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Scottish Planner

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Celebrating Planning

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EDITORIAL

I'M WRITING THIS Editorial with one eye on the Paris Olympics. It's hard to look away for a minute when there's so much going on, and I'm enjoying the astonishing variety of sports as well as all of those medal winning moments when athletes draw on their inner reserves of talent, experience, strength and determination to secure a win. There are so many inspirational stories to accompany each medal – and as this edition of the Scottish Planner celebrates planning 'winners' we hope you'll be similarly inspired. Good news deserves to be shared, and it's a real delight to have some positive stories to bring to you showing what can be done within the bounds of our current planning system. These stories are a useful counterpoint to media narratives about planning backlogs and housing starts – showing the variety of things that planners do, and the profound impact that good planning can have. Well done to everyone who entered the awards this year – and best of luck to the winners going through to the national judging round in the Autumn. The RTPI President Lindsey Richards began her presidential year by asking us all to be planning influencers – so, let's get out the bunting and the flags and celebrate Scottish planning excellence.

Dr Caroline Brown
Director for Scotland, Ireland and English Regions

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CONVENOR'S COMMENT



PAMELA CLIFFORD MRTPI,
RTPI Scotland Convenor, Chief Planning Officer at East Ayrshire Council, Chair of Heads of Planning Scotland

A Celebration of Planning – Imagine a World without Gold Stars!

Pamela Clifford, MRTPI, RTPI Scotland Convenor, Chief Planning Officer at East Ayrshire Council, Chair of Heads of Planning Scotland reflects on the winning projects of the RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence 2024 and the significance of Celebrating Planning through Awards in Scotland.

I hope you are enjoying reading the new style Scottish Planner. This edition is a Celebration of Planning through Awards or Achievements. In June I had the great pleasure to present the Scottish RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence 2024 which showcases and celebrates the best plans, people, and projects. The evening is one of celebration to recognise the hard work that went into winning the awards as well as the actual participation in the occasion. The RTPI Awards are in their 47th year which recognises and highlights the positive contribution planning professionals make to the communities that they serve. I think this is something to celebrate in its own right! Congratulations goes to all the winners on the evening. Many of the winning entries are showcasing their projects and plans within this edition, demonstrating the impact a project has had or explaining how the lessons learnt from the project or plan can be or have been passed on or shared with others. The sharing of good practice is so important, and we can learn so much from others as well as encouraging us all to be more creative and innovative in our working life to take forward award winning plans, processes, or projects.

A special mention goes to Glasgow City Council for the Play Sufficiency Assessment Pilot which was the overall winner of the Scottish RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence 2024, and it has been put forward to the National RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence in November. Fingers crossed, they come back with the prestigious Silver Jubilee Cup! Well done to the Young Planner of the Year James Hewitt who will also be entered into the national shortlist.

It is good to get the recognition from an Award that you have received from others to

say well done for making a specific difference and it can be seen as a shining beacon to highlight the scale of achievement.

The Awards Ceremony is always something to look forward to and makes people feel that their work is valued. At this time when planning and planning professionals are under workload and other pressures, I believe that the Celebration of Planning through Awards has never been so important as it shows others such as the general public awareness of what planning is achieving and delivering on the ground. It intensifies everyone's learning and sharing from a whole range of successful projects no matter what type or scale. Awards can make us feel proud, happy, and delighted and give us validation and boosts our confidence. It is a special moment in time, for a respected individual or a prized organisation.

In Scotland we have a strong history of the Celebration of Planning through Awards including the Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning (SAQP), now the Scottish Planning Innovation Awards, led by Susie Stirling in the Scottish Government who has shown great commitment and enthusiasm to them for over 20 years. The Scottish Planning Innovation Awards builds on the legacy of the SAQP promoting the value of good architecture and sustainable places in support of the current policy in NPF4. The SAQP through the years

“At this time when planning and planning professionals are under workload and other pressures, I believe that the Celebration of Planning through Awards has never been so important”



has helped to celebrate achievements in planning from the detail of processing through to the bigger picture of creating quality sustainable places which become the legacy of our profession. It has helped to promote best practice and excellence in planning, architecture and design throughout Scotland.

This year RTPI Scotland welcomed two new Fellows – Irene Beautyman and Nick Wright. Chartered Fellowship is the highest professional membership by grade offered by the RTPI and is only awarded to chartered members who have made a major contribution to the planning profession for the benefit of the public. Both Irene and Nick have an impressive breadth and depth of planning experience and have contributed more widely by making a difference to health and wellbeing and through community engagement. They both demonstrate outstanding character and are deserving candidates for the honour of Fellowship. I would also congratulate the new Scottish Women of Influence 2024 – including Erin Fulton and Erica Knott who are featured in this edition.

Let us all continue to promote and celebrate planning. **SP**

ARTICLE



SHABNAM AFSHAR,
Student member of the RTPI and Intern Project Officer at RTPI Scotland

Buddhas and the Blue Mosque – preserving Afghanistan’s built heritage

Shabnam Afshar, Student member of the RTPI and Intern Project Officer at RTPI Scotland, explores two key historical built heritage sites and preservation challenges in Afghanistan.

A fghanistan holds a wealth of cultural and architectural wonders that showcase its rich and diverse heritage. Situated along the ancient Silk Road, Afghanistan became a hub where various cultures, religions and empires intersected, each leaving a lasting impact on its architecture.

From ancient forts and mosques to intricate Buddhist stupas and traditional urban designs, Afghanistan’s cities reflect its historical role as a crossroads of civilizations. Here, I will explore two key historical sites in Afghanistan – the Bamiyan Buddha Statues and the Blue Mosque – which have played an integral role in shaping the urban fabric and development of two major cities: Bamiyan, in the central highlands, and Mazar-i-Sharif, in the north. I will introduce these sites and highlight some of the main challenges in preserving them within Afghanistan’s urban landscape.

Bamiyan Buddha Statues

The Buddha Statues – a UNESCO World Heritage Site now considered endangered carved into the cliffs around the 6th century CE. These colossal statues symbolise the region’s Buddhist heritage – particularly Central Asia and were major tourist attractions until their tragic destruction. In 2001, Taliban fighters destroyed the Bamiyan Buddhas to erase traces of a pre-Islamic past. This act was widely condemned, and the site has since been protected by UNESCO. The Statues are situated at the heart of Bamiyan city in Central Afghanistan along the historic Silk Road, a

key trade route that traverses the Hindu Kush mountain region in the Bamiyan Valley.

Before their destruction, the Bamiyan Buddhas were among the largest sculptures in the world. The tallest statue, named Salsal, while the smaller statue, named Shamama. Both statues showcased remarkable carving skills, with detailed head and foot areas. The space around the feet allowed worshippers to circulate around the statues during their devotions.

“Afghanistan’s built heritage is not only a testament to its historical significance but also a cornerstone of its cultural and historical identity”.

For centuries, the Bamiyan Buddhas were more than just impressive sculptures; they were a fundamental part of Bamiyan’s cultural and social identity, marked as the icons of the city’s historical legacy, cultural wealth, religious significance, and artistic achievement. Their presence attracted Buddhist pilgrims from around the world, enhancing Bamiyan’s spiritual importance and influencing its spatial and economic development. This historical pattern changed in contemporary times, primarily due to conflict, war, and subsequent economic instability.

From an urban planning perspective, the Bamiyan Buddha statues underscore the importance of integrating cultural and historical landmarks into city planning. This integration can be achieved by incorporating protective zoning regulations, promoting heritage tourism, and engaging local communities in preservation efforts. Specifically, for Bamiyan city in Afghanistan, planners should adopt a multi-layered approach that includes establishing buffer zones to safeguard the integrity of the Buddha statues and surrounding areas, developing infrastructure that facilitates access while minimizing environmental impact, and implementing educational programs that highlight the cultural significance of the landmarks to both residents and visitors. This integration is currently infeasible due to political transformations and the Taliban’s return, which has made preservation efforts for the Bamiyan Buddha statues uncertain, with concerns aggravated by the lack of substantial foreign aid.

Rawze-i-Sharif (Blue Mosque) in Mazar-i-Sharif

The city of Mazar-i-Sharif is home to some of the most stunning examples of Islamic architecture. The Blue Mosque, with its striking blue domes and tile work is one of the most important religious sites in Afghanistan, attracting both Muslim pilgrims and tourists. I remember my first visit to the Blue Mosque as a high school student, where I was amazed by its architectural beauty. The grandeur of the domes, the tile work, and the serene atmosphere left a lasting impression on me. Later, as a university student studying urban planning, I was particularly impressed by how the mosque’s design creates a sense of harmony and balance. Also, I came to understand how its placement and



architectural style symbolize both spiritual and civic prominence, and how the mosque not only serves as a religious centre but also acts as a landmark that influences the surrounding urban fabric. I’ve always appreciated its significance and impact on the city’s identity.

The Blue Mosque is essentially the reason for Mazar-i-Sharif’s existence and serves as the city’s identity. Reconstructed in the 15th century after being destroyed in the 12th century, the city was built around the mosque. And thousands of religious Muslims migrated to this city. The city’s name, Mazar-i-Sharif, means “Tomb of the Exalted,” referring to a large, blue-tiled mosque in the center of the city believed by some Muslims to contain the tomb of Ali ibn Abi Talib – the fourth caliph and first Imam in Shi’a Islam.

