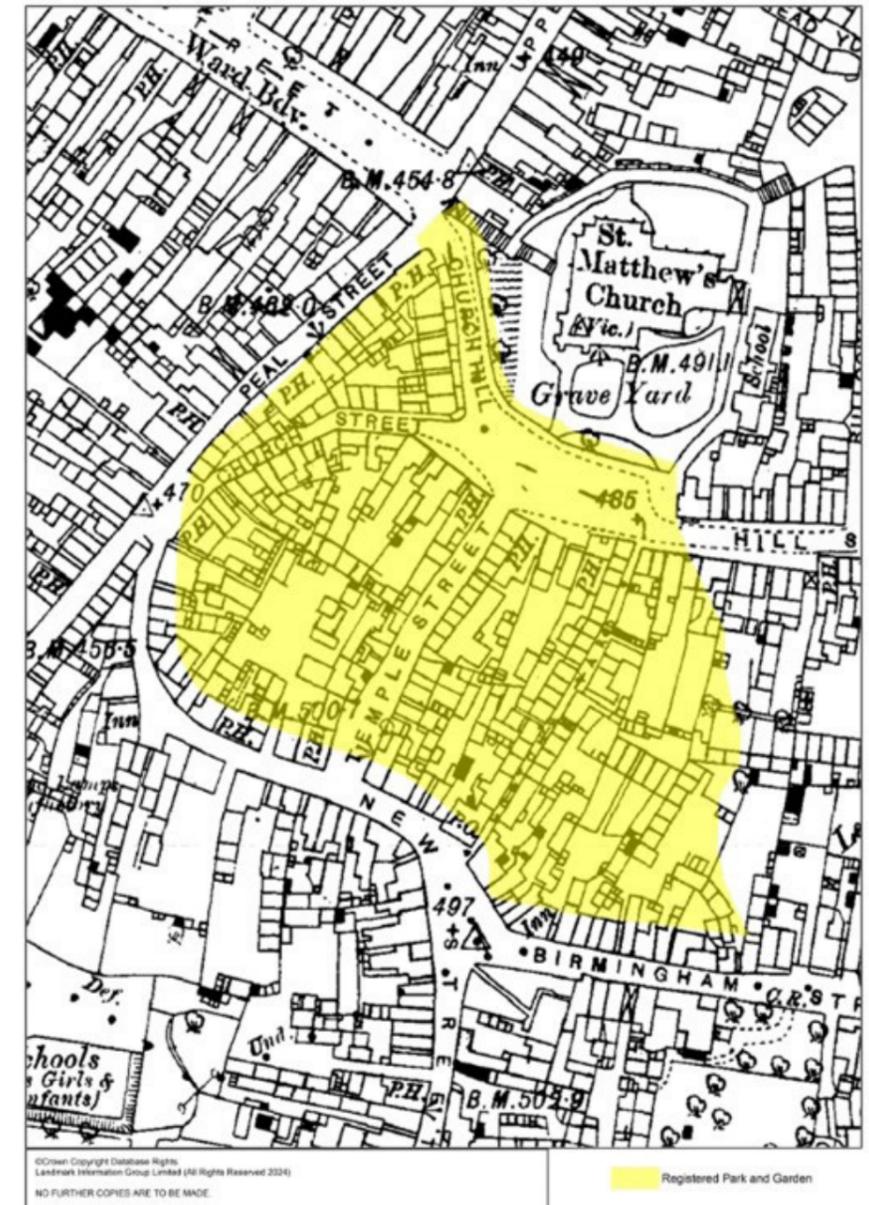
In 1947, Geoffrey Jellicoe “the foremost landscape architect of his generation” was awarded a contract to design a scheme for “twenty-two flatted houses” with separate access ways and recreational grounds (Gardens Trust). The Council applied to the then Ministry of Health for a financial loan to undertake the works, which was refused, however, the Council was advised that the “Ministry might view the scheme more favourably, if the Council were to emphasise that the project was intended as a war memorial” (Gardens Trust).

Jellicoe designed “an ambitious scheme, whereby the hilltop would be left open as a garden, to include a memorial to the town’s war dead” (Historic England, 1999).

The Memorial Gardens comprise of three separate elements, the Gardens, the terrace, St Matthew’s Close and flats. The first phase of development included the garden and terrace.

The Memorial Garden is rectangular in shape, measuring 70m by 25m. The design includes four central planted beds and formal grid designed pathways around and in between the planted beds. At the sides of the garden are lawn areas.

