

Spring 2026



RTPI Cymru

Royal Town Planning Institute
Sefydliad Cynllunio Trefol Brenhinol

Cynllunio

The journal of RTPI Cymru



Senedd elections- less than 50 days to go

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Editorial

Welcome to our Spring 2026 edition of Cynllunio. We intended to make this a Senedd election special edition, but there is so much other activity we wanted to tell you about we've added that too.

It's less than 50 days until the Senedd Cymru elec-

tions and we've been super busy engaging with our members to produce and then circulate our Planifesto asks. Find out more in this edition. However people vote, we know we'll be getting a new Cabinet Secretary with responsibility for planning, because Rebecca Evans MS is not standing for re-election. I'd like to put on record my thanks to Rebecca for her support of planning and planners in Wales during her tenure, during which she has secured much-needed additional funding for PEDW, NRW and the Welsh Government's own planning division, put in place measures to work towards cost-recovery development management services in Local Planning Authorities, set out a clear ambition for Wales to be the fastest nation to determine renewable energy proposals, simplified permitted development rights to support greater rollout of air source heat pumps, and commissioned RTPI Cymru to provide the evidence base on public sector planning resources in Wales to help inform the next Government's priorities. More on that research in this edition too.

You'll also find information about the great programme of events we have planned for the remainder of the year. Pop the dates into your diary!

On a wider RTPI note, we've inaugurated a new RTPI president for 2026 - Jan Bessell - and appointed a new chair of our Board of Trustees - Elle Cass, as well as welcoming our new Chief Executive at the start of this month - Rachel Fisher. Rachel will be visiting Wales to meet some of our members on 06 May, and will be back on 17 and 18 June for our Summer Party and conference.

As part of our efforts to grow the pipeline of planners, we've

relaunched the Chief Planners of Tomorrow programme and have refreshed our school materials (now available in Welsh too) with a call for ambassadors to go into schools and tell people about planning as a career option. Get in touch if that floats your boat. We're also doing some important work on the safety and wellbeing of planners.

As always, if you'd like me to come and visit you and your colleagues to talk about all things planning, please get in touch, whether you're in the private, public or third sector.

Mark Hand

Director of Profession, International, Cymru and Northern Ireland

RTPI Cymru activities



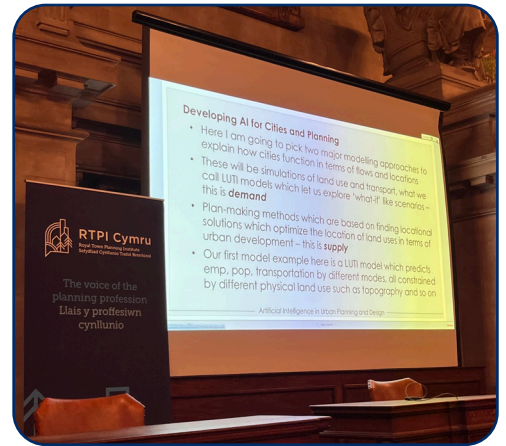
**Lambert
Smith
Hampton**

RTPI Cymru held its **North Wales conference** in October 2025 and focused on regional planning. Speakers included Ambition North Wales, Arup, North Wales Minerals and Waste Planning Service as well as a workshop with Tai ar y Cyd and an update on RTPI Cymru's planifesto.

Many thanks to Lambert Smith Hampton for sponsoring this event.



Our third **Professor Tony Hall lecture** was livestreamed from Anglia Ruskin University and featured Professor Michael Batty speaking on Artificial Intelligence in urban planning & design.



We held our annual **Enforcement Conference** in a new venue this year- Powys County Council in November. This was a sold out event which featured case studies and speakers from Local Authorities as well as an update from Francis Taylor Building, and a session on safety of planners. Thank you to Planning Officers Society Wales who sponsored the conference.

- Webinars**
- Tai ar y Cyd and placemaking
 - 2025 RTPI Cymru Awards for planning excellence winners series
 - Planning Law Update delivered by Francis Taylor Building
 - Session on our newly published report on public planning resources in Wales
 - Planning and Health Impact Assessments (in association with Public Health Wales)



Our Planifesto

We've been working with our members and industry leaders in Wales to develop the key manifesto asks - or 'Planifesto' - for the planning system in Wales in preparation of the upcoming Senedd elections in May 2026.



Our vision is to empower planners to deliver positive impact, creating healthy, well connected, inclusive and sustainable places and communities.

To achieve this we need a thriving and resilient Welsh planning system that is fully resourced, plan-led, responsive, effective and accessible.

Planners balance economic, environmental, societal and cultural demands to meet the needs of current and future generations. Planners are drivers of positive change. A properly resourced planning system is vital to deliver your priorities.