The Blue Mosque offers an escape from Mazar-i-Sharif’s bustling streets and bazaars, except during the daily calls for prayer. It functions not only as a place of worship but also as a focal point for social interaction and local rituals. This dual role is especially evident in the mosque’s open space, which serves as both a spiritual area and a vibrant social and cultural hub where people meet, relax, and visit. Moreover, during the New Year festival (Nowruz), people from other cities visit the shrine and the city for the Janda Bala ceremony – the raising of the holy flag in honor of Hazrat Ali on the first day of each New Year. This attraction boosts local economic growth by welcoming hundreds of thousands of tourists to Mazar-i-Sharif. The Janda Bala ritual, held at the Blue Mosque, is further complemented by

additional festivals like the Red Rose Festival (Mela-gul e sorkh), which lasts for 40 days. This festival celebrates the arrival of spring and the end of winter, attracting even more visitors to the city.

This heritage site has continued to receive significant attention for preservation, largely due to its religious and touristic significance.

Preservation Challenges

Reflecting on the two discussed historical sites, these landmarks have the potential to drive economic growth, enhance social and cultural identity, and attract global tourists. However, these built heritages face major challenges, including ongoing conflict, insecurity, economic instability, and lack of economic and human resources including town planners and architects for preservation. The destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan was a significant shock to the world, drawing attention and international aid for preservation efforts. However, this aid has been insufficient to fully address the issue. Additionally, a shortage of skilled professionals, particularly women, worsens the situation. This lack of human capital has been particularly intensified due to the ongoing Taliban regime’s ban on girls’ and women’s education since 2021. The damage to various historical sites over decades of war highlights the vulnerability of this heritage. Preservation efforts are crucial to protect and restore these invaluable cultural and historical assets for future generations and play a crucial role in preserving local, national, and regional heritage and identities.

Afghanistan’s built heritage is not only a testament to its historical significance but also a cornerstone of its cultural and historical identity. Preserving these sites is crucial for fostering a sense of continuity and resilience amidst adversity and conflict. Given the complex context of ongoing conflict and economic instability, alongside the inherent connection between historical heritage and urban spaces, the critical question for urban planners is how to address the challenges of preserving built heritage in Afghan cities effectively, both in the short and long term. This question demands thoughtful, context-specific strategies that balance preservation with sustainable urban development, ensuring that Afghanistan’s rich heritage continues to inspire and support its communities. **SP**

? Q&A



MAURA MCCORMACK MRTPI,
Associate at Icen Projects and Junior Vice Convenor at RTPI Scotland

Public enquiries

Maura McCormack, MRTPI, Associate at Icen Projects and Junior Vice Convenor at RTPI Scotland, answers our questions.

Q Who has been the biggest inspiration or influence on your career and why?

My early career was spent working predominantly in Edinburgh and the east coast where I was given some great opportunities under Ronald Oliver and Peter Allan. This gave me a strong foundation in planning with exposure to major projects, high profile regeneration and a varying range of clients. More recently my career has progressed at Icen Projects where I work with an insightful and collaborative planning team under the leadership of Gary Mappin, Ian Gallacher and Callum Fraser in Scotland. The full team, along with our Built Heritage and Townscape colleagues, draw influence and inspiration from being in the office and sharing ideas which is very refreshing after long working from home periods.

Q What do you feel is the biggest issue facing planners and planning at the moment?

It may be clichéd to say in August 2024, but resourcing across the sector is still one of the biggest issues facing planning in Scotland at the moment. It has been very encouraging to see the recent Young Planners conference so well attended but retaining experienced staff is something that appears to be faced by a growing number of local authorities and consultancies alike. Without a pipeline or ‘succession plan’ for planners in Scotland it will become increasingly difficult to balance expectation of the process with the reality we all face.

“Without a pipeline or ‘succession plan’ for planners in Scotland it will become increasingly difficult to balance expectation of the process with the reality we all face”.

Q Where do you think best exemplifies planning’s role in creating great places for people?

One place I was surprised by on my first visit and which I have now subsequently visited about a number of times (parent to teenage boys who like German football!), is Hamburg. I really enjoy cities and towns ‘on the water’ and Hamburg has managed to create liveable and enjoyable places all along the River Elbe, all while being one of the largest and busiest ports in the world. Homes, offices, and leisure spaces all co-exist with the industrial uses on the river, and it never feels like the scale of the Harbour dominates the river area of the city, Hamburg by boat with a beer is quite the enjoyable afternoon. In addition, the city is easy to navigate, has an integrated public transport system and allows for connections to so many other cities and countries.



River Elbe, Hamburg

Q Reflecting on a year of NPF4, what is your favourite NPF4 policy and why?



While the terminology 20-minute neighbourhood can be controversial, the concept and sustainability of local living means that Policy 15 is my current favourite NPF4 policy. Who doesn’t want to live in a neighbourhood where you can meet the majority of your daily needs within a reasonable distance from home. Way before NPF4 introduced the concept, I was drawn to where I currently live by this exact idea, I wanted my children to grow up in a place where they didn’t constantly need a lift from mum or dad. I also like the idea that 20-minute neighbourhoods are not exclusive to suburban/ local/ village development. If Glasgow City Centre, for example, was to be considered the pioneer of local living, just think of the available vacant brownfield land and floorspace within a ten-minute walk/ cycle that could be utilised to deliver residential development and help meet the currently declared housing crisis in the city.

Q What are you most looking forward to achieving this year as RTPI Scotland’s Junior Vice Convenor?

I look forward to learning more about the influence of the RTPI in Scotland and inputting to its practices. Hopefully I can help to promote planning to wider audiences and champion the profession over the coming months. I’m also so far enjoying the collaborative working with so many planners from local authorities, where we would usually be on opposite sides of the table!

IMMATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

An irreverent look at the world of planning...



Credit: Photos by Jenny Munro

↑ Tunnel Storytelling

Planners are place-makers. But some places present greater challenges than others. Integrating large-scale infrastructure at the human scale can be particularly problematic. Tunnels, underpasses, highways etc. are often seen as the antithesis of good place-making – creating unwelcoming and unsafe spaces that deter human activity.

The Colinton Tunnel in Edinburgh is no different – a former railway tunnel that had fallen into a state of disrepair and which became known as a location for antisocial behaviour. It had become an underutilized and under-valued space that left locals and visitors feeling unsafe.

The Tunnel’s transformation was spearheaded by the Colinton Tunnel SCIO, which pushed for improved lighting within the Tunnel and for the creation of a mural running its full 140-metre length. Completed in 2021, the mural is a visual retelling of Robert Louis Stevenson’s poem “From a Railway Carriage”, representing the integration of history, urban design, and visual and literary art. The result – the transformation of this formerly unwelcoming tunnel into a visually vibrant tourist destination created by and for the local community. The mural itself features the faces of local residents, including local Councillor Scott Arthur. Definitely worth a visit

Find out more about the Tunnel’s history and transformation here: [Home | Colinton Tunnel | Edinburgh](#)

↓ Beware: Killer Garden

If you happen to be the daredevil type, with an interest in botany, then the Alnwick Garden in Northumberland might be the place for you!

Featuring its very own Poison Garden with 100 toxic, intoxicating and narcotic plants, visitors are permitted entry only by a guided tour and under strict instructions not to touch, smell or taste any of the plants.

One for the bucket list perhaps (although this particular bucket is not to be kicked during your visit).

Find out more on the [Alnwick Garden website](#).



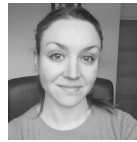
Credit: The Alnwick Garden Website

↓ Happy Homes

We love it when architecture triggers an emotional response. But we don’t often expect buildings to express their own emotions. Happy, sad, confused, shocked – [Love Property](#) recently featured a photo series of buildings showing the full emotional spectrum.



Credit: Photo by Nick Page on Unsplash



ERIN FULTON
Community Development Manager at Planning Aid Scotland
and Woman of Influence 2024

Empowering communities through inclusive placemaking

Erin Fulton, Community Development Manager at Planning Aid Scotland and The Planner’s Woman of Influence 2024, discusses her journey with Planning Aid Scotland and the importance of fostering inclusive community led planning and placemaking.

It’s been very special to be included in The Planner Magazine’s Women of Influence 2024 list, among so many talented women dedicated to creating diverse, inclusive, and vibrant places. My journey with Planning Aid Scotland (PAS) has been anchored by a deep commitment to fostering community-led development and meaningful engagement in planning processes. Initially serving as a volunteer manager and now as a community development manager, I have had the privilege of working with diverse communities across Scotland.

At PAS, our work revolves around the belief that communities should be at the

heart of planning and placemaking. My role as community development manager has allowed me to champion this philosophy through various projects, most notably the Sustaining Choices programme. Having concluded a third year, Sustaining Choices has worked with numerous communities to create their own active travel action plans,

“At PAS, our work revolves around the belief that communities should be at the heart of planning and placemaking”.



Community engagement exercise in Oban

aligning with the Scottish Government’s net zero targets and the active travel transformation agenda central to NPF4.

As community development professional, my approach is rooted in a genuine passion for connecting with people from all walks of life. I aim to take a facilitative approach to all my interactions, ensuring that engagement opportunities are warm, welcoming, and well-facilitated to include a range of voices. Recognising the strengths and unique insights within each area is essential. Every engagement opportunity is a chance for community members to connect, explore broader issues, and contribute meaningfully to the planning process and beyond.

