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### **⊘** EDITORIAL

IT'S AUGUST AND the Edinburgh Festivals are in full swing, bringing colour, busy-ness and creativity to the city – plus a whole lot of people: visitors, crew, creators, journalists etc. The amazing variety of performance, culture, art and literature all happening in the same place at the same time is really a marvel. I get such a buzz from seeing it all – whether it's folks in outlandish costumes, street performers magicking pineapples from bowler hats or someone handing out imaginary flyers on the Royal Mile.

I get the same buzz from hearing about inspirational planners doing amazing projects, writing ambitious plans and using innovative approaches to do planning better and plan better places. So, consider this issue of the Scottish Planner a festival of planning, bringing together creativity, leadership and vision from the Scottish planning sector. There are no magicians in here, but there is a lot of talent and hard work, collaboration and flair. As always. positive stories about planning deserve to be amplified, so if you are inspired by what you read in this issue, please share that with others. It might be a bit much to expect a festival style performance as a means of doing that - but if you want to do an interpretive dance at the Chapter Summer Social, then go for it!

#### Dr Caroline Brown

RTPI Director for Scotland and Ireland

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LAURA ROBERTSON MRTPI, RTPI Scotland Convenor, Senior Planner at Aberdeen City Council

## Collaboration and Innovation: Celebrating Planning Excellence

This edition of the Scottish Planner affords us a brilliant opportunity to recognise the exceptional people in planning and the collaborative projects and plans across Scotland that achieved success at this year's RTPI Scotland Awards for Planning Excellence. So let's get started...



his is always one of my favourite times of the year, with the awards a chance to celebrate winners, commendations and all things planning. This year's awards took place in the Grassmarket Community Project with a lovely event full of planning chat and plenty of catching up with each other. I love the awards - it gives planners the opportunity to show off their amazing work and achievements they have made and help highlight the difference that we as planners make to projects, spaces and communities. It is a testament to our excellence that the judges highlighted how difficult it was to choose winners, since they were all exceptional in their own right.

For me, the collaboration within the projects and plans is key to their success and shines through in the prize winners, a key example being the Water Row Masterplan, which looks to rejuvenate Govan and connect its town centre back to the river. This saw Glasgow City Council. Govan Housing Association and Central Govan Action Plan work together to help put Govan 'back on the map' with a transformative waterfront regeneration project. The overall winner was the Edinburgh Futures Institute, again delivered with fantastic collaboration, allowing for the sensitive conversion of this historic asset as part of a wider masterplan and regeneration of the former Royal Infirmary. The planning team behind the EFI clearly loved working on the project, with their passion and heart contributing to an innovative, flexible, and now award-winning learning and conference facility.

Meanwhile, the Highland Council's Flow Country World Heritage Site achieved Best Plan thanks to their Planning Position Statement and Heritage Impact Assessment



toolkit, which they developed to help guide decisions in an ecologically significant and complex environment – a highly innovative approach given the lack of precedent available.

Finally, the 'people' prizes went to
City of Edinburgh Council, who won local
authority of the year, and Rim Chouaib
winning Young Planner of the Year – an
award that is well earned. All of the winners
and commendations were well deserved,
and a great event was enjoyed by all. I am
hopeful that those moving onto the National
Awards will do well and bring some awards
back to Scotland! SP

"I love the awards –
it gives planners the
opportunity to show off
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spaces and communities."

### **ARTICLE**



DR. ANDREW HOOLACHAN MRTPI FRSA, Lecturer in Urban and Regional Planning and MSc City Planning Programme Director at the University of Glasgow

### **ARTICLE**

# Learning in the rain: Planning for everyday life in Glasgow

**Dr. Andrew Hoolachan MRTPI FRSA,** Lecturer in Urban and Regional Planning and MSc City Planning Programme Director at the University of Glasgow, examines Glasgow citizens' everyday experience with their wet climate, and how novel methods can identify new approaches for not just managing, but living with rain in Britain's wettest city.

with 1370mm per annum, some 80% greater than nearby Edinburgh which receives only 727mm. Evidence of this wet climate is all around us. In summer, luminous green plant life bursts from the seams of stone walls, while city parks feel like rainforests, reflected in Guy Shrubsole's book *The Lost Rainforests of Britain,* which shows that Glasgow sits right on the edge of Temperate Rainforest biozone. In winter, large puddles gather for weeks at a time, almost becoming

a natural feature of the urban environment.

lasgow is Britain's wettest city,

The impacts of rain in our urban environment affect us profoundly. It shapes our moods, how we get around, disrupts or modifies our plans, and determines the uses of public spaces. Considering all of this, Glasgow's distinctively wet climate has until now not been fully considered within planning policy. In a research project funded by the RTPI's Early Career Research Grant, I wanted to understand the disconnection between existing planning policy in Glasgow and everyday life as it is experienced by its citizens in the context of Glasgow's wet climate. I then wanted to find areas of opportunity, where the planning system could acknowledge, enhance and even celebrate rain, to contribute to a better quality of life for the population of Glasgow.

Today there is international best practice in managing excess surface water in cities using

Sustainable Urban Drainage systems (SUDs). These seek to soak up and slow down excess water flow and contribute to better air quality, increased biodiversity, and cooling the heat island effect of cities. In my research I wanted to go beyond this approach of 'managing rain' to consider how cities truly 'live' with rain. From this perspective I was interested in how the ordinary, everyday lives of people in cities are affected by a wet climate, and how the planning system can shape and influence the urban spaces which people inhabit.

"I wanted to understand the disconnection between existing planning policy in Glasgow and everyday life as it is experienced by its citizens in the context of Glasgow's wet climate."

To do this, I applied a novel methodology that sought to more accurately capture the feelings, moods, sensations and experiences of people in their daily lives. I asked participants to record a 3 minute 'rain diary' of a single day in the rain using WhatsApp. In addition, I conducted three 'rainwalks' with groups of



participants – a 20-minute walk during the rain while recording our conversations and observations. Such a methodology is a far better way to both engage with and capture authentic experiences of participants than traditional interview or survey methods. It also revealed hyper-local, granular problems in the urban environment that are frequently missed by traditional methods.

To compare lived reality with policy and practice, we undertook both a broad international scan of wet cities around the world, as well as a deep-dive analysis of Glasgow's planning system. We created a qualitative matrix that looked at the relative strength of 'living with rain' across three policy domains: the planning system, the built environment, and socio-cultural practices. Within the domain of the planning system, we evaluated policy frameworks, spatial strategies, development processes, and enhanced planning and design guidance. Within the built environment, we considered active travel plans or initiatives, public realm design, and any innovative developments or projects that specifically consider local climate conditions. The third domain, socio-cultural practices, we considered local customs and culture related to wet weather, tourism, public art and general rain awareness in the public consciousness.

Within Glasgow, we found that the city does attempt to manage rain through its Avenues project, the Smart Canal and the sustainable





drainage in large housing estates as part of the Metropolitan Glasgow Strategic Drainage Partnership. Its strengths were in its Golden Z plan for the city centre which acknowledges rain in many places. However, we deduced that planning for rain in Glasgow is largely contained to single projects and there is a lack of a comprehensive 'living with rain' approach across planning policy and guidance.

Our research participants' responses centred on four key aspects of urban life that the planning and development system could meaningfully influence. These were: public space, threshold spaces, active travel and public transport. Participants noted that many public spaces lacked shelter from the rain or were poorly lit. This included outdoor gyms, playgrounds, benches, and some bus stops. Participants noted that Glasgow lacked consideration of threshold spaces - those spaces that transition us from outside to inside - and called for spaces to dry off and get warm when entering buildings. However, it was public and active travel in Glasgow that elicited the greatest feelings among participants. At bus stops for example, one participant noted how the tarmac warps due to the weight of the busses, forming a deep puddle in the rain. When the bus arrives, everyone gets splashed and there's no space for them in the bus stop to stand far enough from being splashed.

For pedestrians the 'drowned crossing' was a very common hazard, whereby a

"Despite the negatives, many participants noted that they like being outside in the rain, depending on the severity, noting the fresh air and smells it creates."

pedestrian crossing is perennially under water. Owing to Glasgow's insistence on guardrails at crossings, it is often impossible to avoid crossing without stepping into the large puddle. This is clearly a hazard for everyone but will be heightened for those with physical impairments. Despite the negatives, many participants noted that they like being outside in the rain, depending on the severity, noting the fresh air and smells it creates. And several noted that the rain would not discourage them from cycling, thus a reminder that Glasgow isn't 'too wet' to adopt active travel. These experiences of everyday life were then linked to existing policy practice to help us generate specific policy and practice interventions.

- Our recommendations were grouped into:
- Enhanced planning policy guidance for living with rain
- · Holistic and proactive management and

maintenance of Glasgow's streets.

- Retrofitting the built environment for rain.
- Culture change, citizen engagement and data collection.
- Public art projects.
- · Tourism and business campaigns.

Upon reading the report, councillor Baillie Paul McCabe (SNP) brought adopting a 'living with rain' motion to Glasgow City Council in May 2024 where the motion passed. This means Glasgow City Council will now adopt such an approach to its planning policies, which is perfectly timed to coincide with its upcoming 2027 Local Development Plan.