See our key asks in detail in the next pages

An ambitious and agile Plan-led system that provides certainty for all stakeholders

- Recognise that a well-resourced planning system is a key component for a thriving Welsh economy.
- Encourage meaningful engagement in plan-making and placemaking by strengthening community awareness of the planning system.
- Ensure that decisions are based on up-to-date and proportionate adopted development plans, that provide certainty to investors and communities, strengthen the Welsh language, create healthy places and meet the needs of both rural and urban communities.
- Complete the work on codification of planning legislation, started by the Planning (Wales) Bill 2025.



Thriving communities in well designed places with access to quality homes and infrastructure



- Prioritise tackling the housing crisis as a cross-Government joined-up approach to ensure everyone can access a suitable, safe and affordable home. Housing of all tenures is critical infrastructure that is essential to deliver prosperity, growth and social and cultural well-being across Wales.
- Reintroduce housing targets, monitor delivery and implement appropriate intervention when targets are not being met.
- Create a national arm's length delivery body to assemble land and co-ordinate development. Ensure that land use, transport and infrastructure are aligned in terms of planning, funding and delivery.

Joined up action to address the climate and nature emergencies

- Commit to a long-term and holistic approach to climate adaption and mitigation, that is reflected in planning and investment decisions on renewable energy, biodiversity enhancement and adaption to flood risk.
- Provide a national or regional approach to improving water quality, clarifying what mitigation is acceptable to NRW, how it will be funded, delivered and managed in the long term.
- Regulate low/net zero carbon development in the most effective way by updating Building Regulations. This will simplify plan-making and ensure consistency and certainty for developers.



A commitment to invest

All of the above asks must be accompanied by a commitment to invest in planning and planners to create a thriving and resilient planning system.

- Invest in planning as an essential public service to deliver your priorities
- Invest in skills and training including digital planning to make the best decisions
- Establish an apprenticeship scheme and support for bursaries to grow the pipeline of planners
- Create a statutory Chief Planner at the top table of every Local Planning Authority to champion planning in all decisions

Political engagement



With May's election edging closer and closer, we have been ramping up our public affairs and pre-election engagement work at RTPI Cymru.

At the end of February, RTPI Cymru presented our Planifesto at a Cavendish Cymru Politics Vs Planning event in Cardiff. This was a great opportunity to set out our priorities and key asks for the next Welsh Government to the planning sector and continue our conversation about the future of the Welsh planning system.

We also recently met with a Green Party candidate for Caerdydd Ffynnon Taf, which was a valuable channel for discussing our priorities for Wales's planning system where we homed in on affordable housing, infrastructure, and the importance of community engagement.

Then came a packed weekend at Plaid Cymru's conference at the ICC in

Newport. With a great number of fringe events, roundtables, and discussions to get involved with, we were able to connect with many more stakeholders and organisations with whom we had much in common when it came to our manifestos. With the launch of Plaid Cymru's First 100 Days of Government document on the Saturday, we found the conference to be a meaningful platform to get involved in conversations about policy-shaping and practical solutions relating to our Planifesto asks by talking to MSs, MPs, and candidates, such as Housing and Planning Spokesperson Siân Gwenllïan MS and Party Leader Rhun ap Iorwerth MS.

So, as polling day approaches, it is crucial to keep this dialogue open to keep our Planifesto asks on the agendas of parties as their manifestos begin to trickle out.

Our work doesn't end on polling day! We will continue to use our Planifesto beyond the election to ensure planners are listened to, influence emerging priorities, and continue strengthening the profession in Wales. RTPI Cymru are committed to working with the seventh Senedd and the next Welsh Government in order to deliver shared objectives.

Kirsty Fox Hay is Public Affairs Officer at the RTPI

Public Sector Planning Resources in Wales / Adnoddau Cynllunio Sector Gyhoeddus yng Nghymru

Earlier this month, RTPI Cymru publish its report on public sector planning resources. Commissioned by Welsh Government, this research aims to provide evidence to inform and shape interventions and solutions to support planners and the wider profession to unleash the full potential of the planning system.

In her written statement, the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning, Rebecca Evans MS described our research as the “most comprehensive assessment of planning capacity and resilience in more than a decade.”

Despite a small improvement since 2022, real-term funding for local authority planning departments in Wales has fallen by 43% between 2009 and 2024. The report warns that a decade of cuts has left planning services with depleted skills and limited capacity. Without ringfencing, there is a significant risk that increased planning fees will be absorbed into wider local authority budgets rather than reinvested directly into planning as intended - 73% of LPAs are operating with one or more unfilled vacancies, while 100%

report they are stuck in 'firefighting' mode, focused on managing immediate pressures rather than delivering long-term ambitions.

The Welsh Government's own Planning Division has been similarly affected, shrinking in size from 60 planners in 2015 to 33 planners in 2024.

RTPI Cymru makes seven recommendations, including the establishment of a national Planning Improvement Service, a comprehensive workforce recruitment and retention strategy to secure the future of planning in Wales and exploring different service delivery footprints for specialisms.

