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Scottish Planner

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Outward insights

Learning from other nations



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EDITORIAL

AS MY INTERNAL CLOCK adjusts to the end of British Summer Time, I have finally come to terms with the fact that summer is well and truly behind us for another year. What I'm perhaps still struggling to come to terms with is that Christmas has already invaded our local supermarkets with in-store Christmas countdowns taking delight in reminding us that the big day is now less than 60 days away.

What that means of course, is that we are getting to the end of 2024 – a great opportunity to think about what we've accomplished as well as where we're headed. As always, there is a lot happening in Scotland with discussions continuing around skills and resourcing, the interpretation and implementation of NPF4 policies, the merits of introducing a new infrastructure levy, and the development of a new Planning Hub. With many important decisions still to be made and much work to be done to deliver NPF4's bold ambitions, it is important that we remain agile and open to new and innovative approaches. Learning from others' experiences is one important way to do this, and we have taken the opportunity in this edition of the Scottish Planner to do exactly that – by exploring the experiences of Wales, Northern Ireland and England on a variety of topics. Each of the articles featured demonstrates the unique political, social, and cultural contexts that have shaped the approaches taken in each nation. They also demonstrate the importance of learning not just from best practice examples, but also from those examples that have perhaps thus far struggled to achieve their intended outcomes. We hope that this edition will provide valuable insights for colleagues in Scotland as we continue our own unique journey – enjoy!

Jenny Munro
Policy, Practice and Research Officer
Co-editor

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CONVENOR'S COMMENTS



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

Looking Beyond Scotland: Broadening Our Horizons

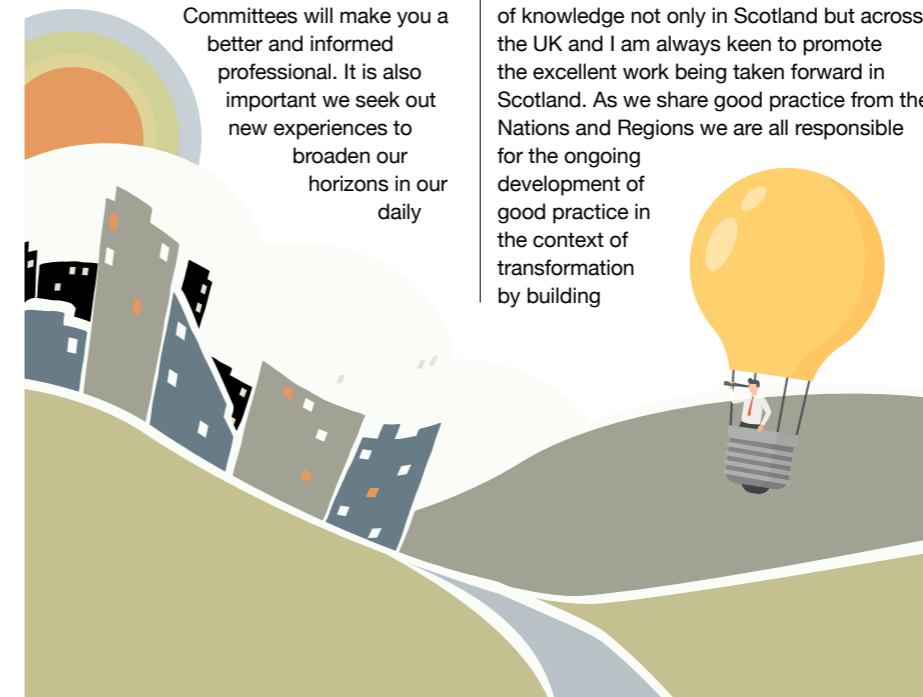
Welcome to the Autumn Edition of the Scottish Planner as we share best practice from the Nations and Regions around renewable energy, the infrastructure levy, wellbeing and play.

It is important that we all expand our horizons and challenge ourselves. We all have a tendency to focus on what we know and are familiar with. This is good for some things, but it may not always be the best idea. I believe that one of the most important and exciting things we can all do is to broaden our horizons by learning from different people, places and experiences. As the elections to the General Assembly and other RTPI Committees and Panels conclude for this year, I encourage members of the RTPI to become fully engaged in the work of the Institute. The experience and knowledge gained from taking

part in activities, events and Committees will make you a better and informed professional. It is also important we seek out new experiences to broaden our horizons in our daily

work or challenge ourselves beyond our workplace such as engaging in discussions with people who have a different perspective, listening and being open to new ideas. New experiences can spark your creativity and expand your view of planning. The influence of Planning is significant and we can influence the development of the built environment and well planned places that support strong, vibrant and healthy communities. Just step out of your comfort zone and pursue an interest in your daily work whether it be placemaking, health and wellbeing, sustainable, biodiversity.

In my role of Convenor, I have been impressed by the commitment and breadth of knowledge not only in Scotland but across the UK and I am always keen to promote the excellent work being taken forward in Scotland. As we share good practice from the Nations and Regions we are all responsible for the ongoing development of good practice in the context of transformation by building



skills and the capacity of planners and delivering planning expertise across all planning sectors. It is interesting to hear the political debate about the proposed changes to the English Planning System with significant changes proposed to the National Planning Policy Framework aimed to kick start an unprecedented programme of housebuilding and with specific focus given to renewables, low carbon projects and digital technology. In Scotland, a different approach is being taken forward with a focus more on investment in planning such as the creation of a Planning Hub, future increase in Planning Fees, addressing the housing emergency and promoting renewables. Hopefully it will result in a strengthened and sustainable planning system which is delivering on outcomes.

As I speak about broadening our horizons and stepping out of our comfort zone, it is only appropriate I speak about Barbara Cummins – past Scottish RTPI Convenor who passed away recently. Craig McLaren has

“I believe that one of the most important and exciting things we can all do is to broaden our horizons by learning from different people, places and experiences.”

provided a heartfelt tribute to Barbara in this edition assisted by a number of friends and colleagues of Barbara. Like so many, Barbara had an influence on my Planning Career. I first met Barbara when we both studied Geography at Queens University Belfast. Unlike many students, including myself, Barbara knew from an early stage that she wanted a career in Planning. She certainly planted the seed as she talked about the power of Planning. I would remember her enthusiasm for the subject when I was selecting a Postgraduate course. Our paths crossed again when I was thinking about standing for the Convenor role. Barbara came forward and in her usual kind and straightforward way gave me good advice and confidence to stand for the role. I feel privileged that I am the current holder of the Convenor Bonnet knitted by Barbara. She will not be far from my thoughts when I pass the bonnet to Laura later this year. **SP**

ARTICLE



CRAIG MCLAREN FRTPI
National Planning Improvement Champion at the Improvement Service

Barbara Cummins: An Appreciation

Craig McLaren, FRTPI, National Planning Improvement Champion at the Improvement Service, pays tribute to the life, achievements, and vast contributions to planning of Barbara Cummins who sadly passed away on 12 September 2024.



After hearing the terrible news of Barbara's premature and sudden death in September I was asked to write this piece. Deliberately, it isn't a traditional obituary given that Barbara always tried to push beyond convention. It pulls together thoughts from a range of people who knew her.

At the start of her career Barbara worked at Stirling District Council as a trainee graduate planner, after completing her planning course at Heriot Watt University and an MA from Queens University Belfast. She met Sheila Terry and they became life-long friends. Sheila remembers how Barbara was one of the first women to be employed as a professional planner in the council and, as such, was a great support to her in the difficult role as a female who was the most senior planner in the service. They also worked together in Falkirk Council. Sheila says that "you could always rely on Barbara to be straightforward, truthful, very supportive and with a good sense of humour. She was a great communicator, called a spade a spade and didn't mince her words. She was very personable, well-liked and respected by all who worked with her as well as users of the planning service."

Barbara joined the City of Edinburgh Council's Planning Service in 1997, initially dealing with planning applications, then moving onto a variety of project work, latterly



Barbara Cummins with Julia Frost and Irene Beautyman

"Irene Beautyman was her predecessor and said that 'Barbara cared passionately about the role of planning and was always tenacious in getting her message across whilst ending each input with a smile'."

working on the development of Edinburgh's Waterfront. Colleague and good friend Lesley Martin remembers how she had a reputation for "being forthright and resourceful, a helpful and generous colleague who was always fun to work with." Barbara was soon promoted to Group Leader.

Colleagues in the Council said that Barbara was a hugely valued professional and was incredibly supportive of team members, mentoring them and helping them develop their skills in planning. She always had time for colleagues, and sought to connect with people to build good working relationships. With her decisive, forthright and enthusiastic approach, Barbara was a role model for those starting out in their careers, particularly women, who were working in a more male environment than it is now. Barbara knew how to make things happen and for our profession, she knew the importance of making a decision. She led by example and gave colleagues the confidence to trust in their own voices, saying: "You know what you're doing – you know what you need to do". And, in a wonderful turn of phrase: "Stop mithering!" We will remember with a smile, her words of encouragement and her wonderful sense of humour. Barbara leaves us a great legacy of how to approach planning with humour, with grace and with outstanding professionalism.