City Planning education at the University of Glasgow is being revitalised this year and we are committed to research-led teaching that can have relevance for practice. As such, I look forward to using the research methods and analysis here in training future planners. Specifically, it will be used to inform how embodied practices such as walking methods and sound recordings can be used to evaluate both urban space and planning policy. This was in fact the dissertation of Tilly Mason, a brilliant dissertation student of mine who in 2024 evaluated Glasgow's planning policy CPD1: Placemaking Principle using walking and sound recording, which she called 'sonic geographies'. Indeed, in the words of Jane Jacobs, to understand 'real cities', we must pay attention to our senses and 'listen, linger and think about what we see' - especially in the rain. SP

### **ARTICLE**

## Meet our Future Planners:

## 2025 Bursary Recipients

In 2024. RTPI Scotland secured funding from the Scottish Government to grant bursaries to ten planning students in Scotland. Katie Mackenzie, Joseph Ashmore and Kirsty **Hood.** Bursary Recipients at the University of Glasgow. discuss their experience of studying planning, and how the bursary is helping them to prepare for their future careers.

#### What prompted you to study planning?

KATIE - My interest in planning began during my final year of undergraduate study when I was learning about the development of sustainable cities. This was where I began to truly understand the impact of planning and how it shapes communities. After graduating. I travelled to various cities, which gave me firsthand insight into how much urban planning influences daily life. I realised that going on to study and having a career in planning would give me the opportunity to have a positive and meaningful impact within local communities and cities.



JOSEPH - I initially came into contact with the planning system during my first post-graduate job, as a caseworker for my local MP. As part of my role in answering constituent enquiries on a range of issues, I dealt with a number of cases related to planning enquiries, upcoming developments and controversial proposals. I became absolutely fascinated with the idea of being able to contribute to how places look, feel and work. Since my MP wasn't standing for re-election, I knew I would need to find something new and took the opportunity to formally study planning and find my place in a new sector.

KIRSTY - My first degree was in history. so I've always been drawn to heritage. place, and the attachments people have with where they live, work, and play. Before returning to study, I worked in community events programming and operations management. It was fast paced and a lot of fun, but the pandemic shifted my thinking about my career. One day during lockdown, whilst making sneaky sandcastles in a golf bunker with my then two-vear-old. I reflected on how I wanted to help create more lasting, meaningful change for communities beyond temporary events. Planning brings together my interests and experience and offers the chance to do exactly that.

#### What have you gained (or achieved) so far since commencing your studies?

KATIE - Since beginning my studies. I have gained a deeper understanding of different planning theories and different planning systems. This has allowed me to have a more comprehensive view on how planning works in practice. During this time, I have had the opportunity to connect with experienced planners and learn from their insights and advice. I have had the time to go out and do site visits which have helped me with the understanding of development processes which was something I was not familiar with before studying.

JOSEPH - Through both theory and practical assignments, I've gained an excellent insight into the world of planning, and an appreciation for the importance of collaboration and community engagement in creating highquality spaces. I've particularly enjoyed my chosen pathway of urban conservation, which has given me a new perspective on the role that heritage assets play in planning, particularly when the value of a place is found not only in its architectural or historical significance, but also in its intangible qualities. such as emotional or spiritual.

Besides studying hard, I'm also proud to have been a part of the University of Glasgow's

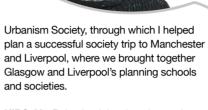
"I'm looking forward to with improving how people

Joseph Ashmore



excellent insight into the world of planning"

Joseph Ashmore



KIRSTY - Being back in a learning environment. with access to the resources of the University of Glasgow library, has felt like a real gift. I've been able to take deep dives into regeneration, governance, and community empowerment - examining theory and connecting it to realworld examples in Scotland and beyond. Insight from tutors and the diverse perspectives of fellow students have challenged and expanded my thinking about how people engage with their built environment. I've also developed digital and collaborative skills that I'm already putting into practice in both work and study.

"Planning has the people live and feel in their proud of where they genuinely included in

**Kirsty Hood** 

## How has the bursary helped

KATIE - The bursary has been a massive help to me, has taken away the financial stress and allowed me to reduce my working hours, enabling me to focus more on my studies. Additionally, it has provided me with opportunities to attend RTPI planning events and help me connect with a valuable network of professionals who are always willing to offer advice and guidance.

JOSEPH - Receiving the bursary has been instrumental in allowing me to make a career change at this stage in my life. It has meant that I've been able to fully focus on my studies and take full advantage of my Master's experience, as well as allowing me the opportunity to take part in RTPI events and networking sessions. Through sponsored places at the RTPI Scotland Annual Conference and SYPN Conference I've had the chance to speak to planning professionals from all backgrounds and learn about the countless directions in which planning can take you, which has given me a real sense of excitement for my career.

KIRSTY - The bursary has made a real positive difference over the past year. Financially, it has helped cover some childcare costs and contributed towards course fees. Just as importantly, it has connected me with the wider planning community through RTPI events, conversations with practitioners, and the realisation that people come into planning from all walks of life. It's reassuring to know there's no single 'correct' path into the profession, and the openness and support I've encountered have been encouraging. The bursary has been a real practical boost and a vote of confidence in my existing skill set and my decision to pursue a career in planning.

# What are your hopes for your future planning

KATIE - My hope is to secure a role that allows me to grow and learn from experienced professionals in the field. I look forward to developing my skills further applying the theories I have learned into practice and help contribute to making effective, well-informed planning decisions that positively impact local communities, helping places become more inclusive and sustainable.

JOSEPH - I'm excited to graduate and find my first planning job - I hope to get a range of experience and hopefully find my planning niche. I'm looking forward to getting directly involved with improving how people experience the places in which they live, work me firsthand insight into in planning would give me positive and meaningful communities and cities."

Katie Mackenzie

and relax, and hope that my work can make a positive difference. Overall, I want to contribute to and highlight the good work that planners do by helping to address some of the key challenges - whether economic, environmental or housing related - that Scotland faces.

"I have gained a deeper understanding of different planning theories and systems"

Katie Mackenzie

KIRSTY - I hope to work in local government, where I can bring all my interests together, ideally through supporting community centred regeneration projects and community ownership. Additionally, I'm interested in heritage, play and intergenerational design: how public spaces can work for everyone from toddlers to older adults, creating a sense of identity and connections across age groups. Planning has the potential to shape how people live and feel in their environments. I want to help communities feel proud of where they are, and ensure they're genuinely included in shaping what comes next. SP

### **ARTICLE**



JONATHAN MCQUILLAN, Director at Anderson Bell + Christie

## Net Zero Placemaking: A Collective Opportunity for Scotland's Future

**Jonathan McQuillan,** Director at Anderson Bell + Christie, introduces the Balance White Paper which was launched earlier this year, and which explores the holistic application of net zero principles across Scotland

few years ago, we found ourselves increasingly frustrated by the narrow lens through which "net zero" in the built environment was viewed. Too often, the focus was limited to individual buildings, disconnected from the wider spatial, social, and ecological systems they inhabit. We asked ourselves: How can we expand the scope of net zero? What would net zero placemaking look like in practice?

Around the same time, National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) posed similar questions. We took this as a timely call to action.

#### From Question to Action

We partnered with the University of Strathclyde, supported by Innovate UK and Scottish Enterprise, to investigate how Scotland might apply net zero principles more holistically. The result of this work is our White Paper, Balance, launched this spring with support from the RTPI and RIAS.

Balance links the aims of NPF4 with hard data on place-based emissions and sequestration. It recognises that even in 2045, residual embodied carbon will remain in the built environment – but crucially, it shows how this can be addressed locally through urban greening. By doing so, we can calculate the carbon balance of a place, demonstrating how net zero can be delivered spatially, not just technically.

#### **Opportunities for Urban Greening**

A key finding of our research is that there is sufficient space between buildings—without using developable land – to sequester this residual carbon. This opens up a transformative opportunity to use nature as infrastructure in service of both climate and community.



"Net zero placemaking is within reach – but only if we act now, together."

Greening the built environment delivers a cascade of co-benefits:

- Reducing the urban heat island effect
- Lowering energy demand in adjacent buildings
- Mitigating flood risk through improved permeability
- · Supporting urban biodiversity
- Enhancing air quality and promoting biophilic wellbeing

These are not side benefits—they are core to the creation of high-quality places and the delivery of a community wealth building agenda.

#### A Call for Collaboration

Achieving this vision requires urgent and sustained collaboration across the built environment. With 20 years to go until Scotland's net zero target, the window to act is open-but narrowing. We need action from every part of the sector: Policy makers, to establish enabling legislation and incentives. Building standards, that drive down embodied carbon. Designers, to prioritise reuse and design for deconstruction. Suppliers, to offer scalable economy solutions. Contractors. to adapt business models and methods. Planners, to embed urban greening into LDPs. Aboriculturalists, to document, monitor and manage urban trees. And educators and technologists, to support new skills and tools.

Our Balance White Paper is intended not as a conclusion, but a beginning – a shared blueprint for net zero placemaking.

