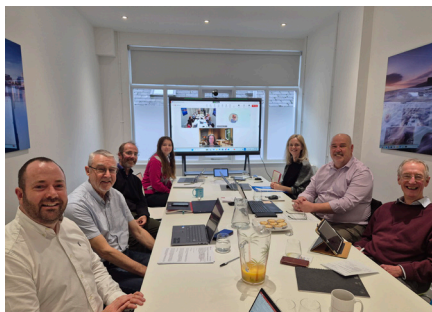


Cynllunio

The Journal of RTPI Cymru

Summer 2025



RTPI Cymru 25th anniversary special edition

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Croesawn erthyglau yn y
Gymraeg.

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Editorial

Welcome to the Summer edition of Cynllunio- it has been another very busy time for RTPI Cymru since the last edition, as you can see from the round- up of activities starting on page 3. The biggest event was obviously the Wales Planning Conference- with a new location, a record number of delegates and positive feedback from attendees and exhibitors it is great to see that this event is seen as a crucial opportunity for planners to get together, connect and learn from each other. We also announced the winners of our RTPI Cymru Awards for Planning Excellence- again with a new format and a new venue for the Summer Party, this event had a wonderful buzz about it. You can read about our fabulous winners in this edition- we will see whether Wales secures any UK Award at the national ceremony in November.

We wanted to acknowledge and celebrate RTPI Cymru's 25th anniversary- thank you to our contributors for taking part in the occasion and providing us with a wide range of articles doing so. The main front cover photo only showcases a snapshot of what RTPI Cymru has been doing for the last 25 years- this is only possible due to our amazing volunteers- thank you! We're now looking ahead with our ongoing work on the Planifesto for the 2026 Senedd elections as well as an RTPI-wide rebrand. Look out for more announcement ahead of the official launch on 8th September- there will be a new logo, colour palette, font and visual style across our website, communications and events. Our next edition of Cynllunio published later this year will reflect this new branding. But most important are our new values: we are inclusive, we are professional, we are approachable and we champion planning. RTPI Cymru branding is, of course, bilingual and will include new bilingual logos for our email signatures.

Finally, I do hope you have had an opportunity to take some time off over this summer to recharge and relax. It is looking like another busy end of the year for RTPI Cymru and we know it will be the same for everyone in the planning profession. Remember that as an RTPI member you have access to some wellbeing support resources which includes a 24/7 365 confidential helpline as well as advice on personal safety and lone working.

Mark Hand, Editor

Awards and Summer Party 2025



Our Awards and Summer Party took place on the eve of the Wales Planning Conference, in the Botanist in Cardiff. This event was an opportunity for our members to catch up, network and celebrate RTPI Cymru's 25th anniversary. We also announced the RTPI Cymru 2025 Awards for Planning Excellence winners, and formally welcomed newly Chartered Members to this new chapter of their professional career. Thank you to C2J and Carney Sweeney for sponsoring this event.

RTPI Cymru 2025 Award for Planning Excellence winners:

- Best Project – [Her Teifi Challenge](#) submitted by Ceredigion County Council
- Best Plan – [Crickhowell Place Plan](#) submitted by Chris Jones Regeneration and Crickhowell Town Council
- Planning Authority of the Year – [Ceredigion County Council](#)
- Small Planning Consultancy of the Year – [Highlight Planning](#)
- Young Planner of the Year – [Owain Evans](#), Ceredigion County Council



Llongyfarchiadau i bawb!

RTPI Activities

Wales Planning Conference

On 26th June we held our annual Wales Planning Conference. To coincide with our 25th anniversary the theme for this year was *What do the next 25 years look like for the planning profession.*

The day started with a keynote speech from Rebecca Evans MS, Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning at which she announced her decision to increase planning applications fees following the recent consultation- the purpose of which is to enable properly resourced planning services.

“Planners are the backbone of our drive to create sustainable and thriving communities, but resources are a challenge.”



The plenaries offered presentations from WSP, Public Health Wales, Savills, Woodlands Trust, RTPI Young Planners Cymru, Royal Town Planning Institute and Grasshopper Communications. After lunch delegates chose to attend a one hour breakout sessions from either Lichfields, Francis Taylor Building, Ceredigion County Council or Asbri Planning and JBA Consulting. There was also a panel discussion with RICS, RSAW, CIH, Home Builders Federation, Landscape Institute, and R-UK. A big thank you to FTB and Savills whose sponsorship makes this event possible.

In the breaks between plenaries, delegates had a chance to network and interact with a range of exhibitors in the refreshments area- and the conversation kept going even after the conference, thanks to networking drinks sponsored by WSP.





RTPI Activities

RTPI Cymru at Pride Cymru

RTPI Cymru joined Building Equality on 21st June for Pride Cymru, taking part in the morning parade through the streets of Cardiff- luckily the weather stayed mostly dry!

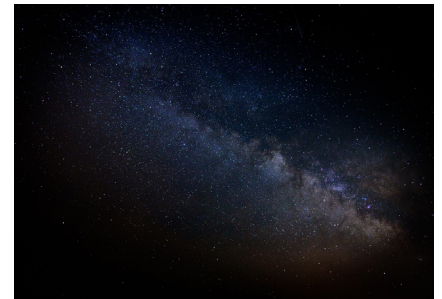
This was the second time RTPI Cymru joined the group, an alliance of built environment consultants, engineers, developers, contractors, and institutions passionate about working together and harnessing our collective power to drive LGBTQIA+ inclusion in the construction, engineering and built environment industry.



More information on Building Equality, and how to be involved [here](#).

Dark Skies guidance webinar

The Good Practice Guidance on Planning for Dark Skies in Wales was recently launched and RTPI Cymru was delighted to offer a one hour webinar to learn more about it and understand its practical applications on 9th July.



Many thanks to our speakers at this session: Gayle Lister and Siobhan Wiltshire, both members of the Dark Skies Working Group.

RTPI Cymru Director to take part in Implementation Group

In October 2024 Lee Waters MS was tasked by the Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government, Jayne Bryant MS, and the Minister for Delivery, Julie James MS, to convene an Affordable Housing Taskforce of which Mark Hand, RTPI Cymru Director was a member.

Following on from the publication of the report in April 2025 and recommendations Mark accepted an invitation to be part of the subsequent implementation group. Look out for further updates in Cynllunio, on our LinkedIn page, the RTPI website and our email bulletins.

