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News
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Chair's column

by Sam McCabe, National Chair

WiP is nearly 40 years old. I sincerely hope that WiP and organisations like ours won't still be needed in another 40 years but, as things stand, our presence remains vital. Over that time, we have argued that women – and ethnic minorities, disabled people and other under-represented groups - deserve a metaphorical seat at the table, our voices heard. Slowly things began to change. A few years ago companies couldn't get enough of EDI – we saw annual reports talking about representation, and Boards talked of inclusive cultures, targets.



Sam McCabe
National Chair of Women in Property

In fairness much good work has been done and there is considerably more awareness of the issues surrounding EDI, but now I wonder if things have actually gone the other way? Has EDI become a victim of its own success? EDI hasn't stopped mattering, but it seems that it is no longer fashionable. There is a reluctance to use the EDI terminology, in part because of the political backlash coming from the US, but it could also be that some businesses believe they've resolved the problem in their organisation. A few more women at senior level, a shiny new inclusion policy in place.

But this doesn't automatically mean the system has changed. Have we mistaken the presence of some successful individuals at or near the top, for evidence that things are working, that the barriers have disappeared? In our industry we know that equity, diversity and inclusion can look very different across the sectors and at board, project and site level. Our industry has a particular problem because we're designing and delivering the places in which everyone else lives, works and spends time. So, diversity isn't simply an HR issue. Who is in the room, at the table or on site, affects what questions get asked, how spaces and places are designed and how good our decisions are. So yes, there is still much work to be done.



Melanie Flaherty of Property Week, and Chithra Marsh

Chithra in the Hall of Fame

Congratulations to WiP Board Director and former National Chair, Chithra Marsh, who has been inducted into the Property Week Inspiring Women in Property Awards Hall of Fame, which honours exceptional trailblazers and leaders who have transformed the UK property sector. Receiving the award, Chithra said:

"It almost feels like cheating to be awarded for something that I enjoy so much and that has been central to my life for so many years!

But this isn't just my story – this is about all of us. We should all be celebrated for our differences, irrespective of ethnicity, gender or age. Isn't that what inclusion is all about? My Women in Property 'family' has been a wonderful, embracing influence. I proudly and passionately support their endeavours for diversity and inclusion in the industry."



Ferries, Bikes and Popemobiles!
London to Paris 2026

Train hard, play hard! These seemed to be the general rules of engagement for the 51 cyclists who set off from London to Paris, as they took on the latest Women in Property Sweatworking challenge, representing all sectors of the property and construction industry.

Many of the all-women team hadn't been on a bike since they were kids, let alone chosen to cycle the 180-mile distance before, some were experienced athletes, but all came at it from a position of camaraderie, friendship, team spirit and more than a little resilience – the WiP ethos on wheels!

Speaking on the Start line Maddie Difazio Wright, the driving force behind the ride and creator of WiP Sweatworking, said,

"The difference between an ordeal and an adventure is attitude. Each person here has their own reason for doing this event and I urge you to be aware of that. Someone stood next to you has an internal driver than you won't see. Take the time to find that out, because the people we meet are often carrying gifts we cannot see."

The trip wasn't without its challenges – a cancelled ferry meant cycling through France at 5am, Paris roads were closed off and the ride rerouted because the Pope was in town, and there were the inevitable mechanicals but everyone responded with wonderfully good humour, and mutual support, all under the guidance of the amazing team from Discover Adventure.

The final destination was the iconic Eiffel Tower, the perfect place for a team photo opportunity, followed that evening with a celebration party and the 'Ultimate Spirit of the Ride' Award.





A huge thank you to our sponsors MUSE, Highgate Transportation, Harley Haddow, CitiVale, CDA Architects and of course us, Women in Property. It was through you – and 51 determined women - that all of this was possible.

So, what would WiP members like to do next? We're thinking about doing a ride every two years, but we'd love to hear from you. Where shall we go? Where will the next adventure begin? Contact Maddie@mdwconsulting.co.uk with your thoughts.

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Voices from the ride

"I knew no one at the beginning of the journey but the support and encouragement that I saw and received really made me proud just remembering that when we work towards achieving something together, we can accomplish greatness."

"It's all downhill from here!"

"We made it! The last few days have been filled with joy, laughter and pure grit and determination. It has been a truly inspirational experience of a lifetime meeting these extraordinary women. What shall we do next Women in Property? It's going to be hard to top this!"

"Beyond the impressive feat of cycling from London to Paris, this event has clearly achieved something much bigger; it's inspired and connected people, and it's given dozens of remarkable women a shared experience that they'll remember for years to come."



