

## THE CHAIR'S FIRST SIX MONTHS

Looking back over my first six months as Chair of the RTPI North East Region has reinforced my view that any successful organisation, particularly one based on voluntary support, needs a critical mass of competent people to pursue its aims and objectives. Individual enthusiasm, no matter how well intentioned, tends to become isolated and misdirected. The success of any organisation is in its collective spirit. We are fortunate in this Region to have that critical mass of able people. It makes chairing such an organisation a privilege. Indeed if I have a general observation of our Region it is the quality of the individuals that we have. Most would not be out of place in the higher positions of any organisations anywhere.

Snow, Planning Aid and the Localism Bill tended to dominate the early months. Given the main aims of the Localism agenda it seemed to me completely irresponsible of the Government to precipitously cease funding for Planning Aid. We tried, without success, to promote an interim Planning Aid North organisation that would maintain the former

service, with the aim of it becoming mainly self-funding in two or three years. I feel that we made a credible case. I was pleased that we tried and sorry that we failed. I am pleased that we now have a re-formed Planning Aid service but it does feel like we have moved backwards in terms of the level of service that we can provide in this region.

I believe that it is reasonable to say that in recent times our relations with the Institute in London have on occasions been strained. There seem to be a



number of reasons for this. Of course we sometimes have a different agenda but at the heart of many of the problems has been the simple issue of poor communications. This was raised by my prede-

cessor Julian Ringer in a paper to the Institute last year. Just how effectively was brought home to me at the "Incoming Chairs" meeting that starts the year. Before the meeting, last year's President took me aside. Would I mind not mentioning communications at the meeting! I could be assured that the Institute had taken on board the con-

cerns of the North East and would be improving arrangements. She did not want the meeting bogged down on an issue that had already been debated at length. There is no doubt that the Institute has listened. Things have certainly improved. We believe that they can improve more and this is an ongoing matter.

It is difficult to argue with the philosophy behind Localism, although we had a go. Obviously the community should have an important say in how their area is planned. I also think that recent years have seen an overly centralised system. In our submission to the Institute we tried, amongst other things, to argue that since the "Big Society" is a finite resource, the various competing demands, particularly major infrastructure and cross boundary development, need a Regional Strategic context. In this we were not successful. The Institute's position was effectively that Regional Strategic Planning was already a sinking ship and that if we tried

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to defend it, we would sink with it. It was much better to focus on other elements of the Bill, to improve neighbourhood planning, national planning, and cross-boundary arrangements.

Although we believe that the Institute has been frugal in its support for Regional Strategic Planning there is no doubt that it has been successful in influencing some parts of the Localism Bill. It does appear that the Government has accepted the Institute's submission on the duty to co-operate. It also has to be acknowledged that the RTPI's approach has reaped benefits in Government support for the re-birth of Planning Aid England. The Institute's "Briefing Notes to Members of the two Houses of Parliament" on the Localism Bill are articulate, well argued and well presented. I hope the Government appreciates them.

Urban Design is one of those elusive subjects on which we all can comment. I am no different. Indeed my choice of place to live is strongly influenced by its architectural interest. I included Urban Design as one of my themes for the year and one of my ideas was to investigate the possibility of the RTPI promoting local design awards for the sub-regions in addition to its Regional Award. I have been involved in two local awards and I have been obliged to accept that at present our involvement should be limited to our Regional Awards. There are a number of logistical and presentational problems that we need to consider before we could launch a sub-regional award. This is something for the next six months.

At the beginning of the year, one of the areas that the President was keen to see us engage in was support for members of the Institute in these difficult economic times. This was fine since I had already included it among my things to do this year. There has been a presentation to the students of Newcas-

tle University and we have held two events for members, one in Newcastle and one in Darlington. It is difficult to know how useful these types of events are but I found them informative and interesting. If nothing else, I hope it demonstrates the Institute's support for its Members. We do know that some of the people attending the first event have since secured jobs in planning; I hope that we helped them along the way.

One of the few responsibilities I have successfully discharged has been to present the trophies to the winners of what must be the best RTPI football competition in the country. The pace was frantic. It made me tired watching. I had no idea that we had so many decent footballers in the North East Region. We were pleased to welcome a visit from Trudi Elliot, the Institute's new Chief Executive. She visited Teesside and Durham before finishing at the Region's Policy Committee. Localism and Resources, and how they can be reconciled, were amongst the matters discussed.

I do feel that we are all guilty of hiding our light under a bushel. It has recently become even more important for us to tell people about our successes. If you have a good news story, please tell us. Email a copy to [northeast@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:northeast@rtpi.org.uk) and we will circulate it to the local media and publicise it through our website and newsletters. Recently we have had some bad press. We need to balance this with good news. Please help us with some case studies of good practice. I look forward to visiting some of the entries for our regional awards, in the near future.