RTPI Cymru at the Eisteddfod

RTPI Cymru attended the Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru in Wrexham on Monday 4th August.

We had an chance meeting with First Minister Eluned Morgan and Plaid Cymru leader Rhun ap Iorwerth who were both attending on this day. We also stopped by the Ymchwil y Senedd, Senedd Cymru tent and got really helpful advice about attending the Farchnad events, in preparation for our Planifesto work ahead of the Senedd 2026 elections.

It looks like we already have secured a space for next year's Eisteddfod which will take place in Pembrokeshire- watch this space for more updates!



RTPI Activities

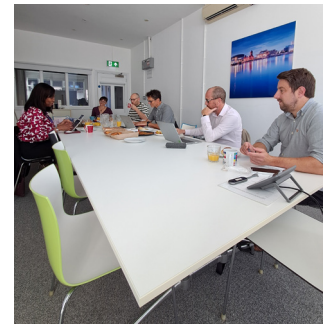
RTPI President visit to Wales

On 30th and 31st July RTPI Cymru welcomed RTPI President Helen Fadipe for her two day visit to Wales.

The visit started with a built environment business breakfast discussing strengthening collaboration, shared resourcing challenges, recent changes to the planning system in Wales, and our shared priorities as we near the Senedd Cymru election. Thank you to our partners in the built environment for attending: Thomas Webb (RSAW), Samuel Rees (RICS), Mark Harris HBF, Hannah Dineen (Grasshopper communications) and Matt Dicks (CIH).

Helen and the RTPI Cymru team travelled to Aberystwyth for a tour of Old College. One of the biggest heritage regeneration projects in the UK, it carefully but imaginatively restores disused Grade 1 and 2 Listed Buildings for community and tourism uses including Aberystwyth's first 4-star hotel. It is expected to attract 200,000 visitors a year, create 48 new jobs and offer over 1,300 training and volunteering opportunities.

On the second day there was a visit to Her Teifi (the Teifi Challenge), an RTPI Cymru Planning Excellence Award winner this year. Thank you to Cabinet lead for Planning at Ceredigion Council Cllr Clive Davies, Sarah Groves-Phillips, Liza Zanoni, Gail Pearce-Taylor and Owain Evans for their warm welcome and for giving Helen more information on the project followed by a site visit to one of the monitoring sites.



“Diolch yn fawr for the warm welcome to Wales. I was inspired by the creativity, collaboration, and commitment to community led planning, from heritage regeneration to grassroots engagement. It was an inspiring visit, a powerful reminder of planning’s potential to transform places and lives. Thanks to everyone who took time to meet me.”

Helen Fadipe MBE, RTPI President

RTPI Cymru Awards for Planning Excellence 2025

Best Project 2025: Her Teifi Challenge, submitted by Ceredigion County Council

Her Teifi Challenge is an exemplar project which through collaborative working with neighbouring authorities and 3rd sector partners developed an action plan with the WBFG Act and UN SDG's alongside Future Wales 2040 and the Habitats Regulations 2017 to implement a catchment based approach to restore the Teifi SAC. The team have implemented innovative in-river water quality monitoring systems combined with an extensive citizen science testing programme, alongside developing strategic mitigations for nutrient management. This resulted in delivering on the ground action in the form of SUDs schemes, farm capital works improvements and 9km of riparian fencing, leading by example.



“The project addresses environmental and development challenges through integrated planning, aligning with policy goals and promoting biodiversity, sustainable housing, and economic growth. It pioneers regional collaboration, notably on nutrient management, and showcases innovation through citizen science and real-time data tools. Strong stakeholder engagement and leadership are evident, though inclusivity details could be improved. The project exemplifies best practices under the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and UN SDGs, deserving national recognition for its impact”.

Judges feedback

Best Plan: Crickhowell Place Plan submitted by Chris Jones Regeneration and Crickhowell Town Council

The Crickhowell place plan is aligned to the Y Bannau management plan approach and has applied the principles of Doughnut Economics when looking at planetary, environmental and social spheres of action. This strategic yet bottom up approach followed through the plan process and led to outcomes being at a Park and town level. The place plan adopted accessible, creative, and inclusive approach-

es to plan participation. It has also enabled Crickhowell Town Council with managing its cultural and organisation changes. A toolkit has also been devised to help the Park Authority with the roll out of other Place Plans.



“The entry presents a thoughtful and inclusive planning approach, clearly outlining project aims, stakeholder engagement, and the planners’ pivotal role. It excels in community involvement, using diverse methods to achieve impressive engagement levels. The plan addresses climate and nature emergencies with well-developed policies and demonstrates a strong commitment to inclusivity.”

Judges feedback

Planning Authority of the Year: Ceredigion County Council

Team Ceredigion are improving, engaging and striving to be the best. They have implemented a number of changes in the way they operate and the work they focus on. They are tackling their difficulties head on, whether this relates to rurality, phosphates, placemaking, recruitment or determination rates. This is done by engaging with their users, and striving to create an agile, better working environment, with more customer focus, whilst delivering on the plans and strategies that safeguard local heritage, put town centres first and manage special habitats. Through their work Ceredigion County Council aim for efficient, timely planning decisions based on co-produced visions.



“This submission is testament to the dedication and exceptional hard work undertaken by Ceredigion to improve the delivery of its planning function within the county. In particular, how it has reduced the backlog of open cases to manageable levels, and how it has engaged with various stakeholders in bringing forward place making plans, increasing affordable housing provisions and establishing a culture of inclusivity.”

Judges feedback

Small Planning Consultancy of the Year: Highlight Planning

Highlight Planning is an independent consultancy providing clear, practical advice to developers, landowners, and businesses across Wales and the UK. They simplify planning complexities, ensuring clients and stakeholders can engage in the process with confidence. With a problem-solving approach, they focus on achieving consensus whilst maximising benefits for people and places and always aim to achieve the best outcomes. Whether working on housing, commercial projects, or renewable energy, Highlight Planning combines knowledge and experience to navigate challenges effectively, helping clients unlock opportunities while ensuring developments align with planning policies and community needs.