#### **Planners: Leading the Way**

Local Authority planners have a crucial role. Local Development Plans that will be in effect in 2045 are being written today, carrying a statutory obligation to support net zero – and *Balance* demonstrates how this can be done at the place scale.

#### **Communities at the Centre**

Perhaps the most immediate opportunity is to engage communities in shaping net zero places. Future development must be co-created with local people, and the transition to net zero must deliver direct, visible, and meaningful improvements to daily life.

The Balance approach can underpin datainformed conversations between planners and communities. These dialogues empower residents to shape their local environment – and contribute to Scotland's broader goals around climate justice, health, and prosperity.

#### **Looking Ahead**

Net zero placemaking is within reach – but only if we act now, together. With clear guidance, coordinated effort, and the right tools, Scotland can lead the way in building climateresilient, healthy, and vibrant places for future generations.

The work begins today. Let's build the future – together. SP

For more information please visit our website to read the <u>Balance White Paper</u>

## (Q) PODLICIOUS

## Recommended podcasts for planners. Ep 3 by Dr Caroline Brown, RTPI Director of Scotland and Ireland.

For this episode of Podlicious, I'm delving into soft skills, inspired in the main by the Scottish Government's Listen-up podcast series.



As part of her work on the national planning skills commitment plan, Susie Stirling has been in conversation with 4 different practitioners about their work and about leadership. The guests are: Johanna Boyd (Planning Aid Scotland), Karen

Anderson (RIAS), Helena Huws (Network Rail) and Dr Ombretta Romice (Glasgow University). The podcasts are hosted on the Our Place website, sitting alongside all of the other resources and tools available to support place-making in Scotland. I love the intention of the podcast, sharing the stories of people in different roles and at different stages of their career. It's always illuminating to hear about career journeys and I loved the way Susie brought the conversations around to lessons for others. Short and sweet – highly recommend. Listen-Up!



With leadership as the starting point, an obvious place to go next is Brené Brown. If you haven't come across her, she's worth looking up because all of her work is underpinned by academic research – and she has written and spoken about

many different aspects of management and leadership. I particularly enjoyed an episode of her <u>Dare to Lead podcast</u> in which she talks to Dr Linda Hill about digitally mature organisations. Whilst the focus is not on planning, some of the insights are definitely relevant to the work happening on digital planning. Brown's back catalogue is also worth delving into and I've got an episode on <u>inclusivity in the workplace</u> lined up in my listening queue.



Another favourite series for me is the Squiggly Career podcast which has weekly episodes on all aspects of professional life – my pick here is about mentoring, which they discuss in Episode 210. They discuss various aspects of mentoring and set

out a series of tips for new and experienced mentors. You might know that the RTPI has a mentoring scheme and if you are interested in mentoring or being mentored, then please do have a look at our website: RTPI | RTPI's career development mentoring programme



Finally – public speaking! Lots of people find public speaking difficult – even accomplished presenters – and it's definitely a skill that can be developed. If that's something that resonates, then my next recommendation is Viv Groskop's How to Own the

Room podcast and accompanying book. Groskop talks to lots of well-known women about confidence and public speaking and her interviewees include Hillary Clinton, Sophie Ellis-Bextor and Mary Beard. I particularly like Series 19 episodes 1-6 which are styled as masterclasses in public speaking covering knowing what to say, how to prepare and how to be confident.

Happy listening!



### **MARTICLE**



CLARE MACDONALD MRTPI, Senior Planning Officer at the City of Edinburgh Council







# From Dereliction to Design and Planning Excellence:



# Creating the Edinburgh Futures Institute

Clare Macdonald MRTPI, Senior Planning Officer at the City of Edinburgh Council recounts the challenges, efforts and innovative solutions that went into transforming the former Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh building into the Edinburgh Futures Institute, winner of the Overall RTPI Scotland Award for Planning Excellence 2025.



he Edinburgh Futures Institute (EFI) is a heavily tech-enabled, adaptable, state-of-the-art learning facility for the

University of Edinburgh that supports agile and innovative working across diverse disciplines. The facility also provides a high-quality conference space, flexible enough to service many diverse types of internal and external events from dinners and lectures to Festival/Fringe performances etc.

As a relatively young planner in 2002, I first dealt with the proposed conversion of this building - the category A listed former Surgical Hospital of the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh (RIE) - as part of a series of applications for listed building consent to convert the historic buildings of the RIE to housing. I worked alongside my colleague, Barbara Cummings, who dealt with the associated planning application for the Quartermile development, which has since become a vibrant part of the city. However. despite the approval of a scheme to convert the Surgical Hospital to a 220-bedroom hotel this flagship building of the RIE was never implemented, nor was a 2005 proposal for conversion to 174 dwellings with leisure and retail uses.

In December 2015, after years of this splendid building sitting vacant, it came

as great news to us in Planning that the University of Edinburgh had purchased the building with the intention of converting it to a single educational facility - the best possible outcome for a structure of this scale and right across from the University's main campus. Also welcome was the appointment of Bennetts Associates who brought with them an open approach to working with the Planning Team.

of collaborative working

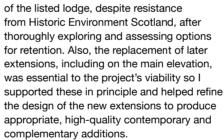
However, to say the project faced significant challenges is an understatement. As a result of 13 years of dereliction, there was severe water ingress across the building, widespread dry and wet rot, soft floors and areas of collapse. Compounding these issues was the failure of many historic ad hoc NHS extensions and alterations of ill-considered

or poor construction. This was not going to be an easy undertaking for any party involved! And just when we eventually got there and the actual construction was getting underway, Covid 19 struck....

Back to the early stages... As case officer, I immediately understood that a successful outcome would involve a pragmatic, nonpurist approach to the complex architectural conservation issues that needed to be resolved. With invaluable support from my then Team Manager, Elaine Campbell, I worked collaboratively throughout the project from the pre-application stage through the determination process (both planning permission and listed building applications) to encourage and persuade Historic Environment Scotland (HES) to accept certain contentious elements of the scheme.

The key to unlocking the whole scheme was the removal of the category B listed gate house which sat directly in front of the main entrance. Associated with the original George Watson's hospital building (long since demolished), this structure blocked access to the proposed new public concourse in front of the impressive clock tower of the former Surgical Hospital and, crucially, stood as an impediment to the construction of a 450-seat underground lecture theatre and event space below.

Convincing evidence had to be gathered so I could make a sound case for the demolition



Another significant challenge was retaining as many of the historic donor plagues as possible on the interior walls, many of which had been severely affected, directly and indirectly, by the widespread wet and dry within the building.

Finally, but by no means the last challenge, the historic entrance door was inaccessible behind a tall flight of stone steps, so for many years the public had entered the former RIE via the A&E entrance at the side. The bold solution to move the steps sufficiently forward of their original location to accommodate a discreet ramp has, along with the new public concourse, turned the building into an open and welcoming institution and an asset to the city.

I've been in Planning, and specifically with the City of Edinburgh Council, since the tender age of 25. As a graduate of the University of Edinburgh (in Archaeology and Ancient History), then coming into Planning through a Post-Graduate Diploma in Architectural Conservation. I never imagined being part of a team that would win an RTPI award.

On the night, it was such a lovely surprise to receive the award for the overall winner, after feeling proud for my colleagues involved in the Rowanbank Scheme and congratulating all the other worthy recipients on such interesting and varied projects. I was truly touched after all these years of watching this building stagnate and was so proud to have played a part in its rebirth.

It's an apt point in my 30-year career to receive such a special award and feel that it represents official recognition of all those years of sometimes tough negotiations with all parties involved in planning and listed building applications, from developers. agents and architects to statutory consultees. amenity bodies, members of the public, and internal interests.

Crucially, this award acknowledges the power of collaborative working across the public and private sectors, as well as showcasing the significant, if not often recognised role of Planning.

My approach to each project has always been supportive as far as possible, nonbureaucratic and flexible, and this proved particularly valuable in the assessment and approval of the EFI. Being mindful of the substantial cost of this project, given the internal condition of the building and unexpected problems that emerged during the construction phase, a pragmatic approach assisted in achieving a timely and smooth

This unique project puts sustainability at its heart. Reuse of the building was the key point of the project, but the development goes way beyond to create a truly sustainable, flexible. adaptable and long-term facility for the city and further afield. It also sets an exemplary standard for similar conversions of other major historic buildings.

solution, with both minor and more substantial

changes proposed.

In other words, the Edinburgh Futures Institute is here to stay and will live up to its name! SP





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CHRIS BURROWS ASSOCRTPI, Principal Officer – City Deal (Waterfront and West End) at Glasgow City Council





## Water Row Masterplan: an exemplar of waterfront regeneration

Chris Burrows AssocRTPI, Principal Officer – City Deal (Waterfront and West End) at Glasgow City Council, reflects on the history, challenges and opportunities of regenerating the River Clyde, as well as the impact so far of the Water Row Masterplan for the Govan community and the reasons why it was presented with the Best Project Award at the 2025 RTPI Scotland Awards for Planning Excellence.

he River Clyde played a fundamental role in the economic fortunes of Glasgow. During the industrial era the Clyde was one of the great manufacturing and shipping centres. From the 1960s onwards a process of industrial decline and demolition of traditional tenement stock caused a rapid collapse in the urban fabric of the waterfront.



