

# North West Branch Newsletter


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## North West Regional Student Awards 2026



On 9 June 2026, Women in Property North West celebrated eight exceptional students at the Regional Student Awards, hosted by TLT LLP in the stunning Eden Building, Salford. The evening brought together students, industry professionals and committee members to recognise outstanding talent from across the built environment sector.

A particular highlight of the evening was the Women in Property NW NextGen Q&A panel, where early-career professionals shared honest insights into graduate life, career development and building confidence within the industry. The discussions reinforced the value that new entrants bring through fresh perspectives, curiosity and a willingness to challenge traditional ways of working.

The event was a powerful reminder of the importance of supporting and encouraging the next generation of professionals. Congratulations to all eight finalists, and especially to Georgie Cavanagh, who was named the North West Regional Winner for 2026.

The impact of the Student Awards programme can be seen in the experiences of both current and past participants:

“The entire process was eye-opening and invaluable in gaining insights from women with real experience and an array of perspectives. Alongside this, the ability to step out of your comfort zone in a wholly encouraging and warm environment was so beneficial in terms of building confidence for future steps.”

**Madeleine Dobson, 2026 North West Finalist**

“The WiP Student Awards has provided me with an invaluable opportunity to connect with professionals from diverse backgrounds, many of whom have become mentors and sources of inspiration. This experience transformed networking from something I found intimidating into an opportunity for meaningful conversations.”

**Chanelle Nirale – 2025 North West winner**

## Upcoming Events

- **WiP North West Summer Social**  
9<sup>th</sup> July, 5.00pm - Manchester
- **Turning Spaces into Places: Next Gen First Street Placemaking Tour**  
15<sup>th</sup> July, 8.30am - Manchester
- **Summer Speed Networking**  
15<sup>th</sup> July, 5.30pm - Liverpool
- **Women of Winckley Square Walking Tour**  
16<sup>th</sup> July, 9.30am - Preston
- **You Don't Have to Shrink to Fit**  
28<sup>th</sup> July, 4.30pm - Manchester
- **Cartrefi Conwy Housing Association: Factory and Site Tour**  
30<sup>th</sup> July, 9.45am - Rhyl
- **Cyan Lines Walk**  
5<sup>th</sup> August, 2.30pm - Manchester
- **How to Design Inclusive Spaces?**  
11<sup>th</sup> August, 4.30pm - Liverpool
- **Family Netwalk to Moel Famau**  
21<sup>st</sup> August, 10am
- **Your Time to Shine (1<sup>st</sup> of 4 workshops)**  
8<sup>th</sup> September, 12.00pm - Virtual
- **What Stands Between Us and a Balanced Work Life**  
16<sup>th</sup> September, 4.30pm - Manchester
- **Late Summer Paddle Boarding**  
17<sup>th</sup> September, 4.00pm - Liverpool
- **North West Annual Dinner**  
8<sup>th</sup> October, 6.00pm - Manchester

# Women in Property at UKREiiF 2026: Voices, Visibility and the Power of Connection

Editorial by Dr Catalina Ionita, Urban Design Studio Director Planit

If there was one word that defined UKREiiF this year, it was *momentum*.

Momentum in conversations around regeneration, delivery and investment. Momentum in discussions around social value, inclusive growth and partnership working. And perhaps most importantly, momentum in the collective voice of women across the built environment who continue to push for a more representative, collaborative and equitable industry.

For many of the Women in Property committee members attending this year, UKREiiF was an intense whirlwind of panels, networking breakfasts, chance meetings, dinners, fringe events and countless coffees across Leeds Dock. By the end of the week, many of us had completely lost our voices, a small price to pay for the sheer number of conversations, introductions and moments of connection packed into just a few days.



Personally, I found this year's event both energising and reflective. Chairing a panel at the Caddick and Moda Pavilion on inclusive placemaking and sustainable growth reinforced just how important it is that inclusion is not treated as a side conversation, but as an intrinsic part of how we shape places. Joining an EDI roundtable hosted by Arcadis further highlighted an uncomfortable truth many of us continue to feel across the sector: too often, we are still preaching to the converted.