Jenny Bruce, who worked with Barbara both at City of Edinburgh Council and HES

said: "Barbara gave me the confidence to trust my own professional judgement, which gave me a voice and helped me to start sharing my knowledge and experience with others. She was good fun and always took care to get to know and respect peoples' different ways of working because she had a huge capacity to trust the professionalism of others."

In 2009 she took up the role as Director of Heritage with Historic Scotland. Her colleagues said that she "focused on building on our existing planning functions and developing an outward looking service. She encouraged us to look beyond the heritage sector and to work in partnership with others to support the delivery of successive phases of planning reform." They highlight how she was supportive of women, young people and those from non-planning backgrounds. She encouraged colleagues to apply for Chartered Planner status and set up a graduate traineeship to encourage young people into the sector. Barbara was seen as a true mentor to young people joining Historic Environment Scotland who "would give you an unvarnished opinion on any course of action that you were proposing" but who was always approachable and engaged with everybody.

Barbara surprised many by retiring from HES in 2021, again doing things on her own terms. She threw her energies into voluntary work, being elected Convenor of the RTPI in Scotland that year. Irene Beautyman was her predecessor and said that "Barbara cared passionately about the role of planning and was always tenacious in getting her message across whilst ending each input with a smile."

2021 was a pivotal year for Scottish planning so having Barbara at the helm was a real bonus. We were in the shadows of Covid and lockdowns but Barbara faced these challenges head on. She led from the front in launching the RTPI Scotland manifesto for the Scottish Parliament election held that year; she engaged with the subsequent new Minister Tom Arthur and contributed to the discussion that led to the publication of the draft NPF4. I vividly remember her speaking in Parliament where she put the case of supporting twenty minute neighbourhoods, emphasising how Covid-19 has allowed us to appreciate the importance of the places we live in. She was an important part of the RTPI delegation that attended COP26 in Glasgow. It was also fitting, given Barbara's commitment to supporting younger people in the profession that she presented the

"Barbara's great love of knitting even featured in her year as Convenor. As a parting gift when handing the mantle over to Andrew Trigger...she produced a newly knitted 'Convenor's bunnet'."



Barbara Cummins passing the planning bunnet to Andrew Trigger, December 2021

inaugural Scottish Young Planner of the Year award to Jane Tennant.

Barbara's great love of knitting even featured in her year as Convenor. As a parting gift when handing the mantle over to Andrew Trigger – a former colleague who had benefited from Barbara's career advice – she produced a newly knitted 'Convenor's bunnet'. It is fair to say that this has now become an institution for incoming Convenors, even more so than the traditional chain of office.

Barbara was well-respected by heads of planning across Scotland. There have been eloquent tributes from David Givan at the City of Edinburgh Council, and Pamela Clifford as Chair of Heads of Planning Scotland and Convenor of RTPI Scotland. These are perhaps neatly summed up by Pam Ewen from Fife Council who said she was "an inspirational woman who made such a positive impact on people, buildings and communities. Barbara brought laughter, smiles and always good debates to a room."

In 2021 Barbara became Vice-Chair of Planning Aid Scotland. John Bury, the

current Chair, shared with me his recollections of Barbara:

"As a volunteer, Barbara embodied Planning Aid Scotland values. She was generous with her time, brought her professionalism to discussions, sought to ensure everyone had their voice heard and used her diplomatic skills and charm to bring people together. As a Board member, her sharp mind and valuable insights came to the fore and she deployed her leadership qualities as a vice-chair, ensuring the Governance and Audit Committee was in very capable hands. As an individual, she had a wonderful way of dealing with people and willingly put forward her ideas and views, often seeing things from different perspectives. Words along the lines of 'I'm sure that's very interesting, but...' would lead to a contrary and persuasive alternative view, which invariably held sway. Barbara did all this in her own unique way, always seeing the funny side of things and never missing an opportunity to make us laugh."

In May 2023 she was elected to become the first female Chair of The Cockburn Association, Scotland's oldest conservation charity. She set about her duties with typical vigour, developing initiatives focused on the Cockburn's planned celebration of its 150-year anniversary in 2025, and its future long-term strategy.

Perhaps the most fitting words that sum up Barbara's tenacity and passion for planning and the built environment are her own. In her last article for The Cockburn Association in June 2024 she concluded "So, now is the time for our political leaders to stop bashing the planning system and using it is an excuse for failures in other public policy areas, such as housing. We need to invest more in planning and good place-making, increasing awareness and reinforcing community and neighbourhood accountability, thereby ensuring Edinburgh's unique architectural and landscape heritage is available to future generations to enjoy."

Wise words from someone whose talent, wisdom, enthusiasm and good humour will be sorely missed.

Many thanks to Sheila Terry, Lesley Martin, Irene Beautyman, Pam Ewen, Adele Shaw, Annie Pollock, John Bury, David Givan and colleagues in the City of Edinburgh Council and colleagues at HES for their support in writing this. **SP**

ARTICLE



DAVID MCALLISTER
Director of Operations at Planning Aid Scotland

Celebrating 30 years of Planning Aid Scotland: Reflections

This month marks the end of our 30th anniversary year, which we launched at our 30th AGM in October last year.

Over the course of the year: we developed our new branding and reverted to the original Planning Aid Scotland name; we brought together our founding members for a discussion panel; we held a celebration of 30 years of volunteering; we brought together many of our partners and supporters at our reception in the Scottish Parliament in May this year, sponsored by Sarah Boyack MSP; we were awarded Scottish Planning Innovation Award overall winner; and in early October we held an exhibition for MSPs to highlight the contribution of our volunteers and to promote our free public Advice Service.

We also have an update from our staff team. David McAllister took on the role of Director of Operations in July this year. Alongside David in his new role, both Diane Cassidy and Marina Ramsay have recently joined the team.

Diane Cassidy is our Projects and Training Officer. Diane previously volunteered with Planning Aid for over 10 years and brings a lot of professional experience in community engagement from various community development roles across a number of different sectors. Diane will be working on delivering Local Walking Action Plans for the fourth cohort of our Sustaining Choices programme. As the first person in Scotland to be awarded SP=EED verification back in 2014, Diane will also co-deliver our SP=EED engagement training.

David McAllister, Director of Operations at Planning Aid Scotland, reflects on the last year celebrating Planning Aid Scotland’s 30th anniversary, changes to the Planning Aid Scotland team, and looking to the future as they continue to support communities, planners, local authorities and the Scottish Government.

Marina Ramsay is our Communications and Marketing officer. She brings experience from the third, public and private sectors and has most recently been working with voluntary organisations and Third Sector Interfaces across Scotland.

We also celebrate the life of Barbara Cummins, who served on our Board as vice-Chair. Barbara brought her straight-talking and joyful spirit to everything she did, and we cherish the beautiful hats she knitted (perfectly in the style of our intricate new logo) to mark our 30th anniversary. Barbara was instrumental in helping to shape our new branding and name, proudly taking us back to our full “Sunday best name”, Planning Aid Scotland. Wherever Barbara saw a need, she helped – and through her dedicated work as a volunteer and vice-Chair, she

helped people and communities across Scotland for the better.

Local Place Plans

Our 30th anniversary year has been particularly active on the Local Place Plan (LPP) front.

We worked with Fife Council to deliver a programme of training and mentoring for community groups in Fife, to support them to take forward and register their own LPPs. Following the successful delivery of that project with Fife Council, we are currently working with Shetland Islands Council to support their 18 community councils through a similar training and mentoring programme to produce their own LPPs.

The team of staff and volunteers has been providing more hands-on direct support to communities in Nairn, Gairloch, North Berwick and Morvern to help those communities produce their own LPPs.

Through late spring and early summer, we worked with West Dunbartonshire Council to produce a straightforward ‘how to’ guide for LPPs for their communities. Co-designed with community groups through a series of workshops, the final guide has now been published on the West Dunbartonshire Council website and is being used by local groups to help support them on their LPP journey.

In light of the increasing number of requests for support we are receiving from communities across Scotland, in early 2025 we’ll be updating our existing resources, and developing a wider range of support opportunities for communities. To see our existing free resources, visit: www.pas.org.uk/resources

Volunteers

Our Licentiate Mentoring Scheme is designed to help licentiate planners on their journey to becoming chartered by giving them the opportunity to see a variety of the cases submitted to our Advice Service and understand our impartial, educational approach to giving advice. The licentiates come from a wide variety of planning backgrounds and are generally six months to one year into their first planning role.

Each licentiate will be given one case from the Advice Service to respond to each month, with the support of a mentor who is a senior or retired planner. We will also be providing 3 training sessions to help the licentiates understand the planning context of the cases they are being asked to respond to.

We have had some great feedback from the pilot scheme last year and are excited for this one to get underway. Further to the Licentiate Mentoring Scheme, we are working with some of our volunteers to develop a Graduate Training Programme to help bridge

the gap between university courses and expectations from employers. We hope to run this new programme in the new year.