I have found that creative avenues can be valuable to promoting participation and making it more accessible. Art and creative engagement methods are powerful tools for telling the stories about our places. This approach is critical in creating a vision for the future and respond to current challenges. Imagining our futures in a variety of ways allows us to unlock new possibilities and craft dynamic, resilient communities. I’m keen to explore these methods further in the future in my work.

There is much potential in collaboration between community development theory and planning. Integrating these disciplines can lead to more successful and vibrant places. Our efforts at PAS have focused on supporting communities to come together, explore their places, and connect with decision makers. This holistic approach not only strengthens community bonds but also enhances the effectiveness of planning initiatives.

My work with Planning Aid Scotland has been immensely rewarding. It has allowed me to contribute to meaningful change, empower communities, and advocate for a more inclusive and empathetic approach to planning and placemaking. As we move forward, I remain committed to these principles, confident that they are key to building more sustainable and connected communities across Scotland. **SP**



ERICA KNOTT MRTPI
Head of Marine Energy at NatureScot and Woman of Influence 2024

Navigating the challenges of Marine Energy Planning in Scotland

Erica Knott, MRTPI, Head of Marine Energy Planning at NatureScot and The Planner’s Woman of Influence 2024, discusses the challenges and innovations in marine energy project planning in Scotland.

In March, I was pleasantly surprised to be nominated for the 2024 cohort of The Planner Magazine’s Women of Influence. I was surprised, not least because I had no idea who had nominated me, but also despite being a qualified planner and member of the RTPI, my career has been largely away from ‘mainstream’ planning. For just over a decade now, I have been leading a team helping to advise on the planning and development of marine energy projects in Scottish waters.

We are currently living with two emergencies – climate change and biodiversity loss. Working for NatureScot and advising on marine energy projects brings both into sharp relief. Over the last 20 years, two-thirds of Scotland’s breeding seabird species have declined. Adding to this, the advent of offshore wind brings concerns about potential

impacts to seabirds from either collision or displacement. The slower emergence of tidal Stream Energy generation also brings with it risks around potential collision impacts as well as disturbance to fish, birds, and marine mammals. Having been involved in these emerging industries, my team and I quickly realised there are known knowns, known unknowns and possibly unknown unknowns when it comes to impact assessment.

Our knowledge of the marine environment is limited, and the costs of surveys are a magnitude greater than terrestrial surveys with added complexities. The ability to build out in these extreme conditions requires wide project (Rochdale) design envelopes at the application stage, which are only refined after consent. This can lead to many discussions around the multitude of scenarios that may require assessment as the worst-case scenario under EIA. Marine spatial squeeze is now a thing. Unlike the past 40-50 years when it was mostly fishing, shipping, oil and gas as well as fish farming in near shore waters, there are many more competing users and uses for our marine areas. In Scotland, whilst we have achieved over 30% of nature conservation protected areas, there is still a long way to go in implementing conservation management measures.

The degree of innovation and flexibility required in marine energy work is amazing. The support for strategic research to help answer some of the knowledge gaps has been immense – for example, designing camera systems to understand what interactions are happening between predator and prey species, creating small tags to attach to birds, fish etc. to track their movements and ingenious engineering designs for floating wind turbines.

Every day really is a learning day. I have been on a journey throughout my career of



Neart na Gaolithe operation base in Eyemouth

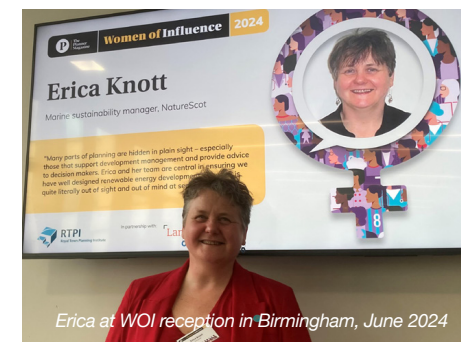


Nova tidal stream in Shetland EV charging station

30 years with NatureScot (previously Scottish Natural Heritage). However, moving into the marine environment has been the steepest learning curve, particularly, early on, when dealing with applications before the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 and national marine planning began. The Energy Act 2023 will bring more change. We now have an opportunity to be bold in securing solutions for biodiversity and meet net zero targets. The Sectoral Marine Plan for Offshore Wind, now under review, is likely to become one of the first plans in Scotland where plan-level compensation will be necessary. The first applications requiring project compensation under the Habitats Regulations are currently being determined by Marine Directorate.

I consider the nomination is recognition of not just me and the role I have played, but also of an impressive set of colleagues in NatureScot. A large part of my work would not be achievable without them – but also more widely across industry, Scottish Government, and bodies such as RSPB, and academia all working together to find solutions. **SP**

“I consider the nomination is recognition of not just me and the role I have played, but also of an impressive set of colleagues in NatureScot”.



Erica at WOI reception in Birmingham, June 2024

ARTICLE



ETIVE CURRIE MRTPI
Senior Planner at Glasgow City Council



Co-designing spaces with young people and children in Glasgow

Etive Currie, MRTPI, Senior Planner at Glasgow City Council highlights the significance of including children and young people's voices in planning and decision making and her team's delight at being announced as the Overall Winner of the 2024 RTPI Scotland Awards for Planning Excellence.

Nobody wakes up and decides to be a Planner, but what if....

Children and young people's voices are all too often overlooked or lost when decisions are being made about change in our city. Let's make sure they are included in our big conversation about planning and decision-making to help realise Glasgow's Everyday City ambition to deliver 'Living well Locally – climate resilient neighbourhoods for everyone'.

Background

National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4), adopted in 2023, states in Policy 21: Play, recreation, and sport, that local development plans (LDPs) should identify sites for sport, play and outdoor recreation for people of all ages, and support development proposals that protect, enhance, or improve children's access to play.

NPF4 recognises that many people, including children and young people, need better places to support their lifelong health and wellbeing and

build their future resilience. It seeks to improve the quality of life of people across Scotland through facilitating places that enable local living, including providing access to playgrounds and green and blue spaces where there are opportunities for relaxation and informal play.

Ensuring all children have access to good quality play opportunities will deliver the policy objectives contained in NPF4 and help local authorities to uphold the rights of children.¹

It is also important to note that everything we do as a Local Authority happens in the context of a place and planning balances the social, economic, and environmental needs of our city.

The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 inserted a new section 16D Play Sufficiency Assessment into the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 with regards to local development plans. Section 16D sets out that a planning authority must assess the sufficiency of play opportunities for children in its area in preparing an evidence report.

The preparation of a Glasgow's Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA) forms part of the Stage 1 processes as part of early engagement and data collection for the development plan. It is intended to help ensure there is a good understanding of the sufficiency of both formal and informal play spaces for children across planning authority areas. The evidence gathered in the PSA should be used to inform provisions for play in the preparation of LDPs.

Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that every child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

Engagement with Young People

The Scottish Government introduced, as part of the National Planning Framework 4 (2023) the need for children and young people to be actively involved in the Development Plan Process in Scotland. Play Sufficiency Assessments have become a mandatory requirement for all local authorities and Glasgow is working towards meeting the criteria set out by the Scottish Government.

Children experience a range of health, wellbeing and education benefits from outdoor play, and learning in and connecting to nature. Planning staff have been collaborating with the Centre of Civic Innovation, and Education Services, to pilot a collaborative engagement approach with young people in Glasgow for our Play Sufficiency Assessment.

Colleagues at the Centre for Civic Innovation have been working with young people (12-16/17-year-olds) at St Paul's High School to co-design an engagement model to gather information as well as let young people tell their stories about what it is like to live, learn and play in Glasgow. To date this has been a rewarding pilot and we have now rolled this exemplary engagement model for our play sufficiency assessment to 18 secondary schools across the city. We have made it optional for secondary pupils to participate and tell their stories to inform the proposed plan stage for the new development plan for Glasgow.

Over 400 pupils at St Paul's High School have not only helped to design this engagement model, but have also told their stories about being young and living in Pollock. A further 18 high schools (including an ASL school) have now participated in this engagement process, reaching and involving over 5,500 young people. Young people have told us where they go and what they do and what they think about the quality of their places in Glasgow. The findings from St Oswald's have been particularly exciting as it is an ASL school and provided valuable insights about place and the need to co-design a range

INCLUDING YOUNG PEOPLE'S VOICES



"A collaborative /co-design approach was our primary goal because we wanted not just to do a PSA but bring our children and young people into the Glasgow conversation about what it is like to live in the city and what you need to live well locally in Glasgow's diverse neighbourhoods".



of spaces from quiet and enclosed spaces to spaces where screaming and shouting are acceptable. These views have been included in our PSA, which can be viewed here: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories>

Over the summer, one of our next steps is to identify a site in Pollok that we can co-design with the pupils from St Paul's High School and our COP26 Girls to create a space

that is designed by them and is for them. Girls continue to feel unsafe and tend to stop organised sport earlier than boys, so our co-design of a site will have a strong focus on designing for girls. In the autumn the PSA will continue with our engagement model and cover the rest of our schools across the city. Our colleagues in Education Services continue to have a vital role to make it possible for us to engage with children in the city's nurseries and primary schools. The findings from the PSA will be used to inform the ongoing play area renewal programme; the existing maintenance and management regime for play areas and Open Spaces as well as forming part of the Evidence Report for the new Development Plan. The PSA will also help to inform the development management decisions that impact on existing play areas and open spaces or require development of new play areas and informal spaces.

