

Chair's column

by Chithra Marsh, National Chair

A year ago I was mulling over what I would write as incoming National Chair and here I am now, trying to summarise that year in 300 words, no easy task!

If this were a word cloud, you'd see it include 'frenetic, warmth, collaboration, adrenalin, sharing, challenge, partnership, support, friendship...' but the stand-out word for me would be 'team'. In fact, so many teams.

This starts with the national team – our immediate past National Chair, Nicola Jones and incoming National Chair, Jennifer Winyard. This three-layer approach, introduced a couple of years ago, gives the support, experience and longevity that is so important for the National Chair role. We are guided by Women in Property's directors, who give oversight and governance at a strategic level.

Then there are the branch Chairs and their committees, all volunteers like us and all giving their time, enthusiasm and commitment to the ongoing success of the organisation, managing the business in their regions. Finally, there is the National Executive who support all of us – and that includes you, our members – with the day-

to-day running of the organisation, from membership to events, treasury to PR.

And let's not forget our rapidly growing 'team' of sponsors! We are immensely grateful to our four national Student Awards sponsors – Amazon, Bouygues, Savills and tp bennett – who have again committed to another year behind the Awards programme, but our appreciation extends to all those businesses who have got behind us over the past year, endorsing all that we stand for.

Finally, my fellow directors and the team at Buttress Architects who have given me the space to fully commit to this role.

So many people to thank, so little time left because, as of 1st March, I step down and we welcome Jennifer Winyard as National Chair. I would like to personally wish Jennifer all the very best in her role and thank all of you for your ongoing support of Women in Property. We thrive through you!



Chithra Marsh
National Chair of Women in Property

The People | Innovation | Place Summit

hosted by Women in Property #PIPbyWiP

The countdown is on, and 14th November 2024 is a date not to be missed! Women in Property will be holding our first, CPD-accredited **People | Innovation | Place Summit** at the wonderful [Dynamic Earth](#) in Edinburgh, hosted by our Scotland branches, exploring the theme 'Rethinking Places'. We are delighted to announce that McLaughlin & Harvey is joining us as headline sponsor and discussions are underway with other businesses, on a range of packages, including networking receptions and exhibition space. Meanwhile the team has secured a high-profile Chair, as well as finalising speakers, all of whom will be revealed soon.

Chithra Marsh, National Chair, said "We're heading north of the border for the 2024 summit and with a fabulous venue this is a celebration of all that Women in Property is about, in both Scotland and across the rest of the UK. Our aspiration is for the People-Innovation-Place Summit to become a brand in its own right, a regular fixture on the industry calendar and open to all. This is a great start."



**People
Innovation
Place
Summit**

Hosted by
Women in Property



National Student Awards

Sponsored by:



tp bennett

networking organisation | advancement of women | established careers | actively involved in property and construction | national body

Unlocking Potential

Introducing our incoming National Chair – Jennifer Winyard

Jennifer Winyard will soon be stepping up to become National Chair, when Chithra Marsh's term ends on 29th February.



Jennifer's involvement with Women in Property goes back 17 years, when she joined as a Yorkshire & North East member. She was branch Chair in 2014 and has been Student Awards and Mentoring Ambassador in the region, both of which remain a major focus for her – she now leads on the National Student Awards programme.

Her 'day job' is with Barratt Homes & David Wilson Homes, based in Leeds, where she is Senior Strategic Land Manager.

"Barratt is doing a lot with internal EDI programmes to encourage women in the business, but women are still very underrepresented in the housebuilding sector and many are unaware of the scope of careers available to

them. For example, I am a qualified planner and surveyor with RTPI and RICS accreditation both of which are invaluable in the work I do, but early in my career – I started in a planning consultancy – I had no idea there were so many options in this industry. I am keen to change some minds about getting into housebuilding.

"It isn't just housebuilding though. Encouraging girls and young women to consider a career in the property and construction industry was my main motivation for joining Women in Property and still is, including unlocking potential among children and young people – and changing the mindsets of ill-informed educators and within the industry. I'm going back to WiP basics!"

