

Chair's column

by Sam McCabe, National Chair

On 23 April, I found myself reflecting on the strength of community and connection within Women in Property while attending #PIPbyWiP, WiP's People-Innovation-Place Summit in Manchester, brilliantly hosted by the North West branch. Those who attended will understand exactly what I mean and, for anyone who couldn't be there, I strongly encourage you to join our next Summit in September 2027.

The collective passion and commitment to our industry was truly inspiring, matched only by the warmth, friendship and humour in the room. #PIPbyWiP is fast becoming a tangible expression of everything WiP stands for. Congratulations to Team North West — particularly Branch Chair Louise Emmott and former Branch Chair Steph Cox — who poured extraordinary energy and dedication into making it such a memorable event. I hope you enjoy reading more about it in the following pages, and take a look at the video [here](#).

Immediately after #PIPbyWiP, I travelled to Essen, Germany, to attend the 28th International Passivhaus Conference on behalf of WSP — an experience that perfectly reflected my National

Chair theme for 2026, "Building more with less." Being supported by WSP to attend the iPHA conference, alongside so many like minded professionals from around the world, was both inspiring and energising.

I was surrounded by people united by a shared ambition: to learn from one another and to deliver better buildings using fewer resources. Despite differences in building typologies, climates and cultural contexts, the common focus was clear quality, control and low running costs, with users firmly at the heart of design. Making Passivhaus principles both affordable and essential is critical to achieving consistent, high performing buildings. I am deeply grateful to the Women



Sam McCabe
National Chair of Women in Property

in Property network for the role it has played in building my confidence to pursue my passions and retrain later in my career. WiP continues to enable its members to grow, evolve and take bold steps forward. As the saying goes: if you can dream it, you can do it

Join us for the regional Student Awards

Our branches will soon be celebrating the talented built environment students who went before our judging panels earlier this year. Why not join in...with eight events across the country there should be one nearby!

Check [here](#) for further details.

Central Scotland
South East
Northern Scotland
South West
North West
South Wales
Yorkshire & North East
Midlands

14th May, 6pm - Edinburgh
26th May, 6pm - London
28th May 5.30pm - Aberdeen
3rd June, 4.30pm - Bristol
9th June, 5.00pm - Manchester
10th June, 5.00pm - Cardiff
18th June, 6.30pm - Leeds
22nd June, 6.00pm - Birmingham

Inspiring Innovation at the People-Innovation-Place Summit #PIPbyWiP



People
Innovation
Place
Summit

Hosted by
Women in Property



Glorious sunshine greeted delegates to the Lowry Hotel in Manchester, for #PIPbyWiP2026. Hosted by the fabulous North West team, WiP members and non-members came together to explore the theme Inspiring Innovation... and inspiring it was.

National Chair Sam McCabe welcomed us and, after thanking our Summit sponsors, introduced cultural entrepreneur Dr Ria Meera Munshi, our host, who steered us through the day, with panels that looked at innovation from different perspectives. How it is shaping the way we design and manage places — not just through technology, but through a deeper understanding of systems, of nature and of people. Innovation doesn't always happen at scale. Sometimes, it's in the smallest decisions. The conversations we have. The people we listen to. The details we choose not to

overlook. And innovation isn't just about what we're doing now — it's about what comes next... and who gets to shape that, so we also heard from those at the very start of their journey into the built environment.

Dr Ria set the tone, saying "I'm not from the built environment industry. And that's very deliberate. Because sometimes the most interesting conversations about innovation happen when we step slightly outside our own disciplines... and start asking different questions."

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Working in harmony



It was Robyn Hewson, Deputy Editor of Insider North West who asked the questions of our first panel, discussing “Working in Harmony: innovating for dignity, difference and designing with nature.”

The discussion focused on the effects of climate change on communities, the need to strengthen urban resilience, and efforts to renaturalise city environments. Stephen O’Malley, CEO of Civic, pointed to the Mayfield development in Manchester as a key example, where plans include 2,000 new homes alongside retail and mixed-use space. “This scheme highlights the importance of creating meaningful habitats that support biodiversity. Here the river is being uncovered, trees are being planted and the river and park are being utilised for their calming, soothing qualities.”