Awards for Planning Excellence

The PSA team in Glasgow were surprised and delighted to receive the top award for Scotland, in the RTPI Scotland Awards for Planning Excellence on the 24th of June 2024. We entered our pilot project with St Paul's High School because we wanted not only to share our approach, but to demonstrate that talking to and spending time listening to young people (who are the adults of the future) might help our understanding of place-based collaborative approaches, as well as dream that some of our young people might wake up and decide that being a planner is exciting and a good career choice. Could we get to a point in Glasgow where we have young people fully represented with a strong voice on our citizens panels; urban design forum; climate actions; etc.?

A collaborative /co-design approach was our primary goal because we wanted not just to do a PSA but bring our children and young people into the Glasgow conversation about what it is like to live in the city and what you need to live well locally in Glasgow's diverse neighbourhoods. NPF4 is changing planning practice, bringing planning professionals back to using maps, master planning, seeing our development plans as new and innovative ways to shape and influence our towns and cities but most importantly, the Scottish Government has emphasised the need for engaging not only with other professionals but local people and children and young people. The RTPI are fully supporting the changes set out in NPF4 and the move towards place-based collaborative approaches being our 'new normal'. **SP**

¹Scottish Government Planning Guidance: Play Sufficiency Assessment, para. 12-14, Page 4, 2023



EMMA CHURCHYARD
Urban Designer at Kevin Murray Associates



The Fraserburgh Beach Vision and Masterplan – a collaborative community plan

Emma Churchyard, Urban Designer at Kevin Murray Associates discusses the Fraserburgh Beach Vision and Masterplan which won Best Plan at the 2024 RTPI Scotland Awards for Planning Excellence.

The Fraserburgh Beach Vision and Masterplan was commissioned by Aberdeenshire Council, prepared by Kevin Murray Associates (KMA) with Rob Thompson Urbanism (RTU) and Willie Miller Urban Design (WMUD) over 2022-2023, and adopted by the Council at the end of 2023.

From the outset, the purpose of the Fraserburgh Beach Vision & Masterplan was to develop a robust evidence-based and community-owned, long-term strategy for improvement that could guide future investment decisions to create a higher quality, sustainable and more flexible series of spaces that improves the beach offer, both for the local community and those who visit the town.

A major part of this plan was to embed participatory planning throughout the various stages: from inception, consultation and design review, through into the delivery and action plan. Thorough community involvement at every stage of this project afforded residents a say in future development, enabling cross community buy-in, including of the delivery plan. Throughout the year-long process, approximately 1,500 people participated across four stages of consultation.

KMA entered the Fraserburgh Beach Masterplan in the RTPI Scotland Awards in the Plan Making Practice category because we believed there were important lessons to share from the Council's co-design brief and community inputs, and because it reflected our team's shared ethos of inclusive planning and design. The iterative, inclusive approach of Aberdeenshire Council's client team, the consultant team and the Fraserburgh community all contributed to

"We are very proud of this project and would wish to thank all who have contributed along the way, as well as RTPI Scotland and the judges for their endorsement."



generate objectives, then designs, that built a consensus around how to develop the beach area fairly and equitably, given different needs, ages and aspirations.

We believe that such co-production provides a significant contribution to contemporary planning practice, demonstrating the importance of open, transparent, and collaborative planning and, in particular, how it can help unite diverse people around a common ambition in shaping change locally. This process provides evidence that such considered, patient engagement can be replicated elsewhere, with communities working in partnership with councils and

designers, to help shape the evolution of places with strong local attachment value.

The Beach Masterplan comprised five thematic pillars and 20 projects to be funded and delivered over time. The five themes are: access, activities, dwell, facilities, and environment & sustainability.

Some keynote projects include:

- A fully accessible multipurpose building to improve economic offer and provide flexible community facilities and designated Changing Places.
- Flexible public realm with a seasonal splash pad; a multi-generational, resilient space that could accommodate events, performances, and spaces for all.
- Various types of seating options to accommodate people of all abilities and ages with their design influenced by local heritage.
- Extended walking and wheeling networks from the town centre into the dunes to improve access to nature.
- New double-width ramps and beach wheelchairs to improve accessibility onto the sand and into the water.
- And expanded and improved play for children in and around the beach area.

Anticipating the future outcomes of the Fraserburgh Beach Vision & Masterplan, we hope that the plan will be incorporated into the future LDP and taken forward as a sequence of deliverable sub-projects that together embrace all six qualities of successful places as expressed in the NPF4 spatial strategy.

We are very proud of this project and would wish to thank all who have contributed along the way, as well as RTPI Scotland and the judges for their endorsement.

Being recognised in this award category means a great deal to us. It validates the intensive contributions and innovative thinking of the community, client, and project team and attests to the wider value of genuine co-design, showing what patience and collaboration can produce at a range of scales and localities. **SP**



CLAIRE MCARTHUR MRTPI,
Policy & Strategy Manager at Aberdeen City Council



Laura Robertson MRTPI,
RTPI Scotland Senior Vice Convenor and Senior Planner at Aberdeen City Council



Union Terrace Gardens – an award-winning revitalisation project

Claire McArthur, MRTPI, Policy & Strategy Manager at Aberdeen City Council, and **Laura Robertson**, MRTPI, Senior Planner at Aberdeen City Council and RTPI Scotland Senior Vice Convenor, discuss Aberdeen City Council's public realm investment which has revitalised the historic Union Terrace Gardens – winner of Best Project at the 2024 RTPI Scotland Awards for Planning Excellence

Over the last decade, Aberdeen City Council has, through the development and delivery of its City Centre and Beach Masterplans, been investing in a series of enhanced public realm areas, buildings, and spaces that will support economic growth, improve the vibrancy and vitality of the city, and boost overall footfall.

A key element of the City Centre Masterplan, Union Terrace Gardens was recently awarded "Best Project" at the 2024 RTPI Scotland Awards for Planning Excellence. The Gardens reopened in December 2022 after a £28.3 million refurbishment to restore historic features, improve access, deliver new and repurposed structures and buildings, and provide new amenities.

The historic Gardens date from 1879 and sit in the heart of Aberdeen City Centre. A number of high-profile schemes had previously been proposed for the Gardens, with varying degrees of redevelopment and intervention. Over time the gardens had become underused, with large overhanging trees, poor lighting, and many dark, unsafe areas. The Masterplan vision for the site was based on enhancing connections and for: "restoration of historic features and sensitive contemporary interventions to create a more accessible, enticing and vibrant city centre destination." Aberdeen City Council recognised that, in order to ensure

"The project positively impacts on the local economy by providing a safe, accessible, usable, green space and public realm within the city centre for people to rest, enjoy and play in."



the Gardens were usable and inclusive for generations to come, positive intervention was needed.

Set within the context of overarching city centre transformation, the redevelopment of Union Terrace Gardens ensured that the historic environment was protected and enhanced. The project positively impacts on the local economy by providing a safe, accessible,

usable, green space and public realm within the city centre for people to rest, enjoy and play in. The regenerated space has given people another reason to come into the city centre and spend time within it. The Gardens are now used throughout the year, and well into the evenings, positively enhancing and enlivening this area of the city centre. The Gardens also provide a key destination for events such as Spectra, Scotland's annual Festival of Light, which in February 2024 attracted over 100,000 visitors into the Gardens and wider city centre.

Today, it is clear that the original aspirations for Union Terrace Gardens have been delivered. This project enhances the quality of the Category B Listed Gardens as the city centre's main public green space and improves animation of the whole area. One of the main catalysts behind the redevelopment was improved access – and opening the useability of the gardens for all ages and abilities, making it a real community asset. The gardens now include play facilities and equipment for children which were not present before. Having play at the very heart of the city centre is a key element of Aberdeen's ambition to become a child friendly city and makes its offering different to that of other cities. Other improvements include a new performance area with stepped seating, focal point buildings, cafe and gallery space and reuse of the existing arches to provide further space for new attractions. The existing Victorian toilets were also refurbished, and access improved to nearby Union Street, Aberdeen's Granite Mile.

Collaboration and engagement throughout the entire process were key to the success of this project. Planners were involved from the identification of the project in the Masterplan, through the determination of planning applications and subsequent discharge of conditions. Throughout the process we worked closely with colleagues from the Council's Capital team, and a number of specialist officers, and external consultees.

This project is just one part of Aberdeen City Council's wider city centre aspirations and the positive impact it has made is already clear. We were thrilled to have this recognised by our peers and take home the "Best Project" award this year. **SP**

ARTICLE



JAMES HEWITT MRTPI,
Senior Planner at Aberdeenshire Council and Chair
of the Scottish Young Planners' Network



Reflection on becoming RTPI Scotland Young Planner of the Year 2024

James Hewitt, MRTPI, Senior Planner at Aberdeenshire Council and Chair of the Scottish Young Planners' Network, discusses his journey to becoming RTPI Scotland's 2024 Young Planner of the Year as well as the motivations behind his application and the significance of the Award to his career and to the broader planning community.

In June I was lucky enough to become the RTPI Scotland Young Planner of the Year 2024, and as a result I have been asked to pen this article about what drove me to apply, and what the award means to me. As a local authority planner, talking about my work and myself in a public setting still doesn't come naturally to me (the temptation to remain anonymous is strong, as planning seems to become more and more contentious). So why apply in the first place?