"We nominated the project for an RTPI Award as we felt that it was an outstanding example of what can be achieved when Planners have a long-term and sustained commitment to the regeneration of an area and a dedication to place quality."

#### **Transforming the River Clyde**

Since the 1980s, the Council and its public sector partners have sought to address the negative effects of de-industrialisation and reposition the river corridor as a mixed-use quarter that can meet the demands of a post-industrial economy. This strategy has had some striking successes. However, the shortcomings of previous regeneration efforts are clearly illustrated on the south bank of the river around Govan, which has suffered greatly from de-industrialisation resulting in a steep decline in its economic base, population loss and significant concentrations of long-term vacant and derelict land.

The requirement for an area action plan was identified in the Glasgow City Plan (2003) as a means of addressing complex urban renewal issues and co-ordinating investment and regeneration activity in the area. The Central Govan Action Plan (CGAP) was adopted in 2006. In 2014, CGAP was winner of the 'Leading the way in planning for the community' category and awarded the Silver Jubilee Cup at the RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence.

#### **The Water Row Masterplan**

The Planning Service has continued to support delivery of the community-led plan over the past decade. The Spatial Strategy Team facilitated the Govan-Partick Charette in 2015. The Charette brought together people from communities on both banks of the river to discuss their aspirations for the future of

the area. The redevelopment of vacant land at Water Row and support for a bridge to re-establish the historical link between the communities emerged as local priorities.

In 2020 Planning Permission in Principle was secured for the Water Row Masterplan providing consent for around 200 new homes and 3,500 square metres of commercial space. The masterplan reconnects the town centre with the river, reinstates Govan's historical function as a river crossing point and re-positions Water Row as a strategically important site at the centre of an emerging Innovation District.

We nominated the project for an RTPI Award as we felt that it was an outstanding example of what can be achieved when Planners have a long-term and sustained commitment to the regeneration of an area and a dedication to place quality. The project involved collaboration of teams across the Service at all stages from plan preparation to project implementation and has resulted in the delivery of a project that can be held up as an exemplar of waterfront regeneration.

## Outcome, Impact and future Aspirations

The opening of the Govan-Partick Bridge in September 2024 marked the completion of the first phase of the masterplan and delivery of 92 flats for mid-market rent and 6 ground floor commercial units. The opening event was a huge success with thousands of people from communities on both sides of the river coming together to mark the occasion on a rare sunny day. The outpouring of positivity at the opening event has been translated into a newfound optimism about the long-term future of the area.

The Planning Service is currently involved in a range of projects that look to build on the momentum generated by completion of the first phase of the development and continue Govan's upward trajectory. These include delivery of the second phase of the Masterplan, the restoration of the former Lyceum Cinema, the redevelopment of the Govan Graving Docks, and significant new housing development as part of the East Govan Ibrox Transformational Regeneration Area. We look forward to nominating some of these projects for RTPI awards in the coming years! SP

### **ARTICLE**



DAVID COWIE MRTPI,
Principal Planner at Highland
Council



**David Cowie MRTPI,** Principal Planner at Highland Council, celebrates The Flow Country's inscription as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the environmental significance of the blanket bog ecosystem and the hard work that contributed to the Highland Council winning Best Plan at the 2025 RTPI Scotland Awards for Planning Excellence.

n July 2024, UNESCO inscribed The Flow Country as a World Heritage Site (WHS), marking the site as globally significant and worthy of protection and restoration. It is the first peatland WHS globally – and Scotland's first WHS to be inscribed purely for natural criteria.

My Highland Council colleague Nicole Wallace (leading on environment) and I were delighted to receive the Scottish 'Best Plan' award in RTPI's Awards for Planning Excellence 2025, in recognition of planning for The Flow Country WHS. It is welcome acknowledgement of the Planning Position Statement (PPS) and Heritage Impact Assessment Toolkit (HIAT). published by the Council to guide development and protection in a context of significant pressures, particularly from renewables, and a changing policy landscape. But it is also recognition of the efforts of the Flow Country Partnership that led the bid for UNESCO inscription of the site - and of the importance of addressing the challenges that lie ahead and maximising opportunities.

The PPS and HIAT, first published in 2023, aimed to provide protection to the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the then candidate Site together with clear, timely guidance about it and

assessment and consideration of development proposals. Recently updated, they vitally guide for the inscribed Site, ahead of a new Local Development Plan.

considered the most

outstanding example

of a blanket bog

The Flow Country is considered the most outstanding example of a blanket bog ecosystem in the world. This blanket peat and its intricate network of pools, hummocks and ridges stretches across nearly 190,000 ha, with the boundary comprising seven separate but proximal areas. The Flow Country blanket bog also provides a diversity of habitats, combined with the patchwork of connected farming and coastal landscape elements

within the wider setting. The area supports a distinctive assemblage of birds.

The peat has been accumulating for the past 9,000 years and displays a remarkable range of features. The Flow Country has an extensive record of peatland accumulation, with peat thicknesses which reach over eight metres. Ongoing processes continue to sequester carbon on a very large scale.

There is scope for future expansion of the property through restoration of adjacent degraded blanket bog. The area is also considered to be the type-locality for description of blanket bog and so represents a significant research and educational resource.

The important role that our fellow Best Plan category shortlist plans play is not lost on us: National Planning Framework 4 firmly embedding climate and ecological emergencies into the development plan; the Hagshaw Energy Cluster - Planning for Net Zero trail-blazing planning for accommodation of additional renewables capacity; and The Hawick Place Plan exampling good practice in community identification of priorities. These, taken together with our planning for the Flow Country WHS, demonstrate the challenges of addressing sometimes competing international and national priorities and of resolving these at the regional and local scales.

Protecting The Flow Country is vital as part of the response to both the climate and ecological

emergencies. Planning has a key role in protection with OUV of the Site itself, its extent and integrity at the heart, whilst enabling appropriate development in light of identified priorities. A key UNESCO principle is that harm is to be avoided. Offsetting impacts on World Heritage is therefore

deemed incompatible with protecting their OUV. Consequently, the inscribed site is particularly important, beyond the existence of a particular hectarage of peatland across the wider region – though peatland restoration within the Site and beyond is a key opportunity. With continued, careful planning – which is often not straight forward – the WHS can fulfil the role of exemplar, managed and supported by The Flow Country Partnership. SP

Find out more on the <u>UNESCO website</u>, the <u>Flow Country website</u>, and on the <u>Highland Council</u> website.

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### **ARTICLE**



RIM CHOUAIB MRTPI, Senior Planning Consultant and Designer at Kevin Murray Associates

# Getting Loud about Planning:

## reflections from the 2025 Scottish Young Planner of the Year

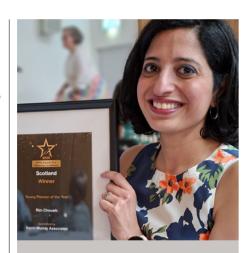
**Rim Chouaib MRTPI,** Senior Planning Consultant and Designer at Kevin Murray Associates, reflects on the achievement of being named Scottish Young Planner of the Year at the 2025 RTPI Scotland Awards for Planning Excellence.

hen I was nominated for the Scottish Young Planner of the Year award, I was interested in the opportunity it presents to amplify values that I care about – inclusive engagement, community-led planning, and giving a voice to communities in shaping the future of their places.

Let's be honest, we planners are not always comfortable shouting about our achievements. We're more likely to be found immersed in planning policy, submitting or assessing planning applications, or doing community consultation, rather than up on-stage collecting awards. However, that is precisely why the RTPI planning awards are important; they celebrate not just skills or potential, but impact.

As planners we have an impact on the lives of people. The way we plan our towns and cities influences the way people use them, from the local to more strategic levels. It can affect their behaviour, even their health and wellbeing. Celebrating best practice can provide inspiration for what can be achieved, acknowledging people who sometimes have spent decades making projects happen, and demonstrating that change is not always a bad thing.

I welcomed being nominated because I care about co-creating places with people and about making an impact. Coming from Lebanon, where planning is either non-existent, market-driven or simply a top-down approach, the outcomes are cities that sprawl, public places that become private, and neighbourhoods where people have little say in what happens.



I wanted to show that young planners can be bold, values-driven, and still deliver on strategy and policy."

Through my work at KMA, I have seen first-hand how meaningful collaborative processes can be, from a national level on the National Planning Framework 4, to regional strategies such as the iRSS for Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park, and locally such as the vision and plan for Glasgow's Golden Z, or the Cupar Youth Charrette. These allow people to share knowledge, understand different points of view and work together on creating a plan. Proper

engagement isn't a tick box exercise; it is a deliberative, transformational process that enriches a place.

Winning the award has been... surreal. Affirming. Motivating. It gave me a sense of achievement that contrasted with my arrival in Scotland to study, when I had virtually no clue about the Scotlish Planning System. Here I am today, having worked on all sorts of strategies and plans, all across the country, reminding me that it is never too late to learn and grow as a person.