“Highlight Planning demonstrates excellence across all criteria, leading sensitive projects like Llan-carfarn School with exceptional community engagement and transparency. Their innovative, mindset-shifting approaches to planning challenges are well-evidenced, as is their strong client satisfaction. They prioritize inclusive, jargon-free communication and offer pro bono support to groups/ charities unable to access planning support. Their commitment to climate-conscious development is clear through multiple project examples. With a strong professional ethos and community focus, Highlight sets a high standard for planning consultancy practice and thoroughly deserves this award” Judges feedback

Young Planner of the Year: Owain Evans, Ceredigion County Council

Owain is an early career planner who puts placemaking at the top of his decision making. He has stepped up to senior officer within Ceredigion County Council and leads his team with compassion and dedication. He is committed to making Ceredigion a better place to live and work through his planning expertise and his volunteering. Having recently taken over the senior role, he has determined major applications, managed performance issues and worked with agents and applicants to negotiate better schemes.



“A passionate young Welsh professional who is clearly self-driven and determined to be able to give back to his local community and help make a difference to the places around him. This submission portrays a breadth of knowledge and experience in planning and development. Owain is a confident individual who clearly portrays the ability to be able to manage conflict and impartial judgement” Judges feedback

RTPI Cymru 25th Anniversary

Reflections on 25 years of RTPI Cymru – a look back by Allan Archer and Lyn Owen

As 2025 is the 25th anniversary of the creation of a Branch serving the whole of the RTPI's membership in Wales, it seemed an appropriate opportunity to look back and reflect. It is worth starting by saying that the creation of RTPI Cymru was the culmination of the efforts of many members across Wales over a long period of time. The many contributions of enthusiasm, ideas and voluntary hard work mean it would be wrong to name only some of those members responsible for achieving the all-Wales branch. Their joint achievement is sufficient recognition.

So, to tell the full story, it is necessary to look back into the 1990s, when the membership in Wales was served by two branches – members in North Wales being part of the North West England and North Wales Branch and members in the rest of Wales being part of the South Wales Branch.

At the time, some of the areas of the South Wales Branch had set up Chapters to organise more locally-based events while, at the same time, North Wales based members of the North West England and North Wales Branch were moving to create a North Wales Chapter. These activities showed that an all-Wales structure with locally organised activities was a feasible prospect.

There were few formal contacts but of course individual members shared views and ideas and the Branch Chairs and other member representatives would often meet at headquarters activities and the much-missed RTPI summer schools.

There had been talk for some time of the need for better links between members across the whole of Wales and for the RTPI to improve coverage of Welsh issues. Two initiatives started the process. The first was the relaunch of the South Wales Branch newsletter, called Cynllunio, in 1991 which deliberately addressed issues from across Wales. This began to be distributed

in North Wales by means of informal contacts and eventually an all-Wales circulation list was achieved. The second was a series of joint efforts, formal and informal, by successive Branch Chairs member representatives and other active members in North and South Wales to promote the case to RTPI headquarters for an all-Wales approach. Fortunately, some Headquarters staff recognised the benefits of this case and so the ball began to roll.

There was a need especially to secure responses on behalf of members in Wales to the growing number of separate consultations and policy initiatives emerging from the then Welsh Office. So, in 1995, the Institute established an all-Wales Planning Policy Panel bringing together representatives from the profession from across Wales. It was also agreed that a part-time Policy Officer post should be established to support the Panel.

Rebecca Phillips was appointed and the efficient and personable way she discharged her duties was a great help in making the panel a success. This continued with Owain Wyn and then Rhian Brimble taking up the role, which continues to be a vital part of RTPI Cymru's efforts to support members in Wales.



Devolution of powers to the Welsh Assembly towards the end of the 1990s further underlined the value of an all-Wales focus and the Institute eventually was convinced that an all-Wales Branch, with a Policy Officer and administrative

support, could effectively deliver services and policy support to members in Wales.

The All-Wales Branch with the title RTPI Cymru, was finally established at the beginning of 2001 (later evolving into one of the RTPI's Nations), and launched with events in Colwyn Bay and Cardiff. At the launch event in Cardiff, the National Assembly's Minister for the Environment, Sue Essex, gave her support to the RTPI Cymru as well as reminding members that she was a long-standing and fully paid-up member of the Institute. She made two main points to the planners present – the need for an active Institute in Wales and the value of a successful planning profession – not only to provide mainstream town and country planning services but to do the many other things planners were good at, particularly coordinating and integrating activities and working towards sustainable development.

So, from the start, RTPI Cymru received strong support from the National Assembly, which has continued through the years of the Assembly's evolution to Welsh Government. A very positive relationship had already been developed between the Institute and the Planning Division of the Assembly and this, happily, continues to thrive to the present day.



Then, in 2006, a new Director post was added to the RTPI's resources for Wales and Roisin Wil-mott was appointed. Another popular as well as respected colleague she oversaw the expansion of that role to include duties in relation to Northern Ireland and the establishment of an office in the centre of Cardiff as a base for branch activities and meetings. More recently, Roisin has been succeeded by Mark Hand who settled into the role at breakneck speed and is continuing to take forward the wide programme of RTPI Cymru activity alongside his other responsibilities.



Completing the resources made available over this period to support the Policy and Director roles and RTPI activity have been excellent and dedicated Administrative Officers – firstly Pauline James, then Georgina Roberts and currently Dorine Chantepie. Finally, in the last few years, RTPI Cymru has been able to offer a year-out placement for a student from the Cardiff Planning course as well as commission Wales-specific research which has enabled discrete pieces of research to be carried out.

While the establishment of the all-Wales Branch and the provision of resources came about through a process which took many years and involved the effort of many members in both North and South Wales it has not been the end-point of the process. The activity of the Institute in Wales and across the UK and beyond has and will continue to adapt to changing circumstances, to new technologies and to the interests and needs of new generations of members.



Change and progress has come about through the combined efforts of an active membership across Wales and the support and direction of the RTPI staff in both Wales and HQ. The continued involvement of members in the many facets of the RTPI's work and activities will be vital to the further evolution of RTPI Cymru and the Institute nationally. Volunteering is also a way of expanding professional networks, learning new skills and strengthening the profession's collective voice.

Having seen the branch develop so steadily and well over twenty five years no doubt its evolution will continue and change as planning itself does.

Allan Archer was the first Chair of RTPI Cymru in 2001 (Chair again in 2024) and Lyn Owen was the second Chair of RTPI Cymru in 2002.