Well, simply put I wanted to build on the legacy of previous winners such as Jane, Rhiannon, and Sarah – and showcase the diversity of work that Young Planners undertake within Scotland. While I won't use this article to recite the work histories of the previous winners, between us we are examples of young planners working the length and breadth of Scotland; in diverse fields of planning; and with different routes into the profession.

As for my own work experience, I am a Senior Planner with Aberdeenshire Council and have been with the organisation for the past nine years. Seven of those years have been spent working in the Strategic Development Delivery Team, which focuses upon large scale energy, transmission, and infrastructure. In this time, I have been (un)lucky enough to represent the Council at a number of Inquiries, and I have been lucky enough to learn from and be supported by colleagues in a variety of services within the Council.

Planning can often feel like a bit of a team sport, as we rely on so many other people and professions to enable us to do our work. This can make it incredibly difficult (particularly for Young Planners) to recognise the value of your own work, your own contributions, and your own successes. For

"Winning the award really is an honour, particularly as I have seen the incredible work and contributions that other Young Planners are making".



me, applying for Young Planner of the Year was not about setting myself above others, or ignoring the foundational role they have played in shaping my professional life or my success – but rather to allow me to showcase the opportunities that working in local government in the North East, with these wonderful colleagues, has afforded me.

Out with my day-to-day work, I have also been a member of the Scottish Young Planners' Network (SYPN) Steering Group since 2019 and I am the Chair of the group for 2024. Volunteering with the network has allowed me to meet Young Planners and Future Planners from across the country and see for myself the enthusiasm and dedication of this cohort of planners. I would hope that if they see that the Northern Irish fella from Aberdeenshire that probably (definitely) speaks about the Electricity Act and EIAs too much, can win Young Planner of the Year – why can't they?

Winning the award really is an honour, particularly as I have seen the incredible work and contributions that other Young Planners are making. I would wholeheartedly encourage others to put themselves forward for the award; or those working with incredible Young Planners to nominate them. You have nothing to lose, and everything to gain. Just don't do what I did, and leave it until your last year as a Young Planner... **SP**

ARTICLE



IRENE BEAUTYMAN FRTPI,
Place & Wellbeing Partnership Lead at
Improvement Service and Public Health Scotland
NINA CAUDREY MRTPI
Environmental Planner at Orkney Islands Council



Shaping Places for Wellbeing Programme- Commended by RTPI Scotland

Irene Beautyman, FRTPI, Place and Wellbeing Partnership Lead at Improvement Service and Public Health Scotland discusses the shaping places for wellbeing programme which helps communities adopt a place-based approach to improve health, equity and sustainability.

It does what it says on the tin! The Shaping Places for Wellbeing Programme is grounded in there being no such thing as a healthy place.

What we do have are places that impact on the people who use them. We behave differently in different places – fact. Some places enable behaviours that help our health and wellbeing, help the health of our planet, and help us live fairer lives with less inequality. Some places do not. Some make all the above worse. This is

why place matters, and our work has been anchored in it.

The Shaping Places for Wellbeing Programme has been supporting seven places in Scotland to take a place-based approach. An approach where decision makers across all sectors think more about the impact of their decisions on our places. Because those places shape our wellbeing.

The first thing we learned is that there is a lot of confusion about what we mean when we talk about place. And even more confusion about how to implement a place-

based approach. As a Programme we have worked with committed, enthusiastic practitioners to develop clarity of HOW to take a place-based approach. It is a three-pronged process that is data led (HOW to capture what people need), evidence led on the features we need to get right in every place (HOW to use the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes) and then brings both into our plans, frameworks, and proposals (HOW to ensure this happens including the use of Place and Wellbeing Assessments).

This clarity on HOW to take a place-based approach we are now sharing with the rest of Scotland through the resources and tools on our [website](#), through an online learning network (you can sign up to) and through bespoke support.

Our hope and ambition moving forward? That we can support others to "leave this place better than we found it!".

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the work of the Programme and thank you to the RTPI for this recognition of our work. **SP**

Enhancing Biodiversity through Collaborative Planning

Nina Caudrey, MRTPI, Environmental Planner at Orkney Islands Council explores the development and implementation of local biodiversity guidance in Orkney, highlighting the importance of communication, stakeholder engagement, and collaboration in Planning.

Sometimes delivering for biodiversity is less about nature and more about communication and building relationships. In Orkney, the typical planning application tends to be for a new house in an agricultural field. Agents usually act for applicants but have little environmental knowledge or interest. Because Orkney is comparatively rich in wildlife, there is a general complacency that it's all good and there's no need to do anything. Persuading agents, applicants,

and developers that National Planning Framework policy 3.c is necessary and simple to deliver was a challenge.

An Orkney version of the national Developing with nature guidance was drafted, tailored to local circumstances. Recognising the importance of local buy in, local stakeholders were sent a copy of the draft guidance for feedback and invited to a workshop to go through the new policy requirements and draft guidance.

The workshop sought to create a

common understanding of biodiversity, the policy requirements, how to consider and include biodiversity in development in the Orkney context, and what information to submit with planning applications. The workshop environment was an opportunity for stakeholders to air their concerns about the policy, provide feedback on the draft guidance and ask questions, allowing professional relationships and understanding to be built.

After extensive testing with stakeholders, with resulting refinement and retesting, an updated version of the guidance and accompanying biodiversity form was considered and approved by full Council for formal use in October 2023. The testing was invaluable as it allowed common misconceptions and misinterpretations to be ironed out, unexpected issues to be addressed and the guidance strengthened. Stakeholders felt recognised and their concerns listened to and acted upon.

As a result, implementation of the guidance should help conserve and enhance biodiversity. **SP**

 ARTICLE


KIRSTY MACARI FRTPI,
Co-Head of Undergraduate (Architecture & Urban Planning/
Contemporary Art Practice) at DJCAD, Lecturer at University of Dundee

NICK WRIGHT FRTPI,
Principal of Nick Wright Planning

★ NEW FELLOW ★

A planner's journey from being a student to a RTPI Fellow

Kirsty Macari, FRTPI, Co-Head of Undergraduate (Architecture & Urban Planning/Contemporary Art Practice) and Lecturer at DJCAD, University of Dundee, reflects on her journey from young aspiring planner to RTPI Fellow.

How did the 17-year old girl sat in her geography class (who hadn't heard of planning) fill out her UCAS form for "Town and Regional Planning" at the University of Dundee go on to become a Fellow?

Answer: determination, not being afraid to think AND do differently, embracing continuous learning and a wee (read large) push from key influencers within Scotland's planning profession.

This was one of the most challenging roles that I have applied for. Putting yourself forward for Fellowship, and asking, not one, but four individuals to take time to write a

"Although delighted to be recognised for the work I have done over the 20 years in planning practice and academia I also see it as a platform to help shape the future beyond me".

detailed supporting statement is no mean feat. It created huge ripples of imposter syndrome. However, it wasn't about the recognition for me individually, but instead for all the planners of tomorrow. Although delighted to be recognised for the work I have done over the 20 years in planning practice and academia I also see it as a platform to help shape the future beyond me. As one of the youngest as well as one of a small number of women, I want my Fellowship to support others.

If you are passionate about planning at the deepest level then this is about having no ego, no agenda, and certainly no aspiration to collect another title. It is for people who will speak about the whole system that is planning and be open to challenge. This is about the contribution that is made selflessly to a profession that plays a key role in making a difference. Other Fellows and I in Scotland recognise the importance that our collective voices can bring with and in support of others. If you are actively encouraged by others to put yourself forward, then I would encourage you to do so. They often recognise the contribution you make to the profession before you do. **SP**

★ NEW FELLOW ★

Embracing Fellowship and shaping the future of planning

Nick Wright, FRTPI, freelance town planner, former RTPI Scotland Convenor and long-term Planning Aid Scotland volunteer, discusses the honour of becoming an RTPI Fellow and his belief that planning should serve people to create vibrant communities.

Good planning doesn't revolve around any one of us as individual planners. Rarely do we have the privilege of pointing at a good outcome and saying, "That was me". Everything we do is through partnership and teamwork. So, it was a huge, heartwarming, and humbling honour first to be encouraged to stand for Fellowship, and then to be elected by an RTPI board based in London.

For me, becoming a Fellow is an

opportunity to shape the planning profession, and the places and communities that we help to create.

My fundamental belief is that planning shouldn't simply be a technical exercise of planning places. It should be with, and for, people.

A good place is more than just well-designed bricks and mortar: it offers community. It should offer opportunities for people of all ages to take part in the

communal activities that we as humans need and love – youth clubs, dance classes, lunch clubs, football clubs, community gardens, book groups, meeting friends in the park on a sunny afternoon, or the myriad of other activities that bring people together and communities to life.

The opportunity that Fellowship presents me is to spread that message more widely.

Anyone can stand for Fellowship, irrespective of age or seniority. The criteria relate to leadership, innovation, and your professional contribution. I may be getting on a bit, but I have never held a senior position in the public or private sectors: I am simply an ordinary planner. If I can make a difference in my role as a self-employed planner, maybe you can too.