My architectural background has allowed me to look at some projects from a different perspective. For example, when working on an appeal against a refusal considered as overdevelopment, I analysed the site and created a figure-ground diagram that showed the Royal Albert Hall could actually fit onto the site, as could other famous buildings.

Through my nomination, I wanted to show that young planners can be bold, values-driven, and still deliver on strategy and policy. I also wanted to let others from non-traditional backgrounds know they do belong here, and that they can lead.

Looking ahead, I'm focused on championing accessible planning that builds resilience – socially, environmentally, and economically. I want to challenge tokenism in engagement and help shift from consultation to true co-production. And as our sector faces the challenges of climate adaptation, housing crises, and digital transformation, I hope to be a voice that keeps empathy and equity at its core.

So yes, I'm proud to be Scottish Young Planner of the Year. But I'm even more excited about what's next – not just for me, but for all of us shaping Scotland's future. If you're reading this and wondering whether you should put yourself forward next year, please consider it. We need more planners who are passionate, principled, and willing to be vocal





ELAINE CAMPBELL MRTPI, Operations Manager in Development Management at the City of Edinburgh Council



**Elaine Campbell MRTPI,** Operations Manager in Development Management at the City of Edinburgh Council, reflects on the cross-team effort to improve services and rise to new challenges that contributed to the Council being named Planning Authority of the Year in the 2025 RTPI Scotland Awards for Planning Excellence

dinburgh is unique, with a beautiful green environment, world recognised natural, cultural, and built heritage, and an innovative entrepreneurial economy. Balancing increasingly complex issues at the same time as delivering growth and embedding climate change in all our decisions, the team deliver a professional well-respected service and continually strive to improve and adapt to changing pressures and priorities.

A key strength of the department is the positive working relationships across all parts of the planning team. The interaction and support provided by senior planners to the assistant planning officers shows true professionalism and passion for the profession. The team are always challenged to adapt ways of working and embrace this through discussion, participation in working groups and leading on department-wide training. One example is working towards the delivery of development and placemaking considerations through a 'Feminist City Lens' to promote the principles of protecting the safety of women, girls and marginalised groups.

Service development and improvements are led by a dedicated team who actively review improvements required, responding

to legislative change, workload pressures and feedback from customers. Key deliverables include planning report overhauls, preapplication engagement procedures and participating in the first cohort for the preparation of the first set of National Planning Improvement Plans.

In a direct response to workload pressures within Development Management, we have pioneered the creation of holding pens to better control the flow of planning applications. Reflection and review of completed schemes are led by officers and engagement is carried out across the entire service. This can be in the form of online training sessions, reviews of decisions or on-site walking tours of completed developments. This approach ensures

"The team deliver a professional well-respected service and continually strive to improve and adapt to changing pressures and priorities."

reflective consideration of developments and opens discussion on areas for improvement.

City Plan 2030 was adopted in 2024 and provides the policy backdrop for the future growth and development of the city. The team of officers who delivered this piece of work incorporated a range of planning officers and specialists. This professional approach to collaborative working was at the heart of the delivery of this project.

At the City of Edinburgh Council, there are no stupid questions! Instead, there is a can-do approach across all teams, and the willingness to engage and challenge staff to try something new is a credit to all. Due to the diversity of our work there is no single team that can be highlighted, as the success and strength within the department is in how we work together, collaborate and show our mutual respect throughout.

We have reflected that we often don't celebrate success, and it is important to recognise the excellent work that is taking place across all Planning Departments. Engaging our young people and providing opportunities for their growth is one of the most important aspects of life as a planner. Our people make our service and are at the root of its success. SP

**ARTICLE** 







**ELAINE CAMPBELL MRTPI, Operations Manager** in Development Management at the City of Edinburgh Council, SUZANNE STEPHEN MRTPI, Senior Principal Planner at the Scottish Government, and ALISON HOPE MRTPI. Associate at The Paul Hogarth Company









RUTH SIMPSON, Planning Officer – Urban Design at Falkirk Council, DAN WALKER CMLI, Associate Director of Landscape Planning at LUC, and IAN SCOTT MRTPI, Senior Planning Consultant

# Spotlighting the Commended Entries that Impressed

Elaine Campbell MRTPI, Operations Manager in Development Management at the City of Edinburgh Council, **Suzanne Stephen MRTPI**, Principal Planner at the Scottish Government, and Alison Hope MRTPI, Associate at The Paul Hogarth Company discuss the bold, innovative and ambitious projects and plans that earned commendations in the 2025 RTPI Scotland Awards for Planning Excellence.

#### COMMENDED BEST PROJECT:

## Rowanbank Gardens

by Elaine Campbell MRTPI

Rowanbank Gardens features 126 new mixedtenure homes, including a high proportion of family accommodation, around a vibrant residents' courtyard garden. This shared landscape serves as the natural heart of the community, complete with communal growing beds and fruit trees that have become key amenities for new residents. At the heart of the scheme is the integration of affordable housing which is truly tenure blind.

Rowanbank Gardens' architectural form reestablishes the street edge, using high-quality materials and robust detailing to create a strong civic presence. This perimeter backdrop frames a central landscaped courtyard, fostering a sense of community and tranquillity within the development. By prioritising passive design strategies, the development thoughtfully anticipates future lifestyles through considerations of how people will work, move, socialize, and manage energy in years to come.

The scheme was forward thinking in its approach with biodiversity considered from the outset. The project was one of the first large scale residential projects in Scotland to utilise internal Electric Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHP) within apartments.

The development of this brownfield site has delivered the policy objectives of urban regeneration in a sustainable form through a range of measures to promote active travel and prioritise the climate and nature crises.

#### COMMENDED BEST PLAN:

## National Planning Framework 4

#### by Suzanne Stephen MRTPI

National Planning Framework 4 has been a game-changer. Although the fourth iteration of our national spatial plan, its content and status as a national development plan are vastly different to its predecessors, building on the planning reform commitment to strengthen Scotland's plan-led system.

Whilst not everyone will agree with every word or detail contained within its pages. NPF4 has not shirked difficult decisions and it firmly places climate and nature at the centre of our planning system. It gives clear direction on how every planning decision will contribute to delivery of the vital development Scotland needs. The bold policy focus of NPF4 has been widely and internationally recognised for its groundbreaking approach to plan making.

Critical to the success of NPF4's production was drawing on professional planning expertise from all sectors right across Scotland - providing us with such valuable insight and breadth of experiences. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all who helped create it.

We were delighted when NPF4 received a commendation in the RTPI Scotland Awards. We are extremely proud of our team for delivering a truly collaborative national spatial plan which has taken up its position at the heart of planning in Scotland.

#### COMMENDED BEST PLAN:

## Plan

#### by Alison Hope MRTPI

Place Plan is the community's vision for the Scottish Borders town, representing a fresh and collaborative way of working, the legacy of which will be felt for many years to come. With over 200 groups and many hundreds more individuals involved, the establishment of the Town Team and development of the Plan brought everyone together for the first time. By combining pride, culture and passions, it unifies an enormous community effort and heart towards the greater goal of improving Hawick for everyone.

# The Hawick Place

By Hawick, For Hawick - The Hawick

The result is an ambitious yet pragmatic Place Plan that truly represents the aspirations of the people of Hawick and is a plan produced by the community for the community. It epitomises the role of professional planners in working together across the private and public sectors, from both The Paul Hogarth Company and Scottish Borders Council, not to make a plan, but to enable and support local people to do so themselves. The result is a fantastically rich and impassioned vision for the future of Hawick, in lockstep with local feelings. To be commended in the RTPI Scotland Awards celebrates and recognises the hard work of the Town Team and local community. SP

# Celebrating the Achievements of our Shortlisted Entries

Ruth Simpson, Planning Officer – Urban Design at Falkirk Council, Dan Walker CMLI, Associate Director of Landscape Planning at LUC, and Ian Scott MRTPI, Senior Planning Consultant at Ryden, discuss the projects, plans and experiences that contributed to being shortlisted in the 2025 RTPI Scotland Awards for Planning Excellence.

#### SHORTLISTED BEST PROJECT:

### Bruce Obelisk Restoration

#### by Ruth Simpson

Originating from the Carronworks! Project, the Bruce Obelisk Restoration Project was entered into this year's RTPI Scotland Awards for its role in safeguarding and spectacularly restoring a nationally significant monument. The Bruce Obelisk was produced at the Carron Iron Company in 1785, commissioned by James Bruce of Kinnaird (d. 1794), an explorer, antiquarian, anthropologist, and descendant of Robert the Bruce.

The local community played a significant role in the project, with pupils from both Larbert and St Mungo's High Schools taking part in specialist iron restoration workshops led by our main contractor, Lost Art Limited, highlighting the importance of shared heritage.

The cast iron monument was removed in the 1990s from its original location in the church graveyard to the church car park; its poor condition was highlighted by its inclusion in Scotland's Buildings at Risk Register. As part of a commitment to reduce the number of buildings at risk (enshrined within Our Future in the Past: Historic Environment Strategy for Falkirk), work began to restore the Obelisk. This included uplifting the Obelisk to the contractor's workshop, an assessment of surviving original material, removal of non-original components, restoration of original components and reinstatement of missing detailing. Following restoration, it was transported back to Larbert and relocated in its original position in 2024.

