



Inbox

YOUR NEWS, VIEWS AND QUESTIONS

FEEDBACK

Steve Ellis

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The general quality of *The Planner* remains high, but do we have to increasingly see it reported that schemes have been ‘green-lit’ (e.g. page 9, June 2018). It is a clumsy expression, of North American origin – what is wrong with plain old ‘approved’? (And you can save yourself one character by using it). Thankfully, I have yet to see any schemes being ‘red-lit’.

Steve Ellis, Long Buckby, Northamptonshire

(Thanks Steve. On reflection I've given the go-ahead, pulled the trigger and signed off on a decision to ban this phrase – Ed)

Martin Willey

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With the current lack of resources in local authorities, it is understandable if all potential policy and delivery contributions from planners, especially to corporate planning, have to give way to the preparing of local plans and managing of planning applications! However, in some authorities the potential that the planning process offers to wider local authority management is recognised. Birmingham and Plymouth provide particularly good examples.

CIPFA, the local authority finance officers’ association, has a subscription website, Technical Information Service (TIS) online that includes a planning information stream. An editorial board consisting of local authority, consultant and Homes England representatives as well as a

communications company MD and senior planning lawyer, are producing pages that, as well as identifying the usual financial contributions, seek to identify other ways in which the planning service can contribute to the wider corporate management of an authority.

The scope to align other public budgets through the local plan process, to address the prioritisation of public investment, risk assessment in public sector expenditure, optimising government contributions and generally providing evidence for audit and budgeting are, or will shortly, be addressed. The wider place-shaping agenda and role of planning in generating income and investment from growth underline the approach of the board.

It is highly likely that, if you are a local authority planner, your finance department will subscribe to CIPFA TIS online. If they do, then signpost officers to the planning information section – and perhaps check it yourself to see if resources can be provided by or to the planning function to maximise the corporate contribution.

*Martin Willey
Chair, CIPFA TIS Planning
Information Editorial Board*

Peter Monk

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Rob Krzysowski, the RTPI’s representative on CIC, writing about diversity in *The Planner* in April 2018, stresses how we must recognise diversity in order to strengthen our approach to it.

Only last year, a

parliamentary inquiry into disability (House of Commons Report HC 631) found that planning has rather lost focus on one duty that planners, designers and developers have. This is the duty to specifically secure the anticipatory adjustments that all disabled people need if they are to enjoy full use of the built environment.

As Rob points out “we all know about the Equality Act 2010” but are we all so clear that we have a duty actually to anticipate or to ensure development is accessible, and will not actually disadvantage disabled people?

This is the “anticipatory adjustment duty”. It is an extra-over duty that planners must action. Ensuring balanced solutions, and that disabled and other Equality Act protected groups are not disregarded in consultation and decision-making processes, is not, on its own, enough, a High Court judge has pointed out (*Goodall v Reading Borough Council* (2016 EWHC (Admin) 3795)).

We now have up-to-date tools we can use. The latest British Standards define all the facilities and dimensions that buildings need to offer to disabled people. BS 9266:2013 covers accessible housing, and BS 8300-2:2018, public and other buildings.

In BS 8300-1:2018 there is, for the first time, a British Standard for the design of accessible external environments, which sets out the good practice to ensure all disabilities are catered for.

Those who are actually disabled by inaccessible environments need to be reassured that planning as

a profession is not blind to disability; and that we are all delivering to this challenging must-do agenda and are doing it in their interests.

*Peter Monk MRTPI
Planner with Planning Aid*

Jerry Birkbeck

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Victoria Hills’ appointment as RTPI CEO, with her background in engineering and membership of the Institute of Chartered Engineers, is timely. She could help environmental bodies to work together in providing clarity to the challenges affecting cities, towns and rural landscapes within the UK.

She mentioned working with schoolchildren, which is an excellent concept. However, this needs a coordinated approach that brings together the key professional institutions. This must commence at school level through proper representation in the national curriculum and has to continue through a shared undergraduate teaching.

Over many years as both planner and landscape architect, I saw just how poorly aware the key professions are of one another.

It’s about education, awareness and a positive approach by professional bodies to move out of their silos and truly work together. Action is critical if we are ever to see the principles of all disciplines put in place at that early stage of learning. So, over to you Victoria – and the best of luck!

*Jerry Birkbeck
Planner and landscape architect (rtd)*