Do you have a story to tell and a message to share? Do you fulfil the criteria? Then why not apply! **SP**

 ARTICLE


MICHAELA SULLIVAN FRTPI,
Head of Place at East Renfrewshire Council

IRENE BEAUTYMAN FRTPI,
Place & Wellbeing Partnership Lead at Improvement Service and Public Health Scotland

★ NEW FELLOW ★

Three decades in planning – a journey of learning and contribution

Michaela Sullivan, FRTPI, Head of Place at East Renfrewshire Council reflects on her three-decade long career in planning, emphasising the importance of collaboration, knowledge sharing and pushing boundaries to shape the future of planning

Planning is an endlessly varied and exciting career. There are few professions that allow an opportunity to shape the places in which we live and where our ideas and decisions can endure for tens or even hundreds of years.

Over my three decades in the profession, I have had the privilege of working in the public and the private sectors, experiencing many facets of the world of planning. There are no 'sides', 'poachers' or 'gamekeepers'. There is

a profession dedicated to planning the world we need.

I have taken a Planning Act through Parliament, reinforcing the importance of development planning and so avoiding a lengthy debate about the third party right of appeal. I have sought and obtained consent for large and small developments for commercial spaces, renewable energy, leisure, retail, housing and marine development. Along the way, I have learnt a remarkable amount about things I didn't think I'd need to

know – combustion in power stations, the distribution of waste gases, the habits of fish, bats, slow worms, newts, badgers and common terns, the design of golf courses, the potential for 'blade throw' from wind turbines, and the engineering of quay walls, to name a few.

Above all, I have always been happy to share my knowledge and equally, to learn from other planners. Fellowship provides an opportunity to enhance debates and becoming a Fellow reinforces the importance of building an exciting career in planning – to make the necessary contribution to the future of the profession and help to shape it. It is important to push boundaries. We are a profession that can and must debate, to help us make the right decisions for the future of place. I am honoured to have been awarded Fellowship and offer my thanks to the RTPI and my sponsors. There is so much left to do. **SP**

★ NEW FELLOW ★

Embracing collective contribution in planning

Irene Beautyman, FRTPI, Place & Wellbeing Partnership Lead at Improvement Service and Public Health Scotland examines the importance of individual and collective contributions to the planning profession and the broader community.

“Don't get above yourself!”. I grew up in Scotland so that phrase sits on a handy shelf in my mind right next to “Don't blow your own trumpet”. So, stepping forward to be awarded a Fellowship and join the top 1% of planners that sit at the highest level of our professional membership does not come naturally.

To become a Fellow requires making a major personal contribution to the planning profession for the public's benefit. While

we work in a planning system that can seem incredibly structured by legislation and policy, I believe everyone of us has the opportunity to bring our own personal contribution to help people.

The standout reason why this is true for us all? The Planning profession cannot deliver the asks laid at its feet on its own. We must work with other practitioners, sectors and with communities to create the places that enable our people and planet to thrive. We can all bring our own personal contribution

to our career journey by stepping up our conversations with others to ensure they know their part in this ambition.

Stepping up means explaining the contribution of place within long-term, preventative solutions to the challenges society currently faces: climate change, the declining health of our people and the huge gap between the wealthiest and poorest in our Country. Explaining everyone's collective contribution to creating places where people thrive expands understanding of our role and moves us into being facilitators of our places. Every time we do this it's the public that win.

For myself, becoming a Fellow is an opportunity to take a place at that highest level and blow our collective trumpet loud and clear about the contribution Planning makes. I hope you will join me; there is plenty room in the orchestra! **SP**

ARTICLE



MANDY BROWN MRTPI,
Team Leader Helix at Falkirk Council



Credit: © Carron Dam Scottish Wildlife Trust

A Dam Fine Place: a beacon of community and environment collaboration

Mandy Brown, MRTPI, Team Leader Helix at Falkirk Council discusses how a community led project, Carron Dams Local Nature Reserve, won two awards at the 2019 Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning.

This is the story of how a small community-led project stole the hearts of judges and the public to become a double award winner in 2019's Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning. Entered by Falkirk Council, Carron Dams Local Nature Reserve: A Dam Fine Place was not only named Overall Winner, but also won the People's Choice Award.

Not immediately obviously a planning project, this greenspace project was nevertheless borne in the Development Planning process and brought to life by the Local Nature Reserve's volunteer management group – a team made up of local residents, pupils and teachers from Larbert High School and representatives from Scottish Wildlife Trust, Green Action Trust, Buglife and Falkirk Council.

At its heart, the team simply wanted more people to visit, enjoy and help look after this hidden gem – where nature had reclaimed a former industrial site. With funding and developer contributions successfully secured, the team set about delivering



"The team behind Carron Dams LNR were delighted the project was recognised in this way and cheered by the public appreciation for all their hard work".

access and habitat enhancements across the nature reserve.

Through a series of activities and events, children and adults alike were engaged in learning about the site's prestigious history – the Carron Company being a leading light in Scotland's Industrial Revolution. Pupils of

PAST SAQP WINNER 2019

all ages were able to experience the space in many creative ways – exploring nature, creating sculpture trails and through outdoor art, creative writing and drama classes as well as using the area for science, history, and geography studies. In the words of Miles Oglethorpe, Historic Environment Scotland, the project "forged a healthy link between the historic environment and the natural environment to create a joint resource and an asset for local communities".

At the time, the Judges highlighted the creativity of this initiative and the impact this project had on school children and the wider community. Drama, history, sculpture, photography, and nature were all choreographed in the outdoor learning space. Plus, in the Team's own words "behind all the activities that they were able to maximise from the place, the bottom line was all the fun was really education by stealth". The Judges not only felt that the enthusiasm was infectious but, at its core, the project was embedded within the planning strategy for the area.

The team behind Carron Dams LNR were delighted the project was recognised in this way and cheered by the public appreciation for all their hard work. Winning these awards encouraged the group to begin building new partnerships, with aspirations for bigger and better community events at Carron Dams.

As a group, we were proud of what we created over the years – a vibrant, welcoming, and valued place. Immediately after the win, and throughout the turmoil of 2020 and 2021, and beyond, community volunteers still take an interest in looking after the nature reserve, and Larbert High School continues to use the site for a variety of classes.

As for the future, Falkirk Council and Scottish Wildlife Trust are committed to reinvigorating the management group, working closely with Larbert High School and community volunteers to draw up and deliver a new Action Plan for the site.

There are a few outstanding projects to complete, but through this project, and the 2019 awards, the team behind Carron Dams Local Nature Reserve is proud to celebrate the role of planning in creating quality spaces for people in general, and this Dam Fine Place in particular. **SP**

Please check out our project video [at this link](#)

ARTICLE



GRANT BAXTER MRTPI,
Planning & Building Standards Team Leader at Clackmannanshire Council

An overview of Living Alloa – the SURF Award winner of 2022

Grant Baxter, MRTPI, Planning & Building Standards Team Leader at Clackmannanshire Council highlights the award-winning Living Alloa project's impact on community living and the recognition it brought to the town.

In December 2022 I was fortunate to be part of the team that won the SURF Award for Improving Scotland's Places for our Living Alloa project. The project involved Clackmannanshire Council coming together with Kingdom Housing Association, the local Business Improvement District (BID) Alloa First and third sector agency (CTSI) to deliver a transformational town centre living project, centred on new dementia friendly flats, with public realm enhancements and creation of a community hub from a vacant building.

This was the first time a project in Clackmannanshire had been entered into the SURF Awards and we had no idea if it had any chance of success. We felt the project had much to commend it in terms of the partnership working involved in devising and delivering the projects and how, through this collaboration, the quality of each individual element had been enhanced significantly and the whole had become much more than the sum of the parts.

A large vacant site in the heart of the town conservation area became a high-quality living

environment with 60 dementia friendly flats and associated external and internal spaces all informed by dementia design principles. Around the development, a number of public realm interventions addressed actual and perceived barriers to safe and comfortable movement around the town centre; removing walls to turn a dark alleyway into an attractive thoroughfare adorned with a new mural, creating safe crossing points across a busy road, bringing new life to two tired public squares. A previously closed, and much missed, public toilet was transformed into a new town centre hub run by a community interest company, formed by the BID and CTSI.

We were surprised and delighted to be shortlisted but felt the calibre of the competition was very high, and although we tried to wow the judges when they visited Alloa, we kept our expectation level at "delighted to be short-listed" when we attended the awards ceremony in Glasgow. They really do go to town for this gig, and the whole thing felt like a big deal for us to be part of.

As the "top" award, the Improving Scotland's Places announcement came last. What a feeling, when Scottish Minister, Tom

Arthur announced us as the winner! Our table erupted (admittedly a few glasses of wine had been consumed by then). Going up to accept the award along with Anthea Coulter of CTSI and saying a few words is all a bit of a blur, and I've not had the courage to watch the video back just yet.

Winning the award for Alloa was something special for us. SURF do such a magnificent job of publicising the awards, that we felt very much "on the map" in the aftermath. I was invited to speak to a number of different audiences about the project in the months that followed, including at the excellent learning events that SURF organise to showcase the winning projects.

There is a lot of publicity and attention that comes from winning the award, both local and national, which lasts for the following year. From an Alloa perspective, it was a catalyst for embarking on a wider town masterplan. We have gone into this process with a lot more confidence that firstly we have great partners, both locally and nationally that want to work with us on this and secondly that "good enough for Alloa" is no longer a thing, and that we can exceed our own expectations and deliver excellence in place making.