Strategy Day 2026

Starting in September 2023, our leadership team has held an annual Strategy Day, with the Limited Board, the National Team and the National Executive Team. We commit valuable time to reviewing activity, looking at membership, exploring opportunities, debating future plans and interrogating budgets, this year lead by Limited Board Chair Rachel Bell and Vice Chair, Hannah Lloyd. Headline items included:

The 2026 Membership Survey

We run the survey every two years and have established a small working group to drill down into the responses. We will be feeding back to you via our next national newsletter.

Social Value

We know the work we all do is of tremendous value, particularly Outreach, Mentoring, Inclusion and professional development but we don't currently measure its social impact. So we will be forming a working group to explore this how we can support social value for our members, partners, sponsors and supporters.





Women in Property Future Industry

We are working on a dynamic new programme that incorporates our Outreach and development activity, from primary school through to mid-career. A Task Group drawn from our Outreach teams across the branches has been working on Future Industry for some months, with a launch planned in 2027, our 40th Anniversary year.

2027 – WiP's 40th Anniversary

2027 will be a year to remember. 40 years after the organisation was formed it is now widely regarded as being one of the most highly respected 'women in' networks in the country and we have much to be proud of, so it's time to celebrate! We are working on national plans and will be guiding the branches on their own activity.



Welcoming Two New Board Members

As we get ready to celebrate our 40th anniversary in 2027, the Women in Property team is growing. We are thrilled to announce that Laura Stone and Fiona Cameron have joined our Limited Board as our newest Non-Executive Directors (NEDs).

Both Laura and Fiona bring business acumen and legal expertise to the table. They'll be stepping in to help guide our overarching strategy and governance, while also working closely with our WiP working groups.



Laura Stone



Fiona Cameron

• **Laura Stone:** Laura is a lawyer by trade and a mentor for The Circle Partnership, she was previously the COO and General Counsel at the B-Corp accredited Greencore Homes.

• **Fiona Cameron:** based in Edinburgh, Fiona is a Dispute Resolution Partner at Gillespie MacAndrew, which has a long-standing relationship with WiP.

With Laura and Fiona on board, our leadership team grows to 12. Both share our core WiP ethos: a belief in purpose, strong support systems, genuine friendship, and empowering personal and professional development.

We would like to extend our thanks to the Limited Board, who dedicate valuable time and insight in support of Women in Property.

Celebrating our National Finalists

We recently brought our 2026 regional winners together in London for our Student Awards National Finalists Day – a chance to make new connections, hear from people across the built environment and spend a day thinking about where their own careers might take them.

A huge thanks to Material Source for hosting us at their Farringdon studio, where the day began with a tour of their Future Materials Library, exploring innovation, retrofit and the materials shaping the future of our industry.

We heard from two inspirational speakers, each sharing their career paths and favourite projects: Olaide Oboh discussing Socius & Populate and Sara Willard on Workable City. Alongside the talks, there was an open Q&A where panellists Sam McCabe, National Chair and WSP, and Nicola Rudman, WiP Board Director and Fairhursts, joined Olaide to offer up candid advice based on personal experiences.

Later we were treated to a tour of the recently completed 123 Golden Lane by sustainable developer Bywater, guided by the knowledgeable Amber Wren. A brilliant development marrying retrofit of a historic building with a timber two storey extension.

The Student Awards are about much more than the award itself. We want to give talented students from across the UK exposure to the breadth of our industry, access to people working within it and, importantly, a network of their own that can grow alongside their careers.

Thank you to Olaide, Sarah and Amber for sharing their experiences so generously, and to the Women in Property team who brought the day together – Shannon Conway, Nicola Rudman, Sam McCabe and Charlotte Bayliss. The day was supported by Picture This. Congratulations again to all our 2026 Student Award winners. We can't wait to see what you do next.













Collaborating at UK Construction Week

WiP was back at the NEC in September, for UK Construction Week. Hosted by our Midlands branch, the WiP stand welcomed visitors from across the industry, including women at mid-career looking to grow their networks, students and trainees seeking guidance on how to secure work placements, and an encouraging number of enthusiastic and empathetic men wanting to recruit more women to their teams.

WiP got together with our friends at NAWIC and G4C West Midlands for a session in the Build Connect Lounge – 'Women building the reset'. This brought women from across construction and the wider built environment together for four round table discussions, asking the central question, "If we are resetting construction, what should we do differently?". Among the main points raised were how we encourage young girls (as young as 8 and 9) into the industry; combating site intimidation; providing guidance and policy on AI at organisational level to help teams harness and benefit from the technology; implementing strong management systems, from the top, to encourage greater responsibility; and creating more opportunities for smaller companies, through improved procurement and supply chain resilience.