RTPI Cymru Celebrates 25 Years: A potted reflection, by Roisin Willmott

A quarter of a Century sounds a long time, and it is, it's also a generation. So RTPI Cymru's anniversary is something to celebrate. I was honoured to be part of the journey.

The RTPI Cymru journey in many ways reflects the journey which Wales itself has been on since the 1990s. Prior to the 1997 Referendum and the resultant establishment of the then National Assembly for Wales in 1999, planning policy in Wales was starting to plough its own furrow. The case for a single Wales' entity (at that time known as Branches, and now referred to as the Nations and Regions) for the RTPI became increasingly logical. It gave members based in Wales a single voice and the ability to focus on the Welsh planning system. So RTPI Cymru was born.

As the all-Wales Management Board bedded in, after a few years, a determined group of RTPI members in Wales argued the case for Wales to be given more resource, as had been the case for Scotland for some years. It took some time, but they wouldn't take 'no' for an answer and eventually their persistence paid off and the position of National Director for RTPI Cymru was created in 2007. I was thrilled to be entrusted with this role.

The Management Board had helpfully prepared a business plan; it anticipated developing the policy role, holding a Wales Planning Conference and building up the Wales Planning Award, amongst other things. There was also the expectation of continuing participation with the Regeneration Skills Collective Wales.

Home-based, the role was supported by five hours a week of an Administrative Assistant – Georgina Roberts, who many members will have interacted with. This was quickly changed to half time to support the demand required of the Business Plan.

Our first 'challenge' was to arrange the Annual Dinner. The venue (Aberdare Hall) was already booked and there was an established format. The fantastic Terry Stevens, was Chair and he and I muddled through the evening, hosting the Minister – Jane Davidson – who presented the Awards. The Awards (the first awarded in Wales) had been a number of projects submitted over a couple of years and 'rescued' by Nick Mills who took great effort in providing carefully crafted award certificates in the form of posters. The first winner was Galeri, Caernarfon and the Wales Spatial Plan also had a mention.

2008 had great expectations. One of the first headline changes we introduced was the establishment of the Wales Planning Conference. Gareth Williams and Anna Prescott from NLP (now Lichfields) provided valuable support and in addition to sponsorship, made themselves available to discuss the venue and programme. We were delving into the unknown, who would come, what would they be interested in, how many should we plan for? We were overwhelmed by the response, with over 250 delegates. For 2019, we had to find a bigger venue!

The Wales Planning Conference has continued to be a success and is now a firm annual date.

The Management Board were pleased with the success of the Conference and debated whether to move it around Wales, but instead a national Conference in North Wales was arranged for the Spring – and the Spring Conference was born.



There was a sensitivity in the early days about not focusing on Cardiff for activities and ensuring we were genuinely all Wales – Cymru gyfan – in our programme. It's often easier to arrange events, particularly social events, in Cardiff because there is a larger population, boosted by the many private consultancies and students, but events held elsewhere were often more rewarding and definitely had to be done, so this was always a consideration.



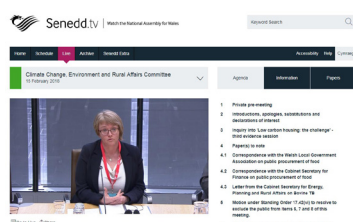
The North Wales Chapter was reinvigorated, providing CPD events for members in the North. These were popular but took a great deal of members' time to arrange and waned as a result of Covid. There was an attempt to set up a West Wales Chapter, but after an initial injection of budget led by Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, this struggled.



The 2009 Eisteddfod Genedlaethol saw our first presence on the Maes and we have had a form of activity linked to the Eisteddfod each year since. In 2016 (Monmouthshire, Abergavenny) and 2017 (Anglesey, Bodedern) we had our own stand, using members to help staff them. The Eisteddfod not only offers an opportunity to provide a focus for members on a topic / activity in Welsh, it also provides an opportunity to engage with the public on planning.



The policy function started with responding to consultations but moved to being more proactive and establishing policy positions. The most significant opportunity for this came with the development of the Planning (Wales) Bill, steered by the Policy and Research Forum's chair, Lesley Punter. RTPI Cymru released four position papers of what we would like to see from the Bill. This moved us forward and gave us a platform on which to influence others who were looking to engage in the Bill.



RTPI Cymru became regular invitees to various Scrutiny Committees of the National Assembly for Wales and later Senedd Cymru. This was important to bring the profession's views to the attention of those scrutinising law and Welsh Government.

The policy work also provided us with material for our event programme, providing a cross-over between policy and CPD provision.

2008 also saw the first edition of Cynllunio – born in the café in Cardiff University's Glamorgan Building at a meeting between myself, Neil Harris (Cardiff University) and James Davies (Planning Aid Wales). James took on the design and layout of the new publication and did a great job, raising the quality of the publication. It was produced quarterly and had contributions from many members across Wales. We were even instructed by the National Library of Wales that they required a copy under the Legal Deposit Libraries Act 2003! It was produced in hard copy until Covid, when the last edition was posted out in March 2020, just as we closed the office.

Talking of which, with a new RTPI Chief Executive in 2018 – Victoria Hills - the case for an office for RTPI Cymru was finally achieved in March 2019 when we moved into the Creative Quarter in Cardiff. This made a huge difference to how we could operate, we had somewhere to store the RTPI paraphernalia – from leaflets and pop-ups, to historical documents and past publications and materials for school visits – we could now host meetings and we had a physical presence and importantly, had somewhere the team could work together.

The development of RTPI Cymru is also set within the context of a changing RTPI itself. Since RTPI Cymru was formed, we've had three leads – one Secretary General, Robert Upton and two Chief Executives, Trudi Elliot and Victoria Hills and we are about to see a change again. Each have put their own stamp and priorities on the direction of the Institute and this has had an effect on how the Institute operated in Wales. Over time Wales became treated as its own entity, not as a sub-set of England.

RTPI Cymru
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**RTPI
Discussion
Paper**

2022



In addition to this welcomed increase, in 2021 we also began employing a student placement from Cardiff University's planning undergraduate courses, to add to our policy capacity. Each of the students who have worked with us, have brought their own interests and skills and added so much to the team. We started with Ben Reader, who was followed by Siôn Mainwaring and Georgina Nee.