I have deliberately not mentioned names, mainly because there are so many people that I would like to credit for their commitment to the North East Region that I worry that I might miss someone out. Anyway, thank you all for your contribution. It is appreciated.

**Despite the economic downturn and the loss of planning jobs in the Region the total number of RTPI North East members has held up surprisingly well, falling only slightly from 881 in June 2010 to 873 in June 2011.**

There are however challenges for the RTPI as corporate membership in the Region has declined by 5%. To help counteract this decline the RTPI has been encouraging licentiate membership, and uptake of the licentiate class of membership has increased by 9% over the last year from 113 to 124 members. This trend in increasing licentiate members is reflected nationally with an 11% growth in all licentiates from 2010 to 2011.

Overall RTPI membership has been steadily growing and is now at 23,000. As with many professions the RTPI has an ageing population, and our retired membership increased by 9% in the previous year. Through our policy of expanding planning education, licentiate applications are still on the increase and the Institute is in a strong position to cope with the retirement of our corporate members.

The North East continues to face considerable challenges with the pressures on local government budgets and the downturn in development activity. The RTPI will continue to support planners and members in the Region in this difficult time and the strength of RTPI membership reflects the continued importance and value that the RTPI offers to members, and the value employers see of having RTPI accredited staff.

## PLANNING AID & PAN – Comment by David Stovell, Chair of RTPI NE

The end of March 2011 marked the loss of the highly regarded organisation Planning Aid North – PAN. Energetic and committed local leadership and management had enabled the development of a very successful service to local people, communities and organisations, including Councils. For me to say that it was a matter of very great regret, and a decision of crass stupidity by the Government, to unilaterally and precipitously remove funding is an understatement.

I had been in a position to understand the valuable work that had been done by PAN in community engagement and involvement in planning. Last year I said that I was anxious to investigate extending its service, particularly in the Tees Valley. In the event most of my time in the first half of the year seemed to be involved, with others, in seeking bridging capital to maintain PAN for a year whilst we looked at new funding options. Then, when that was not successful, we submitted, with Graham Garnham our Treasurer, a proposition to the Institute to use some of our Regional Reserves to fund further research into re-launching a PAN service for the Region, under a re-formed Planning Aid England service.

However, things move on. The RTPI has been successful in bidding for finance from the Government under its Neighbourhood Fund for Planning Aid England, at least for the next year. A regional service is to be provided, and we very much welcome the appointment of Chris Anderson (a former staff member of PAN) as Community Outreach Coordinator. We wait to see how matters develop, but it

seems to me that it will be some time (if ever) before the same service previously provided by PAN for the Region will be available again. Our idea last year of extending the PAN service in the Region now seems fanciful, and we will be more than ever dependent on the input of volunteers.

One thing that I did find amusing in the process, which was caught up in the localism agenda, was the instructions from the Institute on the use of words. Amongst others we were advised against using the words “Planning” or “Regional”. These words apparently did not go down too well with influential people in the Government; whilst the bidding process for neighbourhood funds was underway they should be avoided. So, instead of planning we were promoting localism and, instead of regional, we were the north east. In so far as the Institute has been successful in the bidding process the approach has been justified, but really!

Community involvement in the planning process, particularly in regeneration and development, is hardly new. It has been an important part of plan formulation since at least the early 1970’s, when I commenced work. The difficulty has always been to have this involvement properly articulated, particularly in communities where under social stress the community structure has fragmented. PAN had demonstrated the benefit of involving outside professional support to unify communities and focus on objective aspirations in the formulation of plans. It will be missed in this Region. I would like to take this opportunity to offer my thanks to Kevin Lillie, the former PAN manager, and everybody involved in PAN, for the work that they did. I wish Chris Anderson and all the staff of Planning Aid England every success in carrying the torch forward.

## .....and PLANNING AID re-launched

The RTPI has re-launched its Planning Aid service in England (Planning Aid England – PAE), following the announcement of a year long £1m grant from the DCLG. While significantly less than the grant in previous years, the new funding allows the re-launch of a single national Planning Advice Line on **0330 123 9244** or [advice@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk](mailto:advice@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk), where all callers can receive 15 minutes of free, independent and professional advice. In addition, some callers may be eligible for further assistance from a professional volunteer.

A neighbourhood planning service is also underway, to support people and communities in gaining knowledge about the planning system. A team of community planning outreach co-ordinators has been recruited to work within target communities – the Community Outreach Co-ordinator for this region is Chris Anderson, formerly of PAN (Planning Aid North), who can be contacted on [chris.anderson@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk](mailto:chris.anderson@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk). Further information about the neighbourhood planning service is available from 0207 9299453 or [info@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk](mailto:info@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk).