Mandatory training for elected members

One of the key changes arising from the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 was the introduction of mandatory training for elected members. The proposed introduction of mandatory training for elected members in Scotland aims to improve the effectiveness and consistency of the planning system by



Chief Executive, Johanna Boyd, with RTPI President Lindsey Richards FRRTPI at the RTPI Scotland conference

“Our Licentiate Mentoring Scheme is designed to help licentiate planners on their journey to becoming chartered by giving them the opportunity to see a variety of the cases submitted to our Advice Service.”



Raising awareness of our Advice Service in the Scottish Parliament this month. Clockwise from top left: Monica Lennon MSP, Ivan McKee MSP, Sarah Boyack MSP, Miles Briggs MSP

enhancing the quality of decision-making and building public confidence in the planning process.

It was recognised through previous consultations and stakeholder engagement that elected members may lack the necessary expertise to make informed planning decisions, particularly given the complexities of the modern planning system.

The new programme of training, as required by the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, will seek to ensure that elected members are equipped with the relevant knowledge of planning legislation, policy, and the key principles required to make balanced and informed decisions. Without completing the training, elected members would be prohibited from carrying out specific planning functions, such as determining planning applications. Examination and periodic retesting may also be required.

Planning Aid Scotland is supporting the Scottish Government with the design of the framework, training content and delivery of the training programme for elected members. With 30 years of experience delivering training for elected members, we look forward to helping the Scottish Government over the next few months to take forward the work commenced through the consultation.

RTPI Conference October 2024 – The Art of Placemaking

We were delighted to take part in the RTPI Annual Conference in Clydebank with our CEO, Johanna Boyd sitting on the panel considering place-based approaches alongside Josh Doyle of Urban Intelligence and Irene Beautyman of the Improvement Service. It was great to connect with a number of our volunteers at the event including those who are just starting out on their planning careers.

Digital planning

We are continuing to contribute to the digital planning agenda on a number of fronts, including through our partnership with Geosphere and the Improvement Service on Community Map Scotland. We’re also supporting the Place Standard Data Research project led by Sam Whitmore at Public Health Scotland, and currently exploring a potential joint project with Arup to support communities through digital planning tools. Our focus on digital planning will see us setting up a digital advisory group from January 2025 to advise our Board and inform our work. **SP**

To find out more about any of our work, visit www.pas.org.uk

ARTICLE

Meet our Future Planners: 2023 Bursary Recipients

In 2023, RTPI Scotland secured funding from the Scottish Government to grant bursaries to several planning students in Scotland. **Sarah Morton**, Bursary Recipient at the University of Glasgow, **Ross McFarlane**, Bursary Recipient at the University of Dundee, and **Seona Macbean**, Bursary Recipient at the University of Glasgow, reflect back on their studies over the last year, including how the bursary has helped them to achieve their goals.

Q What prompted you to study planning?

SARAH – I was attracted to the interdisciplinary nature of planning. The scope it offers to be both highly rigorous in terms of complying with policy and procedure, while also encouraging a creative and visionary approach to imagine what a place could be like in the future, seemed like an ideal balance. I have come to planning having previously studied social anthropology and art history and spent the early years of my working life in heritage and arts organisations and wanted to be more directly involved in shaping the environment in which cultural activity happens. Working in a variety of historic buildings which had been repurposed having outlived their original purpose, I became particularly interested in the challenge of sustainably adapting the historic built environment to accommodate modern demands while conserving its historic character. This ultimately became the focus of my dissertation.

ROSS – I have always found the built environment interesting in terms of its function, design and the incredible impact that cities and places can have on people and the environment. Originally, like many others, I thought this meant I wanted to be an architect. However, a day's work experience with an



“It was encouraging to have the vote of support from an external body”
Sarah Morton

urban planner showed me it was urban planning and design I had a passion for. This, along with my care for heritage, battling climate change and improving the lives of people is what therefore prompted me to study planning at the University of Dundee.

SEONA – My initial interest in planning came from my undergraduate degree in geography where I particularly enjoyed human geography. Throughout my undergraduate degree the modules I enjoyed revolved around development and the impact this has on everyday lives such as attachment to places, health outcomes and even deprivation levels. Whilst my Geography degree taught me lots of transferrable skills, I struggled to determine what to apply these to as the degree provided no specific job direction. The MSc in City Planning provided a sense of stability and grounding in relation to beginning a career, as

I was aware that there was demand within the planning profession. I have since learned that the planning profession is multi-faceted and provides a range of career paths within both the public and private sectors.

Q What have you gained (or achieved) over the last year of your studies?

SARAH – Returning to university after a gap of several years felt like a daunting step, but it has been a pleasure to dedicate a year to learning from academics, practitioners, and the diverse cohort of my student colleagues. The programme at the University of Glasgow was broad; I feel simultaneously that I have learnt a huge amount but also only just scratched the surface of such a wide-ranging subject as planning. A particular highlight was working as a small group to develop an ambitious strategic spatial framework for a neighbourhood of Glasgow, for which my team won first prize. This was a great opportunity to bring together elements of all the preceding classes and apply theory to a real-world example. I also enjoyed meeting and interviewing planning officers, architects and conservation specialists in the course of my dissertation research.

“I am looking forward to being part of a community of talented and thoughtful planners across the country who care about enhancing and building people-centred and sustainable places.”
Sarah Morton



“The bursary has been a massive help... it allowed me to fully focus on my studies”
Ross McFarlane

ROSS – Completing my masters degree has allowed me to greatly strengthen many analytical and research skills. As well as this, the design specification of the degree has greatly improved my knowledge of urban design and developed skills which has improved the visualisation of my work through an increased use of design tools and skills. Gaining a better knowledge of urban design and building on my understanding of planning through completion of the master's degree has helped me become a more well-rounded planner which will benefit me as I go into my career.

“I feel much can be learned from working in different planning systems to identify best practice and innovative solutions that can be adapted and applied to different scenarios.”
Seona Macbean

SEONA – The MSc City Planning course at the University of Glasgow provided a comprehensive introduction to the UK planning system and policies as well as theoretical and practical topics. The course was well-rounded and enabled students to explore personal interests further with a wide range of additional pathways including transport planning, international planning challenges and many more. The masters provided opportunities for independent work as well as collaborative group projects to stimulate the working environment. The assignments were often set in a report format to replicate the conditions of professional reports. I have achieved a solid understanding of the development process and how planning is the first step in unlocking development potential. I have also gained recognition of the importance of regulation within the planning system so that development does not go unchecked.

Q How has the bursary helped you over the last year?

SARAH – In returning to study after some years out of education, I am grateful for the support of the bursary which gave some financial breathing space and allowed me to give more focus to my studies. It was also encouraging to have the vote of support from an external body as I embarked in a new direction.

ROSS – The bursary has been a massive help over the past year. By providing financial support it allowed me to focus fully on my studies and reduced the stress of needing to balance university studies and a job. As well as this, illness in my family meant it also took the pressure off them to help support me. With the masters course being 12 months, it meant I was given significantly less each month than my undergraduate degree (with the same amount being awarded over 6 months). Therefore, this bursary helped bridge that gap and significantly reduced any financial stress.

SEONA – The bursary helped to confirm that undertaking the master's in planning was the correct decision for my academic progression. The financial support was very welcome, particularly during the cost-of-living crisis. The bursary also helped to aid the transition of beginning a master's as I found I was less stressed having had financial support that made the course more accessible.

Q What are your hopes for your future planning career?

SARAH – It feels like an exciting time to be entering the world of planning, with many policy and technological changes on the horizon. I am looking forward to being part of a community of talented and thoughtful planners across the country who care about enhancing and building people-centred and sustainable places. Through my studies I particularly enjoyed learning about approaches to development planning and thinking about strategies for

“Throughout my career as a planner, I hope to be able to aid in improving the lives of people and have a positive impact on the environment, climate and work to retain the character and heritage of places.”
Ross McFarlane

building meaningful and positive community engagement and consultation into the process of vision setting and strategizing.

ROSS – I hope to work in a sector where I can fully utilise planning and its many benefits. Throughout my career as a planner, I hope to be able to aid in improving the lives of people and have a positive impact on the environment, climate and work to retain the character and heritage of places. The completion of my masters, aided by this bursary, has helped greatly in beginning my journey to making these positive impacts. I also hope to continuously develop as a professional planner, working towards my RTPI charterhip and beyond.



“The bursary helped to confirm that undertaking the master's in planning was the correct decision”
Seona Macbean

SEONA – During the MSc City Planning course I was fortunate enough to begin my planning career and gain experience in the professional field by working part-time alongside my studies which I found to be extremely beneficial. I have recently just passed my probation period with Icen Projects within the Glasgow Team where the next step I intend to take is to begin the APC process to gain charterhip with the RTPI in the coming years. I also hope to work abroad due to a personal interest in travel and yet on a professional level I feel much can be learned from working in different planning systems to identify best practice and innovative solutions that can be adapted and applied to different scenarios. **SP**

PODLICIOUS

Recommended podcasts for planners. Ep 1 by Dr Caroline Brown, RTPI Director of Scotland, Ireland and English Regions

I love a podcast. I grew up on a diet of spoken word programmes from Woman’s Hour to I’m Sorry I haven’t a Clue, so it’s not a surprise I still love listening to people talking about stuff, it’s just that today I’m listening to podcasts rather than radio. I find podcasts a great accompaniment when I’m travelling or pottering about – and they’re a great way of fitting in some CPD into the every day. Here are some of my favourite planning-related podcasts past and present: enjoy!