There have been some stand out initiatives over the past 25 years and two in particular come to mind. In 2014 the RTPI celebrated its Centenary, each part of the RTPI did something to mark this. In Wales, we walked around the country using the Wales Coast Path (which had won the RTPI's Silver Jubilee Cup in 2012) and Offa's Dyke footpath – we worked out it was just over 1,000 miles and we had just over 1,000 members – so a mile a member! Of course some miles were very popular and repeated by many, and some less popular, but together we did it. It was fantastic to see so many members rise to the challenge. To mark the Centenary a small dedicated group of members wrote a series of articles tracking the history of planning in Wales, these were published in Cynllunio and provide a valuable record of how Wales has been shaped.

Whilst on the topic of the Centenary, it is worth noting that we had a President from Wales – Cath Ranson – in 2014. During the 25 years of RTPI Cymru we've had two RTPI Presidents from Wales, in addition to Cath, Phil Williams was President in 2017.

The second initiative, was Wales Best Place, when we engaged with the public to find where they considered the best place in Wales to be. We invited nominations and then convened a panel to come up with the top 10 places in Wales. This was then put out a public vote. Aberaeron was overwhelmingly voted as the best place in Wales and was announced at a gathering in the town with local elected members and school children by RTPI President, Phil Williams.



The governance of RTPI Cymru has largely run along the same lines, a Management Board, which changed to an Executive Committee, and a Policy and Research Forum, delegated to consider policy issues. Each of the Chairs RTPI Cymru has seen have brought their own styles and value and over the 25 years there has been a good representation of the membership of Wales. There have been many members across Wales who have supported RTPI Cymru – formally on the Committee and Forum, as judges for Awards, speaking at events, participating in school engagement activities, and writing for Cynllunio. Long may this continue – there is an opportunity suited to everyone.

On a personal note, I have found it a privilege to be at the heart of much of the development of RTPI Cymru (for 16 of the past 25 years). It is now good to see how Mark Hand has taken on the baton and brought new ideas to take RTPI Cymru forward.

RTPI Cymru has proven to be able to provide the framework for the profession in Wales to be part of something global, yet in a Wales' context. RTPI Cymru am byth!

Roisin Willmott was the Director for RTPI Cymru from 2007 to 2023.

Welsh planning legislation fit for the 21st century- Dr Charles Mynors, FLSW, Barrister, FRT-PI, IHBC, FICFor (Hon)

Fifty years ago, when I started my studies to become a town planner, I knew almost nothing about the law. But I quickly discovered that law is of critical importance to planning – and should be of equal importance to planners. Who owns land? Are owners free to do with it whatever they wish? How can that freedom be limited in the public interest? And who determines what is the public interest? Idealists and policy-makers have all sorts of ideas as to how land could or should be used; but what they can actually achieve is severely constrained by the limited extent of the powers that have been given to them by Parliament (or latterly by the Senedd).

The significance of planning law

“Planning laws” are frequently blamed by uninformed commentators for getting in the way of much-needed development – or making it difficult to protect much-loved landscapes. Actually, of course, it is not law but policy that determines what is allowed, and what is prevented. It is policy that attracts all the limelight, and the news. More houses should be allowed in certain locations, fewer in others; more infrastructure must be provided, preferably somewhere else. However, it is the law that is the framework that enables the planning system, and planners, to operate. And the key element in that law is the legislation – the Acts, orders, and regulations – providing the fixed basis for the whole system.

The Latin word *regula*, the basis of the modern words “rule” and “regulation”, came originally from the word for trellis, a framework to enable ordered growth of plants in a garden. It is the plants that are the focus of attention, but without the trellis they would collapse.

Planning law is – in spite of how it might appear – actually not particularly complicated. In short, it answers a series of straightforward questions –

•What is controlled by the planning system?

->“Planning permission” is needed for “development” – that is, building, engineering and mining operations (but not internal works), and significant changes of land use.

•Is permission needed for everything?

->The General Permitted Development Order (and local development orders) grant permission automatically for categories of development that are generally innocuous, or that are approved in some other way.

•Who grants or withholds permission?

->The “planning authority” (either the local council or the national park authority), in response to applications; or the Welsh Ministers (in practice, PEDW inspectors), in response to appeals.

Simple.

Alongside those basic principles, a lot of peripheral detail has grown up – there are, for example, separate codes (in regulations) governing outdoor advertising and works to more significant trees; and there is greater control over works to historic buildings and monuments. The rules also apply slightly differently to statutory undertakers. The system is largely reactive; that is, there is relatively little scope for national or local authorities to intervene in relation to land they do not themselves own.

But, fundamentally, it is not complicated – at least in theory.

However, because development proposals are often controversial, it has become axiomatic that they must be the subject of public consultation – although almost invariably that largely attracts responses from those likely to be adversely affected, because those who will benefit from change, whether new housing or a new sewage works, cannot be identified until the development is in use. But no amount of consultation can hide the fact that new development will benefit some, and harm others.

The growth of planning legislation

Against that background, Parliament has continued to legislate for planning. This has often been for one of two purposes. First, mechanisms have to be found to enable development that is less controversial (or is otherwise politically attractive) to by-pass the normal procedures – of which the most useful is the system of permitted development. More recently, enthusiastic politicians have introduced simplified planning zones, enterprise zones, urban development areas, local development orders and (in England) neighbourhood orders – all of which are so tangled up with detailed safeguards that they are little used in practice.

Second, there have appeared a series of different procedures for dealing with large-scale projects, which are inevitably complex and controversial – such as railway lines, roads, airports, and power stations – hence planning inquiry commissions, transport and works orders, development consent orders, and the new system of infrastructure consent in Wales. These are largely separate from the mainstream planning system.

The result of this is that planning legislation has grown hugely, becoming ever more complicated, and difficult even for professionals to find their way around. So, in 1947 the original Town and Country Planning Act (TCPA) contained a mere 120 sections and 11 Schedules. Fifteen years later, the TCPA 1962 contained 226 sections; and it was soon replaced by the TCPA 1971, which had 295 sections and 25 schedules. That in turn was replaced by two Acts, the TCPA 1990 and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which together – when they first appeared – contained 431 sections and 21 Schedules.