The same people are still having the same conversations around diversity, equity and inclusion. The challenge now is ensuring these discussions reach wider audiences, influence decision-makers and become embedded in the everyday culture of the industry rather than existing within dedicated "EDI spaces."

And while progress is undoubtedly being made, there were still moments during the week that reminded us how far there is left to go. I attended more than one dinner where I was the only woman in the room, or one of just two women among ten or more men. In 2026, we should be able to do better than that.

Perhaps part of the responsibility now lies with all of us learning when to challenge those spaces, and when necessary, say no to them. There are extraordinary women across this industry doing exceptional work in development, planning, architecture, engineering, regeneration, social value, construction and leadership. We need to actively create room for them, invite them into conversations and ensure representation is not treated as an afterthought.



That sentiment was echoed strongly by fellow Women in Property member and Head of Social Value, Sam Johnson, who reflected on how encouraging it was to see social value and diversity woven throughout the programme rather than confined to standalone sessions.

"These were not side conversations," she noted. "They were central themes shaping discussions on regeneration, investment and the future of our built environment." Across the week, discussions repeatedly returned to the importance of long-term thinking, authentic community engagement and partnership-led delivery. From local authorities and developers to consultants and investors, collaboration remained a consistent theme throughout the conference.

Rachel Hollins, Head of Regeneration Delivery, reflected on the importance of maintaining place-based regeneration at the forefront of conversations, particularly in the context of unlocking complex sites and navigating uncertain market conditions.

"The opportunity to connect with a wide range of partners in a relatively short space of time is invaluable," she shared. "The informal conversations and chance meetings are often just as beneficial as the formal ones."

This balance between structure and spontaneity became a recurring reflection among attendees. While UKREiiF schedules can easily become overwhelming, some of the most meaningful interactions happened unexpectedly: in queues for coffee, walking between pavilions or during impromptu catch-ups with old colleagues and new collaborators.

Emily Dixon of CBRE, and incoming Women in Property Next Gen Chair, reflected on the importance of relationships, trust and long-term thinking in successful placemaking, noting that meaningful regeneration depends on collaboration and providing genuine opportunities for communities to shape projects at every stage.

Her reflections also highlighted a wider shift in the industry conversation this year; a growing recognition that successful placemaking is not simply about delivering buildings, but about creating environments that support belonging, wellbeing and everyday life. One quote shared during a panel particularly resonated: *“We’re more interested in the spaces outside and in between the buildings than the buildings themselves.”* It became a recurring reminder throughout the week that the quality of public life, the moments between buildings, the activation of streets, parks and civic spaces, is what ultimately defines successful places.

Housing delivery and affordability also remained firmly on the agenda. Conversations at the Great Housing Development Summit reinforced the urgent need not only to build more homes, but to support and retain people within the industry itself. Mentoring, apprenticeships and widening access into built environment careers were recurring themes, alongside discussions around planning reform, devolution and the opportunities presented through long-term public-private partnerships.

Siobhan Ryder, National Board Director at Women in Property, captured another important lesson from the week: the value of leaving space for the unexpected. Approaching the conference with less structure than usual initially felt uncomfortable but ultimately became liberating.

“In creating too much structure, you can end up missing out on the serendipitous meet ups, conversations and chance encounters that challenge your views and keep you grounded,” she reflected.

Her thoughts also touched on something many attendees experienced this year: the emotional importance of community. Beyond the panels and policy debates, UKREiiF remains a deeply people-focused event. It is about reconnecting with former colleagues, strengthening relationships and finding your tribe within a complex and often demanding industry.

For younger professionals and Women in Property Next Gen members attending future events, visibility remains key. Sam Johnson’s advice was refreshingly simple but incredibly effective:

“Post on LinkedIn before you attend. Let your network know you’ll be there, share what you’re interested in, and invite people to meet.”

Because ultimately, UKREiiF is what you make of it. Yes, it is a conference about investment, regeneration, infrastructure and delivery. But it is also a space where careers are shaped, collaborations begin and industries evolve through conversation.