Reasons to be Cheerful – with Ed Miliband and Geoff Lloyd

This podcast series began in 2017, and boasts an expansive back catalogue. Each episode covers a policy idea, exploring the

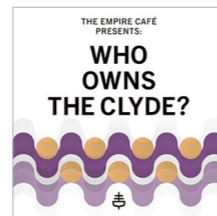
topic through interviews with academics, practitioners and politicians. Not all of the ideas covered were necessarily planning or place related, but many of the episodes were, including: Reasons to be Letchworth (May 2023); Home sweet (social) home (October 2022) and Back to nature – tackling the biodiversity and climate crises (Jan 2022). The series is now occasional rather than weekly (apparently Mr Miliband has a new job to keep him busy), but it’s worth delving in the back catalogue which covers everything from Universal Basic Income, to active travel, climate, circular economy, rewilding and biodiversity. It’s often supported by additional resources, so you can always go further with a topic if something is of interest. Worth a delve.



From What if to What Next – with Rob Hopkins

I came to this series after reading Hopkin’s book ‘From What is to What If’. Both the book and the podcasts are rooted in the idea of radical imagination – stepping

away from the present into an imagined future where all things are possible. The book is wonderful and hopeful, and the podcast follows in the same vein – exploring imagined futures with academics and practitioners making use of a time machine set to the year 2030. Like Reasons to be Cheerful, this podcast covers a wide range of topics – with episodes on planning and place that include ep 62 ‘What if land were owned and managed for the common good?’, ep 47 ‘What if rooftop gardening covered our cities roofs?’ and ep 45 ‘What if we redesigned cities based on children’s needs?’ The time machine wasn’t my favourite element – but the conversations that followed were interesting and eye-opening.



Who Owns the Clyde? – Jude Barber & Louise Welsh

A new entrant to my podcast queue is the new series ‘Who Owns the Clyde?’ a citizen-led exploration into the history of

landownership along the river. Despite being new and only 3 episodes long, this pod recently made it to the Radio Times recommended list. Presented by writer Louise Welsh (queen of crime fiction) and Jude Barber (architect) the first episodes weave together information with interviews and an over-arching narrative about opaque transfers of land, hard to reach landowners and concerns about accessibility and safety.



ARTICLE



JUSTIN MCHENRY
ESG & Solar PV Consultant at GIA Surveyors and RTPI Licentiate member

Empowering a Net-Zero Future: Pioneering Solar Energy Solutions in Belfast and Beyond

Justin McHenry, ESG & Solar PV Consultant at GIA Surveyors and RTPI Licentiate member who sits on the NI Young Planners Committee, discusses the work undertaken in NI to assess the potential contribution of urban solar photovoltaic energy towards net zero.

Amid growing climate challenges, solar photovoltaic (PV) energy has gained global attention. In the UK, this was underscored by the formation of the [UK Solar Taskforce in 2023](#) and their upcoming [Solar Roadmap Plan in 2024](#). [Northern Ireland’s Energy Strategy, The Path to Net Zero \(2021\)](#), initially set a target for **70% renewable electricity by 2030, later increased to 80% through the [Climate Change Act \(2022\)](#).**

In line with these goals, Belfast City Council and the Department for the Economy NI commissioned GIA to assess solar PV potential across Belfast using advanced 3D modelling, along with expertise in daylight, energy and financial modelling, setting a new benchmark for solar energy analysis.

After a small-scale pilot assessing 60 government properties, the project expanded to cover a 3km² urban area, encompassing over 5,200 properties with diverse land uses and a mix of existing and planned developments. These factors play a key role in determining the effectiveness, suitability, and financial viability of PV installations.

The rationale for the project was to create a vital evidence base as to the potential contribution of brownfield assets towards the renewable technology mix necessary to achieve net zero in Belfast; the NI local authority with the highest annual consumption of electricity per year. This evidence was then used to support renewable action planning, property retrofit programmes, including those aimed at addressing fuel poverty, asset decarbonisation programmes, local area energy planning, incentivisation scheme



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modelling and network upgrade planning.

The innovation of this project lies in the precision and scalability of its results. We achieved up to 97.5% accuracy in our PV performance estimates compared to real-world installations. This success is due to our rigorous analysis, which calculates the net usable roof or open space for each property, the performance potential of every panel, and accounts for contextual factors like shading, local climate data, and surrounding developments.

Lessons for Scotland

Our work highlights key learnings for Scotland and others to advance toward net-zero:

1. Urban solar PV can make a significant contribution to localised and national targets. The Belfast project evidenced that the existing building stock of circa 5,200 properties could provide:
 - 68,743kW of solar PV systems.
 - 196,409 solar panels.
 - 39,270,180kWh/year of renewable energy production.
 - a payback period for the combined systems around 9.5 years with some as quick as 6 years.
 - 14,565 tonnes co2e savings per year.
 - 10% of the city centre’s total energy demand and 3% of Belfast’s entire electricity demand using a renewable source.

2. Collaborative working between central and local government, distribution network operators, the private sector and communities is crucial to move projects from technical feasibility to implementation.
3. The development of large scale, interactive, urban technical assessments represents a fundamental starting point for any city, country or asset manager to understand how they can maximise their decarbonisation gains through PV while optimising financial investment.

Scotland’s Draft Energy Strategy and Vision for Solar includes a commitment to deploy between 4-6GW of PV by 2030; a commitment that requires strategic and localised plans for commercial, domestic and utility-scale roof and ground-mounted solar.

GIA’s approach in Belfast demonstrates exactly how urban environments can help achieve these targets. If Belfast’s urban environment could produce approximately 10% of the city centre’s entire electricity demand annually, imagine the contribution possible to decarbonisation targets should Scotland follow suit across their existing building stock where, for example, Glasgow currently consumes 2,402.4GWh of electricity per year, Edinburgh 2,021.5GWh/year and Aberdeen 938GWh/year. Accurate, interactive, evidence bases are crucial to planning the renewable transition and mix of technologies required. **SP**

Find out more about GIA by visiting the [website](#)

 ARTICLE


IZINDI VISAGIE LARTPI
Partner at Ivy Legal

Izindi Visagie, LARTPI, Partner at Ivy Legal, examines the important role of planning enforcement teams in delivering Biodiversity Net Gain in England.



“The main idea is fairly straightforward: to create and improve the natural environment by requiring that all new development has a positive impact on biodiversity.”

Enforcing Biodiversity Net Gain in England

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is generating a lot of discussion amongst planners. The main idea is fairly straightforward: to create and improve the natural environment by requiring that all new development has a positive impact on biodiversity. The statutory biodiversity net gain condition requires development to achieve at least a 10% increase in biodiversity value relative to the pre-development diversity value of the onsite habitat. This can be achieved either onsite, off-site, or by purchasing statutory biodiversity credits.

How is this working in practice and what is the role of planning enforcement teams in England in enforcing BNG? This article explores this question, including the associated challenges and uncertainties.

BNG basics

Perhaps the first conundrum relates to the condition itself. This requires that a Biodiversity Gain Plan (BGP) is produced and submitted for approval, and that development may not begin until the plan is approved; creating by statute, a pre-commencement condition. Whilst that is straightforward, a

gain is only to be counted if the LPA is satisfied that it will be maintained for 30 years following completion of the development – and this presents the conundrum for LPAs.

There are arguably two approaches: the first is to take the view that the condition only requires that a biodiversity plan is prepared and approved. Implementation is not statutory, neither is monitoring. The second approach is to introduce additional conditions to ensure that the BGP is implemented and maintained over the 30-year time period. Paragraph 7 of [the guidance](#) clearly points to the second approach as preferred. But in following the guidance, the LPA creates

something of a rod for its own back. If a condition is thought important enough to impose, there is arguably an expectation that it will be monitored and, if necessary, enforced – creating a considerable forward workload over an extended

time period. This requirement for proactive monitoring of the statutory BNG condition by a reactive enforcement service would require significant change.

Proactive enforcement of BNG

Planning enforcement has not, traditionally, been a proactive service. There are several reasons for this including:

- Planning enforcement legislation’s focus on expediency – which is by its very nature complaints-driven.
- The remedial nature of enforcement (made clear in case law) that the enforcement task is to ensure proper scrutiny of a development in a planning application.
- That almost all development is in breach of planning control to some extent (usually minor deviations from plans etc.). The scale of the task, were the service to be proactive, would be immensely resource intensive.
- Planning enforcement already suffers from a jobsworth image and proactive enforcement in the absence of complaints would only worsen that image. Rather than proactive monitoring by

planning enforcement, a better option might be to develop procedures for monitoring and reporting within planning teams, in the same way as happens with, for example, construction management plans. This would leave enforcement to situations where there is a clear failure.

The challenges of enforcing BNG

There are many challenges associated with enforcing BNG, and too many to cover in this article. However, to highlight a few:

Commencement of development – The BNG statutory condition requires that it is satisfied before development is commenced. As a rule, neither planning nor planning enforcement teams routinely monitor commencements.