The records of all previous Planning Aid volunteers have automatically been transferred to the new service, but you are welcome to contact them direct if you wish to ensure that you are on their records as a planning aid volunteer. A small, but invaluable, part of this is the launch of a new method of making donations to support the work of PAE – go to <https://mydonate.bt.com/royaltownplanninginstitute>.

# Local Development Frameworks: Progress

## Background

The 2004 Act introduced a new system of local planning: the local development framework. The new legislation called for local authorities to prepare such 'development plan documents' (DPDs – see Terminology) as they felt were needed, and to produce a timetable (local development scheme) for doing so. DPDs could be core strategy, generic policy (development control), site allocation, area action plan or topic based.

### Terminology

LDF	local development framework
DPD	development plan document <i>(i.e., a plan which is a component of the LDF)</i>
AAP	area action plan
LPA	local planning authority
LDS	local development scheme <i>(i.e., programme for plan preparation)</i>

At the time of the change-over only 8 of the 23 LPAs had plans (local or unitary) which had been adopted in the previous 5 years. Five plans were over 7 years old and two were more than 8 years old.

Government intention was to achieve up-to-date coverage: hence the new system would have to be much more rapid than the old one. Dedicated LDF teams would be established, and staffing levels

would need to be significantly increased. DPDs should be submitted within two years and adopted within a further 12 months – ie, by September 2007. Policies in the current local, unitary and structure plans would be 'saved' until then: permission from the Secretary of State would be needed to extend the validity of such policies if timely adoption of DPDs was not achieved.

## First Intentions

The first LDSs included 87 DPDs, or an average of 4.1 per LPA. Two thirds of authorities proposed AAPs: these were for town centres and towns (10 each), and parts of towns (7). One was for new development (a proposal in the Regional Strategy for 'prestige employment').

In terms of timing, all but two of the cores were expected to be submitted by end of 2007. Those two and all but 8 of the projected 87 DPDs were expected to be submitted by end of 2008. Adoption was expected to take on average an additional 15 months.

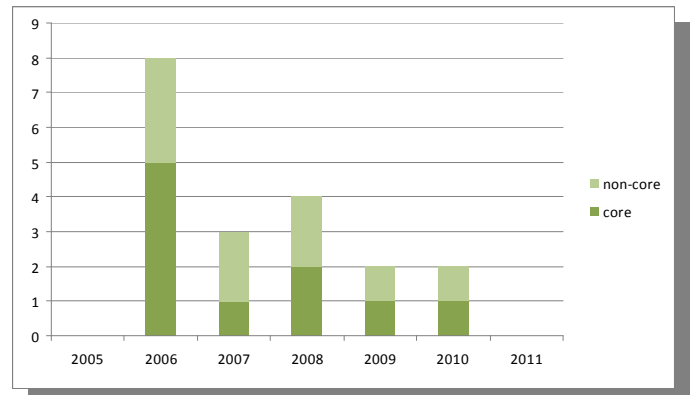
In all but two cases (including Durham city centre AAP) the cores were given highest priority. About half the authorities intended a sequence of core followed by development control and allocation DPDs. Half intended that preparation / submission / adoption of these documents should be simultaneous (though this was in fact never achieved).

## Progress since 2004

The trend in DPD submissions is shown in the chart opposite. Eight documents were submitted in 2006, with much smaller numbers in following years.

## Trend in DPD Submissions

By the end of 2008 (shortly before reorganisation, and four years after commencement), only 15 of the 79 DPDs expected to be submitted by then had in fact been submitted. These in-



cluded 8 of the 24 cores. At the present time, after 6 ½ years work, only a further two core and two non core DPDs have been submitted.

All but one of the DPDs which have been submitted have been found sound and have been adopted. The significant exception is the core for Newcastle: this was withdrawn on the prompting of the inspector, for reasons which included inadequate evidence. A new core is now being prepared. The examination (approval) period has invariably been shorter than expected – averaging 12 months.

Fifty of the 87 intended DPDs have been abandoned. Besides the AAPs and topic DPDs referred to below, many of the development control and allocation DPDs in progress are now being combined with each other and/or with the core. Almost all DPDs which had not been submitted were abandoned when the new unitary councils of Northumberland and Durham were formed in 2009. The explanation given in LDSs for abandoning or combining DPDs is typically that this 'follows Government Office advice'

## AAPs and topic plans

Of the 28 AAPs envisaged in 2005, 5 have been adopted, and work is apparently continuing on 7. Sixteen have been abandoned (15 of these when the two unitary counties were formed). A further 7 AAPs have been proposed since 2005, of which two have been abandoned. All 5 of the adopted AAPs are in depressed areas along the Tyne.