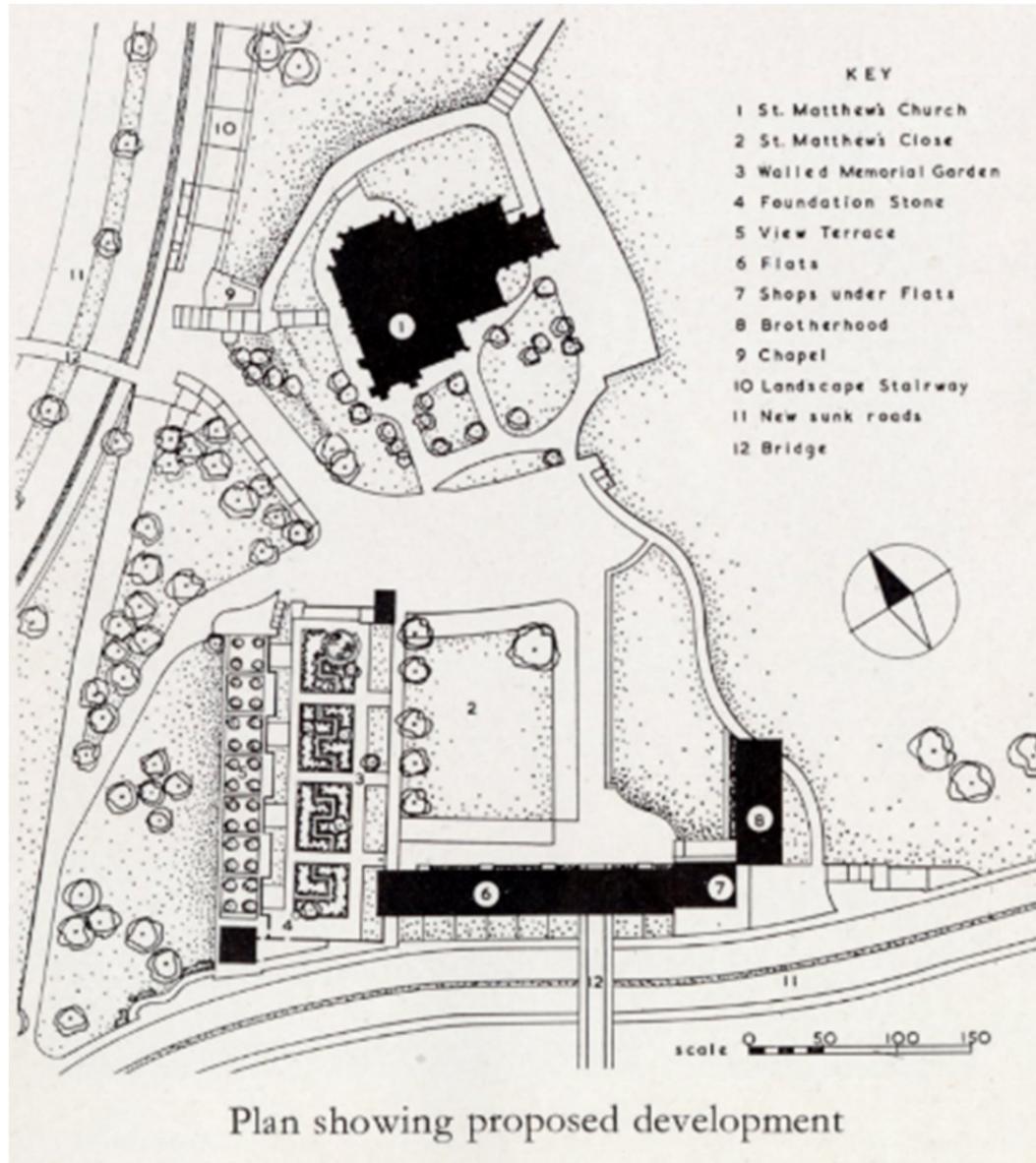
The boundary walls of the garden are three metres high, constructed out of red handmade bricks and concrete copings. The southeastern boundary wall includes three entrances secured by steel grilles.



The northwestern side of the boundary walls includes bays for benches and the northeastern wall includes square window openings to provide sky views and views out towards the Church of St Matthew.

Within the garden to the north, there is an opening that provides access to the terrace. From this terrace short and long views across towards the town centre were once obtainable, now screened by tree canopy coverage. “At the east corner of the Garden is a brick, pavilion-like memorial chapel with undercroft. This projects north beyond the corner of the Garden as an artificial stone structure with full height mullion and transom windows supported on two round columns with walkway beneath. The two bays of the chapel are covered with a roof in the form of twin, copper-sheathed, truncated pyramids” (Historic England, 1999).

Located near the chapel is a pool, eight metres in diameter, a jet fountain was originally installed within the pool. The pool has been drained and the jet fountain no longer functions.



Map Walsall Archives:  
-  
Opening of Church Hill Memorial Garden

In the southwest corner is a circular memorial slate slab measuring “five feet in diameter and four inches thick. It was designed by Gordon Herickx, a Sculpture Master at the Walsall School of Art and a professional sculptor and inscribed with words which recorded its ceremonial unveiling by the Princess” (Garden’s Trust).

In this corner there is also a Gardener’s cottage which is modern in design with balconies.

“ The north-east side of the house projects forward, with its first floor supported on four round columns, originally providing an open verandah-like area for seating looking down the Terrace”

(Historic England, 1999).



Walsall Archives: Opening of Church Hill Memorial Garden



Photography: Author



Photography: Author

In the early 1990s a restoration programme sought to restore the Memorial Garden, “partly funded by the European Regional Development Fund” (Gardens Trust). Red brick pavements were laid, repointing works to walls undertaken, coping stones were re-laid, the pool was repaired, and the planters retained.