Representation at APPG

The Women in Property National Team and directors represent the organisation at the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Women and Work which is held both in person in Westminster and virtually. This is a cross-party group that provides a Parliamentary forum to examine constructively and debate the role that policy makers can play to deliver gender balance within the economy. It also allows Members of Parliament and interested stakeholders to examine the responsibilities of employers and to explore what more is required from the private, public and third sectors to deliver the Government's ambitions for women and work.



Chaired by MPs Jess Phillips and Flick Drummond, the current series has included The Teens: Equipping Future Workers, The Twenties: Nurturing female Talent in Male Dominated Workplaces, The Thirties: Balancing Priorities and The Forties: Family Breakdown. Each session usually

includes three or four speakers who talk for a few minutes on the theme, after which members of the audience have the opportunity to comment or pose a question. If you would like to hear more about the work of the APPG click [here](#).

The voice of Women in Property

An important part of the National Chair role is engagement with other industry organisations and speaking on public platforms, to help our collective voice be heard. As well as partnering with UK Construction Week, when we joined and curated panels respectively, for their May and October events, we also supported London Build in November, when Chithra Marsh was a panellist discussing 'Beyond the Binary: Supporting gender diversity in the construction industry' alongside representatives from Jacobs, BAM, Balfour Beatty and Sir Robert McAlpine. Chithra also chaired a panel 'Empowering women in construction: navigating bias and stereotypes', steering the debate with Mace, Atkins, Bechtel and MICIM.

Chithra was in Westminster for two of the APPG sessions, noting the pressing need for professionals to engage with schools, given the limited understanding of the industry among careers advisors. And most recently she was invited by public affairs agency PLMR to join an

Insights event with Matthew Pennycook MP, Shadow Minister for Housing and Planning, where she questioned him on public sector procurement frameworks and the 'race to the bottom' on fees jeopardising quality of expertise.



Thanks for the feedback

In September 2023, we asked you for feedback on the organisation, its value to you professionally and your thoughts on EDI in the industry.

The good news is that the vast majority of you are very happy with your membership and are making the most of all the opportunities it brings. You rate highly having this professional network, which helps raise the profile of women in the industry and you particularly like the variety of in person events.

You believe that, while there has been an improvement in the representation of 'non white' people in the industry, this is not coming through at the senior or leadership level and is still a long way off.

"There's more visibility of we, the workers, but as with everything else, senior level changes very, very slowly."

It is a similar story for the LGBTQ+ community, where representation has improved through the growth of diversity groups and allyship. Importantly, many of you commented that knowing an individual's sexuality is not relevant to business, where the aim should be inclusivity for all.

On the subject of allies, we asked you if you would like to see membership extended to our allies, of all genders? This resulted in an almost even 30% each for Yes/No/Don't Know - 'No' had the majority - but it was the passion in many of the comments that was striking, vocalising a firm desire to remain a women only organisation. One respondent summed it up:

"The world is changing and we need to evolve to be diverse and inclusive – practice what we preach. But we also need safe spaces for women to feel comfortable to speak up, so a mix is required."

Our ethos has always been one of working towards an inclusive industry. Empowering women to evolve and grow professionally and personally remains our priority. We are pleased that the majority of our events are open to all genders and we are grateful for the support of our allies across the country but, at this time, we will not be making further changes to the membership criteria, instead keeping this under review.

Festive Spirit

From cocktails to wreathmaking, Women in Property branches made the most of the festive season.

Lancashire and Cumbria's popular wreath making event made a return in November at the Tithe Barn in Carlisle, with even more people attending than last year.



The **South East** branch had a fantastic morning in the luxurious surroundings of the 5* Dixon Tower Bridge, for a pre-Christmas networking breakfast in the Courtroom Bar. It was great to see so many members and non-members. The hotel takes its name from the architect John Dixon Butler RA, FRIBA who was also surveyor to the Metropolitan Police.



The **Yorkshire & North East** Christmas Cocktail Party at Harvey Nichols, Leeds was a great success. Thanks to sponsors Royal Pilgrim Communications and SLR Consulting and to everyone who came along for a fantastic networking event.



South Wales hosted its biggest event to date, the inaugural Christmas Lunch at The Parkgate Hotel with over 150 guests in attendance. The event was kindly sponsored by Stride Treglown and Bouygues, who provided guest speakers Karyn Williams and Donna Griffiths respectively and Student Awards winner, Freya Kirby, participated in a Q&A. A lovely event, even better because it raised in the region of £1,300 for Llamau.