Only a small number of 'topic' DPDs have been proposed (Box 2). Amongst these are minerals and waste plans prepared for 5 Teesside LPAs jointly by consultants, which are the only ones to have reached submission. Several have been added since 2005. Several have been abandoned.

### Topic DPD's

- Minerals and waste (6)
  - Environment (2)
  - Gypsies (2)
  - Waste  
(rural areas)
  - (Heritage)
  - (Green Belt)
  - (Affordable housing)
- DPD's in brackets have been abandoned*

# n the North-East Region by Anthony Coon

## Saved local plan policies

No LDF had been completed by September 2007, so all LPAs requested (and were granted) permission to save previous policies. Since then one LPA (Northumberland National Park) has replaced all its previous local plan policies with adopted DPDs. Two LPAs (Redcar and Cleveland, and Middlesbrough) have deleted all but a small number of local plan policies, and these authorities expect to replace all their local plan policies with adopted DPDs by 2013 and 2014 respectively.

All the other LPAs, including the extensive areas with no adopted core (see map on page 6), still rely substantially or entirely on disembodied local plan policies which have been 'saved'.

Policies have been deleted from the previous plans for reasons other than being superseded by the LDF (See 'Reasons for deleting local plan policies').

**Reasons for deleting local plan policies**

- Policy implemented
- Repetition of national policy
- Conflict with national policy
- Change in legislation
- Change in local policy

*Source: Sunderland LDS 3/09*

The newly-created unitaries indicate the resultant complexity: In Durham the statement of saved policies runs to 365 pages. In Northumberland there are about 1,000 saved policies (these include DPDs by the previous districts).

## Coverage in each of the District

LDF performance may be assessed in terms of how complete and how up to date the coverage is.

DPD Coverage	
Complete LDF	N'land NP
Core + other	Blyth Valley
	Middlesbrough
	Redcar & C.
	Sedgefield
	S. Tyneside
Core only	C. Morpeth
	Alnwick
	Stockton-on-T.
	Tynedale
AAP	Newcastle
No DPD	(13 Districts)

An LDF might be regarded as being 'complete' when all the LDDs the LPA considers necessary have been adopted. An indication of the very varied progress made towards this objective in each of the districts (and former districts) is shown in the map.

One LPA has a complete LDF (in a single DPD). Five LPAs have a core and one or more other DPDs, and four have adopted only the core. One has adopted AAPs. Thirteen areas have not yet adopted any DPD, of which 6 are former districts of County Durham.

Age of plans	
2004	2010
Local/unitary	local/unitary/core
5.4 years	6.6 years
<i>(average age of the most recent adopted plan in all LPAs)</i>	

The average ages of plans in the North East at two dates are compared in Box 5. Despite cores being only the first stage of the LDF, coverage is older (i.e., more out of date) now than it was in 2004.

## Future prospects

The 12 current LPAs are progressing 34 DPDs: half of these were in the original DPSSs, half added later. Likely dates when 'complete' LDF coverage in LPAs might be achieved are difficult to estimate. LDSs are little help here because many are now badly out of date and do not reflect programme slippage.

Full adopted coverage could be achieved by Hartlepool (in a single DPD) and by South Tyneside in 2012. If there are no further upsets, many LPAs could reach this stage by 2014. Several large authorities including Newcastle, Gateshead, Sunderland, Northumberland and Durham appear unlikely to do so before 2015. It is to these 5 LDFs that nearly 60% of new housing is allocated in the regional strategy.

## DPD Review

LDSs repeatedly claim that all matters will be 'kept under review'. Stockton-on-Tees pledges that its DPDs '... will be formally reviewed at least every three [or 5] years'. So far, however, no replacement DPD has been submitted.

If DPDs are to be revised at 5 yearly intervals and if preparation plus adoption take 2 plus 1 years, then reviews need to be programmed in the LDS at the time each document is submitted. Only one LPA (Middlesbrough) has included in its LDS a programme for reviewing its DPDs.