In 1960, the second phase included the construction of the chapel (within the garden), the flats and church hall. “The square that the terrace of flats enclose is c. 100 metres across and is bisected by a road, also called St Matthew’s Close, which runs north-east to south-west across its centre, connecting New Street to the South with the parking area south of St Matthew’s Church. The rest of the Close is mown grass with shrubs and some mature trees, notably a row of London planes alongside the Memorial Garden. The terraced row of two storey flats has a low pitched, tile roof beneath which the road passes. Immediately north-east of the east end of the flats is the Brotherhood or Church Hall” (Church Hill Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, 2007).

“The Gardener’s House was constructed as part of Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe’s proposals for the Church Hill area and is within the boundary of the registered Park and Garden of the Memorial Gardens. It commands a magnificent setting overlooking the town centre. It is prominent in local views from the south and west, although its modern movement character is in contrast to any other built development within the area, and the building is seen in isolation, rather than as part of any larger scheme or setting” (Church Hill Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, 2007). Walsall Memorial Garden is a Grade II Registered Park and Garden (RP&G) and listed on the National Heritage List for England.



## Church Hill Conservation Area

Walsall Memorial Gardens sit to the south of the Church of St Matthew, in the Church Hill area of Walsall. The RP&G is within Church Hill Conservation Area, which is listed on Historic England’s Heritage at Risk Register as being in a very bad condition, with low vulnerability and an improving trend.

A conservation area is an area of special architectural and historic interest, the character and appearance of which is desirable to preserve and enhance in accordance with Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Conservation Area Map:

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Walsall Council

## Registered Park and Gardens

The National Heritage Act 1983 established the Register of Parks and Gardens. The Register of Parks and Gardens includes “specially designed landscapes of all ages, right up to the recent past. The emphasis of the Register is on gardens, grounds, and other planned open spaces, such as town squares and on 'designed' landscapes, rather than on planting or botanical importance. The main purpose of the Register is to “celebrate designed landscapes of note and encourage appropriate protection” (Historic England, 2024).

More than 1,700 parks and gardens in England are designated as being of national importance. These are included in the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England. Registered Parks and Gardens are graded similar to listed buildings, Grade I, sites of exceptional interest, Grade II\* particularly important sites of more than special interest and Grade II, sites of special interest, “warranting every effort to preserve them” (Historic England, 2024).

Registered Parks and Gardens (PR&G) are defined as designated heritage assets in The National Planning Policy Framework (2012) (NPPF) and are given the same weight in the NPPF as listed buildings and schedule monuments. It is the responsibility of the local planning authority, when assessing any planning application/s for development that affects the significance or setting of a RP&G, to ensure “great weight is given to the assets conservation, irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance” (paragraph 205, NPPF). Paragraphs 206, 207 and 208 of the NPPF set out the tests that need to be carried out to assess the harm to the significance and setting of a designated heritage asset.

The Gardens Trust must be consulted on all planning applications that affect all Grades of registered parks and gardens. Historic England must be consulted on planning applications that affect Grade I and Grade II\* registered parks and gardens.

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 received Royal assent in October 2023. In relevance to registered parks and gardens, the duty is to have special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the asset or its setting, however, this part of the Act is not yet in force.

The setting, character and fabric of Registered Parks and gardens are vulnerable. They can easily be harmed by poor or lack of maintenance, new development and infrastructure, changes in setting and views, lighting, noise, dust, fragmented ownership, as well as other factors. We should look to protect and preserve heritage assets, including registered parks and gardens.

### Historic England’s Heritage at Risk programme

“protects and manages the historic environment” (Historic England, 2024). Any grade of registered parks and gardens can be included on Historic England’s Heritage at Risk Register. The “Heritage at Risk Register” tells communities about the condition of their local neighbourhood. It encourages people to become actively involved in looking after what is precious to them. It also reassures them that any public funding goes to the most needy and urgent cases”

(Historic England, 2024).



Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe

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Source: RIBA

## Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe

Geoffrey Jellicoe was born in Chelsea, London in 1900. Jellicoe trained as an architect and it was whilst he was studying architecture, he embarked on a tour of Italy with his fellow student Jock Shepherd, to study Italian garden designs. In 1923, he joined the British School of Rome. The Italian tour inspired Jellicoe to publish the Italian Gardens of Renaissance, which is still relevant in garden design today.

In 1929, Jellicoe founded the Institute of Landscape Architects, and later the International Federation of Landscape Architects. His early works include designing the Caveman restaurant in Cheddar Gorge, Somerset, image below.

During the second World War, Jellicoe was approached to advise on garden design, a period when vast urban areas were being cleared due to bomb damage and slum clearance. After the second World War, Jellicoe worked abroad in Zambia and Barbados designing new buildings. In 1947, Jellicoe designed an enclosed cottage garden at the Sandringham Estate in Norfolk, he also worked at Windsor Royal Estate.