The **South West** branch and 100s of guests had a fantastic Christmas 'night at the museum'! Thanks to sponsors RLB LLP and Colliers. Once again, the branch was able to fundraise for Migrateful.



Building Balance

Helen James, Gleeds and Women in Property
South West committee



Helen James, Gleeds and Women in Property South West committee

Women in Property, with Gleeds and Buro Happold are launching Building Balance, a comprehensive survey on wellbeing, careers and the impact of childcare on the industry.

We know as an industry that a diverse, fair, inclusive workforce increases productivity, is more creative and innovative and ultimately increases the bottom line. We also know there is a skills shortage in the industry.

The property industry demands a lot, with constant change and challenging deadlines. In today's world, when you factor in a family, childcare costs and availability, alongside one's own commitments and wellbeing there is a lot to juggle, to be the best professional you, and the best personal you. Yet, due to the cost of childcare, some parents are having to decide whether they can both afford to work. And today, with a greater reliance on paid professional childcare, the supply cannot meet

the demand, meaning that people are unable to return to work when they want to, or work the hours at the times they want.

Women in Property is launching Building Balance to identify the reality of the affordability and availability of childcare. Using the findings, we will raise the awareness and significance of the issues and the impact this is having on businesses and the industry. We want to make improvements for all, not only supporting those returning to work or those with families. By retaining our talented people, we can create a diverse and inclusive culture that makes business sense and contributes to a thriving construction and property industry.

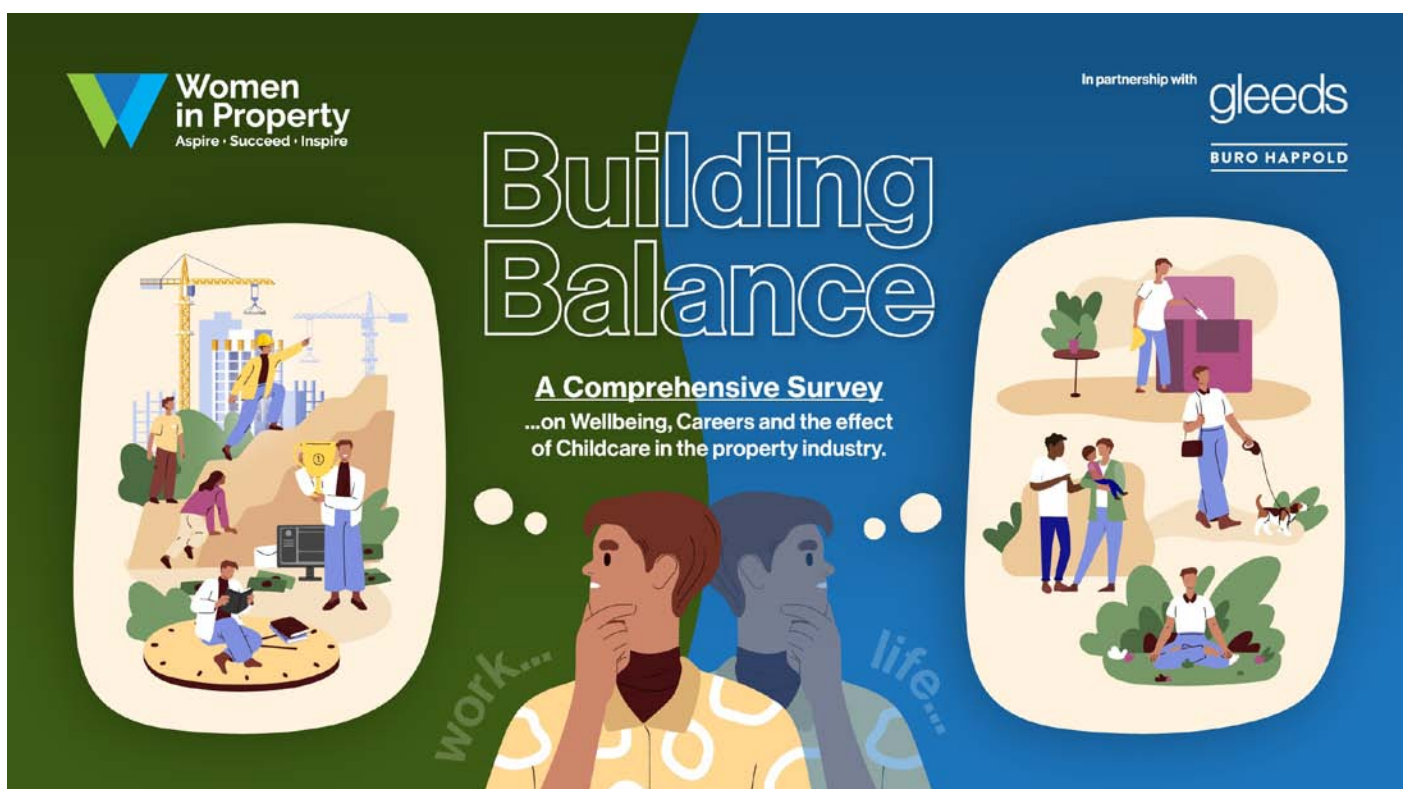
The Building Balance survey is now live and closes on 1st February. We would appreciate it if you would:

Complete the survey via this link



Share it on your social platforms

This is your industry. You can help to shape and improve it for the next generations.



The win win of student placements

Vicki Odili, director of tp bennett, National Student Awards national sponsor



"Through our involvement with Women in Property and the Student Awards, tp bennett has enjoyed the ongoing opportunity to support talent joining the construction sector. Our teams have made a collective effort

to accommodate some of these students for work placements, both internally and with connections from across the industry. Both our in-house sustainability team in London, and our Interior design team in Manchester, have employed students that we were introduced to through the WiP student regional finalists.

Hettie Wood joined our sustainability team as a year-out student from her planning degree, until September last year. She has since returned and is still working two days a week with us, while she completes her final year of studies at Birmingham City University. Beatrice Allen, a finalist in the 2023 Awards, is working in tp bennett's

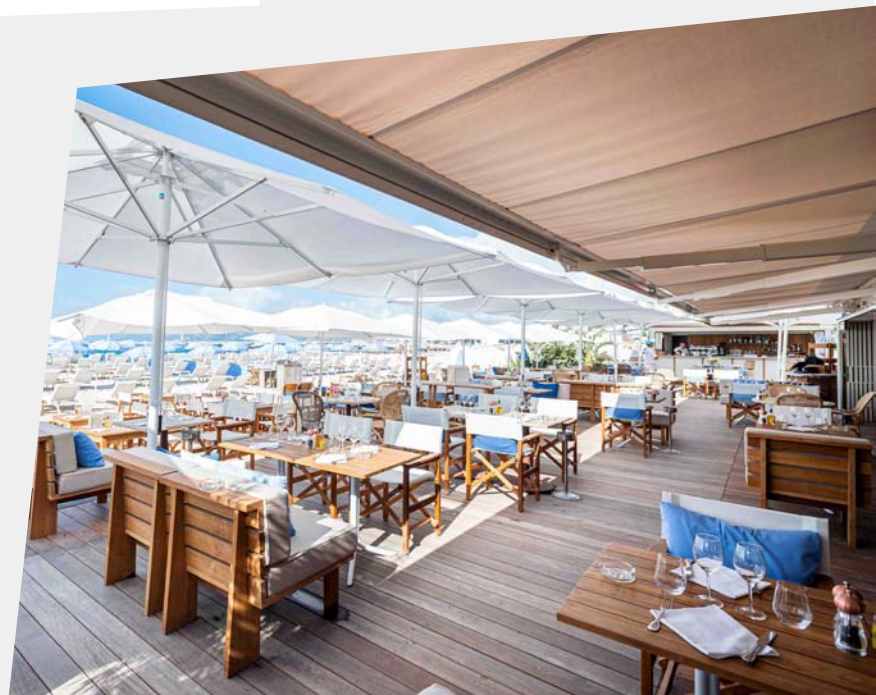
Manchester office as a junior interior designer on a year's placement from Manchester Metropolitan University. And we were able to introduce another national finalist, Alexa Skillett-Moore studying Civil Engineering at London South Bank, to AKT II where she secured a placement.