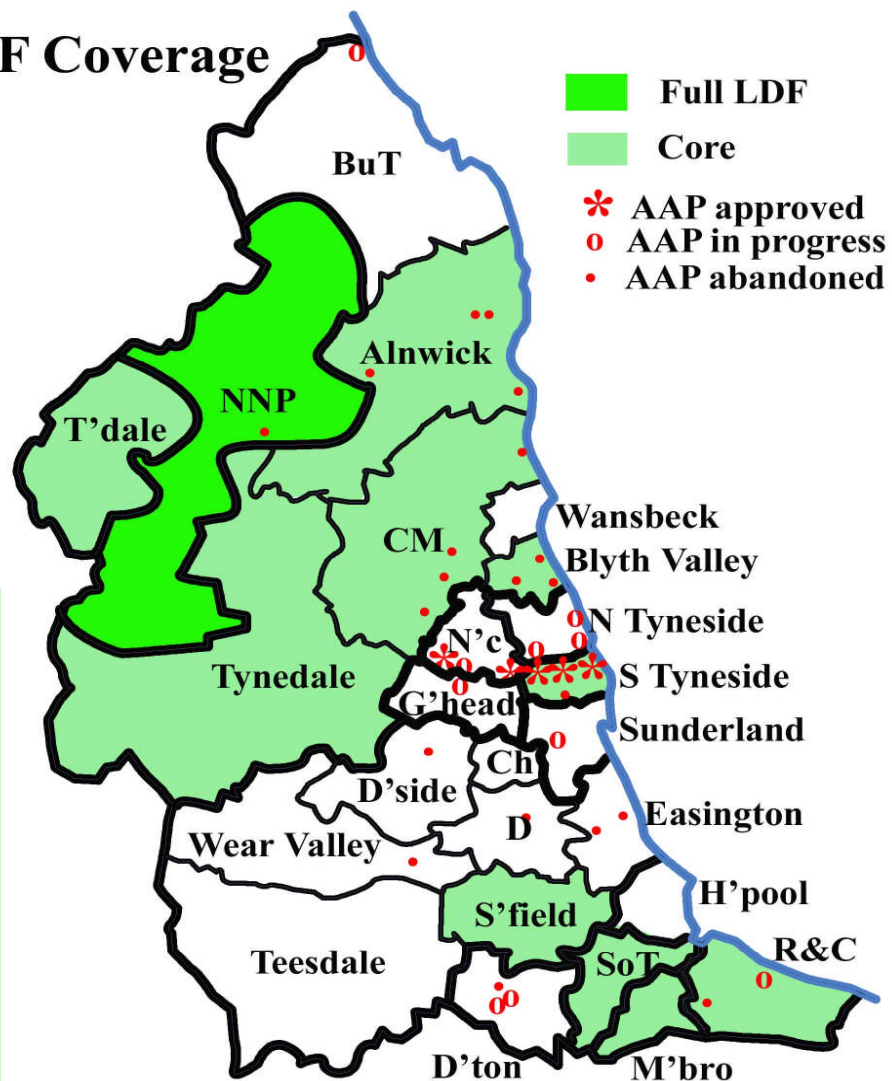
## Conclusions

1. There is a wide variation between LA's in both:
  - the composition of their LDF's in terms of the different types of DPD, and
  - progress in achieving coverage
1. The unitarisation of Northumberland and Durham caused delay both by disruption and by the decisions to prepare unified LDFs rather than to progress the LDFs then under way.
2. Progress since 2004 on achieving LDF coverage has been far slower than either the government or LPAs hoped.
3. Delays have been in preparation, not in examination / adoption.
4. Relatively detailed policies have been put in place in AAPs for a small number of areas with acute planning problems.
5. The crucial and contentious 'allocation' stage has (except for (5) above) hardly been addressed in DPDs yet.
6. At the present time – 6 years after commencement - only one of the 24 original LPAs has 'complete' coverage. A

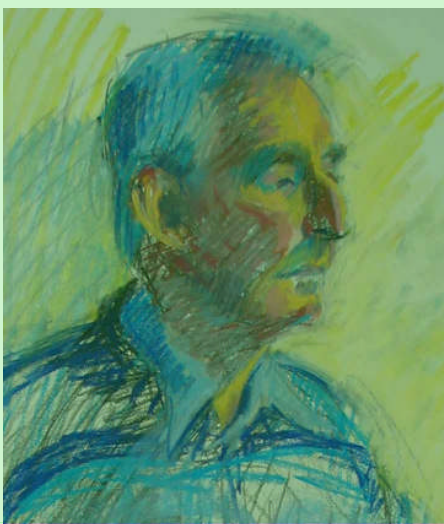
- further 9 have adopted cores. Thirteen have not.
7. core DPD.
  8. The LPA which has achieved most in terms of coverage has a negligible population, while those that have furthest to go include those with the largest populations.
  9. The need to 'save' previous plan policies means that the typical development plan is a bewildering array of policies whose interrelationship is difficult to discern, drawn from numerous plans in different stages of finalization and of differing status, age, spatial coverage and legal basis.
  10. The fitful gestation of the regional strategy over the first four years of the LDF system disturbed the LDF process. However, with the demise of the RS, the lack of a firm regional context will render planning at local level in the future more complex and more contentious
  11. Two other recent trends may further delay LDF progress:
  12. Reduction in staff numbers in planning departments, and Proposals for 'neighbourhood plans'. These come in the wake of dissatisfaction with the local relevance and timeliness of LDFs; a consequence of their introduction will be further loss of confidence in and resources for the LDF.
  13. Full LDF coverage seems very unlikely to be achieved before 2016.
  14. By the time LDFs are 'complete', substantial parts will be out of date.
  15. Widespread dissatisfaction with the multi-document LDF system suggests the need to return to the simplicity of a single document like the previous local plans. Such an approach is also supported by the many cases where LPAs have sought to combine DPDs or to prepare them simultaneously.
  16. The good news is that the North East has performed relatively well in comparison with other regions in terms of DPD submissions and adoptions.