Implementation of the BGP – If the LPA imposes a condition that the BGP must be implemented in accordance with its terms, this would need to be monitored.

BGPs will be created by ecologists and confirmation of compliance is likely to require ecologist input. This is not really a function which currently exists within local authority planning teams. Not only would a very significant budget be needed were it to be introduced, but it is also not clear that there are sufficiently trained staff to undertake it.

Maintenance – In order to count an improvement as a gain, the LPA must be satisfied that it will be maintained for 30 years after completion. Clearly, checking maintenance of BGP measures for 30 years is entirely impracticable. It is unnecessary anyway as a new permission within the 30 years would carry another BNG condition.

Uncertainties around enforcing BNG

In addition to the practical challenges of enforcing BNG, there are also a number of uncertainties as to how BNG can be properly enforced, including:

Determining the nature of the breach – The statutory BNG condition operates as a pre-commencement condition. As a rule, failure to comply with a pre-commencement permission means that the entire development is without permission. However, this only applies where the condition “goes to the heart” of the permission.

It is not clear whether the BNG condition will go to the heart of the permission. If the BNG is important enough to be given

statutory backing, arguably it must be considered fundamental. On the other hand, if the actual measures in the BGP are minor, can its preparation really be fundamental?

Where no plan has been produced at all, or where it has been produced but not approved, the first problem for enforcement is identifying the breach. Without case law to guide us, it seems likely that enforcement notices in the alternative (development without permission and in breach of condition) will be required.

Immunity – The nature of the breach will determine the immunity period. Alternative notices may therefore carry alternative immunity periods.

There could also be some confusion arising from whether a maintenance condition is breached, given that the 30-year period runs from “completion”, giving rise to whether there has been completion.

“This requirement for proactive monitoring of the statutory BNG condition by a reactive enforcement service would require significant change.”



What enforcement action to take?

The breach will determine the available enforcement options, which include:

- **Enforcement Notice against the whole development:** An option if the statutory BNG condition operates as a true pre-commencement condition. The remedy for this is usually removal of the entire development. This is not a problem that is exclusive to BNG. But the status of the BNG condition as a statutory creation puts it in a special class of condition. Should a house be removed because of failure to provide a BGP involving a few bat boxes?
- **Breach of Condition Notice (BCN):** In principle, a good remedy for breaches of implementation, information and monitoring conditions. There is no requirement to consider expediency and the BCN offers a quick resolution. However, this approach can still carry with it potential problems, including that BCNs do not run with the land.
- **Enforcement Notice for Breach of a condition:** The benefits of this approach are its right of appeal which allows a variation of a condition if a deemed planning application is made; and that the Enforcement Notice runs with the land so it binds future owners. The problems include its dependency on the permission and the condition. Also, the right to appeal means that the process takes longer to achieve results.
- **Enforcement of S106 Agreements:** S106 agreements are usually negotiated by the LPA legal team and are then filed away and usually forgotten about (with the exception of major schemes). Although some LPAs have S106 monitoring officers, not all have that luxury. This may lead to a two-tier system where planning enforcement teams are involved in enforcement of BNG secured by condition but not secured by s106 agreements.

This article only scratches the surface of the mammoth tasks LPAs and planning enforcement teams in England have of determining and undertaking their monitoring and enforcement responsibilities associated with delivering BNG. LPAs need to consider how best to approach this – as with much in planning, the aim of BNG is laudable but there is a need for pragmatism in its execution. **SP**



DR MATLUBA KHAN, Senior Lecturer, **DR NEIL HARRIS** MRTPI, Senior Lecturer, and **DR TOM SMITH**, Reader at the School of Geography and Planning, Cardiff University

Planning for Children's Play in Wales

Dr Matluba Khan, Senior Lecturer, **Dr Neil Harris** MRTPI, Senior Lecturer, and **Dr Tom Smith**, Reader at the School of Geography and Planning, Cardiff University, discuss how Wales includes children and young people in the planning and design of places.

Wales, as the first country in the world to legislate for children's play, provides a framework for planners and urban designers to engage children and young people (CYP) meaningfully in the planning and design of their places.

The [Children & Families \(Wales\) Measure 2010](#) and the [Rights of Children & Young Persons \(Wales\) Measure 2011](#) make local authorities legally responsible for assessing and securing sufficient play opportunities for children. Participation of CYP in decisions affecting them, complying with the Welsh Government's [Children and Young People's Participation Standards](#) is explicitly mentioned in the statutory guidance notes 'Wales a play friendly country' published in 2014. However, a gap is persistently felt between the policy and implementation due to the absence of a robust link between current planning practice and the Play Sufficiency Assessment process.

[Planning Policy Wales](#) puts an emphasis on good design and making provisions to meet the needs of all, including children. Planning Policy Wales also includes some more specific reference to 'active and social streets and the opportunity in new development to promote opportunities to play in streets.' There is however no specific mention of children's participation, either in design, policy or implementation. To what extent play sufficiency assessment can inform the Local Authorities' Play Action Plans and subsequently the Local Development Plan largely depends on where in the local authority the Play Sufficiency Assessment team is situated. Where the play sufficiency assessment is within the responsibilities of the LDP team, or the Parks and Recreation



The children of Ninian Park Primary School in Cardiff were working on a model for their local park, which they identified as lacking age-appropriate play features (Credit project team)

"The Child Friendly Cardiff team has been especially important in raising awareness of children's rights, promoting consideration of children across the spectrum of the local authority's activities, and helping to cut across silos in relevant policy areas."

team, the assessment is likely to have more leverage in informing the planning decisions of neighbourhoods and parks.

We, Cardiff University academics, worked with CYP in different communities of Cardiff – Grangetown, Butetown and Llanishen - in collaboration with Child Friendly Cardiff team

of Cardiff Council, to create a [children and young people's plan for their neighbourhood](#). We produced a [toolkit](#) that can enable planners, designers, teachers and youth workers to engage CYP in conversations about their local area. Planners and designers can utilise the bespoke set of tools provided to co-design a place plan with CYP for any community, which has the potential to inform both the Play Action Plan and the Local Development Plan.

Through correspondence with different actors within and beyond the local authority, during our research we found out that a collaboration gap exists among different bodies working to promote children's rights and participation. The Child Friendly Cardiff team has been the bridge for our engagement work with children and young people; they brought teams together to make sure the voices of children and young people are integrated in the work by LDP team and the Parks and Recreation team.

We also found out that CYP themselves are largely unaware of how they can share their opinions on matters affecting them as many children in our activities shared, 'This is the first time I have been asked about my views on my neighbourhood'. The Child Friendly Cardiff team has been especially important in raising awareness of children's rights, promoting consideration of children across the spectrum of the local authority's activities, and helping to cut across silos in relevant policy areas.

Going forward several lessons and recommendations can be noted:

- 1) Involvement of planners, designers and landscape architects in delivery of the 'play sufficiency duty' where children's voices are taken into account to inform design and planning of neighbourhoods, parks and public spaces.
- 2) Specific mention of children's participation in Planning Policy Wales and National Development Framework and The National Plan 2040.
- 3) Making information available and accessible on how CYP can engage in the process of planning for play.
- 4) The significance of agencies and organisations advocating for children's rights, including rights to play. **SP**



ALAN HERRON, Chief Executive Officer at PlayBoard NI

Policy, Planning and Play: The Child's Right to Play in Northern Ireland

Alan Herron, Chief Executive Officer at PlayBoard NI, examines Northern Ireland's journey towards realising the child's 'Right to Play'.

The journey to realising the child's 'Right to Play' has been shown to be both long and arduous. With the incorporation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into Scots law, Scotland has undoubtedly taken a significant step towards realisation of the child's right to play.

But what of Northern Ireland – the smallest constituent part of the UK?

Perhaps best known for "The Troubles," a period of violent sectarian conflict running from the late 1960s to mid-1990's, more recently Northern Ireland has become somewhat synonymous with the political instability which has led to regular and frequent collapses of the power-sharing assembly.

The impact of 'the Troubles' on society as a whole, and children and young people in particular was significant. By the mid 1980's it was becoming clear that cross-community violence, division and political instability was having a profound impact on children, not least in terms of restricting their ability to access play opportunities.

It was during this time that PlayBoard NI was established to develop targeted programmes aimed at creating safe, accessible, high-quality play opportunities that crossed the community divide, bringing children together through play.

The Regional Policy Picture

With the end of 'The Troubles' and the establishment of the Northern Ireland Assembly in 1998, PlayBoard led calls for greater recognition of the 'Right to Play' at a policy level. This culminated in the publication of Northern Ireland's first Play Policy Statement (2006), Play and Leisure Policy (2009) and Play and Leisure Implementation Plan (2011).

Whilst significant steps forward in terms of securing recognition for play at a policy level, the impact has been minimal. This is due in large part to a lack of designated departmental responsibility to oversee delivery and the absence of an effective monitoring and reporting system.

