

Chair's column

by Sam McCabe, National Chair

As I write, the UK – and much of Europe – is sweltering through another brutal heatwave. As custodians of the built environment, the question is no longer whether we'll see more extreme heat; we know we will. The real question is whether the buildings we're delivering today will be ready for it.

This summer has underlined something our industry can no longer afford to ignore: buildings don't just need to keep people warm – they need to keep them cool too.

For decades, our focus has rightly been on reducing winter heating demand. But as the climate changes, overheating is becoming one of the defining challenges for the built environment. The homes, schools and workplaces we design today will still be standing decades from now, so they must perform in tomorrow's climate, not yesterday's.

This isn't just about comfort. Overheated buildings affect physical and mental wellbeing, disrupt sleep, reduce productivity and place additional pressure on the NHS. The costs are

felt by individuals, employers and the wider economy alike.

The encouraging news is that we already know many of the answers. We don't need to reinvent building design; we need to rediscover its fundamentals. Good orientation, thoughtful responses to site, effective shading, natural ventilation and passive design have always been the hallmarks of quality architecture.

Climate resilience should now sit alongside operational carbon as a defining measure of good building design. Truly sustainable buildings don't just reduce emissions; they create healthy, adaptable places that remain comfortable as the climate changes, while using as little energy and carbon as possible.



Sam McCabe
National Chair of Women in Property

Become a WiP Mentor!

Anyone can be a mentor; we all have valuable experience which can be of use to another member. Our mentoring programme relies on volunteer mentors, so please consider putting yourself forward.

Mentors can benefit as much as the mentee. Not only are you 'giving back', you are also learning a great deal from the mentee. It is an extremely rewarding experience.



Applications are open
for our next mentoring training session
on 30th September – [apply here](#).

Celebrating the brightest and the best – the 2026 Regional Student Awards

Talented students from across the UK have been honoured in the 2026 Women in Property Student Awards, recognising emerging talent in the property and construction sector. WiP members and employers from across the property and construction industries got together at Awards events to applaud the next generation of built environment professionals and highlight the wide range of career opportunities available within the sector.

The Women in Property Regional Student Awards aim to identify and support talented students while helping to address skills shortages and improve diversity across the built environment industry. Judges praised the exceptional standard of this year's finalists, highlighting the winners' technical knowledge, professionalism, communication skills and enthusiasm for their chosen careers.

The winners were selected from a cohort of 141 from across the country, following a competitive judging process involving representatives from leading organisations in the property and construction sectors. The Awards play an important role in encouraging talented students to pursue careers in an industry that shapes communities,

infrastructure and the built environment across the UK.

The regional winners will now all meet in London for a Winners Training Day in September allowing them to spend time with their peers, whilst engaging in sessions such as mentoring, networking skills and market updates.



Yorkshire & North East
Leoni Francis,
Real Estate and Property Management,
Leeds Beckett



Midlands
Laura Higgins,
Architectural Engineering,
Loughborough



South East
Soundarya Sethi,
Real Estate,
Westminster



Midlands
Mrunalina Siya,
Architectural Technology,
Nottingham Trent



North West
Georgie Cavanagh,
Town & Regional Planning,
Liverpool



South East
Veronica Turco,
Real Estate Finance,
Reading



Central Scotland
Michaela Rendlova,
Civil Engineering with Architecture,
Glasgow



Central Scotland
Sophie McQueen,
Civil Engineering,
Heriot Watt



South East
Leah Walters,
Civil Engineering,
Surrey



Northern Scotland
Amy Mustarde,
Civil Engineering,
Highlands and Islands



Midlands
Holly Lockwood,
Construction Management,
Nottingham Trent



South Wales
Abigail Holden,
Civil and Environmental Engineering,
Cardiff



South West
Yan You Kay,
Architectural Technology and Design,
West of England



Yorkshire & North East
Ashleigh Jones,
Structural Engineering and Architecture,
Sheffield



South West
Daisy Buick,
Civil Engineering,
Exeter





Women in Property at UKREiF 2026



Voices, Visibility and the Power of Connection

Dr Catalina Ionita, Urban Design Studio Director Planit

If there was one word that defined UKREiF 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.

But 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.

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.

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.



Drivers and Barriers: Market Outlook 2026

Our successful partnership with RSM continued at UKREiiF with the return of the popular Drivers and Barriers panel discussion, an official fringe opening event for the conference.