*Anthony Coon is a freelance planner, and a former head of planning at Strathclyde University*

## LDF Coverage



Anthony Coon



### Local Development Frameworks in the North East Region: a Footnote

We are greatly indebted to Anthony Coon for the thorough research which has gone into the preparation of this article, and for his thought-provoking conclusions. The views expressed are, of course, his own, not those of the RTPi. We would be delighted to receive any comments from the local authorities mentioned in the article, or indeed from any other reader. Please address them to [northeast@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:northeast@rtpi.org.uk) headed "Newsletter". In addition, Anthony would be happy to receive queries or comments on the sources of the data used for the article: he can be contacted on [Anthony@anthonycoon.co.uk](mailto:Anthony@anthonycoon.co.uk)

## RTPI North East Careers Event RTPI North East Careers Event RTPI North East Careers Event

Andrew Dorrian reports that the first RTPI North East Careers Support Workshop was a resounding success. 20 people attended the seminar at Newcastle University in April, hearing about methods of finding future employment and learning the skills job-seekers should apply.

A mixture of postgraduate students and those looking to diversify their careers heard a presentation by Chris Sheridan, the RTPI's Planners in the Workplace (PiWP) Manager, who introduced the support that the RTPI provide. The RTPI provide a wealth of resources on their website, including advice towards setting up in private practice, alongside links to other organisations including Business Link, to provide information on the financial elements of running a business. The Independent Consultants is a network that can help freelance consultants establish themselves.

Jos Harrison (University Careers Service)

delivered a talk about the skills that planners should have when seeking employment. In the current climate it is important to sell your skills to the employer and let them know why they should employ you and the frequently feared question, why you want to work for that organisation. Presentation is extremely important at all stages of the application process, as employers look to 'weed' out candidates, therefore punctuation and grammar may no longer be minor errors in the process. Further information about CV's and Application Forms alongside all other aspects of applying for jobs can be found on the Newcastle University Careers Service website and at [Prospec.ac.uk](http://Prospec.ac.uk).

The two presentations were followed by a panel discussion, Chris and Jos were joined by David Stovell (RTPI NE Chair, David Stovell and Millwater), Chris Clarke (RTPI M&PR Officer), Joe Ridgeon (RTPI NE Junior Vice Chair, George F

White) and Scott Gibson (Freelance Consultant and Urban Design student). The insightful discussion hinted that jobs are available but that many are not being advertised. Job-seekers should go that extra mile to find work. Networking is key, join in with the activities of the RTPI in the North East and especially the North East Young Planners.

The seminar provided an appreciated positive outlook on the jobs market. If planners can market their skills, build up a network of contacts, apply directly to certain employers, and find niches in the market where their skills could fit the gap, then they can ultimately boost their chances of finding work. Fortunately we know that at least two people who attended the workshop went on to successfully get work in planning!

A similar workshop was held in Darlington in May. We are particularly grateful to Chris Sheridan for visiting the region twice in such a short time.



After the abolition of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and the axe of Coalition cuts leading to redundancy from the Regional Planning Body, it was disheartening to enter such a bleak job market so soon after completing my Diploma in Town Planning.

The difficulties shared by many of my peers, such as high competition for so few jobs, together with the frustrations of applying for job vacancies that were subsequently pulled could be demoralising. However, I was optimistic that there were still jobs available that, despite not being direct town planning officer roles, were still highly relevant to planning.

Being interested in housing regeneration and sustainable development I continued to widen my search and soon landed a job with Eaga Plc (now Carillion Energy Services) working on the Community Energy Savings Programme (CESP).

CESP is a Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) initiative, monitored by Ofgem to improve energy efficiency standards across England, Scotland and Wales. The intention of the scheme is to drive the installation of multiple measures into a home, covering a high number of properties in an area. CESP is an area based scheme targeting areas with the highest level of low income housing, according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). Any domestic property, regardless of tenure or occupant, in the lowest 10% IMD in England and lowest 15% in Scotland & Wales is eligible.