As a Town Planner, Jellicoe prepared master plans for the towns of Guildford, Wellington, Hemel Hempstead and Gloucester. In the late 1950s, Jellicoe designed and created the Hemel Water Gardens (Registered Park and Garden, Grade II, February 2010), which sits adjacent the new retail centre at the time, and which remains today.



Photograph: Tim Dunn (Twitter)

On Guildford High Street, Jellicoe and Co designed the five storey Harvey’s department store (House of Fraser).

“ The owners of the store who also owned the Derry and Toms Roof Garden on top of their store in Kensington High Street, London, were in favour of a roof garden, and they approved of Jellicoe’s proposals for the creation of a cafe surrounded by a water garden on top of their new store in Guildford. Jellicoe (1900-96) stated in his Studies in Landscape Design published in 1966, his design for the roof garden ‘is primarily a sky garden and the underlying idea has been to unite heaven and earth; the sensation is one of being poised by the two’. The water in the garden was to reflect the sky with its different cloud formations, and to emphasise this, Jellicoe created a viewing platform on top of the cafe, so the garden could be viewed from above”

(Historic England, 2000).



Photograph (left): Civic Square Registered Park and Garden, Grade II

Source: Heather Gordon <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1001425>

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(Historic England, 2000).

Photograph (above): The Jellicoe Roof Garden, Guildford Registered Park and Garden, Grade II

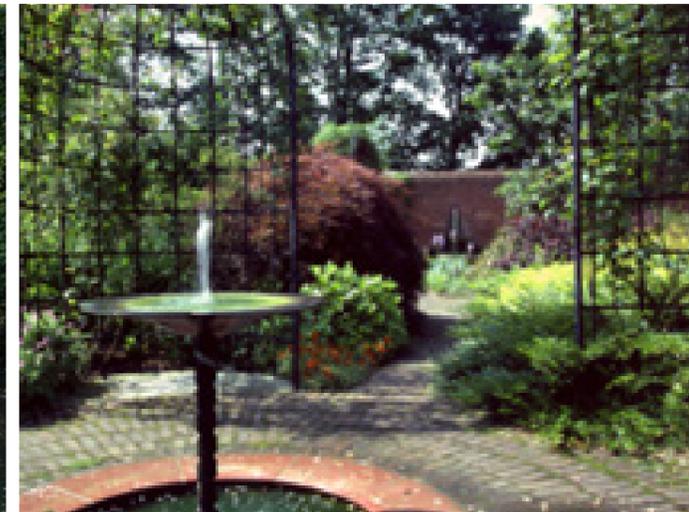
Source: Christopher Reynolds <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1001474>

The British Government in 1965 commissioned Jellicoe to create a memorial to president, John F Kennedy. The memorial is a designed landscape in Runnymede, Surrey and is located close to the River Thames. The design includes a pathway through a woodland setting, which brings visitors out to a central open area where the memorial stone is stood.

Jellicoe described the commission as follows in ‘Soundings’: “In 1963 [sic, early 1964 is more likely] came the commission for the Kennedy Memorial at Runnymede, and for the first time I was challenged to take seriously the concept of the subconscious. Was it possible to bury a great invisible idea within a modest visible world? I now turned to literature for help and found in Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress the study of Life, Death and Spirit; and this majestic saga, unseen and unrecognisable intellectually, is embodied in the landscape” (Historic England, 2020).

“ Grappling with forces of the subconscious that might be figments of my imagination, I now sought out Jung for guidance, and found it. With the knowledge confirmed that the subconscious within us lives a life independent of the conscious, we now re-enter this strange land of shadows”

(Jeffrey Jellicoe - 1964).



Photograph (left): Kennedy Memorial Landscape Registered Park and Garden, Grade II.

Source: <https://www.visitthames.co.uk/things-to-do/the-kennedy-memorial-at-runnymede-p1123491>

Photograph (centre): Shute House Gardens Registered Park and Garden, Grade II\*

Source: <https://www.houseandgarden.co.uk/gallery/gardens-shute-house>

Photograph (right): Sutton Place Registered Park and Garden, Grade II\*

Source: [https://www.gardensvisit.com/gardens/sutton\\_place\\_garden](https://www.gardensvisit.com/gardens/sutton_place_garden)

The last garden Jellicoe designed was at Shute House for Lady Anne Tree and her husband. The design included utilising an existing canal and the creation of a pond, sculptures and additional water features were created.

At the age of 80, Sir Hugh Casson enticed him out of retirement to design the gardens at Sutton Place, Guildford. In 1980, Jellicoe designed the gardens at Sutton Place for Stanley J. Seeger. Garden design included a Paradise Garden and a Plane Tree Garden.

**“A rectangular canal runs along the foot of the south-east front with stepping stones across it giving access to the main area of the Paradise Garden which is laid out with a series of brick serpentine paths intersecting between lawns and borders. Adjacent to the south-east and separated by a yew hedge lies the Plane Tree Garden, laid largely to lawn with perimeter borders and dominated by a large plane tree. Two clairvoies in the walls give views out of the garden, one towards the hills to the south-east. A two-storey brick pavilion or Gloriette (1980s) occupies the south corner, enjoying long panoramic views to the south-east, south, and south-west, close by which is a gateway giving access to the south-east end of the terrace lawn”**

(Historic England, 2001).

Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe was an Architect, Town Planner, Landscape Architect and a Landscape Gardener. Jellicoe was an internationally renowned landscape architect. In 2004, the International Federation of Landscape Architects set up the Geoffrey Jellicoe award. The award recognises living landscape architects’ achievements and contributions to the profession of landscape architecture throughout the course of their professional career.

Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe has left a remarkable legacy, twenty-seven of his designed gardens including a civic square (Plymouth) are Registered Parks and Gardens, three Grade I, ten Grade II\* and fourteen Grade II. “Jellicoe was awarded gold medals by landscape institutes in the United States (1981), Britain (1985) and Australia (1990) and received the Royal Horticultural Society’s Victoria medal of honour in 1995. In 1961 he was appointed CBE, and he was knighted in 1979” (Historic England, 2020).

His obituary in the Independent on 19th July 1996 stated “Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe was one of the century’s greatest landscape architects. His contribution to landscape design - a discipline he credited above building design as the “Mother of all Arts” - has been described as equal to that of one of his great heroes, the 18th-century gardener Capability Brown”

[www.independent.co.uk/incoming/obituary-sir-geoffrey-jellicoe-5607830.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/incoming/obituary-sir-geoffrey-jellicoe-5607830.html).

## The Secret Gem

Research has found that Jellicoe’s only garden design work outside of the southeast of England were at Nottingham university campus in the East Midlands, and the Memorial Gardens, Walsall West Midlands. At the Twentieth Century architectural slam held in Birmingham, January 2024, I was approached by one of the speakers who advised there may be a Jellicoe designed garden in Birmingham, but there is no official record of it. Today, I have found not details or evidence of this.

In Walsall, it is surprising how many people have not heard of the Memorial Gardens or even know that they exist. Today the Memorial Gardens are kept closed due to anti-social behaviour within the garden. As Conservation Officer, I am looking into future heritage tours of the garden and am currently producing a heritage trail leaflet providing further information about the Garden. I am also liaising with colleagues for better signage to direct the public to the gardens and to ensure essential maintenance and repair works within the gardens are undertaken. Alongside this, training webinars on the history of the gardens have been presented to colleagues and stakeholders, increasing the awareness and importance of this garden.

The Memorial Gardens in Walsall are a hidden gem. The Garden offers a place of peaceful contemplation and tranquillity, as well as some great views framing the sky, the town and the Church of St Matthew. Next time you’re in Walsall, why not take a look, take a seat and consider Jeffrey’s legacy in urban landscape conservation.



Devinder Matharu

Conservation Officer at  
Walsall Metropolitan  
Borough Council

# TRIPWIRE TIME CAPSULE



This time in Tripwire Time Capsule we dive back into Issue 19 of November/December 2003 to look at how the conversation on wind power and renewables has evolved from nascent national beginnings and unrealised regional potential, to a mature and productive energy sector today.

More than two decades ago, Planning Practice Statement 22 (PPS22) - Renewable Energy was up for review. The draft proposed regional targets for renewable energy and promote their development, as part of a national aim toward achieving 10% of UK electricity generated from renewable sources by 2010, and 20% by 2020. At the time, England had 200 wind turbines producing 325 megawatts (MW) of power, but none in the West Midlands.

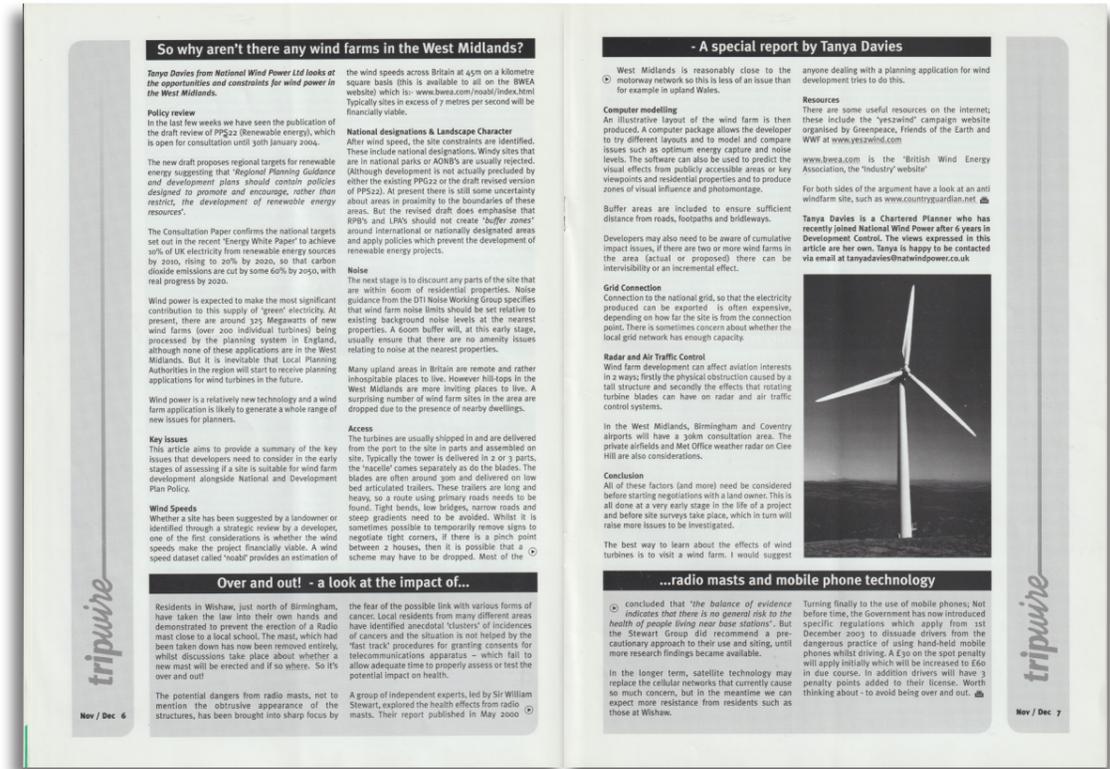
Nonetheless, 2003's Tripwire anticipated that the tide would soon be turning, and in a guest article penned by Tanya Davis of National Wind Power, outlined the key issues for planners and developers to consider in the establishment of a wind farm, including viability, expected generation capacity, noise, visibility, intervisibility (any geography students remember that one?), access (turbine 'nacelles' and blades were said to be very heavy, and very long, requiring articulated trucks for transport), proximity to roads or Public Rights of Way, grid connections and air traffic control. So lots for 00s planners to prepare for.