#### SHORTLISTED BEST PLAN:

## A Development Framework for the Hagshaw Energy Cluster

#### by Dan Walker CMLI

In 2020, NatureScot brought together a group of renewable energy developers and operators with East Ayrshire and South Lanarkshire Councils to discuss how we could work together on the future of renewable energy development in planning for and delivering Net Zero in a more coordinated and collaborative way.

Advocating for quality through design and maximising benefits for people, nature and place, the Development Framework identifies opportunities to enhance the natural and built environment to support a thriving economy and prosperous local communities.

The Development Framework was developed by a working group of local authorities, renewable energy developers, statutory agencies and communities to create a shared vision for the cluster. The plan sets out an ambitious but deliverable ten-year vision for how a more strategic and collaborative approach to renewable energy development can help us achieve Net Zero together in a just and fair way.

We believe passionately in the vision created for the framework and how it is inspiring adoption of the concept elsewhere in Scotland. We were delighted to be shortlisted for an RTPI Scotland Award. You can learn more about the Hagshaw Energy Cluster here.

#### SHORTLISTED YOUNG PLANNER:

## The journey so far

#### by Ian Scott MRTPI

Being shortlisted in this year's RTPI Scotland Awards has been an honour. This achievement follows a career path that has been both inspiring and challenging in ways not previously envisaged. Below is a brief snapshot of my journey so far, which I look forward to continuing.

Across eight years of experience in both the public and private sectors. Ian has developed an extensive knowledge of the planning system. Starting his career as planning officer at Aberdeenshire Council, lan quickly demonstrated his ability to learn, work under pressure and apply sound planning judgement. Ian demonstrated these same abilities at University, taking a career break to complete a joint RTPI- and RICS-accredited master's degree at the University of Glasgow. Whilst there, he demonstrated academic excellence by winning all three graduation awards that were available to his cohort.

The end of lan's studies coincided with his move into the private sector, when he overcame major setbacks, including a serious illness and pandemic-related challenges. Despite these, he has shown noteworthy professional growth. In five years at Ryden, he has progressed from graduate planner to his current senior role. becoming a Chartered Planner along the way, as well as assisting with Planning Aid Scotland projects and sitting on the SYPN Steering Group since 2022. SP

ARTICLE





ETIVE CURRIE MRTPI, Senior Planning Officer, Glasgow City Council and HOLLY GRAY, Graduate in Urban Planning and Property Development

## ARTICLE



STUART HAY, Head of Outreach at the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland (RIAS)

## Celebrating Planning's Women of Influence

Each year, The Planner magazine publishes a list of 50 Women of Influence. Nominated by their readers and assessed by a panel of judges, the list celebrates the impact of women working in and around the planning profession. We reached out to two of this year's Women of Influence based in Scotland, **Etive Currie MRTPI**, Senior Planning Officer, Glasgow City Council, and **Holly Gray**, Graduate in Urban Planning and Property Development, to share their experiences – including what being named Women of Influence in 2025 means to them.

### Etive Currie

In today's global and dynamic world, the concept of influence has transcended traditional boundaries. It is no longer confined to those who hold esteemed positions of power; instead, it is a quality that can be cultivated and exercised by any planner, regardless of their official status. One of the most profound examples of this evolution lies in the growing recognition of women who wield significant influence, often without the need to be in a position of power or a love for meticulous hierarchies.

Influence is an art, not a title, and a core skill in the planning profession. It is the capacity to inspire, motivate, and guide others through one's actions, words, and ideas. Being influential does not necessarily require a woman to occupy a high-ranking position. In fact, many of the most impactful women are those who lead from the heart and inspire through their authenticity and passion.

"Influence is an art, not a title, and a core skill in the planning profession."

Take, for instance, the countless women who have made indelible marks on their communities through grassroots efforts, social activism, or simply by being role models in their everyday lives. These women may not

hold titles such as CEO or President, but their impact is deeply felt and widely recognised. Their influence stems from their ability to connect with others, to share experiences, and to advocate for change with unwavering conviction. Collaborating and listening to others' lived experiences gives me a unique insight into how places work well or, more often, why places are not working for the people who live there. This is the privileged and humbling part of being a planner for me.

#### **Embracing Influence**

To be a woman of influence is to recognise and embrace the power within. It is about understanding that influence is not restricted by external factors such as titles or other people. It is about being true to oneself, cultivating one's passions, and using one's unique strengths to make a difference.

Every woman has the potential to be influential. It starts with believing in oneself and recognising that influence comes in many forms. Whether it is through mentorship, advocacy, creativity, or simply leading by example, every woman can make a meaningful impact on the world around her.

Being a woman of influence is not about having a love for planning or holding a position of power. It is about the ability to inspire, and effect change through authenticity, passion, and resilience. It is about recognising that influence is a quality that resides within us all, waiting to be harnessed and shared. So, embrace your influence, and let it shine—your impact, whilst not always recognised, is powerful and can make a big difference.

## Holly Gray

Being named one of The Planner's 2025 Women of Influence is incredibly meaningful to me. It's given me a moment to reflect, not just in terms of personal growth, but also on the colleagues, classmates, and work experiences that have challenged and inspired me along the way. Planning is rarely a solo effort, and its collaborative nature is one of the things I love most about it.

"Planning is rarely a solo effort, and its collaborative nature is one of the things I love most about it."

Another significant professional achievement for me was the publication of my research by the United Nations. The paper, included in the Journal of Public Space's special issue 'Young Gamechangers', explored inclusive public space design for teenage girls in the Global South and contributed to conversations around global sustainable development. By drawing on Scotland's experiences and past challenges, I developed a framework to enhance engagement and support youth mental wellbeing in India. The process reinforced my belief that planners, with the right resources and opportunities, can influence global conversations well beyond their everyday roles.

Looking back, four years ago, I took a risk and switched career paths to urban planning. This has led to incredible opportunities I couldn't have imagined. Soon, I will be joining the private sector as a graduate planner and am excited to be part of the ever-changing future of Scottish planning.

To find out more about this year's Women of Influence, visit the <u>Planner website</u>

## RIAS Awards: Recognition For Design Ambition

**Stuart Hay,** Head of Outreach at the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland (RIAS), discusses the projects breaking convention with ambitious, innovative and place-conscious design at the 2025 RIAS Awards.

S

cottish architecture continues to blossom, even against a backdrop of economic uncertainty. The 2025

RIAS Awards are a testament to what can be achieved when clients bring ambition and vision to the table, drawing on the talents of leading studios from across Scotland and the UK. These awards uphold rigorous standards, recognising only the most outstanding examples of design.

Unlike other design accolades, RIAS requires that all shortlisted buildings have been in use for at least 12 months, with judges visiting each shortlisted project in person. This year, twenty-one buildings were assessed – involving visits to Argyll, Harris and many places in between. But what do the eleven winning projects tell us about the state of contemporary architecture in Scotland?

One clear theme is the continued excellence in conservation, particularly where clients have the ambition and resources to restore Scotland's distinctive built heritage. This includes not only traditional country estate houses, such as Aldourie Castle Estate (Ptolemy Dean Architects), Fairburn Tower (Simpson & Brown), and Kinloch Lodge (GRAS) – but also bold industrial transformations like the regenerative revival of Rosebank Distillery in Falkirk (MLA). These projects demonstrate that historic buildings need not be liabilities and become assets when given new life.

Meanwhile, public buildings of real value are still being delivered, despite fiscal pressures. The Nucleus Building at the University of Edinburgh (Sheppard Robson) exemplifies a humancentred approach to education, while Riverside Primary School in Perth (Architype) sets a new benchmark with its Passivhaus-certified design. Meanwhile, HMP & YOI Stirling (Holmes Miller) reimagines the prison environment through trauma-informed design, placing rehabilitation at its core. More projects need to have the courage to challenge convention, including putting faith



"More projects need to have the courage to challenge convention, including putting faith in their architecture teams to find a solution that addresses budget, planning requirements and net zero." in their architecture teams to find a solution that addresses budget, planning requirements and net zero.

Ellengowan Regeneration in Dundee (Collective Architecture) stands out in a new housing world increasingly dominated by placeless, generic volume house building. It delivers a community-focused redevelopment that balances heritage, accessibility, and contemporary living. Worryingly, this year's shortlist saw fewer entries from the social housing sector, which is perhaps an indication that cuts in Scottish Government funding in 2023 are still being felt.

Finally, projects such as Caochan na Creige on the Isle of Harris (Izat Arundell), Union Terrace Gardens in Aberdeen (LDA and Stallan-Brand), and the Gairnshiel Jubilee Bridge in Deeside (Moxon Architects) demonstrate how architecture can be deeply rooted in the local landscape and local context, each responding at a different scale to its environment with sensitivity and poise. This is the difference between importing a generic design solution and employing designers who are bought into a place's ethos.