Steve Connor is CEO of Creative Concern and Co-Founder of Cyan Lines, which aims to create 100 miles of routes across Manchester and Salford, connecting people with a series of blue and green spaces. He said, “Ecosystems are either dead or dying. Cyan Lines is a direct response, the

move must be away from grey, to green and blue. We are finding excuses to put more nature in wherever we can and layering it with active travel and flood resistance.”

Eve Holt, Head of Policy and Implementation at Greater Manchester Combined Authority also picked up the importance of nature and dignity, referring to Live Well, one of Manchester’s key strategies and its quest to create harmonious interdependence. “This is about designing for human nature, dignity. We are in very polarising times. Every time you enter a space your impression will be different from the next person’s so we must find ways to cater for that, create cultural curiosity.”

Phil Hepworth, Director at AEW Architects, talked us through an extremely successful scheme, Stockroom in the heart of Stockport,

when the design team worked with the local community, inviting them to rediscover Stockport. Again, this project is about reconnecting, providing something for people that encourages them to stay. “This was about ‘daylighting’ an under loved ‘60s space, giving new life to a library and bringing together children and different social groups. We found that retail footfall went up by 10% and the library, which used to get 100,000 visitors per year, now gets 100,000 per week.”

How do schemes like these attract funders? Steve Connor said, “Asset value shoots up as soon as you sit it next to green/blue infrastructure” and Stephen O’Malley added “If you drive the footfall to create the market conditions, you’ll give confidence to investors. The head and the heart are critical.”



Small changes, big impact



Susan Leadbetter, Transport Planner and Gender Inclusive Design lead for WSP sat down with client Laurence Neal, Designer with Earls Court Development Company (ECDC), for a Fireside Conversation, under the heading Small Changes, Big Impact: Innovating through Lived Experience and Co-Design.

This offered a compelling look into the work both were involved in on the ECDC development through the Public Realm and Inclusivity Panel (PRIP). The panel brought together participants aged 14 to 80—individuals who are not typically included in decision-making processes for such projects—with a strong emphasis on shared, collective responsibility.

"Understanding lived experience is crucial – it's how we engage, remove assumptions and biases that can lead to real innovation. We were able to get into an open dialogue with people who have lived experience of the city," said Laurence.

Through the PRIP the team got into safety issues very quickly, enabling the development team to get the design brief right, early on. The conversations with local people led to some surprising findings. Take Lizzie, a wheelchair user, for example. While girls generally reported feeling less safe being out and about at night, Lizzie felt safer. With fewer people around it was less busy and easier for her to get about. And

an elderly resident in her 80s who felt safer meeting her friends in the park at night because nobody else was around. Lived experience, not our assumptions.

Susan said "On another scheme I worked on, in the North East, we asked community researchers to go out and engage with residents, effectively handing the research to the community, someone residents already knew and trusted. 'Hard to reach' people aren't actually hard to reach, it's just that we as a sector aren't good at making it convenient and straightforward for them."

The PRIP also included an intergenerational panel. While older members stayed consistent throughout, the younger ones would change each year, so the older people would set the tone and establish trust. It didn't take long for younger ones to start talking. Through the PRIP, people could see why the development team were making certain decisions.

The PRIP's demand for knowledge was huge, wanting technical information and

putting the consultant teams through their paces. The power of hearing first hand from end users was incredible. And it was valuable for the PRIP members too. Of the original group, three quarters were unemployed but towards the end of their involvement most had gone back into work having gained confidence in saying what they needed, what they didn't understand and what should be done differently.

What conclusions can we draw from the PRIP experience? Developers should be really honest about the challenges they face, the scale of development they need, and its commercial viability. They should talk to the community about it, be robust about the issues and, through honest discussion, avoid the risk of getting design decisions wrong. Get buy in from local people and they will advocate for you.