More recent policy and strategic developments have focused on establishing a broad rights-based approach to supporting the wellbeing of children and young people. Both the Children's Services Co-operation Act (2015) and the Children and Young People's Strategy (2020-2030) have at their core [eight common wellbeing outcomes](#) linked to the article of the UNCRC, including the enjoyment of play and leisure.

It would be unfair to comment on the impact of the Children and Young Peoples Strategy which remains in the early phases of delivery. However the impact of the Children Services Cooperation Act has been largely negligible in terms of advancing the Right to Play.

Localised Approaches

In the absence of an effective regional play policy a number of councils have sought to fill the gap through the development of local play policies and strategies that have at their core UNCRC Article 31, the right to play.

With the support of PlayBoard, such strategies have focused on addressing gaps in play provision, enhancing the quality of playparks, developing inclusive play opportunities and delivering community based, non-fixed play programmes. Beyond increased investment in place, participative approaches have been embedded, to provide children an opportunity to help shape the play environment.

The Planning Framework

Outside of targeted regional policies, the role of the planning system in supporting or impeding the Right to Play in Northern Ireland must be acknowledged. The decentralisation of planning powers to council level (2015) under the Review of Public Administration sought to create a more efficient, transparent and locally sensitive planning system.

Under the process, existing Planning Policy Statements (PPS) were subsumed under a new Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) built on a number of core objectives including sustainable development and the improvement of health and wellbeing.

From a play perspective, the SPPS contains two retained policy statements which incorporate recognition of play – PPS 7: Quality Residential Developments and PPS 8: Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation. Neither can be said to adequately prioritise play as part of the planning process with a lack of clear, enforceable standards or targets specifically aimed at ensuring sufficient provision of high-quality play opportunities.

The regional Play and Leisure Implementation Plan (2011) identified the inadequacies of both PPS 7 and 8, including an action to strengthen planning for play ahead of decentralisation in 2015. Like many of the actions contained in the implementation plan this did not proceed and both remain in place.

Overall – despite best intentions – the decentralised planning system in Northern Ireland continues to provide an insufficient focus on needs of underrepresented groups, particularly children and young people. Whilst it aims to promote sustainable development and community well-being in its broadest sense, it falls short of explicitly addressing the play needs of children and young people.

Although the absence of a regional play policy has stimulated some localised action at council level, which is welcome, there remains the need for a regional Play Policy that articulates a clear, consistent approach to realising the child's right to play, alongside the embedding of UNCRC articles at a policy and planning level. PlayBoard looks forward to continuing to advocate for such a development whilst supporting local delivery which aims to deliver access to enhanced, quality play opportunities. **SP**

ARTICLE



SARAH LEWIS, MCD, MRTPI,
Former Planning Practice Officer at the RTPi

Children and town planning – The experience in England

Sarah Lewis, MCD, MRTPI, former Planning Practice Officer at the RTPi and author of the RTPi practice advice note ‘Children and Town Planning: Creating Places to Grow’, discusses the experience of planning for children and young people in England.

I was delighted to be asked to write an article about planning and play. However, once I began, I realised I didn’t want to confine myself to writing about just play. Focusing solely on play tends to compartmentalise the lives of children, with the result that we are left with plans that only consider children in discrete locations – schools, playgrounds and sports facilities, rather than creating truly child-friendly places. Which in turn limits the ambition of the plans and developments that are delivered.

Having said that, in Scotland the introduction of Play Sufficiency Assessments under the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 is a significant step forward, requiring the assessment of play opportunities as part of the Local Development Plan process. This brings Scotland closer into line with Wales, which was the first country in the world to legislate for play with the introduction of the Play Sufficiency Duty in 2010, which requires the production of a Play Sufficiency Assessment every three years.

The situation in England is less progressive. The 2024 consultation on the National Planning Policy Framework does nothing to strengthen the policy position on children and the built environment. Furthermore, the National Planning Practice Guidance is limited on detail, beyond education provision. Even the open space and sports and recreation provision does not specifically mention children. In a backwards step England had a national Play Strategy between 2008-2011, after which it was scrapped. Currently only local planning authorities in London are required to develop plans that are informed by a needs assessment of children and young person’s play and informal recreation facilities.



“I would stress that the most important thing to do when planning for children and young people is to talk to them, really engage in a meaningful way and get creative in the ways that you do this.”

Although presenting a gloomy outlook, there are some hopeful signs. The 2023 Sport England ‘Active Design’ guidance takes a much more positive and inclusive approach, with a broader prominence on active environments, rather than just sports provision, as in the past. Also, an inquiry into ‘Children, young people and the built environment’ launched by the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee Select Committee in 2023 demonstrated a new interest in the issue. However, the Committee’s findings have not been published due to the timing of the General Election.

As the UK planning systems are in a near

constant state of flux, in my former role as Planning Practice Officer at the RTPi I always advocated for planners to not wait for new national policy or guidance on an issue, but to draw inspiration from the innovative ways of working that their colleagues at other local authorities have pioneered.

It’s to this end that I developed a set of design principles that should be considered when creating child friendly places at any scale, whether they are - urban or rural, a new development or existing settlement. They include creating places that include cues to indicate that children and young people are welcome and focus on the local – child friendly and 20-minute city principles are mutually supportive. I don’t have space to go into detail here, so of course I suggest that you take a look at the [practice advice on the RTPi website](#).

However, I would stress that the most important thing to do when planning for children and young people is to talk to them, really engage in a meaningful way and get creative in the ways that you do this. It is impossible to adopt a one-size-fits-all approach. When researchers worked with pupils at Auchtertool Primary School in Fife, asking pupils to hold up smiley, sad and neutral faces to show their opinion successfully worked for that age group. However, when Liverpool City Region planners wanted to understand the views of young people in the city they ran drop in, interactive events in vacant retail units. They found that the vast majority of those who attended would never have engaged if it hadn’t been for the drop in venues used. The thing that most excited the Liverpool planners was when the group of young people who enjoyed the experience so much, went out and encouraged all their friends to join in. Our young people have essential insights into the places we are creating for their future and as planners we need to find the most effective ways of listening to them (and then of course delivering those places). **SP**

ARTICLE



GEORGINA NEE
RTPi Cymru Planning Policy Assistant

Well-being and Sustainable Development: the approach taken in Wales

Georgina Nee, RTPi Cymru Planning Policy Assistant, reflects on the impact of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, as Scotland looks at drafting its own wellbeing Bill.

It is nearly 25 years since devolution and the establishment of the Welsh Government. A stable political majority over much of this period has enabled some brave and forward-thinking policy decisions and legislative change to be introduced. Among these was the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 - a world-first. The Act requires decision-makers to consider [seven well-being goals](#) as a core part of ensuring sustainable development.

Public bodies must meet present and future needs through [5 ways of working](#): collaboration; integration; involvement; long-term; and prevention.

[Indicators are colour coded](#) to each goal, displaying how aims relate to multiple well-being goals. This is noticeably different to Scotland’s National Performance Framework which allocates specific indicators to each national outcome.

In the last year, the Scottish Government has consulted on the Wellbeing and Sustainable Development (Scotland) Bill, partly inspired by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. But what can Scotland learn from the Wales experience?

Future Generations Commissioner

Of significance to the Act’s success in Wales, the legislation was accompanied by appointment of the first Future Generations Commissioner, Sophie Howe in 2016. The Commissioner helps Wales address the expectations on public bodies. Currently Derek Walker is in the role, promoting sustainable development and protecting future generations to have their needs met

meanwhile encouraging public bodies to consider the short-term and long-term impacts of policies and decisions.

In Wales, the Commissioner has provided an essential champion for the new Act, ensuring it gets properly integrated into thinking and decision-making. However, the [Scottish Government’s consultation analysis](#) reported that when asked if Scotland should introduce an independent Future Generations Commissioner:

“Less than half of respondents agree with this, and a sizeable proportion were unsure or did not answer, with some against the proposal.”

Not necessarily a smooth transition

It has not all been smooth sailing in Wales. Public bodies have been accused of not raising enough awareness. Wales Online reported in 2015:

“Public bodies in Wales have been put on warning...if they think their duties under the Well-being of Future Generations Act amount to no more than a box-ticking exercise, they have another thing coming.”

In 2021, the Senedd’s public accounts committee reported that public bodies had not sufficiently changed their organisational

culture. The Welsh Government were too slow to make changes internally and did not provide the clearest expectations or lead role for public bodies.

How has the Well-being Act influenced the planning system?

[RTPi Scotland’s response to the Scottish Government consultation on the proposed Bill](#) highlights the importance of clearly defining sustainable development and notes this as something that has been done well in Wales. Going beyond the human-centred approach of the UN’s 1987 Brundtland Report definition, Wales defines sustainable development as the:

“Process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the well-being goals.”

The 2015 Act has also had an impact on Planning Policy Wales (PPW), which is a ‘material consideration’ for planning decisions. Whilst PPW8 (2016) was ordered by topics, for example retail, housing etc.,

PPW10 (2018) changed significantly, with policies completely rearranged to align with themes of the Well-being Act. The new format seeks to fully incorporate the Act’s seven wellbeing goals and the five ways

of working and has a greater emphasis on placemaking.

So, what has been achieved?