PPS22 would eventually be superseded by Planning practice guidance for renewable and low carbon energy (DCLG, 2013), as well as the first National Planning Policy Framework (2012). But more importantly, in the 21 years since the article, what progress has been made on the renewables sector in the West Midlands since, when turbines remained but a pipe - or perhaps nacelle - dream in planner's minds?

Being so far inland, the West Midlands can't capitalise on the prevailing offshore winds that are captured to great effect in vast farms along coasts like North Wales and Merseyside.



— Tripwire Issue 19  
Nov / Dec 2003



Guest article by Tanya Davis  
National Wind Power  
— Tripwire Issue 19  
Nov / Dec 2003

Lower wind speeds, protected areas and many built-up areas all limit the number of viable sites here. Instead, capacity is installed in isolated turbines or on wind farms in elevated areas.

The National Grid's Regional Review (2022) shows that wind made up just 3% of total distributed electricity generation in the West Midlands area, compared to 42% for solar, with very little coming through the pipeline, with a maximum theoretical capacity of just 250 MW. Now, being a countrywide electricity producer and supplier, National Grid has its own definition of its 'West Midlands License Area', which stretches even beyond the Welsh border in the west, up into the Peak District in the north and right down to the edges of Bristol and Bath in the south.

As such we get to ensnare a sizeable Welsh wind farm in our regional figures, at Garreg Lwyd Hill, with 17 turbines totalling 34 MW capacity, as well as another farm that is a lot closer to home in the Rodbaston campus of the South Staffordshire College, where 2 turbines together output 4 MW. This is part of the college's wider Net Zero Energy Training Centre, where future carbon-free net zero plumbing is taught using on site photovoltaics, electric vehicle charging, air and ground source heat pumps and hydrogen boilers. So while installed wind capacity is small in the region by national comparisons, we are using those breezes to train the next generation to install, maintain, and so support, the rollout of commercial and domestic renewable technologies.

And what about those national wind and other renewable power targets? Well by 2010, wind alone was producing 2.3% of total energy, rising precipitously to 24% in 2020 (and nearing 30% today), with renewables altogether (including solar, tidal power etc) reaching 6.5% in 2010, climbing to 43.1% in 2020 and hitting a whopping record 51.6% today. While the UK missed its 2010 target, it smashed through its initial hopes for 2020 (by 2003 standards at least) and continues to grow, although by global standards, the UK ranks only in the top 1/3 of countries, so work still to do.

The policy around renewables has also evolved since our time capsule article. Today, the government is consulting on a revised National Planning Policy Framework which further promotes renewable energy generation and its associated infrastructure, giving it significant weight in planning decisions, and requiring local planning authorities to identify suitable areas for renewable and low carbon sources, including many energy generation types in the West Midlands identified in aforementioned regional review by the National Grid: not just wind, but solar, biomass, battery storage facilities and energy from waste.

One wonders whether the conversation in 20+ years hence will move to managing the phasing out of the last fossil fuel generation sources and technologies (gas boilers, petrol and diesel cars), much like the former closure of coal production and coal fire power stations?

You'll have to check Tripwire again in 2045 to find out!

RTPI West Midlands

# The Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (BMAG) Reopens

On Wednesday 23 October the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery reopened after a nearly five-year hiatus, we take a brief look to give a flavour of the new exhibits on offer, and the story it tells of the biggest city in the West Midlands region.