In the case of ECDC, the final planning document included all the amends the community made and achieved planning consent without any objections.



Future Voices

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#PIPbyWi



The third and final panel of the morning - 'Future Voices: Rethinking innovation through the next generation' - introduced us to the incoming generation of built environment professionals, in a panel convened and moderated by Jo Harrop, founder of social enterprise company, PLACED.

First, Jo told us all about PLACED which has been working with community stakeholders since 2011.

"We speak to people about their place, make them part of the decisions, move outside the silos. People just need to be heard, and young people must feel like they are part of the future, that they belong, and they will want to stay. But innovation means change which needs to be handled sensitively. Not everyone will embrace innovation as much as you'd expect."

PLACED Academy provides a pathway into built environment careers, for 11-25 year olds, starting with Foundations for years seven-nine. There is a nine month programme for 14-18 year olds, introducing live projects and then Pathways, for 18-25 year olds, for young people already committed to the built environment, which involves two way mentoring, developing networks and being the best you can.

Joining Jo on the stage were Matt Weir, also from PLACED, Rachel Newton from Manchester School of Architecture and

student panellists, Anu Ibinayo, Rui Jang and Lilia Haken.

"What does innovation mean to you?" asked Jo. "Is it tangible, is it a difficult concept to engage with?"

Matt stressed the importance of giving young people a seat at the table, saying "These schemes will be part of their future so investment in them should be built into tenders and bids. Young people have a different sense of understanding around place, bringing them in will have a lasting benefit. To me this represents innovation."

"We need to ask why we need to innovate? What is it that we're changing?" asked Anu. "Who is invited into a place and how does it welcome them? Innovation needs to be radical, we can talk about things but walking into real world places can still feel very unsafe."

Lilia cited climate change, saying "Innovation today seems to be more about mitigation rather than how we would have perceived innovation

before" and Rui added "There are lots of brilliant ideas in the market - I would like to see some of those innovative concepts put into practice."

Rachel said, "Innovation has to come from a greater range of the built environment skills. People would naturally say it is about digital skills, processes and so on but it's more about tangible skills - going out on site for example - as well as intangibles like understanding the human condition."

Lilia referred to the importance of 'third spaces' such as coffee shops, which are good sites for conversation, to get more people talking and hosting events and Anu agreed, saying the community spaces are an important case study for innovation.

"We need to ensure we have spaces for young people to feel safe and flourish," said Matt. They grow out of the playground and need somewhere to go, we need to create spaces for young people. Innovation would be taking this a step further and pulling it into briefs."



Workshops

Lunchtime gave everyone the opportunity to come together, to catch up with old friends, make new contacts and continue the conversations arising from the morning's panels, as well as exploring the exhibition stands on display. After lunch, delegates joined pre-booked sessions, which offered either three different workshops, or a walking tour.

Thanks to all our amazing workshop hosts, and tour leaders.

- **Jo Harrop**, Founder of PLACED: Interactive Workshop
- **Anne Hughes**, Executive Coach: 'Embracing a challenger mindset'
- **Dr Catalina Ionita**, Urban Design Studio Director at Planit and **Katie Rudin**, Housing and Innovation Director at Akerlof: Design Charette

- **Jonathan Schofield**, Cyan Lines: Walking Tour

Thanks too to our media partner Insider Media, exhibitors Assured Partners International, Auro, Civic, NLIS, PLACED, SES, SLR and Work Boutique and the amazing Connect In Events who helped

create a smooth, seamless day for everyone.

After all that, how many conferences close with an Indian Dance Workshop? Ours did, thanks to Dr Ria! A fabulous, fun way to strengthen those bonds and build relationships.

And finally, our favourite delegate comment:

"As someone with a young daughter, being surrounded by so many intelligent and driven women felt incredibly powerful. It made me feel hopeful. The future looks bright for the next generation of women in the built environment, and I love knowing she'll grow up seeing spaces like this where women are leading and re imagining the world around us!"



MIPIM 2026: Who Gets a Seat at the Table?