The flats have all been occupied and have transformed the lives of many residents who can now get out and about in the town centre in a way they couldn't previously. The Alloa Hub has become a focal point for people coming to the town and promoting what is going on there. Crucially it has also provided an accessible public toilet in the town centre. Residents of the new flats regularly use the Hub as a meeting space. Overall, this part of the town feels safer and more attractive for everyone.

I'd encourage anyone thinking of entering their project for a SURF Award, to go for it. The process of applying is very easy, and given the range of awards, there are categories for all sorts of place-based projects in all types of communities, be they urban or rural. The publicity from winning or even being short-listed, money really can't buy. **SP**

PAST SURF WINNER 2022



ARTICLE



SUSIE STIRLING MRTPI,
Skills Development and Innovation at the Scottish Government

Celebrating excellence in Scottish planning – a journey from SAQP TO SPIA

SAQP
& SPIA
AWARDS

Susie Stirling, MRTPI, Skills Development and Innovation at the Scottish Government, outlines the evolution of the Scottish Government's planning awards from SAQP to SPIA.

The Scottish Government's Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning (SAQP) ran for 20 years, culminating in a commemorative event in 2019 at the Balmoral Hotel (Edinburgh). Thereafter, there was a 4-year hiatus, not least triggered by the onset of COVID. Last year, however, heralded the successful rebrand of the modern Scottish Planning Innovation Awards (SPIA) whereby, in March, there was a celebratory Ministerial announcement of the 2023/24 Winners at Carron Dam Local Nature Reserve (Falkirk), the reigning 2019 Overall and People's Choice Award winner.

After working on SAQP over its full-time span and then creating the new SPIA format the one word to describe how everyone involved should feel is – proud. Proud over the length of time that the Scottish Government has committed to the Awards; proud over the power of planning to transform places;

and proud of all the achievements delivered – whether individually or collectively.

The Awards, however, are not just a certificate of recognition. They reflect the spirit of true enthusiasts – whether planners, related professions or community champions – who have committed their hearts to make positive changes across Scotland's cities, towns and rural areas. It's through that determined dedication, creativity, and sheer graft that many people are now living in better places and thriving in their neighbourhoods.

Looking back since 1999...

Let's step back in time, therefore, and appreciate how far we've come since the first year of the SAQP!

1999 was, politically, a significant year, marking the transfer of power to the re-established Scottish Parliament. At that time, from a planning perspective, Glasgow's Buchanan Galleries opened to the public whilst Neolithic Orkney was designated a World Heritage Site. Fast forward to today and how wonderful to see so many of our historic city and retail town centres that have won Awards for their Conservation Area

“Over the years, by way of capturing true excellence as evidence, the SAQP has awarded – four Personal Achievement Awards, four People's Choice Awards, over 130 Commendations and 150 Awards”.

revitalisation, such as Falkirk, Cupar and Shawlands.

Across time too, one of the biggest shifts that has taken place and a common thread for many winning projects, has been the unreserved encouragement to get communities involved and voice their opinions about their places. It may sound so simple,

but taking the time to listen to people and respond accordingly has been time well spent. This commitment to people's wishes was epitomised by this year's SPIA Overall Winner for the 'Live Life Morven' Initiative – delivered by Planning Aid Scotland in collaboration with the Morven Community. The project had Community Wealth Building and a strong climate commitment at its core – all driven by a shared desire to simply make sure their place 'stayed alive'. In particular, the memorable words of Annie Tordoff

(Community Council Representative) “Come as a partner and leave as a friend” are a wonderful line of encouragement for us all.

Achievements over the years

Over the years, by way of capturing excellence as evidence, the SAQP has awarded – four Personal Achievement Awards, four People's Choice Awards, over 130 Commendations and 150 Awards.

Starting with the first Award, in 1999, for the New Lanark Mill Hotel. Since then, through the Overall Winners alone, we've celebrated regeneration projects ranging from Argyll & Bute, the Islands – covering Stromness and Lerwick – to the triumphant Commonwealth Games together with the 2018 Overall Win for Scottish Canals, again, with Glasgow City Council.

With regard to housing, we've recognised the commitments to achieving a mixed-use development at Rothienorman as well as the sensitive masterplan which knitted together the Holyrood North Site.

Environmentally, from one end of the spectrum – Whitelee was Awarded for its windfarm through to the significant transformation of Falkirk's greenspace and, worth a mention, is the ability of the Millennium Link to join both places and people together.

South Ayrshire was endorsed for its groundbreaking digital advancement of its development plan through an online Story Map, as well as Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park for their very graphic approach to development planning and placemaking.

Architecturally, we've praised a blend of new build such as the Sir Duncan Rice Building and Eastgate's shopping complex, together with pain staking renovations of Rutherglen Town Hall. Likewise, East Ayrshire's commitment to its Kilmarnock's Conservation Area Guide.

And, just staying on architecture, in 2002 West Dunbartonshire was recognised for its Loch Lomond Shores development with its

new Council Office also awarded as well as it being recognised as the Best Regeneration project in Britain, by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors. How special! I'm sure the current RTPI Scotland Convenor will still feel proud. Likewise West Dunbartonshire picked up another Award for its lead and partnership work on Antonine Wall – now one of six World Heritage Sites in Scotland – running through five local authorities covering the Central Belt of Scotland, also including Glasgow City, East Dunbartonshire, North Lanarkshire, and Falkirk.

For this year too, mention should also be given to Aberdeen City Council's City and Beach Masterplan, winner of the People's Choice Award for its creative consultation, involvement of children and focus on investment. More details of all the SPIA Winners can be found here [Scottish Planning Innovation Awards | Our Place](#).

The Judges

Without passion, there would be no need to give Awards and, likewise, without a rolling commitment from respected Judges – ranging from Scottish Young Planners, previous winners, and retired specialists – there would be no validation, mix of opinions or joy. I'd like to thank, therefore, every single Judge who has given their time to share in the experience and get involved. It is always a pleasure and friendships remain strong to this day. Likewise, to all the Scottish Government officials, who have helped with Awards over the years. In particular, the now retired Graham Robinson MBE, Lee Begbie and the late Roger Kelly, who was one of the original planners leading the inception of SAQP. We still have one of Roger's reports – now a quarter of a century old!

Looking to 2040

Recapping on all this outstanding work proves that, over time, Scottish Planners have had two choices – either to revolve or evolve – and, without doubt, the latter speaks for itself in terms of Scotland's planning achievements. Likewise, SPIA continues to show how the profession is still taking risks to advance Scotland into a strong, happy and healthy place.

Awards help to put a spotlight on our passion for places and people-let's keep building a beautiful Scotland. **SP**

RTPI

» Policy Consultations

RTPI Scotland have submitted responses to the following consultations and requests for written and verbal evidence:

- Scottish Government Flood Resilience Strategy consultation
- Historic Environment Scotland Inventory of Historic Battlefields – Revisions to Selection Guidance Consultation
- Scottish Parliament National Performance Framework: Inquiry into proposed National Outcomes
- Scottish Government Investing in Planning consultation: a consultation on resourcing Scotland's planning system

All RTPI's written responses are published on our website.

Consultations currently under consideration are:

- Infrastructure Levy for Scotland: discussion paper

» RTPI Scotland Awards for Planning Excellence

On 24 June, RTPI Scotland celebrated the winners of this year's Scotland Awards for Planning Excellence at our summer drinks reception in Edinburgh.

Congratulations to:

- **Scotland Overall Winner:** Play Sufficiency Assessment Pilot submitted by Glasgow City Council
 - **Best Plan:** Fraserburgh Beach Vision and Masterplan submitted by Kevin Murray Associates
 - **Best Project:** Union Terrace Gardens submitted by Aberdeen City Council
 - **Young Planner of the Year:** James Hewitt, Aberdeenshire Council
- Congratulations also go to the Improvement Service for its Shaping Places for Wellbeing Programme, and Orkney Islands Council's Considering and Including Biodiversity in Development Guidance – both of which were commended by the judges.

UPDATE

Our winners are now being considered for the RTPI UK-wide Awards for Planning Excellence and we wish them all the best of luck. The finalists will be announced on 16 October, and the winners at an awards ceremony in London on 26 November. [Find out more here](#).

» Future Planners Bursary 2024?

We were delighted to announce earlier this year that we would be offering 10 Scottish Government funded £5000 bursaries to students enrolled on an RTPI fully accredited Planning Masters in Scotland for this upcoming academic year.

Applications closed on Friday 9 August, and we will be letting successful applicants know about the outcome as soon as we can.

» Apprenticeships

Two Scottish Higher Education Institutions are developing new practice-based routeways at undergraduate level, working closely with employers. Both the University of the West of Scotland and the University of Dundee expect to welcome the first cohorts of students in 2025.

» Digital Skills Portal Launched

Just a reminder that the [Digital Planning Skills Portal](#) was launched in March. Please check it out. Suggestions for additions or updates can be emailed to digitalskills@rtpi.org.uk.

» RTPI Scotland Annual Conference

This year's Annual Conference will take place on 2 October at Clydebank Town Hall. The theme this year will be 'Placemaking – Past, Present, and Future' with Ivan McKee MSP, Minister for Public Finance; Fiona Simpson, Chief Planner and Lord Best confirmed among the speakers. Further details and booking information will be available on the RTPI website soon.