The newly opened museum presents as a beautifully restored piece of the city's civic centre, packed with visitors, many of which will have long awaited the return of what is the most keystone museum in the city.

Perhaps the most culturally ubiquitous exhibit is a mock tourist advertisement of the 'The Ramp' into Grand Central, or what was once The Palisades. Done in the style of the mid-century rail posters for Tenby, Dover or similar dreamy seaside destinations meant to tempt city workers, it presents a more a hilarious framing in this context. A meeting and congregation place for generations of Brummies, and a piece of infrastructure synonymous with the city's postwar, modernist character, The Ramp rightly features as a cultural touchpoint.



Also hanging from the walls are signs from well-known city institutions including The Eagle & Tun public house (infamous venue of UB40's hit Red Red Wine), and the more sober, and saucy, HP sign, the condiment factory of course once based in Aston. The former was recently demolished to make way for the HS2 Curzon Street Station development. There's also an excellent painting of the Halford's Birmingham Formula 3000 Superprix 1987, a nod back to the time when the ring roads dominated the city (just before the 'Highbury Initiative' would begin to roll them back), and were once even given over to some of the highest spec performance vehicles in the racing scene for five action packed years on the run from 1986 to 1990.





For planners' interest, as well as the architects and urban designers among us, there's an excellent scale model on show of the interwar Civic Centre Development Scheme, showcasing the smart, art deco inspired curves and symmetry across a vast and very palatial plaza, originally destined to be the new civic heart of the city in gleaming Portland stone. As it happens, only Baskerville House and the War Memorial were ever built, and of course today, the area instead boasts a number of starkly contrasting, contemporary architectural pieces in of last decade found in the new Central Library, the HSBC building and One Centenary Way, while from the decades before, the Hyatt hotel, the Repertory Theatre and the International Convention Centre still stand as examples of various late 20th century styles. It's fascinating to note what could have been.

To cap it all off, the gift shop is resplendent with the kind of 'merch' that any self-respecting Brummy would hanker over, including plenty of 'Bab' inspired ephemera. The museum is a must visit, and a breath of fresh air after the troublesome times the city council, and the city's residents as a result, have all been through in the last twelve months. As planners we should rejoice at the triumphant return of a key civic institution of the region's largest city. The BMAG gives us the fortitude of collective memory to weather such challenges, as we have done many times before, and gives us the historical framing for our shared endeavour toward the city's story yet to be told.

Find out more about the exhibitions on offer at the [BMAG website](#), and plan your visit soon!

The ever-popular Edwardian Tea Rooms are back and more beautiful than ever, with a seating arrangement that fosters chance conversations over warm drinks and pastries, such as a chat I started up with a Teaching Assistant visiting from Selly Oak, who felt very proud of the museum's exhibits and the restoration of a vital city centre amenity for his class of children with additional needs. Talking to him made me reflect on the importance of museums as 'third spaces', as cost free, no obligation places where all citizens of the city, and all visitors, are invited to explore the story of this ever changing, ever developing entity we call Birmingham.

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



RTPI West Midlands

# CPD programme and Events

## RTPI WM Young Planners Student Social

**Date:** 26 November 2024 at 6:00pm- 8:00pm

**Price:** Free

**Venue:** The Birmingham Stable,  
115 John Bright Street,  
Birmingham,  
West Midlands  
B1 1BE

Join the RTPI Young Planners for a student focused social event. The event brings together students from the University of Birmingham and Birmingham City University to meet the Young Planners Committee and socialise in a relaxed setting over a few drinks.

[BOOK NOW](#)

## RTPI WM Young Planners Winter Social

**Date:** 3 December 2024 at 5:30 - 11:30pm

**Price:** £10.00

**Venue:** Purecraft Bar & Kitchen,  
30 Waterloo Street, Birmingham,  
West Midlands, B2 5TJ

Join the West Midlands Young Planners committee for our annual winter social hosted at Purecraft, offering an evening of festivities and networking. This event is open to all Young Planners

[BOOK NOW](#)

## RTPI WM Winter Reception

**Date:** 20 November 2024 at 6:00pm - 10:30pm

**Price:** Free

**Venue:** Shoosmiths LLP,  
103 Colmore Row,  
Birmingham,  
West Midlands  
B3 3AG

Building on the success of last year's West Midlands Winter Reception, we are delighted to be hosting this event again for 2024.

Join us to celebrate the planning profession, take a look back over the past year and congratulate those who have passed their APC this year.

### We will be:

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

[BOOK NOW](#)

[Click here](#) to see all future RTPI West Midlands events on the regional events calendar.



## RTPI West Midlands Future Events and CPD

Work is underway for the CPD and events calendar in 2025 and tickets will go on sale in late January, keep an eye on your inbox for more information, and to continue receiving these updates, log in online to double check that the RTPI has your email address.

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

If you would like to contribute a photo, illustration or article, suggest a theme for future editions or have any ideas for content please email the Editor at [tripwirewm@gmail.com](mailto:tripwirewm@gmail.com). We especially love to showcase the work of regional photographers, especially in-region contributions for the front cover image.

Contact RTPI West Midlands via email [westmidlands@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:westmidlands@rtpi.org.uk).