In practice, there is evidence of greater coordination of public bodies via Public Service Boards. They are responsible for developing the new Local Well-being Plan as a partnership between the Local Authorities, Local Health Board, Fire and Rescue Authority and Natural Resources Wales. This promotes collaborative working across Local Authority boundaries. It is unclear, however, the extent to which Local Well-being Plans are influencing other policy documents such as Local Development Plans. **SP**

ARTICLE



PROFESSOR ADH CROOK, CBE FAcSS FRTPI
Emeritus Professor of Town & Regional Planning at The University of Sheffield

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) in England: lessons for Scotland



Professor Adh Crook, CBE FAcSS FRTPI, Emeritus Professor of Town & Regional Planning at The University of Sheffield discusses the English experience of CIL and the lessons for the implementation of a new Infrastructure Levy for Scotland.

Together with colleagues I have carried out all but one of the studies of S106 (i.e. planning obligations) and CIL in England commissioned by government. I have also worked with colleagues in Scotland on the last major study of the incidence value and delivery of S75 commissioned by the Scottish Government.

Scotland intends to implement a new Infrastructure Levy and the Scottish Government recently consulted on its draft proposals to which I and other colleagues responded. I have been asked by the Editor of this journal to consider what lessons the English experience of CIL might have for Scotland.

CIL was introduced in England in 2010 to secure contributions to the funding of strategic infrastructure that was not immediately related to sites under development, with S106 restricted to obligations making development acceptable in planning terms, including affordable homes. Regulations were introduced to avoid 'double dipping' and prevent developers paying twice for the same obligation.

Our latest evidence (Lord et al, 2020) for 2018-19 shows that English local authorities

agreed just under £7bn that year for S106 and CIL, mainly for affordable housing (£4.7bn). Of the £7bn CIL accounted for 12 percent, of which 3 percent was for the Mayoral CIL to help fund Crossrail 1. Just under half (47 percent) of English planning authorities were charging CIL. However, CIL has not been as successful as had been hoped, especially for large and complex sites. Many developments are exempted from the charges; and, in contradiction to the intent of CIL, some of it also has to be used for very local, parish level spending. Many authorities have not adopted a CIL on viability grounds, especially to those wanting to protect affordable housing contributions in relatively weak markets. It is seen as administratively complex (regulations have been changed many times), including the need to define charging schedules, defend them at inquiries, update them and then arrange the construction and funding of infrastructure towards which CIL is contributing.

The arguments for an Infrastructure Levy in Scotland are not dissimilar to those that led to CIL in England because the 'rational nexus' restricted planning obligations to meeting the specific infrastructure related to each site with key Court (e.g. Elsie) and reporter decisions (e.g. Armadale) reinforcing this policy. Hence although planning obligations were raising circa £500m in 2019-2020 (consistent with England given different population sizes etc.), mainly in high value areas (of which total £300m was for affordable housing), none could be used to help fund off site infrastructure (or indeed be pooled to deal with the cumulative effect of small scale developments). Hence the argument that a levy was needed to secure this funding, even though research work conducted before the initial levy proposals estimated it would raise very little.

The experience in both countries, as well as the current proposals for change, raise a number of issues about how developer contributions might be better handled. In particular, can raising developer contributions through a single approach covering all types and sizes of developments work, given the complex variety and range of sites and circumstances involved? Additionally, should the amounts secured be related to the costs of provision — a fundamental principle of the original developer contributions approach — or to the value of the development being created?



"The experience in both countries, as well as the current proposals for change, raise a number of issues about how developer contributions might be better handled."

This is a choice which raises the more fundamental question of whether these policies are now being designed explicitly to capture land value increases or to secure developer contributions to infrastructure costs (with land value capture being an outcome but not an explicit objective, as in earlier developer contribution policies).

Maybe better to adopt a three pronged approach (Boyle et al, 2022). An obvious approach might distinguish different types of sites and build on and develop existing practice rather than putting in place completely fresh approaches, which take time to bed in and risk undermining new development.

For small sites with short build-out times, one could envisage a simple tariff. For larger sites, including those with long build out times and perhaps multiple developers, something along the lines of negotiated contributions to infrastructural and community needs generated

by these developments over time would be appropriate. For major developments, such as new villages, significant urban extensions, or substantial urban regeneration sites, one could envisage more partnership types of approach, involving several landowners and developers working in partnership. A clear developer contributions policy, setting out what is required, would shape the land value expectations of landowners whose land is to be acquired. The partnership would thus acquire land in a way that fully reflects the required contributions and realise the value inherent in the proposed new development when it is built out, helping to fund the infrastructure and community facilities needed.

But to do this Scotland might need to abandon its proposed Infrastructure Levy and instead legislate to enable S75 to contribute to off site and well as on site infrastructure. Meanwhile in England the new government has abandoned its predecessor's decision to replace S106 and CIL with an Infrastructure Levy based on the value of completed developments with allowances for construction costs and some land value whereby site specific levy rates and allowances would be set by each local authority (Lord et al 2023). Instead S106 and CIL will continue with expected modifications. **SP**

Scottish Government

» Investing in Planning – Next Steps

Planning fees will increase before the end of 2024, reflecting inflationary increases since 2022 and providing vital additional financial income for planning authorities.

Draft regulations due to be laid later this month will also provide authorities with a greater flexibility for charging for their services, a higher fee for prior notification/approval applications and an adjustment to the fee for shellfish farming.

More information on the timing of these and other proposals to support the resourcing of planning authorities, streamline the system and skills across the sector can be found in our [Investing in Planning – Next Steps blog](#).

» Masterplan Consent Areas

[Final regulations were laid](#) in front of the Scottish Parliament on 23 September 2024, covering the main process for making Masterplan Consent Area (MCA) schemes and relating to the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) provisions of MCA schemes.

[The Planning \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#) introduced MCAs, which will allow planning authorities to take a place leadership role, by proactively consenting the type and quality of development they wish to see in their areas by preparing a MCA 'Scheme'. MCAs will offer a coordinated approach to consenting, granting planning permission, road construction, listed building and conservation area consent – where provided for in the particular MCA scheme.

We published a [Summary of Responses](#) report following our recent "Masterplan Consent Area regulations: consultation" which closed on 22 May 2024. Our [Linkedin post](#) on MCAs provides further detail.

» Development Plan Amendment Regulations

With the move to National Planning Framework (NPF) and Local Development Plans (LDPs) having a review period of 10 years, the [2019 Act](#) introduced the provision for them to be amended between full review cycles. This enables the planning system to respond where newly emerging matters arise. Regulations allowing greater flexibility to LDPs were [laid](#) in front of the Scottish Parliament on 23 September 2024. Subject to Parliamentary scrutiny, they are expected to come into force on 5 December 2024.

We also published a [Summary of Responses](#) following our recent "Development plan amendment regulations: consultation" which closed on 22 May 2024. Our [Linkedin post](#) provides further detail.

» Chief Planner Letter

The Chief Planner and Minister for Public Finance issued a [Chief Planner letter](#) on 17 September 2024 to Heads of Planning at Scottish planning authorities. The letter provided an update on our work programme and priorities and clarified our expectations for a number of areas of planning practice.

» The Planning Hub

On 11 September 2024, the Minister for Public Finance announced the creation of Scotland's first Planning Hub to provide direct support to planning authorities, strengthening capacity and accelerating decision making and development delivery.

This first phase of the Hub will be a pilot that looks to provide proof of concept for it to be in place for the longer term. The initial focus is on hydrogen to provide urgent support to deal with the rapid increase of proposals expected over the next two years.

The Hub builds on the work of the

National Planning Improvement Champion and is hosted by the Improvement Service.

Scoping and engagement has commenced in collaboration with planning authorities, industry and other key organisations to identify the support and expertise needed to support consenting on hydrogen planning applications and identify case studies, collate learning on challenges and opportunities and provide initial targeted support.

» Why Hydrogen?

Planning is a key enabler and if no action is taken to support Planning Authorities, we risk undermining the development of this key sector which is required to achieve our net zero future. Through embedding new skills, approaches and behaviours the Hub will help build capacity within the planning system to meet both our renewable hydrogen aspirations and net-zero targets.

This first phase of the Hub is a pilot that looks to provide proof of concept for it to be in place for the longer term, with a plan to extend the services offered by the Hub in 2025-26 to support wider developments including the delivery of good quality homes and onshore wind.

» Next Steps

If you have experience of hydrogen related planning applications and would like to share this with the Planning Hub please get in touch with Craig McLaren (craig.mclaren@improvementservice.org.uk).

» Planning Skills

In addition to the recent launch of the Planning Hub and Apprenticeship Programme outlined in Programme for Government, we are progressing a range of actions to support planning skills and numbers across the profession. To achieve this, we are currently engaging with stakeholders from the public, private and academic sectors

and we will announce the results of that in more detail in November.

In the meantime, we are delighted that the increase in our Bursary funding from £20,000 to £50,000 has helped 10 postgraduates on their planning journey. The Minister met the successful applicants at the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) Scotland Annual Conference and we look forward to hearing more about their stories throughout their studies.