Dr Catalina Ionita (Planit), with insights from Claire Beaumont (Gorvins Solicitors) and Rachael Cunliffe (Engage 5)

MIPIM is often described as the global stage for real estate and in many ways, it is. A place where deals are shaped, narratives are set, and visibility can shift trajectories. But as with any stage, the question is not just who is present, but who feels able to participate, to belong, and to be heard.

Through conversations with Women in Property NW committee members Claire Beaumont of Gorvins Solicitors and Rachael Cunliffe of Engage 5, this year's MIPIM reveals both the opportunities and the underlying tensions that continue to shape the industry.

"MIPIM is unique," Claire reflects. "It is a once a year chance to have conversations you simply would not have back in the UK." And she is right. The density of access, to people, projects and ideas, is unmatched. It is a space where visibility can be accelerated, where introductions happen organically, and where a single conversation can open unexpected doors.

But access is not the same as inclusion.

Behind the polished façade of the Croisette lies a more complex reality. The cost of attendance, the pressure to be constantly on, and the informal nature of networking can create barriers, particularly for those attending alone or without the backing of a larger organisation.

Rachael, attending her sixth MIPIM, highlights another important dynamic, the need to actively shape your own experience. "It gets better every year," she says, not because MIPIM changes, but because you learn how to navigate it. This year, stepping into the Palais and exploring new formats such as runs, swimming, and alternative events opened up different networks and conversations.

And that is where the real opportunity lies.

Not in following the same circuits or attending the same events year after year, but in deliberately stepping outside them. In challenging who you speak to, where you show up, and how you position yourself within the space. Yet, even in a crowd of thousands,

MIPIM can feel isolating. Both Claire and Rachael point to the importance of creating moments of pause, taking time to reset. While the industry celebrates visibility, it rarely acknowledges the energy it takes to sustain it.

From an equity, diversity and inclusion perspective, this raises a critical question: are we designing an industry and its flagship events in a way that enables a broader range of voices to thrive? Or are we still relying on informal, often exclusive networks that favour those already comfortable in these spaces?

MIPIM has the potential to be more than a marketplace. It can be a platform for change, if we are willing to interrogate how it works, who it serves, and how it could evolve.

Because ultimately, the value of MIPIM is not just in the deals made or the panels attended. It is in the conversations we choose to have, and who we choose to include in them.



Property Week IWIP Awards

It's not too late to enter the Property Week Inspiring Women in Property Awards! WiP is proud to support the Awards in their mission to highlight the innovation and diversity in our sector.

Missed the first entry deadline? You're in luck! The entry window has been extended until 19 May. This is to ensure every standout project and professional has the chance to be recognised. Whether you are submitting for yourself, a colleague, or your company, now is the time to celebrate the achievements driving our industry forward.

Key Details:

- New Deadline: 19 May
- Cost: Free to enter
- Submissions: Unlimited

View all the categories and submit an [entry here](#).

Property Week
INSPIRING WOMEN IN PROPERTY
IWiP
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ROYAL LANCASTER HOTEL, LONDON

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BY SHARING THIS EVENT I HAVE PLANTED A TREE  treeapp

UKREiIF is almost upon us. We know many of you will be making your way to Leeds 19th-21st May so here are the events which Women in Property members are hosting:

Tuesday 19th May, 8am-10am

Women in Property with RSM Official Fringe breakfast panel "Drivers and Barriers: Market Update 2026".

Sorry, this event is sold-out, with a waiting list.

Tuesday 19th May, 12.30-1.30pm

Netwalking with WiP South East branch around Leeds.

Another popular fully booked event.

Tuesday 19th May, 3.15-4.30pm

Women in Property in collaboration with Women in Architecture

...are holding a 'fishbowl' panel in the Bradford Showcase at Mumtaz Restaurant, inside the UKREiIF campus. We'll be discussing "Saying the wrong thing - rebalancing the working world" with panellists National Chair Sam McCabe of WSP, Stephen O'Malley CEO of Civic, Lee Chambers CEO of Male Allies UK, Muiyiwa Oki former RIBA President and Mace, Jo Shepherd of Manser Practice, and moderated by Danna Walker of Built By Us. And of course, there is one empty chair on the panel to be filled by members of the audience wanting to join the conversation.