Mark Hand, Director of RTPI Cymru, said: "It is encouraging to see renewed investment in planning after years of decline, but this report makes clear that the system remains under severe strain and significantly more investment is needed."

While pressures are acute across the planning system, the commitment of those working within the system remains evident. A properly resourced planning system is the Government's key mechanism for creating healthy, inclusive, economically and environmentally sustainable places

“The root of the issue is the chronic underfunding, under resourcing and under investment that requires immediate attention. There is a need to tackle this underlying issue as a first step. Get this right and planning in Wales has a bright future.” (LPA respondent)

[Click here](#) for the full report, a short report and an executive summary- all are available in Welsh and English.

Rhian Brimble is the Policy Officer for RTPI Cymru.

New planning legislation for Wales

Infrastructure (Wales) Act

A new consenting process for infrastructure came into effect on 15 December 2025. Applications for energy projects below 50MW will be submitted to and determined by Local Planning Authorities.

Larger infrastructure projects, or 'Significant Infrastructure Projects' (SIPs) will be submitted to PEDW, who as 'Examining Authority' will prepare a report for the Minister to decide whether or not to grant an infrastructure consent order. Examples include large scale wind or solar projects, overhead electricity lines and major highways schemes.

The Welsh Government has produced an accessible guide to help communities engaging with the process. Planning Authorities whose area contains all or part of the proposed development must prepare a Local Impact Report (LIR) to help the Examining Authority understand the impacts of the development on the local area.

The Act is intended to speed up decisions-making on major infrastructure proposals coupled with appropriate community and stakeholder engagement.

Guidance on the new process can be found here [Significant infrastructure projects \(SIP\): guidance | GOV.WALES](#) or yma [Prosiectau seilwaith arwyddocaol \(SIP\): canllawiau | LLYW.CYMRU](#)

Newly published guidance for elected members can be found here [Significant infrastructure projects \(SIP\): elected members' guide to infrastructure consenting | GOV.WALES](#) or yma [Prosiectau seilwaith arwyddocaol \(SIP\): canllaw i aelodau etholedig ar gydsynio seilwaith | LLYW.CYMRU](#)

Planning (Wales) Bill

The Planning (Wales) Bill and associated Planning (Consequential Provisions) (Wales) Bill bring together decades of existing legislation and amendments into a single bilingual statute, tidying up the current confusion about which

bits apply in England and Wales, and which bits are England only.

The new legislation will make some important changes to clauses and terms we have become used to using for decades. Various parts of the legislation that you're used to referring to such as S.106 agreements will have a new name due to their new location in a new Act, and a few terms will change, for example 'material considerations' will become 'relevant considerations'. But don't worry. The Bill helpfully includes a table of 'destinations' allowing users to easily see where key parts of the legislation are now located. It also includes a list of definitions of key terms at Section 408 of the Bill.

Since our October update, the Bills have made good progress through the Senedd's scrutiny process:

- 28 November - the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee published a supportive Initial Committee Consideration report;
- 19 January - all Government amendments were agreed. No non-government amendments were tabled
- 10 March - the Bills completed their final stages of scrutiny by the Senedd and were unanimously voted through.

We are now nearing the end of a statutory four-week period during which the Counsel General or the Attorney General may refer either Bill to the Supreme Court. If this period passes without a referral, the Bills will be presented for Royal Assent from His Majesty, King Charles III, and impressed with the Welsh Seal by the First Minister, meaning the Bills become Acts. This is expected to happen after May's Senedd elections.

For the Acts to take effect and become the new primary legislative framework for planning in Wales, they must be commenced. Commencement is currently anticipated to be 18 months after Royal Assent. This will be subject to agreement by the next Government.

RTPI Awards for Research Excellence 2026

Calling all planning practitioners, researchers and academics: entries are open for the 2026 Awards for Research Excellence, which recognise and promote high-quality, impactful, spatial planning research from RTPI-accredited planning schools and RTPI members from the UK and around the world.

The five categories are

The five award categories are

- Patsy Healey Award for Academic Excellence
- Sir Peter Hall Award for Wider Engagement
- Tony Crook Award for Early Career Research
- Student Dissertation Award
- Practitioner Research Award

Read the entry criteria and enter today [here](#).

This year's award-giving ceremony will take place during the UK-Ireland Planning Research Conference on Monday 7 September 2026 hosted by Cardiff University.

RTPI Cymru upcoming events

- **12 May- post election webinar with [Grasshopper](#)**
- **17 June- RTPI Cymru Summer Party (2026 RTPI Cymru Awards for Planning Excellence winners to be announced, welcome to newly Chartered members and recognising long-standing members)- [book now](#)**
- **18 June- Wales Planning Conference (tickets available on our website from 1 April)**
- **Week commencing 01 August - RTPI Cymru will be at the Eisteddfod in Pembrokeshire.**
 - **23 September- RTPI Cymru dinner**
 - **22 October- North Wales Conference**
 - **03 November- Professor Tony Hall lecture**
 - **12 November- Enforcement conference**