Significantly, all of those Acts applied in both England and Wales – as did the Planning and Compensation Act 1991 and the Environment Act 1995, both of which amended the TCPA 1990 but also contained freestanding provisions (notably those relating to minerals). But this started to change towards the end of the twentieth century. The first change was the introduction, by the Local Government (Wales) Act 1994, of unitary planning authorities throughout Wales. And the Welsh Office in 1996 issued brand new policy guidance – replacing the guidance previously issued jointly for England and Wales. The Government of Wales Act 1998 then created the National Assembly.

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (PCPA) 2004, in line with previous practice, made some changes to the TCPA 1990 applying both in England and Wales; but it also introduced a new system of development plans in England, and a completely separate system for Wales.

Progress since devolution

The process of devolution was given a significant boost by the Government of Wales Act 2006. This enabled the Assembly to pass laws, which would have a status equivalent to that of Acts

of the UK Parliament, in relation to certain subjects – including planning, historic buildings, and the environment. From then on, some new legislation relating to planning still applied in both England and Wales – for example, the provisions of the Planning Act 2008 relating to infrastructure projects, tree preservation orders and CIL – but, increasingly, planning Acts passed by Parliament in Westminster (such as the Housing and Planning Act 2016, the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017, and the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023) largely applied only to England.

Similarly, Acts passed by the Assembly, later the Senedd, in Cardiff Bay (notably the Planning (Wales) Act 2015 and the Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016) applied only in Wales. These were generally in the form of amendments to the TCPA 1990 and other earlier Acts, and in some cases contained provisions similar to those in recent England-only statutes; but they also contained a number of Wales-only provisions. And of course the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 had no equivalent in England – or anywhere else for that matter.

By 2023, therefore, planning law in England and Wales was to be found in a wide range of statutes – notably the TCPA 1990, as amended by a raft of subsequent Acts, the Planning and Compensation Act 1991, the Environment Act 1995, the PCPA 2004, and the Planning Act 2008. And these between them contained 660 sections. Significantly, however, of those,

- 337 sections (around half) apply in both England and Wales – often slightly differently, and occasionally completely differently;
- 245 sections (over a third) apply only in England; and
- the remaining 74 sections apply only in Wales.

And those figures do not include the legislation relating to large infrastructure projects, nor the separate Acts relating to historic buildings and monuments.

Although there is apparently a single planning system in place throughout England and Wales, therefore, in reality it operates significantly differently on either side of the border. And it is by no means straightforward to discover which pieces of legislation apply where – and in what form. Section 1 of the TCPA 1990, for example, which sets out the basic rule as to which authority is responsible for planning control, applies completely differently in the two countries.

And the same problem has arisen in relation to many other topic areas – including housing, education, agriculture, and local government.

Fortunately, the Welsh Government takes law seriously. It has therefore started a programme, The Future of Welsh Law (Dyfodol Cyfraith Cymru), which will eventually result in all Welsh legislation being codified. The aim is that all of the Acts relating to each topic for which the Senedd is responsible will be brought together, with all England-only provisions eliminated. This will enable users to find that law in a single statute, which will be kept up-to-date, and published in both English and Welsh.

New planning legislation for Wales

Even more fortunately, the first topics to be subject to this new approach are the historic environment and planning. The Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2023, which was brought into force in November 2024, thus brought together the provisions of the Ancient Monuments [etc] Act 1979, the Listed Buildings Act 1990, and the Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016 into a single, sensibly organised Act, in both languages. The new Act was accompanied by a suite of secondary legislation providing the details.

This was followed by the Legislation (Procedure, Publication and Repeals) (Wales) Act 2025, which gained Royal assent on 10 July 2025, and repealed various pieces of redundant legislation,

including a number relating to planning.

The third, and most significant, of these new Acts will be the Planning (Wales) Bill, which will be introduced into the Senedd in September 2025. Assuming that it becomes law, this will replace the TCPA 1990 and all the other existing pieces of planning legislation relating to planning, as they apply in Wales. It will not change the law to any significant extent, save that it will incorporate a number of minor technical amendments recommended by the Law Commission in its 2018 report on Planning Law in Wales. But it will result in Wales having for the first time a single, coherent Act containing all of the relevant primary legislation underpinning the planning system.

The Bill has already been published in draft form, in both languages, in June 2025. That draft is available on the Welsh Government website – along with an explanatory memorandum providing a simple guide to its contents, and a table showing the provisions that are being replaced by it. Because it is a consolidation Bill – that is, it broadly restates the existing law, and contains no policy changes – it is likely to emerge from the Senedd in more or less the form in which it is now available as a draft.

As well as all the material in the two-thirds of the TCPA 1990 that currently applies in Wales, the new Bill will also include the provisions relating to development plans (currently in the PCPA 2004), and those relating to CIL (in the Planning Act 2008). And it will include an updated suite of provisions relating to minerals, replacing those in the 1991 and 1995 Acts; and it will see the introduction (at last) of the changes made by the 2008 Act to tree preservation orders. But it will not restate provisions that are obsolete or redundant, or those that apply only in England.

Alongside the new Bill there will also be a Planning (Consequential Provisions) (Wales) Bill, which will make changes necessary to ensure that other legislation continues to operate satisfactorily – not least the TCPA 1990 itself, which will continue to apply in England.

It is hoped that the two Bills will be passed by the Senedd before the election in May 2026, obtaining Royal assent in early summer; they will then be brought into force in late 2026 or in 2027. At that stage, they will be accompanied by some other items of secondary legislation, providing procedural details, and amending other secondary legislation – and replacement trees regulations.

Eventually, it is likely that various other sets of regulations will be updated and consolidated – including:

- the TCP (Use Classes) Order 1987 (still in force in England and Wales, but somewhat differently);
- the TCP General Regulations 1992 (still in force in England and Wales, but much altered);
- the TCP (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 1992, and the TCP (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (both originally applying in England and Wales, but now only in Wales); and
- the TCP (Development Management Procedure) (Wales) Order 2012.

And Planning Policy Wales (PPW) and other national planning policy will in due course be updated. But the timing of all this will depend on the availability of resources.

The result

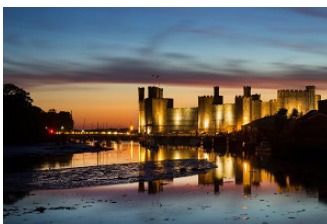
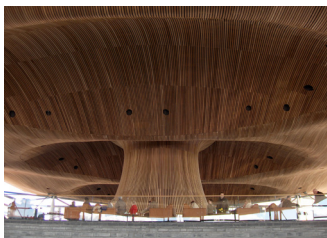
England will continue to struggle on with more than a dozen pieces of primary legislation, much amended, and many dating back more than a third of a century.