These work placements have been incredibly rewarding, both for our teams, and to see the growth in the students' confidence through the year-long experience. We would recommend more industry leaders to take part in the initiative for the value it can bring to students, our teams, and the wider industry."

Maximising MIPIM

The Women in Property Breakfast has become a regular fixture on the MIPIM calendar, a popular and relaxed start to the frenetic networking week that is MIPIM, and a great opportunity to catch up with friends and make new contacts, over a light buffet breakfast. We are delighted that Crowe will very kindly be hosting Women in Property members and their guests at a new venue, the beautiful Plage Goé-land on the Croisette on 12th March.

Ahead of that, to give best advice on planning your trip, juggling your diary and 'working the room', Crowe will also be hosting two 'Maximising MIPIM' evening drinks receptions at their offices in London on 1st February, and Manchester on 27th February. Our thanks to Crowe for their support. Please visit our [events pages](#) for details of how to register.



Branch News



North West branch held its biggest ever sold out Annual Dinner in October, with 470 guests including 105 members and 22 from the committee. It was an evening of dancing, networking and glitter with entertainment from Girls that Mix and DJ Hattie. The branch

celebrated everything it has achieved in the

North West in 2023 and together raised nearly £6,000 for charity Girls Out Loud. The committee is already busy planning the 2024 event, so get ready to secure your place at the property party of the year!



15th November the **Thames Valley** satellite hosted an enjoyable evening at Bicester Village. The managing agents gave a talk on development at the Village and future tenants, as well as the sustainability initiatives they are implementing across the Bicester Village portfolio. The

presentation was followed by a buffet and drinks, networking and some late-night shopping.



Lancashire & Cumbria members and guests discovered their cocktail creating talents in a special Cocktail Making Class which took place in September at Revolution Preston, returning by popularity for second year. Meanwhile, the event

plan for next year is looking strong so far with more events taking place in Preston and Lancaster for Lancashire based members.



The **South Wales** branch held a charity netball tournament

to raise money for Llamau.

Held at Sophia Gardens, seven teams took part from across the industry, with the winning 'All Stars' comprising players from Savills, Turley and Les Gros Solicitors. Powell Dobson Architects were gracious runners up. It was a great event, kindly sponsored by RAM RE Property Advisors who provided sports drinks and water and a celebratory drinks reception for all competitors afterwards.



The **Solent** satellite held a Women in Golf and Business networking morning together with a practical coaching session at Hamptworth Golf Course. 17 attendees were joined by PGA Professionals Katie Dawkins and Nicky Lawrenson (Founder of Women in Golf and Business), involving breakfast, a mindset talk and a practical golf coaching session.

Further golf events will be coming to other regions this year – keep an eye on the website for details.



Yorkshire and North East held an afternoon tea in partnership with Smart Works, sponsored by Andrew Moseley Associates. Smart Works is a UK charity that provides women with the clothing, coaching and confidence they need to succeed in interviews and get the job. The event was held at the DoubleTree Sky Lounge in Leeds and raised much needed funds. It demonstrated what support

the property sector can provide to this organisation and highlighted the importance of giving women back their confidence to find careers in our sector.

By the time this newsletter hits your inbox, **Team Vibe the Wave** will be well into their super challenging Atlantic crossing. South West member Maddie Difazio-Wright, with Grace Gilbert and Grace Pybus set off from the Canary Islands on 12th December, en route for Antigua. After rowing 3,000 nautical miles they hope to hit land late January/ early February. Maddie is raising funds for Empire Fighting Chance and would welcome any support you can give – follow this [link](#). Good luck team!



Success stories



Gemma Cornwall has launched a planet-focused building surveying consultancy, Viridium. Alongside traditional building surveying services, the company offers specialist sustainability advice on decarbonisation, energy efficiency and sustainable development.



Marion Room has joined Fairhursts Design Group as Director.



Kath Sibley has joined Harrison Drury as Partner and Head of the Construction Department.



Congratulations to **Mandy St John Davey MBE** who has been recognised in the King's New Years Honours, for her dedication to supporting and mentoring women in property.



Laura Gorman has been named as a Rising Star in the Legal 500 rankings. Congratulations!



Hannah Lewis-Jones has started a new job as Account Lead, Health for Mott MacDonald.



Georgia Thomson has started a new position as Business Development Manager at Lancer Scott.