To promote planning as a career, we will be running Recruitment 'Inspo' Days on 14 November and 6 March 2024, at Victoria Quay in Edinburgh. Our 'Inspo' days will include a programme of inspiration and discussion about planning as a profession. If you know of any future, aspiring planners, please encourage them to sign up to attend one of these events. Details on how to sign up will be available on PARD's social media.

» Green Freeports

Green Freeports are designed to boost innovation and inclusive growth within communities, while supporting Fair Work First practices, creating new green jobs, upholding the highest environmental protections and supporting economic transformation.

A non-statutory protocol has been agreed, which commits all partners to work constructively on the regulatory planning and wider consenting processes, in the delivery of the Green Freeport sites and projects. The protocol can be viewed at www.gov.scot.

» Place & Wellbeing Alliance Event

Registration will open soon for the Place & Wellbeing Alliance event, taking place on Tuesday 12 November 2024 from 10:30am – 15:30pm at COSLA conference centre in Edinburgh.

The previous online event focused on Town Centre Living and proved very successful to delegates. The November event is currently under development. Registration will open soon, please contact Sam Whitmore (sam.whitmore@phs.scot) for more information.

» 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](#).

RTPI

» Policy Consultations

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

- Scottish Government's Flood Resilience Strategy
- Scottish Government's Infrastructure Levy Discussion Paper

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

Consultations currently under consideration are:

- Scottish Building Safety levy: consultation on proposals, deadline 18 November
- Scotland's City Region and Regional Growth Deals – your experience of the deals and views on their impact, deadline 14 November
- Proposals to Amend Scottish Government Policy on the Protection Afforded to Certain Ramsar Features, deadline 13 December.
- Electricity Infrastructure Consenting in Scotland, deadline 29 November

» RTPI Scotland Election

Congratulations to the successful candidates following the recent Scottish Executive Committee and Junior Vice Convenor elections. Full details of the new committee members and the JVC will be announced in December

» Intern Project Officer

RTPI Scotland is hiring an Intern Project Officer who is motivated and can use collaborative and analytical skills to support the engagement of our Scottish membership on planning policy matters.

The closing date for applications is 10 November.

[Find out more and apply here.](#)

» RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence

On 16 October, the RTPI announced the finalists of the National Awards for Planning Excellence, now in its 47th year. The winners will be announced at the national ceremony in London on 26 November.

[Find out more here.](#)

» Apprenticeships

The University of the West of Scotland and the University of Dundee expect to welcome the first cohorts of students to their new apprenticeship/practice-based undergraduate degrees in 2025.

UWS' BSc (Hons) Town Planning will have its first intake as a fast-track opportunity – aimed at upskilling existing planning professionals who will complete with an Honours award in just 2 years. They are looking for interest from employers and individuals – whether you want to sign up your existing planning staff or want to take the next step in your career, please get in touch with Usman Ahmad (usman.ahmad@uws.ac.uk) for more information and to register for the January 2025 intake.

» Digital Skills Portal

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. We've got some related events coming soon – keep an eye on your monthly bulletin for details.

UPDATE

» RTPI Scotland Annual Conference

This year's Annual Conference was held on 2 October at Clydebank Town Hall on the theme of Placemaking – Past, Present, and Future.



Thank you to all our speakers and attendees, and to our sponsor Objective Keyplan.

We were joined at the Conference by this year's cohort of Future Planners Bursary recipients who had the opportunity to meet the Minister for Public Finance, Ivan McKee MSP, and Chief Planner Fiona Simpson. They shared their stories of how they discovered their passion for planning and their hopes for their future careers.

» Blog: A promising approach for Scotland's Planning Hub

Dr Caroline Brown, RTPI Director of Scotland, Ireland and English Regions, has written an RTPI blog about the approach proposed to be taken in setting up Scotland's new National Planning Improvement Hub.

Read the blog in full [here](#)

Read other RTPI Scotland Blogs [here](#)

» Social Media

We will be closing our twitter accounts in December. But don't worry, you can keep updated with the latest news by following [Caroline Brown](#) and [Jenny Munro](#) on LinkedIn.

DPEA Update

As foreshadowed in the DPEA Annual Review published in July, DPEA is facing an unprecedented rise in casework. This situation is highly likely to continue well into next year and possibly beyond. In addition to routine casework this is caused by:

- an exceptional increase in the number of cases, largely certificate of lawfulness appeals, relating to short-term let uses. In the last week of September, live casework stood at about 160% of normal levels and rising. 56% of live cases were short-term let appeals;
- sisted housing appeals awaiting the outcome of the Mossend Court of Session decision are now being considered by appointed reporters and are moving towards determination. We anticipate more such appeals as planning authorities also work through like cases;
- we have now completed four LDP Gate Check Reviews, all within our 3 month target. One case is currently live and we anticipate a steady stream of these in the coming year; and
- we are advised that five strategic electricity

transmission applications are to be submitted early next year; there is a strong possibility that some or all of these may end up with DPEA for public inquiry. Accompanying these are likely to be associated CPOs and around 1000 necessary wayleaves. To put that in context, last year DPEA processed 28 wayleave cases.

We have put measures in place to respond to these pressures and continue to work on these:

- streamlining procedures and practices within DPEA and with ECU colleagues;
- increasingly calling on self-employed reporters, which has finite capacity; and
- working towards improved resourcing in collaboration with the Chief Planner and other consenting colleagues.

In the meantime, there is likely to be an impact on our ability to allocate cases as swiftly as is our normal practice and we ask for forbearance whilst we work through these issues.

Scott Ferrie, MRTPI
Chief Reporter, Planning and Environment Appeals Division

HOPS Update

There have been some changes at Heads of Planning Scotland since our last update in The Scottish Planner. Pamela Clifford of East Ayrshire Council has taken on the role of HOPS Chair ably supported by Christina Cox of South Ayrshire Council and Paul Macari of Aberdeenshire Council.

A key area of research in the near future will be on streamlining planning processes and we will be looking to work with stakeholders on various workstreams; rolling out good practice for Section 75 agreements, a review and assessment of planning conditions across the country with a goal of drafting a standard wording template, and identifying and promoting good practice for consenting processes.

HOPS continue to work on obtaining better support and resourcing for planning authorities. We are encouraged to see the progress of the National Planning Hub as a solution to upskill

staff to address the requirements of NPF4. We have also recently run workshops and submitted a response to the draft Infrastructure Levy as we will take a keen interest in methods to secure the funding needed to bring infrastructure projects forward.

As we come to the end of 2024, we get closer to a major landmark for HOPS. Early in 2025 HOPS will be celebrating its 25th birthday and feels it is an appropriate milestone to celebrate the successes of planning and the positive impacts of innovative joint working and collaboration between all the Scottish planning authorities. HOPS is the successor body to the Scottish Society of Directors of Planning (SSDP) which was founded in 1975 at the time of local government reorganisation.

Trevor Moffat
Heads of Planning Scotland Secretary and Planning Skills Project Manager at the Improvement Service

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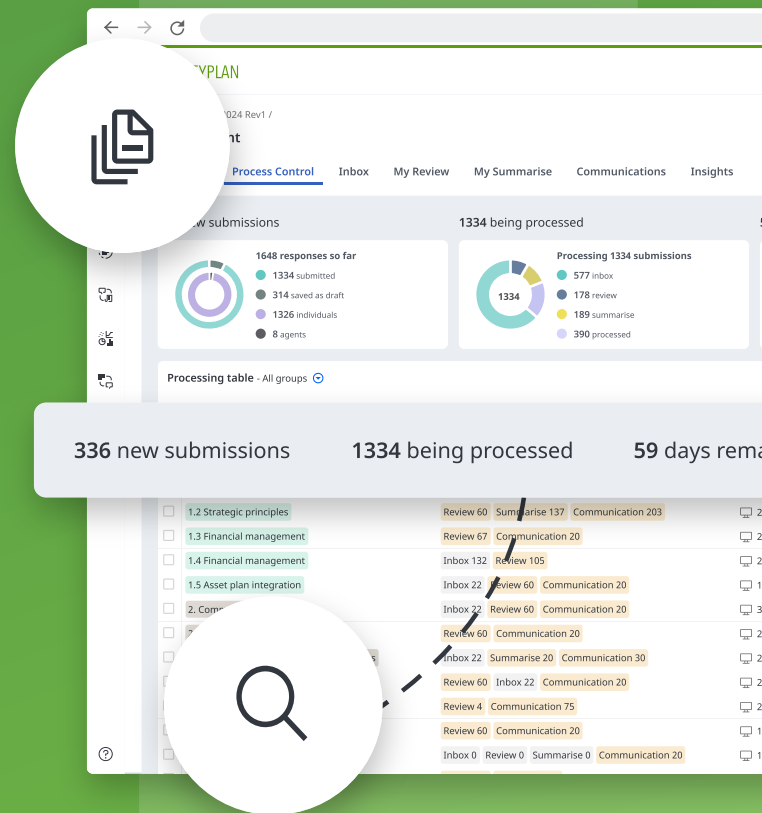
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For further information, please visit
www.rtpi.org.uk/scotland

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