No booking required but you will need a UKREiIF pass to access the venue.

Thursday 21st May 1.30-2.30pm

"From Graduate to Chartered: Understanding the Journey" in the Dockside Pavillion.

This one-hour interactive workshop has been designed to provide students and NextGen with an insightful understanding of the role of a Town Planner along with a deep dive into the various routes to RTPI chartership.

Thursday 14 May 1.30-6pm

Male Allies UK National Allyship Summit 2026

We are proud to support the National Allyship Summit 2026, powered by Scottish Widows, taking place at the London Stock Exchange and online.

Hosted by Male Allies UK, the Summit will bring together leaders across business, policy, media and technology to move the conversation from gender division to gender dialogue.

Set against a research-led agenda, the afternoon will explore where allyship stands now, what closes the

gap in practice, how organisations sustain momentum internally, and how progress can be measured with real accountability. KPMG and the FTSE Women Leaders Review will help shape the wider evidence base around the day, alongside senior voices from across sectors.

WiP is proud to be collaborating with Charlotte Morphet (Co-founder of Women in Planning), Renee Preston (Founder of Construction for Women), Elle Cass (Chair of the RTPI Board) and Luke Raistrick (Managing Director of Centro Planning Consultancy). No booking is required but you will need a UKREiIF pass to access the venue.

WiP National Chair, Sam McCabe, will be moderating the first panel "Where is allyship now?" at 2.35pm.

WiP members and supporters can join online [here](#). We are pleased to support a Summit designed to turn intention into dialogue, action and measurable change.

Proud to partner with
The National Allyship Summit



From Gender Division to Gender Dialogue

14th May 2026
London Stock Exchange and online

Shout Out for Chithra!

Former National Chair, Chithra Marsh, is running for President of the Royal Institute of British Architects and Women in Property is right behind her! Under her campaign theme "**I represent the under-estimated**", Chithra is rooting for the RIBA members, saying,

"There is a lot of noise around us; within our industry, our organisations, our nations and regions and our daily lives. In that noise, it's easy to feel overlooked, undervalued and underestimated...but we should never forget this; our skills shape the world people live in and our work changes lives."

Fellow Architect Rachel Bell, Women in Property Limited Board Chair said, "Chithra brought commitment, empathy and drive to her year as National Chair, characteristics that now make her an invaluable Board Director. She is one of those rare individuals who inspires and unites others but also enjoys the challenges



that go hand in hand with running a business. I would love to see her leading the RIBA."

If you are a member of the RIBA, do take a look at Chithra's [nomination statement](#) and consider giving her your support. Voting opens on 15th June, running until 26th June, with the election results on 2nd July. #ChithraRIBAPresident

Branch News

Central Scotland

Women in Property Scotland has won the 2026 Scottish Property Awards Excellence in Equality & Inclusion Award, which recognises organisations making a lasting impact in advancing diversity across the property and built environment sectors.



The Central Scotland Annual Dinner once again proved why it has become a must attend event in the property

and construction calendar. This year, the biggest dinner ever brought together over 470 brilliant, supportive, and inspiring women and allies, all enjoying the glamorous Roaring Twenties theme.



So far in 2026 the branch has held 14 sell-out events, a mix of networking, site visits and CPD, and the Northern Scotland Hub has reintroduced netwalking in Aberdeen and Dundee as well as a range of networking events.



The branch also welcomes its Next Gen Committee, which officially launched with an inaugural meeting in March, followed by a welcome event in April. The committee is led by Emily Bates, who previously won the North West Student Awards before moving

Branch News Continued

to Scotland, and joining the committee, marking a full circle moment in her professional journey. Looking ahead, the Next Gen group plans to host a series of meet up events at universities across Scotland.