There are numerous qualifying measures under the CESP scheme, to include but not limited to; replace-

ment of G-rated boilers; cavity wall insulation; loft insulation; district heating systems; solar PV; and double glazing and Carillion Energy Services currently has over £40 million of funding for such schemes.

Despite initial concerns that the role was not a direct or traditional planning role, I am now confident that it is developing my professional skills and knowledge in a range of areas, specifically around sustainable development. Working for a private company to deliver a Government initiative requiring direct contact with Local Authorities (LAs) and Social Housing Providers (SHPs), I am gaining first hand experience of the working relationships between the public and private sectors.

I am also developing skills and knowledge around funding streams available to LAs, and how these can be utilised to improve spaces and areas. Furthermore, my planning policy knowledge has proved useful for the development of CESP projects, such as an understanding of the New Homes Bonus. Here, LAs can realise dual benefits from CESP funding, whereby measures installed using CESP funding to improve housing stock can lead to void properties being brought back into use, and thus the LA can benefit from the New Homes Bonus. Experience within this area will also prove useful for the forthcoming Green Deal.

All in all, I feel that in light of so many public sector cuts, working out of the mainstream of LA planning departments or consultancies can certainly be the silver lining; enabling planners to develop their skills in a wider range of relevant areas that will in no doubt be valuable in a new era of planning.

More information on CESP can be gained from: [CESP@carillionplc.com](mailto:CESP@carillionplc.com)

Looking for a job — a case study by Jennifer Nye

## MORE HONOURS



Following the award of an OBE to Caroline Burden in the New Year Honours List, two further RTPI NE members were included in the Queen's Birthday Honours List in June.

Alan Clarke, the Chief Executive of One North East, was awarded the CBE in the recent Honours List, for his services to economic development and the regeneration of

North East England. Alan himself comments: "I was surprised but overjoyed when I got the letter and celebrated with my family. I must say that the award not only recognises my efforts but also those of colleagues I have been fortunate enough to have worked with over the years, with our partners in the region and particularly hear at the RDA."

Alan holds a Degree in Economics, along with a Mas-

ter's Degree in Civic Design (Town Planning), and is a long-time Member of the Royal Town Planning Institute. He spent his early career in planning and economic development, arriving in the region in 1977 to work for South Tyneside Council, before moving to Newcastle City Council and then Sunderland City Council, where he became Assistant Chief Executive in 1995. In February 2000 he joined Northumberland County Council as Chief Executive, before moving to One North East as Chief Executive in May 2003.

Few, if any, Members of RTPI NE can boast of such a distinguished career, and it is a great credit to Alan that his achievements have been recognised in this way at a time when RDA's are hardly "flavour of the month" in government circles!

Finally, James (Jim) Johnson, Director of Tees Valley Living, was awarded the MBE, for services to the housing sector in the North East. Tees Valley Living is the partnership set up in 2003 to lead and co-ordinate housing market renewal in the Tees Valley. Jim is well known to planners in the region, not least through his regular support for RTPI NE CPD events.

## My route to Technical Membership of the RTPI

***Congratulations to Liz Donaldson for becoming one of the first people in the region to achieve Technical Membership of the RTPI! We thought that her experiences of the system might be of interest to others: several of her points could apply equally to licentiates seeking full corporate membership. Amongst the lessons that she has learned the hard way are "take advantage of all the advice and help that you can get" and "if at first you don't succeed,.....!"***

As my ten year milestone in planning was getting closer, my thoughts turned to the long-awaited opportunity to apply for technical membership of the RTPI, and to gain recognition for my contribution to the planning system.

I checked the RTPI website for details on how to apply via Route 2 and obtained the necessary forms. The forms were frustrating, as you could not save your work on line, so I found the best way was to print off the forms, complete by hand, then type back onto the forms and print again. It took quite a lot of time and thought to fill in the different sections covering all my experience.

As I had held several posts in planning, it was necessary for a number of people to corroborate my



roles and responsibilities. Despite a large turnover of staff in my department, I managed to find someone who could back me in each role.

Finally I had to give a synopsis of the assignment I intended to submit.

With fingers crossed I sent my form away in October 2010. In Novem-

ber I received a letter informing me that my synopsis was insufficient and I was given guidance on what was expected from me. At the beginning of the year my new synopsis was approved and I submitted my assignment in February.

Silence prevailed. As I had heard nothing back I e-mailed the Institute but received no reply. However, over a Burger King in Newcastle Central Station with Charles Veal, I explained my concerns and Charles agreed to look into my application.