Later in the day, WiP former National Chair, Emma Richman, joined a Women in Construction panel for a powerful conversation and an engaging audience Q&A, when panellists were asked how they gained confidence (experience translates into confidence, being around good people who have your back, networking); how important are professional networks (invaluable, friendships, learning, partnerships) and what advice would you give your younger self (focus on what you can do, not what you can't, never apologise for who you are, don't overthink things, have fun). And a 'last word'… things have improved but why do we still have a panel called 'Women in construction'? We are all people in construction.





What Stands Between Us and a Balanced Work Life?

Dr Catalina Ionita, Urban Design Studio Director Planit

Is work-life balance real, or is it just another thing we feel guilty for getting wrong? Not enough at work, not enough at home, not enough for our friends, families or ourselves. That tension sat at the heart of Women in Property North West's Building Balance event, hosted by our sponsors Material Source.

The event was organised in response to Women in Property's wider Building Balance campaign and member survey, which explored childcare, flexibility and work-life balance across the property and construction industry. The findings were striking: 50% of respondents had considered leaving the industry because of work-life imbalance, while 42% said they regularly worked beyond their contracted hours. But the conversation was much broader than childcare or parenting. It was about the realities of modern working life and whether our workplaces are flexible enough to reflect them.

Chaired by David Smalley of Material Source, the panel brought together Ciaron Wilkinson of Manchester Museum, Raluca-Diana Anghelina of RIBA, Jessica Spencer of Urbanistas and Cartwright Pickard, and Jade Anderson of Male Allies UK. The discussion was open, honest and refreshingly free of easy answers. One message came through clearly: there is no universal version of balance.

For some, flexibility means school pick-ups or caring for elderly relatives. For others, it means studying, managing health, pursuing interests outside work or simply protecting enough time and energy to have a life beyond the office. None of those needs is more valid than another.

Ashley Taylor-Watts, Director of Define Architects reflected that although balance sounds simple, it is deeply personal. Understanding and inclusivity are fundamental, and people are more able to show up at their best when they feel at their best. In an industry that can still be all-consuming, open and honest conversations matter.



Lisa Sawyer, Director of Land Studio challenged the phrase "work-life balance" itself. Does it create the wrong frame: work on one side, life on the other, permanently competing for space? Perhaps "work-life harmony" is more useful. Her key words from the evening were simple: flexibility, trust and communication.

Women in Property North West Chair and Kingsdene MD Louise Emmott echoed that there can be no one-size-fits-all solution. Trust has to work both ways. Communication matters. Empathy matters. People have different responsibilities, priorities and even different times of day when they do their best work.

Sometimes the changes needed are small. If you send an email outside the traditional 9-to-5 and do not expect an immediate response, say so. If someone needs flexibility for caring responsibilities, do not make them feel they have to justify their commitment. And flexibility should not be framed solely as a women's issue. Men have caring responsibilities too, while parents, non-parents and carers all benefit from workplaces where they can be honest about what they need.

The wider Building Balance campaign makes the same point: flexibility works best when it is embedded in workplace culture rather than treated as a favour, with greater emphasis on trust and outcomes rather than presenteeism.

Perhaps the problem is that we still treat work-life balance as something individuals are expected to solve themselves: manage your diary better, set stronger boundaries, be more resilient, learn to say no. Those things can help, but they only go so far.

If organisations genuinely want healthier, more fulfilled and more effective people, the conversation has to move beyond personal resilience. It needs realistic expectations, meaningful flexibility, clear boundaries, trust, empathy and leaders prepared to create the conditions in which different people can thrive.

Perhaps balance is not something we achieve once and keep forever. Perhaps it is something we continually renegotiate as careers, families, responsibilities and priorities change.

The workplace needs to be flexible enough to renegotiate with us.

North West Branch Dinner

The curtains rose, the lights sparkled and the spirit of the Moulin Rouge arrived in Manchester as Women in Property North West welcomed guests to its highly anticipated Annual Dinner.

From the moment guests arrived, the evening delivered all the energy, elegance and showmanship that the famous Parisian cabaret is known for. Rich colours, sparkling entertainment and an atmosphere of celebration provided the perfect backdrop for one of the North West property sector's most anticipated events.

This year's event proudly supported Maggie's, the cancer support charity that provides free practical, emotional and social support for people living with cancer and their families. Through the generosity of attendees, sponsors and supporters, the event raised more than £11,500 for the charity!

Women in Property North West extends its sincere thanks to BTP Architects, Material Source Studio, Kellen Homes, Primas Law, PMP, Langtree, NJL Consulting, Wallace Whittle, LK Group, Project Furniture Residential, Campbell Consult, Connectin Events and Victoria Warehouse for their generosity and commitment in making the event such a memorable occasion.