Chaired by former WiP National Chair Jennifer Winyard, the panel brought together Stacy Eden (RSM), Eleanor Judd (Savills), Gareth Harrison (Bank of England) and Shannon Conway (Picture This) to explore the outlook for the UK property and construction sector. The consensus? Cautious optimism, tempered by ongoing challenges around viability, funding and economic uncertainty.

Setting the scene, Gareth outlined the wider economic backdrop. While the UK entered 2026 with stronger-than-expected growth and easing wage pressures, recent geopolitical developments in the Middle East have introduced fresh uncertainty.

"Inflation remains above target, and future interest rate decisions will be heavily influenced by energy prices and supply chain disruption – much is

dependent on what happens with the Strait of Hormuz" said Gareth. Bond market volatility is being monitored closely, although the panel agreed there are currently no significant concerns around financial stability.

Viability emerged as the dominant theme throughout the discussion. Stacy said "The impact of rising construction costs, taxation and regulation are making developments increasingly difficult to deliver. Whilst the UK does not have enough homes, developers can only build where schemes are commercially viable."

The panel discussed potential government interventions, including support for first-time buyers and Stamp Duty reform. Housing delivery remained firmly in focus. Panelists agreed that demand continues to outstrip supply but questioned whether planning reform alone will be enough to unlock development while viability challenges persist.

Funding was another key topic. Shannon explained "Institutional

investors have become more cautious about development risk, making traditional forward-funding arrangements harder to secure." As a result, alternative approaches such as patient equity, public sector support and recyclable debt structures are becoming increasingly important.

In the commercial market, Eleanor described growing confidence in transactional activity, alongside increasing market polarisation. She said "Prime assets continue to attract strong demand, while secondary and tertiary assets face greater challenges. Building quality, location and occupier demand are driving wider performance gaps across the sector."

Despite all this, the panel identified opportunities for growth, particularly in data centres and prime office space. The discussion concluded that while demand remains strong, improving viability will be critical to unlocking investment, supporting delivery and driving sustainable growth across the sector.



Saying the Wrong Thing

Women in Property and Women in Architecture came together at UKREiIF for a 'fishbowl' discussion titled *Saying the Wrong Thing*. Chaired by Danna Walker of Built By Us, the panel featured industry leaders Sam McCabe of WSP and Women in Property National Chair, Muyiwa Oki of Mace Group and former RIBA President, Lee Chambers of Male Allies UK, Stephen O'Malley of Civic and Jo Shepherd of The Manser Practice. An 'empty chair' was also available for audience members who wanted to join the conversation and share their views.

The session explored how conversations around equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) are changing. Some male colleagues are increasingly concerned about saying the wrong thing or using the wrong language for fear of causing offence.

The panel acknowledged that although awareness of inclusion issues has grown significantly in recent years, the pace of change can leave people feeling unsure about how to engage. "The situation is intimidating" said Stephen, "Progress is rarely linear and there will be oscillations." Rather than treating mistakes as a

sign of bad intent, the panel argued that workplaces should create environments where people feel comfortable asking questions, learning and improving.

Lee referred to recent research undertaken by Male Allies UK of male CEOs of FTSE 350 companies, in which 41% felt things had gone too far, and 51% feeling scared of getting things wrong. "We must remember how powerful our differences can be," said Lee.

Everyone has unconscious biases. "Be comfortable about holding bias – as soon as we become conscious of our bias, we can then deal with it" commented Jo.

The panel also discussed concerns that some groups, particularly men, can sometimes feel left out of EDI conversations. Panelists stressed that inclusion should not be about creating winners and losers, but about making sure everyone feels valued, heard and treated fairly.

Mentorship and sponsorship are practical ways to drive change. Panelists also highlighted the value of

reverse mentoring, giving leaders the opportunity to better understand the experiences of younger colleagues and people from different backgrounds. Sam said "It's on all of us, we're all really privileged because we're here at UKREiIF, but our younger teammates aren't. We have a voice. Let's give a voice to someone else."

The conversation moved beyond language to focus on workplace culture and systems. While EDI terminology will continue to evolve, speakers urged against getting too caught up in labels at the expense of meaningful action. Instead, they called for greater accountability, stronger leadership and more focus on day-to-day experiences that influence whether people feel included. Muyiwa suggested "We need to get more people bought into a language of D&I. We need to spend more time on cultural moments through TV, film and theatre. There's power in the cultural things we do."

Everyone agreed that lasting change is most likely to come through empathy, curiosity and a willingness to listen to experiences different from our own.