Hardly surprising then that the Central Scotland branch has seen an increase of 23% in membership over the past year and a whopping 123% increase over the last four years, while the Northern Scotland Hub has doubled its membership numbers in the last two years.

National



Chair Sam McCabe, National Vice Chair Charlotte Bayliss and Former National Chair Emma Richman all represented Women in Property in Westminster, for a special International Women's Day Fair, hosted by the All Party Parliamentary Group for Women and Work. WiP has contributed to the APPG for some years including presenting



the Building Balance report findings in July 2025.

The event was held both to mark International Women's Day and 115 years since the first International Women's Day gathering in 1911, bringing together organisations that are leaders in advancing gender equality in the workplace, providing an opportunity to reflect on progress to date and to highlight practical, evidence-based approaches to change.

South West:

The SW branch has continued its incredibly popular sell-out Spotlight Series – the brainchild of Junior Vice Chair, Isabella Lysaght MRICS, Senior Surveyor - Development and Regeneration at JLL – which includes tours of notable developments alongside seminars and CPDs.

Recent Spotlight events have included:

- Bristol Zoo Project with a seminar and talk from Project Manager Gemma Lewis (January)
- Bristol Temple Quarter in partnership with YEP and guided by Bristol Temple Quarter LLP (February)



- Canons Wharf 'Before' tour in partnership with BCO, being refurbished by Kinrise; and the Spitfire Hangar for IWD with a seminar from Ferguson Mann Architects, project architect for YTL (both March)



- 360 Bristol, The Building Safety Act and Lessons Learnt, including a CPD session led by Iesis Consult (April).

Yorkshire & North East



The branch's Easter Chocolate Making Workshop was hosted at York Cocoa Works in the heart of York. Guests learned about where chocolate comes from and how it is made, before rolling up their sleeves to create their very own chocolate treats - not many of which made it to Easter Day. They even learned how to temper chocolate using a hair dryer! There was concentration, creativity... and plenty of chocolate sampling along the way.

Thank you to the brilliant team at York Cocoa Works for sharing their expertise and making the evening so enjoyable. It is always a pleasure to bring members and non members together for relaxed, hands on networking events like this.

Success Stories



Kathryn Cooling has joined Foot Anstey LLP as Managing Associate in the Charities Property team.



Samantha Jevons has been promoted to the role of Associate Director at Bowman Riley.



Rachael Cunliffe of Engage5 completed the Manchester Marathon in 4:12 on 19th April, after training for 16 weeks, including half marathons in Aintree, Lisbon and Wigan.



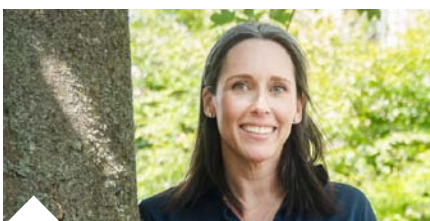
Salma Maqsood, current President of Bristol Law Society, has joined Porter Dodson as Commercial Property Partner.



South West former Chair, **Maddie Difazio-Wright**, is now Director at MDW, a relationship-led business development consultancy she recently founded.



April Marsden is a Finalist in the 2026 Women in Construction and Engineering Awards, Architect category, with the winners to be announced at the Awards dinner on 21st May.



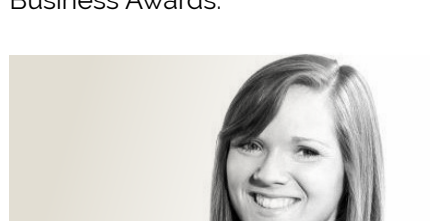
Pip Hunsworth, Associate Director at Buro Happold, has been named as one of the Top 20 Women in Ground Engineering 2026.



Coralie McKeivor was awarded the Woman of the Year Gamechanger award at the Bristol Women in Business Awards.



Catalina Ionita has joined Planit at its Altrincham office as Urban Design Studio Director



Beth Warren MRICS has been promoted to Associate Director at Hartnell Taylor Cook.