Wales, by contrast, has had since 1996 a coherent suite of national policies guiding the planning system – Planning Policy

Wales predated by sixteen years the first National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in England. And it will soon have a clear, up-to-date suite of primary and secondary legislation, in both languages, providing the legal principles underpinning the efficient operation of that system. The new Act will indeed be the most straightforward statement of those principles anywhere in the UK.

The new Senedd will no doubt continue to change the legislation – that is why it exists. But at least it will be possible to see what is being changed; and that may lead to more intelligent amendments. We shall see. In the meantime, it will be up to all those operating the system to ensure that they are familiar with the new Act. The new trellis will be in place; the challenge will be how to use it to the best advantage for the people of Wales.

Charles Mynors is an experienced barrister, with a unique combination of qualifications, in architecture, planning, surveying, law, and historic buildings. Charles has a particular interest in law reform, and is now working for the Law Commission on a Welsh Government project to simplify the legislation on planning and the historic environment – which is the first step towards producing an accessible, bilingual statute book for Wales.



Celebrating 25 Years of RTPI Cymru: A legacy of collaboration in pursuit of great placemaking and design excellence in Wales - Jen Heal, DCfW

As RTPI Cymru celebrates its 25th anniversary, it is timely to reflect on the significant impact it has made on the planning profession in Wales. Over the past quarter of a century, RTPI Cymru has not only supported planners across the country but has also helped shape a collaborative and forward-thinking culture around placemaking. In a constantly evolving built environment, its work has proven critical in ensuring that Wales creates vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable places.

The relationship between planning and design is one of mutual dependence. Good design cannot be achieved without good planning, and vice versa. Recognising this, RTPI Cymru has worked closely with the Design Commission for Wales (DCFW) and advocated for design awareness in planning processes alongside the integration of placemaking principles.

The longstanding relationship between RTPI Cymru and the Design Commission for Wales is a key factor at the heart of this approach. This collaboration has brought about tangible benefits for the planning and design communities. DCFW has regularly contributed to RTPI Cymru conferences and events, providing expertise, sparking dialogue, and encouraging cross-sector learning. This collaboration has not been superficial; it has included working closely on common ground across legislation, policy and practice and the co-delivery of a national training programme on accessible design, underlining a shared commitment to inclusive, human-centred environments. Perhaps one of the most powerful examples of our collaboration was the formation of the Placemaking Wales Partnership. This multidisciplinary group, established by DCFW and Welsh Government and championed by RTPI Cymru, brought together professionals across the built environment to develop the Placemaking Wales Charter. The Charter, and its accompanying guidance, has become a cornerstone in embedding placemaking principles, brought together through good design, across Wales. It articulates a shared understanding of what makes places thrive—principles covering people and communi-

ty, location, movement, mix of uses, public realm, and identity—and ensures these are relevant and accessible to all stakeholders involved in shaping the places where we live, work, and play.

The influence of the Placemaking Charter has extended far beyond policy documents. It has permeated the ethos of planning departments, consultancies, and communities. RTPI Cymru has played a vital role in this dissemination through its consistent advocacy, events, and publications. These have not only raised awareness among planners but also equipped them with the tools and confidence to apply placemaking principles in real-world contexts. This year, 2025, also marks the fifth anniversary of the Charter, and an opportunity to celebrate progress made to date and collectively ensure the principles are upheld into the future.

In light of recent developments in the Welsh planning landscape, this work has never been more relevant. The introduction of Future Wales – the national development framework – and Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12) has placed placemaking firmly at the heart of planning policy. These documents emphasise sustainable growth, climate resilience, and well-being—goals that align closely with the values RTPI Cymru has championed over the past 25 years. Through its policy responses, thought leadership, and member engagement, RTPI Cymru continues to be an influential voice in ensuring these ambitions are realised in practice.

Moreover, the challenges facing planners in Wales today are significant. The pressures of affordable housing demand, climate change, diminishing resources, and the increasing pressure to do more with less make the role of the planner more demanding than ever. In this environment, RTPI Cymru has provided essential support—offering guidance, professional development, and community to its members.

This commitment to professional support is particularly important given the increasing scrutiny and expectations placed on the planning system. As the public demands more from their built environment—better transport, more green space, affordable housing, and climate adaptation—planners must facilitate the delivery of visionary, integrated solutions – they must play their part in expecting and enabling well-designed sustainable places. Together the Design Commission for Wales and RTPI Cymru have understood and communicated the need for collective responsibility and the role we all play in shaping great places. Together we have consistently advocated for joined-up thinking, working with other professions and agencies to deliver holistic outcomes.

An example of this approach is joint work with DCFW, which is rooted in a culture of quality and collaboration rather than siloed working. By sharing expertise and vision, both organisations have reinforced the idea that the built environment is everyone's business. Whether through shaping national guidance or delivering training at the local level, our joint efforts have helped planners, designers, and developers see themselves as part of a shared mission: to create places that respect and reflect their context, and which enhance quality of life.

Importantly, the emphasis on “the right development in the right place” remains a guiding principle for both DCFW and RTPI Cymru. This deceptively simple idea speaks to the planner's central responsibility: to ensure that development supports activity, life, and community, while being responsive to local character, need, and resilience. This potential is then realised through design from masterplanning, landscape, urban and building design, down to materials and detailing – all contributing to the success of the place. The collective efforts of RTPI Cymru and DCFW are critical in keeping this principle alive in planning conversations and ensuring that it informs both policy and practice.

The celebration of RTPI Cymru's 25th year is a moment to acknowledge the deep roots it has planted in Welsh planning culture. It is also a call to continue the momentum. With issues such as decarbonisation, biodiversity net gain, and digital design and planning processes, the need for professional leadership and cross-disciplinary cooperation is only increasing.

RTPI Cymru has proven itself as a voice for practitioners and a bridge between policy and practice. As we look ahead, there is great optimism that this role will not only continue but grow in importance. With continued collaboration, such as that with the Design Commission and other bodies, there is a real opportunity to shape the next 25 years of planning in Wales in ways that are inclusive, forward-looking, and impactful.