RIAS encourages planners across Scotland to study these projects and use them as benchmarks for future development. They prove that innovation, sustainability and character are not luxuries, but achievable goals. And they show that contextually unaware, generic developments can and should be challenged. Crucially, the role of local planning teams in enabling these projects must not be overlooked.

Do awards still matter? RIAS believes they matter more than ever, especially in a climate where superior design is too often seen as an optional extra cost, rather than essential to the quality of our built environment. Success is never assured, and achieving outcomes of quality takes heroic effort. Celebrating the best sets a useful benchmark, and shows superior design is attainable with the right encouragement and commitment. SP

Images: 1) Aldourie, © Simon Kennedy; 2) Caochan na Creige, © Richard Gaston; 3) Union Terrace, © Andrew Lee; 4) Rosebank Distillery, © Ross Campbell; 5) UoE Nucleus, © Keith Hunter; 6) Riverside Primary School, © David Barbour 7) Kinloch Lodge, © Fran Mart for Wildland; 8) HMP/YOI Stirling, © ChrisHumphries; 9) Ellengowan Regeneration, © Keith Hunter; 10) Fairburn Tower, © Landmark; 11) Gairnshiel Jubilee ridge, © Simon Kennedy.

### **MARTICLE**



KYLE BROOKS. Marketing and Communications at The Scottish Civic Trust

## ( UPDATE



# My Place Awards: Celebrating Excellence in Community-Led Placemaking

Kyle Brooks, Marketing and Communications at The Scottish Civic Trust, highlights the powerful impact that individuals and communities have on quality placemaking. reflecting on the people and projects that have earned recognition in the My Place Awards.

cross Scotland, local people are leading the way in transforming the places they call home. From revitalised town centres to community gardens and reimagined public spaces, grassroots initiatives are helping to shape a more inclusive, sustainable, and connected built environment. The Scottish Civic Trust's My Place Awards exist to recognise and celebrate these achievements.

Held annually, the My Place Awards honour excellence in community-led placemaking through two key categories: the Community-led Project Award, which recognises impactful built environment projects initiated and delivered by local people, and the Community Champion Award, which celebrates individuals who have made a significant contribution to their community's built environment through leadership, volunteering or advocacy.

This year, the Awards received 15 nominations for community-led projects and 26 nominations for community champions. These entries came from across Scotland, from Huntly to Hawick and Burnhill to North Berwick, demonstrating the energy, creativity and care communities continue to invest in the places they value.

While this year's winners will be announced later in the year, the 2024 awardees offer a powerful illustration of the kind of impact recognised by the My Place Awards.

The 2024 Community-led Project Award was presented to The Corner, a transformed public space in the East Avrshire town of



highlight the essential role



Darvel, led by the Darvel Area Regeneration Team (DART). Once a neglected part of the town centre. The Corner is now a vibrant hub for events, markets, and everyday gatherings - a space, as the team puts it, "to have a blether." It has become a focal point for community connection and a model for grassroots regeneration in smalltown Scotland.

The 2024 Community Champion Award was awarded to Eugenie Aroutcheff, a founding member of Grow 73, a Rutherglenbased charity dedicated to food growing, sustainability, and nature engagement. Through inclusive programming and tireless volunteering, Eugenie has helped transform local green spaces into places of learning, biodiversity, and belonging - bringing people of all ages together to create a healthier. greener community.

These stories, and the many other nominations received each year, highlight the essential role that local people play in shaping Scotland's places. They remind us that effective placemaking is not always top-down. It often begins at the community level, with individuals and groups responding directly to local needs, heritage, and opportunity.

Recognition through the My Place Awards can make a real difference. Past winners report increased visibility, strengthened funding bids, and a renewed sense of pride and momentum within their communities. The Awards serve not only to celebrate what has been achieved but to inspire future action.

For planners, these projects offer important lessons. They show that great placemaking is not just about infrastructure or design codes it's about listening, trusting, and working with the people who live in and care for our towns, villages, and cities. SP

The My Place Awards are run annually by the Scottish Civic Trust. Find out more about the Awards on the Scottish Civic Trust website.

## **RTPI**

#### >>> RTPI Scotland's Planifesto

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We have commenced work on our Planifesto for the 2026 Scottish Parliament elections. As part of this work, we conducted three online workshops with RTPI members at the end of June. These workshops focused on answering the following three questions:

- 1. What do we want the future to look like for Scotland's planning system? - i.e. What are the outcomes we need to achieve?
- 2. What do we need to achieve this future? i.e. what new measures, mechanisms and initiatives are needed in the short, medium and long-terms?
- 3. What does RTPI Scotland's Planifesto need to say to get the message across?

Thank you to everyone who attended a workshop to help inform the Planifesto.

We will continue to develop the Planifesto over the next couple of months. If you have any comments that you would like us to take into consideration during this time, then please email scotland@rtpi.org.uk referencing the Planifesto in the subject matter.

#### >> Policy Consultations

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

- · The Scottish Government's consultation on developing an Ecosystem Restoration Code for Scotland
- · A Historic Environment Scotland consultation on a long-term strategy for heritage designation
- · A call for views by the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee on the Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill
- · The Scottish Government's consultation on a draft just transition plan for transport in Scotland

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

Consultations currently under consideration are:

- Draft Updated Sectoral Marine Plan for Offshore Wind Energy, deadline 22 August
- Wellbeing and Sustainable Development (Scotland) Bill, deadline 24 August
- Draft Environment Strategy, deadline 29

#### >> RTPI Scotland Annual Conference 2025

We are delighted to announce that this year's Annual Conference will take place on 24 September in Perth. You can expect a day packed with a variety of speakers and sessions, including walking tours, workshops and case studies.

We are also delighted to announce Jenny Roe as our keynote speaker. Jenny is author of Restorative Cities and a leading voice on the intersection of health and wellbeing with architecture and urban design.

Secure your place on the RTPI website.

#### >> Future Planner Bursary

Applications have now closed for this year's Future Planner Bursaries, and we are really pleased to hear that there was plenty of interest across the 3 Universities. We look forward to welcoming all 30 of the bursary holders into the profession, along with the 18 Future Planners recruited by the Scottish Government.

#### >> Social Media

Keep updated with the latest news by following us on LinkedIn.

#### >> Victoria Hills to leave the **RTPI**

You will have no doubt heard the news that our Chief Executive, Victoria Hills, will be leaving the RTPI after nearly eight years in post, to take up a new position as CEO of the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) later this year. Read more here.

#### >> Welcoming **Kirsty Fox Hay as** the RTPI's Nations **Public Affairs Officer**



We are delighted to introduce Kirsty Fox Hay, who started in the role of RTPI's Public Affairs Officer at the end of June.

Kirsty will be working closely with the RTPI Scotland team, as well as our colleagues in RTPI Cymru, on the development of our Planifesto, including a strategy of communicating our key messages to political parties in advance of the 2026 elections.

#### >> National Planning **Conference – Book your Place!**

Bookings are now open for this year's National Planning Conference which will take place in Manchester on 9 October on the theme of tackling the housing emergency.

Hosted by the RTPI and Planning Portal, the conference offers the chance to engage directly with industry leaders, policymakers, and changemakers at the forefront of today's built environment.

Find out more on the Conference website.

#### >> RTPI Brand Launch

The RTPI brand is evolving! From early September the new brand will be rolled out, including a refreshed logo, updated materials, and a new tone of voice across our website, emails, social media and publications. This brand evolution has been shaped by our members, volunteers, staff and external stakeholders, who have taken part in interviews. workshops and surveys. The new brand is underpinned by four core values:

- · We are inclusive
- · We are approachable
- We champion
- We are professional

Read more about these core values and what to expect from the new brand on the RTPI website.

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## ( UPDATE

### **Scottish Government**

#### >> Pre-application discussions and processing agreements

In April we published a blog on the benefits of collaborative pre-application discussions and processing agreements, including how they can provide greater clarity and certainty to prospective applicants, making the planning application journey smoother, quicker and potentially cheaper. If any of our stakeholders has experience or feedback on their use. please get in touch. Details are at the end of the blog.

#### >> The Town and Country Planning (Masterplan Consent **Areas) (Scotland) Direction** 2025

The Town and Country Planning (Masterplan Consent Areas) (Scotland) Direction 2025 came into force on Monday 12 May 2025. The Direction ensures the same notification triggers that exist for planning applications also apply to Masterplan Consent Area (MCA) schemes. This provides for appropriate Ministerial scrutiny of those MCA schemes that may raise issues of importance.

Planning Circular 1/2025: Notification to Ministers of Masterplan Consent Area Schemes contains the Direction and explains its triggers and the information requirements when notifying Ministers.

#### >> National Planning Hub

The Chief Planner wrote to Heads of Planning on 15 May to provide further detail on the National Planning Hub. The Hub will focus on housing and onshore energy (hydrogen, wind and battery) and the letter sets out what support is available to them through the Hub. It also outlined the next steps and invited them to respond with requests for support by the end of May.

#### >> Climate mitigation and adaptation

Planning guidance on climate mitigation and adaptation was published on 5 June. This quidance supports the consistent, proportionate and effective application of National Planning Framework 4 Policy 2 on climate mitigation and adaptation.