Upcoming industry events:



Male Allies UK will bring 250 people together at NatWest on **Friday 20 November** for **Stronger Together Conference 2026**, a full day of evidence, lived experience, storytelling and practical participation. New State of Allyship research from Ipsos will open a wider conversation about men, masculinity and belonging; how we build bridges across genuine difference; what helps action become possible inside workplaces; and what sport, family, media and community can teach us about connection.

Stronger Together is not only for men. It is for anyone who believes gender dialogue, belonging, human connection and shared responsibility matter. Our community can access the £249 Early-Bird Delegate rate, reduced from £499, using code EARLY-WIPROP-50 while Early-Bird places remain available. Find out more and book: Stronger Together Conference 2026



London Build 2026
The UK's award-winning construction show takes place on **November 25th and 26th at Excel London**. With 45,000 registered visitors from across the built environment private and public sectors, 900 speakers, 650+ exhibitors and 17 CPD conference stages including Skyscaper & Tall Buildings, AI & Digital, Fire Safety, Sustainability, Diversity & Inclusion.

Hear from Women in Property at London Build

We'll be at London Build, and we'd love to see you there. Women in Property will be represented across the programme by **Sam McCabe**, National Chair and **Emma Richman**, Former National Chair who will be joining multiple panels across the event, including:

- **Affordable Housing: Meeting the UK's Growing Needs**
  UK Housing Stage | 25 November | 2pm
- **Engaging Occupants Effectively: Promoting Fire Safety in Residential Buildings**
  Fire Safety Arena | 25 November | 3pm
- **Building Better Together: Collaborative Approaches Between Architects, Contractors, and Clients**
  MMC Stage | 26 November | 2pm
- **Delivering the Sustainable Homes of the Future, Today**
  Sustainability Arena | 26 November | 3pm

Come along to hear from us across these sessions, connect with the industry and be part of the conversations shaping the future of construction and the built environment.
To register, click this link.



UK Passive House conference
The UK Passive House Conference takes place on 18th November and, in collaboration with the Passivhaus Trust, the South East branch is hosting an early morning breakfast and panel discussion at the RICS in London, a great opportunity to learn and network before the conference begins. With the new London Plan on the horizon, the session will explore the role of Passive House in shaping the future of London's built environment.

National Chair, Sam McCabe - whose professional role is Passive House Lead UK at WSP - is moderating the panel, which includes Ann-Marie Fallon, Co-Director Passivhaus Trust, Hannah Nobel, Director Place Advisory at Avison Young, and Matteo Mazzola, Project Director and certified Passivhaus designer at TP Bennett Architects.

Success Stories

It's Awards season and WiP members are smashing it!



The South West branch kicked off October with four committee members shortlisted at the **Insider South West Property Awards**. Finalists included Emily Coombes, JBP Communications, Samantha Fortune, Fortune Business Development Ltd, and Chloe Llewellin, Gleeds, for Emerging Property Person of the Year. South West Chair, Coralie McKeivor, Freeths, took home the prize for the Property Personality of the Year category – congratulations to Coralie and all the finalists.





At this year's **Property Week Inspiring Women in Property (IWIP) Awards**, Gillian Murray of Slipperfield Building Consultancy and Slipperfield Training, won Woman of the Year (Commercial) and South West Vice Chair, Chloe Llewellin of Gleeds, won the Rising Star (Commercial) category. Congratulations to both of them! Maddie Difazio-Wright, MDW Consulting, was shortlisted for Innovator of the Year and, as reported on our front page, Chithra Marsh was inducted into the IWIP Hall of Fame. We are delighted for all of you!



Shelley Oliver, Associate Architect at Co Create Architects, was the winner of the Unsung Hero Award at this year's **Torbay Business Awards**. Congratulations Shelley!



Women in Property Scotland has won the Diversity & Inclusion Leadership Award (Micro) at the The Herald Scottish Impact Awards 2026, sponsored by Diageo. This recognises the work being done to create opportunities, share knowledge, and champion greater representation across the built environment sector. We are incredibly proud of the impact our committee, members and volunteers continue to make in driving progress towards a more balanced and inclusive industry.



South West committee member **Samantha Fortune**, Fortune Business Development Ltd, has been shortlisted in the 'One to watch' category for this year's **Bath Property Awards**. Good luck Sam!



Many congratulations to **Maria Francké** who has been presented with the Outstanding Contribution to Industry Award at the inaugural Real Estate:Scotland Dinner. Maria, a former WiP National Chair, has her own planning consultancy, Maria Francké Planning Ltd and is a Member of the Policy and Planning and Development Committees for Real Estate: Scotland.



Julie O'Rourke has joined the Consents Team at Carter Jonas as a Senior Planner.