In reflecting on this milestone, we also acknowledge the people —past and present—who have made this work meaningful. In Wales Dr Roisin Wilmott should take great pride in the role she played over many years working side by side with the Design Commission team. It is also vital to recognise the daily effort of professionals in the planning and design fields, guided and supported by organisations like RTPI Cymru, that shape the built fabric of Wales. To them, and to RTPI Cymru itself, we extend our thanks and congratulations and invitation to continue – at pace!

Jen Heal is the Deputy Chief Executive of the Design Commission for Wales.



LDPs in Wales- Progress and Implications for the Future- Mark Harris, HBF

Mark Harris, Planning and Policy Advisor for the Home Builders Federation in Wales, looks at the progress of Local Development Plans (LDPs) across Wales and what it could mean for the Plan-led system.

LDP Regulations (Regulation 41) require a plan to be reviewed every four years, although it's worth noting the recent consultation 'Promoting a resilient and high performing planning service' suggested that this could be increased to six years. Further, the 2015 LDP manual paragraph 10.2.2 states: 'Important considerations in determining the need for plan revision will be the end date of the extant LDP, the need to maintain a 5-year supply of housing land and the time required to prepare and adopt revisions and prepare the plan-critical elements of the evidence base. LDPs once adopted should have an operational life of at least 10 years'.

The Welsh Government last collated and published information on LDP progress in 2019, so what caused the delays which have resulted, as identified in the table below? We've had a pandemic and the phosphate issue (although this didn't affect all local authorities). We've also seen significant reduction in planning resources within planning departments and more recently greater intervention in Plans by the Welsh Government. So, it is perhaps fair to say that some delay was to be expected. But unfortunately the delays appear to continue.

The Welsh Government regularly refers to the fact there is full Plan coverage in Wales, however, several LDPs are in fact time expired, having gone past the end date identified on adoption. A number were also saved when the Welsh Government issued guidance in September 2020 'Local Development Plan (LDP) end dates. Its letter to local authorities, clarified that 'Plans adopted prior to 4 January 2016 will remain the LDP for determining planning applications until replaced by a further LDP'. More recently, a first for Wales has seen the Wrexham LDP being effectively 'unadopted'.

So, what does the future hold? Unfortunately, there are several reasons why Plan progress may continue to stall. Firstly, we have Senedd Cymru elections early in 2026. Secondly, it's still not clear what impact the recent legal decision relating to Wrexham's LDP will have. Thirdly, we have recently seen

increased intervention in the early stages of Plans by the Welsh Government, and it is not clear if this will continue. Fourthly, the delay in progressing SDPs may create an issue with aligning this new strategic level of Plan making with the proposed new LDP 'light'.

HBF members remain committed to a Plan-led system, but as Plan reviews continue to be delayed and adopted Plans become more out of date, it becomes more and more difficult to deliver the new homes that Wales urgently needs due to the lack of viable and deliverable allocated sites.

The current LDP position across Wales is set out in the table below, based on information taken from each Council's web site.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Cardiff Capital Region CJC																					
Gaerphilly	A				*										PS	PS					
Rhondda Cynon Taf		A				*															
Merthyr Tydfil											A2				*	RR					
Blaenau Gwent								*									D				
Bridgend				A				*							A2				*		
Torfaen																PS					
Monmouthshire					A				*							D					
Newport						A								PS			D				
Cardiff							A				*					D					
Vale of Glamorgan								A				*				PS					
Swansea Bay Capital Region CJC																					
Swansea									A					*		PS					
Carmarthenshire					A				*							I					
Neath Port Talbot							A					*				PS					
Pembrokeshire				A				*			D					D					
Mid Wales CJC																					
Powys									A				*		PS						
Ceredigion				A				*		PS											
Ambition North Wales CJC																					
Flintshire								*		PS					A				*		
Denbighshire				A																	
Wrexham																UA			*		
Conwy				A				*		PS											
Gwynedd								A				*				CIS					
Anglesey								A				*		RR							
National Parks																					
Bannau Brycheiniog				A				*													
Pembrokeshire CNP				A							A2				*	RR					
Snowdonia Eryri									A												
KEY																					
A ADOPTED RR REVIEW REPORT CIS CALL FOR SITES PS PREFERRED STRAT * 4yr REVIEW																					
D DEPOSIT I INQUIRY A2 LDP 2 ADOPTED UA UNADOPTED																					
Bold italic - best guess																					

Mark Harris is the Planning and Policy Advisor for the Home Builders Federation in Wales.

Upcoming events

New brand launch

080925

RTPI
Royal Town Planning Institute

From 8 September 2025 RTPI will have a new logo, colour palette, font and visual style across our website, communications and events. This will of course also include RTPI Cymru!

We've also refreshed our tone of voice – making our language more straightforward, personable and optimistic. Learn why we're evolving the RTPI brand [here](#).

RTPI Cymru Planifesto workshops

The RTPI Cymru team is continuing its work on the Planifesto for the 2026 Senedd elections. We are setting up 1-hour online workshops for members to discuss the future of planning in Wales and our Manifesto Asks.

The workshops will be held via Teams on the following dates and times:

September 4th (10.00am - 11.00) online, via Teams

September 5th (10.30am - 11.30) online, via Teams

September 17th (10.30am - 11.30) online, via Teams

Spaces are limited and are filling up fast so please email [Rhian Brimble](#) to register your interest.

The outcomes from the workshop will assist us in developing our RTPI Cymru Planifesto over the coming months. Once agreed, the Planifesto will be used by RTPI Cymru to engage in the 2026 Senedd elections and beyond.

We believe your input will greatly assist us in developing a clear and robust Planifesto that will raise awareness of the most urgent issues facing the planning profession and drive forward the necessary changes that are required to support and strengthen the planning system and planners in Wales.



Save the dates- future RTPI Cymru events

- DCfW- Tai ar y cyd and placemaking webinar - Friday 19th September, online
- North Wales Conference - Thursday 16th October, The Quay Hotel, Deganwy
- Professor Tony Hall lecture - Tuesday 4th November, in person and online
- Enforcement Conference - Thursday 13th November, TBC

All these events will be on our website shortly. Don't forget to follow our [LinkedIn page](#) for the latest updates on RTPI Cymru activities!

**The next edition of Cynllunio will be published in November-
with a brand new look!**