This resource is relevant to all planning stakeholders, but specifically supports planning officers, decision-makers and applicants in taking a proportionate approach to avoiding maladaptation, supporting emissions reduction and increasing resilience to climate risks across our built environment.

#### >> Planning Fees

New planning fees came into force on 9 June. The regulations provide for an inflation-linked increase of 3.3% to planning application fees, and the introduction of fees for local reviews and appeals to Scottish Ministers. Circular 2/2025 deals with the increased fees, Circular 3/2025 provides guidance on the introduction of the new fees. The ePlanning fee calculator has also been updated with the new fee levels and now includes local review and appeal fees.

#### >> NPF Policy 22: Flooding

On 11 June the Minister for Public Finance and Chief Planner wrote to local authorities to provide an update on the work to support the application in practice of NPF4 policy 22 on flooding. The letter clarifies certain procedural matters and highlights a range of new and updated advice on flooding matters published by SEPA.

#### >> Coal Extraction

The Chief Planner wrote to local authorities and stakeholders on 19 June to issue a Direction, which came into force on the same day, setting out new arrangements for notifying planning applications for coal extraction to the Scottish Ministers. The Direction is intended to ensure that the Government's finalised policy position on coal extraction in Scotland is reflected through the planning decision making process and includes the requirement that Scottish Ministers are alerted of any planning applications for coal extraction within 7 days of validation.

#### Architecture and Design **Scotland review**

On 17 June we published a summary report detailing the findings and recommendations for reform of the public body, Architecture and Design Scotland, following a review by Scottish Government. A background report was also published.

#### Section 3F Repeal Order

The Climate Change (Local Development Plan) (Repeals) (Scotland) Order 2025 was laid in draft before Scottish Parliament on 19 June. This Order repeals Section 3F of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 and Sections 72 and 73 of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. Subject to Parliamentary procedure, the Order is due to come into force on 1 November 2025.

The laying of this Order follows publication of the Section 3F annual report in March 2025. The report concluded that the requirement for local development plans to include policy related to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from the use (or operation) of new buildings was no longer necessary, given that technologies are now well embedded in new development and the latest policy and regulatory position goes beyond what Section 3F can achieve.

>> National Planning Skills

**Commitment Plan** 

#### We've introduced a series of 'Listen-Up!' podcasts as part of our Skills work, with the first theme focusing on Leadership. These are short recordings with leaders across the profession.

On Linkedin, 'In your Own Words' is a series of personal stories from planners working across Scotland's rural areas covering Orkney, Highland, North Ayrshire (Arran and Cumbrae) Argyll and Bute, Moray and Shetland.

#### >> Stalled Sites

A priority action in November's Planning and the Housing Emergency Delivery Plan was the creation of a Housing Planning Hub to provide coordinated support for housing delivery, and to accelerate development of housing sites where they had stalled. A Short Life Working Group (SLWG) was convened to clearly identify and overcome barriers to delivery, build consensus around practical actions required, and demonstrate forward momentum to speed up delivery. A blog published on 9 June provides an update on the progress of the group.

## ( UPDATE



## >> Water Resilient Dundee

Through our Stalled Sites work, focussed on unlocking sites for housing delivery, we have been engaging with Scottish Water and found out about their partnership with Dundee City Council to jointly plan and sustainably manage water in the city to respond to climate change. We shared more about this in our blog, Water Resilient Dundee. It will be interesting to follow the progress of this partnership and see how similar approaches can be used in other regions.

#### >> Planning obligations consultation

On 3 July we published draft guidance for comment on Planning Obligations and Good Neighbour Agreements. Once finalised, this will replace Circular 3/2012, reflecting changes in law and practice since the publication of that Circular. In particular, the draft guidance sets out how developer contributions policies should be included within new-style development plans, and how to provide clear iustification for contributions addressing cumulative impacts.

We are now seeking views on the guidance to check that it is clearly written and provides appropriate advice. Please send any comments to Planning.Obligations@gov.scot no later than 30 September 2025. Please use the same email address if you would like to arrange a discussion on the draft guidance.

#### >> Ramsar Chief Planner letter

The policy protection for features on Ramsar sites in Scotland was updated on 9 July through a letter issued on behalf of the Minister for Public Finance and Chief Planner. The purpose of this updated policy is to state that the Scottish Government considers that listed Ramsar sites in Scotland should be treated as if they were European sites for the purposes of land use change decision making. Compliance with this policy means that any plan or project which could affect a Ramsar site will involve undertaking a Habitats Regulations Appraisal to determine whether the proposal is likely to have a significant effect on the notified natural features of the site.

## ( UPDATE

## **Built Environment Forum** Scotland (BEFS)

Earlier in the year we launched our 'Joining the Dots' series - a conversation taking place through guest authored provocations, exploring the interconnected nature of policy agendas for Scotland's built environment and asking 'How do we work collectively, and how can strategic advocacy be amplified through joined-up thinking and cross-sector collaboration, towards legislation that delivers for our people and places?'. Read the latest addition to the series by RTPI Scotland Director Dr Caroline Brown.

In June, BEFS Director gave evidence at the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee to inform its second annual progress review for the Fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4). We highlighted BEFS Members' experiences with NPF4 in

practice, drawing attention to challenges emerging from low capacity in planning authorities, tensions between policy priorities, rigid interpretations, and a cluttered policy landscape, including a positive response to recent investments in planning skills and the National Planning Improvement Hub.

BEFS Director also presented evidence

at the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee in relation to PE2105: Safeguard Scottish Listed Buildings at risk of unnecessary demolition. Created by SAVE Britain's Heritage, the petition calls on the Scottish Government to provide enhanced policy guidance on minimum evidence requirements, and to mandate local authority engagement with conservation accredited engineers in decision-making concerning potential demolition of Listed Buildings. Our

full submission statement to the Committee can be found on BEFS website.

A full list of BEFS consultation responses is available on the consultations and briefings page of BEFS website.

#### **Upcoming Consultations:**

Pre-Budget scrutiny 2026-27: funding for culture

Building Safety Levy (Scotland) Bill

Wellbeing and Sustainable Development (Scotland) Bill

Heat and Energy Efficiency Technical Suitability Assessment (HEETSA) - Scoping Consultation

Private Rented Sector (PRS) Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES)

Draft Climate Change Plan Scrutiny 2025

**Draft Environment Strategy** 

Community right to buy: review.

Hazel Johnson, BEFS Director

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South East Scotland

Grampian

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## SURF - Scotland's **Regeneration Forum**

It has been a year of significant staff change here at SURF and we are delighted to share that Augustijn van Gaalen will be starting as SURF's new Policy & Advocacy Manager, in September.

Following an MSc in Global Sustainable Cities from the University of Strathclyde, Augustijn brings extensive experience in community regeneration, policy development, and project management.

Augustijn has previously worked with the Community Transport Association, then COSLA where he helped develop integration programmes for migrants. More recently he has worked on housing, business and harbour projects for Tiree Community Development Trust – clearly bringing experience that aligns well with SURF's mission.

Augustijn will be leading on the continued development of the SURF 2026 Manifesto which will undoubtedly have interests that intersect with those of RTPI Scotland. The outcomes of the Manifesto will be the primary focus of the SURF Annual Conference in Paisley on the 12th March 2026.

In other news, the 2025 SURF Awards for Best Practice in Community Regeneration have launched for applications for the 27th year. The SURF Awards are delivered in partnership with the Scottish Government, with additional support from Creative Scotland, Scottish Procurement Alliance, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, South of Scotland Enterprise, and Scotland's Towns Partnership.

The purpose is to highlight, celebrate and share the achievements of initiatives that address

physical, social and economic challenges in communities across Scotland.

This year's five categories are: Community Led Regeneration: Creative Regeneration: Improving Scotland's Places; Removing Barriers to Employability; and Housing and Regeneration.

Feel free to share with those you think might be interested. Alternatively, you can nominate a project by completing an application form on their behalf as a nominating party. The deadline for applications is 5pm on Monday 1st September.

The winners will be announced in December at a celebratory dinner event in Glasgow, with shared learning workshops providing an opportunity to learn from what works, and often what doesn't, following in May 2026.

You can find out more about all things SURF and keep up to date with news and events, or sign up to the monthly e-bulletin, via the SURF website: www.surf.scot

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The opinions stated are the contributors' own unless otherwise stated. The RTPI is not responsible for statements made or views expressed in this journal.

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

# RTPI Scotland Annual Conference 2025

## **BOOKINGS NOW OPEN**

This year's conference will explore how to deliver resilient and sustainable communities for the health of people, place and planet.



#### WHERE?

This year's conference will be held in the 'Fair City' of Perth at the Perth Theatre on Mill Street, PH1 5HZ

#### WHEN?

24 September 2025 From 9.30am until 4.00pm

#### WHAT TO EXPECT?

You can expect a day packed with a variety of speakers and sessions, including walking tours, workshops and case studies.

## OUR KEYNOTE SPEAKER

We are delighted to announce Professor Jenny Roe as our keynote speaker. Jenny is author of *Restorative Cities* and a leading voice on the intersection of health and wellbeing with architecture and urban design.