Charles came straight back to inform me that my application was going before the Membership Panel on 15 April and the rest is history .....

**Liz Donaldson**



# rtpiRTPINewsnews

## Anger over Pilot Planning Scheme

According to the "Hexham Courant", Allendale Parish Council is "furious" after "being left holding a baby conceived by two other bodies." The baby concerned is none other than the pilot Front Runner Neighbourhood Plan for Allendale, intended to test out the government proposals now going through Parliament as part of the Localism Bill. The controversial proposal to draw up a Neighbourhood Plan for Allendale was put forward by Northumberland County Council at the request of small community group Sustainable Allendale, but the latter has now stated that it wishes to take a step back and let the Parish Council take the lead in the project.

However Parish Councillors are reluctant to take up the challenge. The Parish Council Chairman has said "I don't want Allendale to come up in a Google search under "How not to do planning"", while the County Council's Head of Development Services has "admitted that planning officers had a lot of reservations about the project....We are very short of resources and not where we want to be at the moment."

## Plaque to Honour Murdered Planner is Moved

The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the murder of Derwentside District council planning officer Harry Collinson was marked recently by the removal of a commemorative plaque from Consett Civic Centre (which is to be demolished) and its re-dedication in a new location in Durham County Hall. The ceremony was attended by Harry's niece, Lisa Foster, and a large group of fellow RTPI members and former colleagues, many of whom remember him fondly.

Durham County Council chairman Councillor Dennis Morgan said: "It was a day that rocked the very fabric of local government and will be etched in many people's memories for all time. I am pleased that so many of Harry's colleagues are with us today, with Lisa Foster and her husband Neil – our thoughts and prayers are with you and the family."

The incident was particularly distressing in that it took place live on television, as Harry was shot dead as he carried out enforcement duties on an unauthorised structure in June 1991. Albert Dryden was sentenced to life imprisonment for the killing, and for wounding a policeman and a BBC journalist in the same incident. Harry is also commemorated in a nature reserve and woodland in the Derwent Valley, purchased to mark his special interest in nature conservation and the environment.

## The Hub

The Hub, an eco-friendly youth centre in Barnard Castle which was the winner of last year's Chair's Award in the RTPI NE Regional Awards Scheme, has won both the Project of the Year and the Legacy Award for Sustainability in this year's Constructing Excellence Awards. The four North

East winners of this year's RIBA awards have also been announced: they are Knop Law Primary School in Newcastle, the Pasmore Apollo Pavillion, Peterlee, Millfield House Visitor Centre, Jesmond Dene, and 55/02, Kielder, Northumberland.

## Heritage Award for Coatsworth Road

One of Gateshead's oldest shopping streets is to step back in time, thanks to earmarked support of £1.4m from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Gateshead Council is the only local authority in the North East of England to secure initial support from the latest round of the Heritage Lottery Fund's Townscape Heritage Initiative. The work will involve public realm improvements and the restoration of some of the original Victorian shop fronts.

## RIBA North East to host Regional Design Review Service

RIBA North East has announced that it is to join with Places Matter! (a brand developed by RIBA North West) to manage the North East Regional Design and Enabling Service, having been selected by the Design Council and CABE (which have recently merged) to manage a new contract funded by the Department of Communities and Local Government. The Regional Design Review Service was set up by One North East in May 2009, but came to an end at the start of this year. For further information contact [jim@placesmatter.co.uk](mailto:jim@placesmatter.co.uk).

## Office move for England & Lyle

Darlington based planning consultancy England & Lyle Ltd have moved into new premises in Coniscliffe Road, after 7 years at Morton Park. Jeremy Good, Director, said "We are pleased to move into our own building, which gives us greater control of our affairs and improved accessibility for many of our clients."

## Green Infrastructure

The last edition of Green Infrastructure Update (in its present form) can be accessed via [www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/GIUpdate\\_tcm6-11962.pdf](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/GIUpdate_tcm6-11962.pdf). The issue includes a discussion of what the future may hold for Green Infrastructure.

## We Need E-Mail Addresses!

Over the last year many planners have moved office, retired or otherwise acquired a new email address. If you want to be notified individually that a new electronic newsletter has just been published, and receive up-to-the minute information on RTPI CPD opportunities, or other RTPI News, then **you must ensure that the RTPI has got your latest, preferred e-mail address AND your explicit permission that we can use it for sending you RTPI communications.**

If you have not done so already, make sure that Kay in the regional office has got your up-to-date email contact details and address by emailing her at [north-east@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:north-east@rtpi.org.uk) and confirm your new details with HQ by emailing [membership@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:membership@rtpi.org.uk).