» RTPI Marks 50th Anniversary of Sylvia Law's Historic Inauguration as First Female President

On 16 July, a special celebration was held in London, bringing together RTPI members, Past Presidents, and staff to commemorate 50 years of inspirational women within the Institute. The event honoured Sylvia Law's ground-breaking appointment and the subsequent progress made for gender equality in the planning profession.

[Read more here.](#)

» RTPI Announces Finalists for 2024 Awards for Research Excellence

The RTPI is delighted to announce the finalists for the tenth edition of the RTPI Awards for Research Excellence. The awards recognise and celebrate leading spatial planning research from RTPI accredited planning schools and RTPI members. This year we received 226 entries across the five award categories – nearly double that of 2023.

Read the [news story here](#), and access the [full list of finalists here](#).

» New Research published on the Value of Well-made Places

The RTPI commissioned Public First to assess the economic potential of a properly supported planning system. The research has found that "good town planning could lead to a 'planning premium' of over £370 billion of additional value". Read the [full report here](#).

» Social Media

The @RTPIScotland Twitter account has 5196 followers and the @ConvenorRTPI account has 1805.

Scottish Government

» Planning for Housing – June 2024

At the end of June, Ivan McKee MSP, Minister for Public Finance and Dr Fiona Simpson, Chief Planner, published a [letter to stakeholders regarding planning for housing](#). It follows the 'Mossend' court judgement and the more recent declaration of a national housing emergency.

The letter confirms that whilst planning is just one of many factors that impact on the delivery of housing, it has a crucial role and so must play its part. It provides clarification on implementation of NPF4, reinforcing that it should be read and applied as a whole, and looks to support implementation of policy 16 Quality Homes, by highlighting the change in approach and emphasising the significance of diversifying tenure to meet the needs of communities.

The letter also emphasises the need for a more positive dialogue and promotes constructive collaboration across sectors to support delivery. It outlines some initial actions being taken forward to support this, including on housing need, support for SME housebuilders and statements of community benefit.

The letter was issued at the same time as a requirement was made to planning authorities regarding the [updating of Action/Delivery Programmes](#) that support local development plans.

» Proportionality Working Group

The Scottish Government has established a short life working group in order to address the proportionality of planning assessments. Within the planning system, there is inconsistency across authorities around the requirements for planning assessments, with the varying requirements and sizes of potential assessments creating a significant time and resource cost for both applicants and authorities alike.

Using feedback from practitioners and

adopting a light touch improvement approach based on the Six Sigma Principles, the group will identify key priorities for improvement and recommend actions to ultimately encourage a proportionate approach to the assessments required to accompany planning applications. The group met for the first time on 25 June 2024 where it was agreed their next meeting, they would process map and workshop a real application with a systems approach in order to identify key issues and good practice.

» Infrastructure Levy

The Scottish Government has published a [discussion paper on an Infrastructure Levy](#) for Scotland, as the first step towards developing regulations by Spring 2026.

Under provisions contained in the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, an infrastructure levy is a charge on development payable to a local authority, to be spent on the provision of infrastructure. This is intended to give local authorities the option to secure a stream of funding for infrastructure which is needed to support growth on a wider scale than individual developments, complementing section 75 planning obligations.

The powers to make infrastructure levy regulations are broad and could allow for a range of different approaches. The paper summarises previous research and reviews relevant to the Infrastructure Levy for Scotland, and then sets out a range of options for the levy and points for discussion.

Officials from the Scottish Government's Planning, Architecture and Regeneration Division are keen to have an open and constructive discussion about the options with practitioners from different sectors. This will feed into the development of draft regulations which will be subject to a full public consultation in 2025.

If you would like to arrange a discussion with the Scottish Government team or submit any comments on the discussion points, please contact Infrastructure.Levy@gov.scot. The discussion phase closes on 30 September 2024.



» Climate Mitigation and Adaptation

As part of the work to inform our forthcoming Planning and Climate Change guidance, the Scottish Government commissioned [research](#), which focusses on identifying relevant information sources, tools, methods and approaches that can be used to help demonstrate whether and how lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions of development proposals have been minimised.

The research comprised a desk-based study and stakeholder engagement with developers and decision-makers to develop understanding of the approaches currently being used to both assess and minimise lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions of projects. The research includes the following findings:

- appropriate and best practice tools and methodologies for assessing whole life carbon already exist and are already being used.
- stakeholders on both sides of the planning process want clear guidance and a consistent approach.
- the Scottish Government guidance can help establish consistency in how carbon is managed through all stages of a proposal.

These research findings will be taken into consideration as we focus on drafting the guidance with the aim of ensuring the best practice approaches it supports are proportionate and applicable to the broad range, in both nature and scale, of development proposals that are considered by the planning system.

Further updates will be provided as work progresses.

» Compulsory Purchase Reform

The Scottish Government is taking forward work to reform and modernise the compulsory purchase system in Scotland. The aim of the programme is to make the system more streamlined, more effective, and fairer for all parties. We have published a [blog](#) post outlining this work. It sets out the background to – and objectives of – the reform programme, as well as its broad timescales.

In line with our [Programme for Government](#) commitment, a Practitioner Advisory Group was established earlier this year to help support the reform process. We are engaging with the advisory group and a range of other

stakeholders to develop reform proposals, with a view to publishing a public consultation in Autumn 2025. You can see [further details on the Practitioner Advisory Group](#), including membership of the group and minutes of meetings.

The compulsory purchase reform work is structured around five 'building blocks':

- Enabling powers
- Early engagement and preparatory steps
- Confirmation procedures
- Taking possession and title
- Compensation

At present we are focussed on enabling powers. In particular, we are looking at whether there are any gaps in acquiring authorities' powers and whether there is sufficient clarity as to the scope and use of existing powers. If you have any questions about the reform programme or would like to speak to us about the work, please get in touch at cpo.reform@gov.scot.

» Recent Planning Consultations

In February the Scottish Government published three consultations which sought views on resourcing the planning system, on amending the National Planning Framework and Local Development Plans and on introducing Masterplan Consent Areas.

The consultations closed in May with over 250 responses being received across the 3 consultations. Work on summaries of responses to each consultation is currently underway and will be published shortly alongside the individual responses and next steps.

» Follow us & keep up to date

We encourage anyone who wishes to keep up to date with what's happening within the Scottish Government's Planning, Architecture and Regeneration division to follow our social media accounts. For detailed content you can connect with us on [LinkedIn](#) or for shorter updates you can follow us on [X](#). We also encourage people to sign up to our regular [e-alerts](#).

 UPDATE

Key Agencies Group

» Supporting Place-based Collaboration

In the year so far, the Key Agencies Group (KAG) has made significant progress with the Authorities piloting a place-based, collaborative Local Development Plan (LDP) evidence report. This includes Fife, Midlothian, Dundee City, Highland and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. We commend Fife Council for being the first to submit their report to Gatecheck – a testament to the power of teamwork.

» Upskilling and Sharing Knowledge

We are delighted that over 500 practitioners have already accessed the [online skills resources for plan making](#) developed by Architecture and Design Scotland (A&DS), following the KAG pilot programme. Furthermore, our joint learning event with Heads of Planning and the Improvement Service in February, brought together around 200 participants to share knowledge from those pilot authorities and key agencies.

» Investing in Planning Consultation

Another focus this year has been the Scottish Government's "Investing in Planning" consultation. KAG's response emphasised the importance of a holistic investment approach in planning. While we support measures to increase local authority planning revenue, we identify the need for broader investment to strengthen the entire system. This includes ensuring our key agencies, who offer vital support during Local Development Plan preparation, have the resources to effectively assist.

The proposed Planning Advice Hub

presents a promising avenue to address challenges like expertise loss and application surges. However, KAG views it principally as a platform for knowledge sharing and skill development, not a replacement for existing resources.

We consider the idea of introducing fees for unallocated sites as helping incentivise a plan-led approach and acknowledges the significant effort invested in LDPs. Additionally, Masterplan Consent Areas hold potential as a valuable tool to support a design-led and infrastructure first approach. However, their success hinges on strong collaboration between planning authorities, agencies, developers, and communities, coupled with sufficient capacity at all levels.

» Looking Ahead

We look forward to continuing to work with the National Planning Improvement Champion and contributing to more Planning Authorities' Improvement Framework peer review sessions.

Finally, our Chief Executives are scheduled to meet with the Public Finance Minister in September to discuss the ideas arising from the "Investing in Planning" consultation and ways to collaborate to support delivery.

Heather Claridge
Director of Design at Architecture and Design Scotland

Partners in Planning

The Partners in Planning group came together in June to discuss developments around future planners. The following updates were shared:

- Scottish Government has agreed to fund 10 new bursaries for 2024, with an increased award of £5000 for each successful student. RTPI Scotland will administer the awards, and set the closing date for applications as the 9th August. Successful applicants will be notified as early as possible following the closing date.
- A follow up to the Ministerial Roundtable (held in May) at the University of Glasgow is expected in the Autumn, with a campaign around skills to be launched after the High Level Group meeting in September.

- The Future Skills Fund led by British Chambers of Commerce and Aviva, is seeking private sector contributions to support a new 5 year programme of support for planning bursaries: [RTPI | Unblocking the planning system through more skills and capacity](#)
- Discussion of careers actions, including offering opportunities for young people to shadow senior planners and gain work experience in planning.

Dr Caroline Brown
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