This year demonstrated that the appetite for change across the built environment is growing. The challenge now is ensuring that momentum translates into action, not only in the places we create, but within the culture of the industry itself.

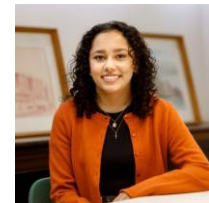
And as Women in Property continues to grow its voice nationally, one thing feels increasingly clear: we are no longer asking to be included in the conversation. We are helping lead it.



## Victoria North Walking Tour



Originally planned as a walking tour, the June heat meant our visit to Victoria North – the largest urban regeneration project in northern England – became a presentation around the 3D model, followed by a tour of a completed building at Victoria Riverside. Hilary Brett and Tom Fenton from FEC outlined the vision for the joint venture with Manchester City Council, the seven neighbourhoods being created, and the challenges and priorities ahead. We then visited Victoria Riverside to see the transformation underway, including new homes, businesses and meanwhile uses, before finishing with networking and refreshments at Red Arch, one of the businesses now occupying the refurbished arches. Watch this space for future tours!



Mia Deaville, a member of our NextGen committee, recently passed the RIBA Advanced Diploma in Professional Practice in Architecture and is now a qualified Architect.

## North Wales Hub



North Wales is experiencing significant investment and regeneration, with major development projects transforming communities from Wrexham to Holyhead. Yet, despite this growth, networking opportunities for professionals in the property and construction sector have traditionally been limited compared with those available in larger cities such as Cardiff, Manchester and Liverpool.

To address this gap, Women in Property launched the North Wales Event Hub of the North West Branch in October 2024, beginning with a successful inaugural event at The Mulberry overlooking Conwy Marina.

Since then, the event hub has developed into a vibrant network of professionals committed to championing the built environment across North Wales. While geography presents challenges—with members spread across Wrexham, Flintshire, Denbighshire, Conwy, Gwynedd and Anglesey, often facing lengthy journeys and limited public transport—the demand for opportunities to connect, collaborate and learn continues to grow.

Throughout 2025, the North Wales hub delivered a diverse programme of events showcasing some of the region's most exciting projects and influential voices. Highlights included a walking tour of Wrexham exploring future development opportunities and active travel initiatives, an exclusive visit to the £50 million redevelopment of Theatre Clwyd in Mold, a breakfast event in Llandudno featuring author Anna Roberts discussing her book *Home Buyers Essentials*, and festive Christmas drinks in Conwy.

Building on this success, the hub set an ambitious goal for 2026: to expand to monthly events and bring networking opportunities closer to communities across the region. From the second quarter onwards, this objective was successfully achieved.

The year began with a breakfast networking event at Alyn Waters Country Park in Wrexham, where attendees heard from Land Studio Limited about the Building with Nature accreditation framework while enjoying refreshments from social enterprise café, Caffi Cyfle. Supporting local businesses and organisations that create opportunities for local and disadvantaged people remains an important part of the North Wales hub approach.



One of the standout events of the year took place in Holyhead, where members joined architects from Donald Insall Associates for a walking tour exploring the town's heritage-led regeneration. The tour showcased the Holyhead Townscape Heritage Initiative, a programme funded by the UK Government and National Lottery Heritage Fund that is restoring historic buildings, revitalising the town centre and encouraging further investment.

The second half of 2026 includes an equally exciting programme: a timber frame factory tour, a site visit with Cartrefi Conwy to see low-carbon homes under construction, a lunchtime learning session on technology in Conservation Management Plans, a family-friendly networking walk up Moel Famau, and an end-of-year craft evening in Caernarfon.

Looking ahead, our ambition is to create an even stronger and more connected network that represents every corner of North Wales. By increasing visibility, working with local businesses, colleges and universities, and continuing to host events across the region, we aim to provide support, opportunities and community for women at every stage of their careers while championing North Wales as a dynamic and important part of the property and construction sector.

**The journey has only just begun, and we are excited about what comes next.**