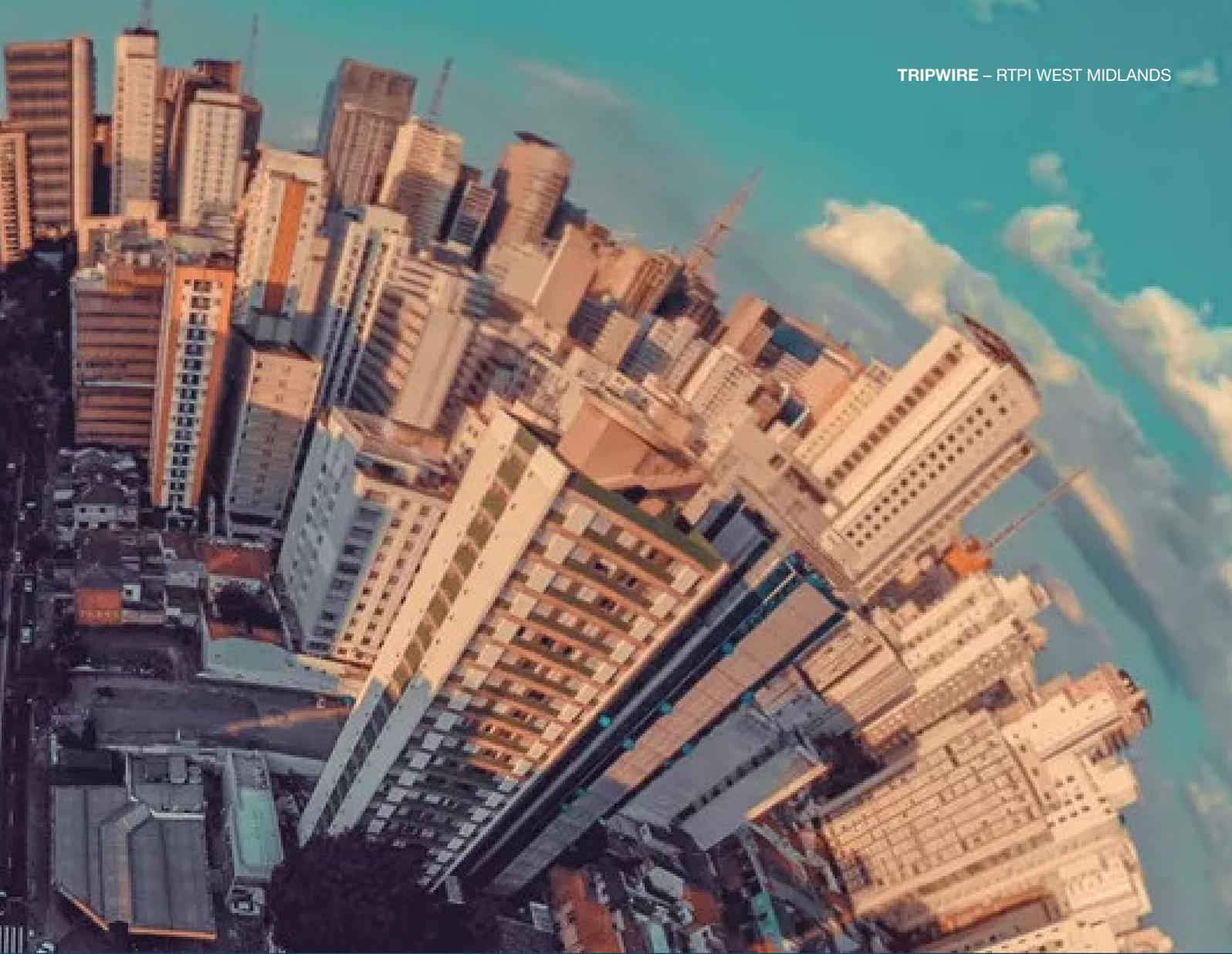
You can also follow us on [LinkedIn](#), [X](#) or see what's going on in the region on our [website](#).



# Congratulations to our RTPI Awards Finalists

- Congratulations to our West Midlands award winners who have been selected as national finalists in the RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence 2024.
- Allscott Meads, Telford & Wrekin Council, Excellence in Planning for Communities (large schemes of 50 homes or more)
- Luston Wetland - Phosphate Credit Trading Scheme, Herefordshire Council, Excellence in Planning for the Natural Environment
- Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, Planning Authority of the Year
- Frances Keenan, Spitfire Homes, Young Planner of the Year

The awards celebrate the best plans, people and projects that serve our communities nationally and internationally, and national winners will be announced at the [ceremony in London on 26 November 2024](#).



## Get in touch

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

If you would like to contribute a photo, illustration or article, suggest a theme for future editions or have any ideas for content please email the Editor at [tripwirewm@gmail.com](mailto:tripwirewm@gmail.com). We especially love to showcase the work of regional photographers, especially in-region contributions for the front cover image.

Contact RTPi West Midlands via email [westmidlands@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:westmidlands@rtpi.org.uk).

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