Collective Action at UKREiif

Women in Property is supporting "Collective Action for Gender Equity in the Built Environment", a project initiated by Building People, in conjunction with Women in Planning. In their words, "... the project aims to foster and enable collective action on gender equality in the built environment, undertaking a collaborative mapping and engagement process to capture who is doing what, where support overlaps, and where gaps or opportunities exist. The outcome will be a shared evidence-

base and framework (Memorandum of Understanding) for collective action, via a roundtable / workshop, informing future policy, funding and partnership work."

The group's first research revealed that there are over 90 'Women in' organisations, mainly supported by volunteers. Their evidence calculated that over £700k is lost by not working together, so a major part of this initiative will look at sharing best practice and collating efforts.

Rachel Bell, WiP Limited Board Chair and Sam McCabe, National Chair attended the official launch at UKREiif when 40 of the 90 groups got together to sign a Memorandum of Understanding. This was followed, in early July, with a meeting to start work on the Action Plan, followed by a drinks reception, attended by Rachel, and South East Chair Mamta Kudhail. The project will evolve over the coming months with WiP, at 39 years old, one of the oldest organisations involved.



Rachel Bell and Mamta Kudhail

Male Allies UK National Allyship Summit

National Allyship Summit 2026 brought together senior leaders, sponsors, partners, speakers and virtual attendees for the first national platform dedicated to moving allyship from good intent into practical accountability.

Hosted at London Stock Exchange and powered by Scottish Widows, the Summit was built around one central question: how do we move from gender division to gender dialogue, and from conversation into action? Across the afternoon, sessions explored research, leadership, workplace culture, pensions, policy, data, sponsorship, organisational change and the role men can play in helping create more equitable workplaces.

Women in Property was represented by Sam McCabe, who chaired the opening panel on why gender equity matters now. That session set the tone for the day by looking beyond performative allyship and into the everyday behaviours, systems and leadership choices that either accelerate or hold back progress. It also reflected one of the strongest themes from the

Summit: allyship is not a side issue or a soft skill. Done properly, it is part of better leadership, stronger cultures and healthier organisations.

A major research discussion with KPMG and FTSE Women Leaders Review helped ground the day in evidence, while later panels moved into practical examples of how organisations can turn commitment into accountability. Thousands also joined virtually, extending the conversation beyond the room and showing the wider appetite for a more constructive, evidence-led approach.

Since the Summit, Male Allies UK has published the official Impact Report, capturing the reach of the day, the strength of the programme and the response from attendees, speakers and partners.

Momentum now continues into Stronger Together on Friday 20 November 2026, the next major in-person conference from Male Allies UK. Timed close to International Men's Day and hosted at NatWest Broadgate, Stronger Together will continue the work started at the Summit by moving deeper into industry, everyday employee experience and practical workplace action.

National Allyship Summit was always intended to be the beginning of a wider programme of work. With Stronger Together, National Allyship Week 2027 and the developing Institute of Allyship now ahead, the next chapter is focused on helping organisations turn allyship into something that can be practised, measured and sustained.



Reconnecting our cities – rethinking the legacy of the existing infrastructure



The debate happening around Scotland's M8 motorway is ultimately about more than transport. Isla Jackson, Director and Head of Scotland at Civic, explores how existing infrastructure can be reimaged to reconnect communities, support active travel and unlock regeneration across Scotland and beyond.

The M8 has been part of Glasgow for as long as most of us can remember; it's almost impossible to talk about the city without acknowledging its presence.

Running directly through the city centre, the motorway remains a vital transport corridor, but it is also at the centre of an ongoing debate about its future. As parts of the structure age, discussions have focused on whether it should be repaired, replaced or even removed altogether.

For me, there is another option worth exploring – retrofitting the infrastructure we already have so it works harder for the people and places around it. As Glasgow continues to evolve, the conversation should be more about what infrastructure can contribute to the city and the communities it serves rather than moving traffic efficiently.

There is no doubt the M8 plays an important role in Scotland's transport network, but its impact is more complex.

Since it was built, it has cut through the centre of the city, creating a divide between neighbourhoods. It has shaped movement patterns, but also the way people experience the city at street level. In some areas, that has meant noise, poorer air quality, and environments that feel dominated by traffic.

The focus has now shifted from simply moving vehicles efficiently, to how infrastructure can support better connected and more human places – and how we work with what already exists to achieve that.

We can see a strong example in the work we've done on Glasgow's Avenues programme. This shows how infrastructure-led regeneration can be used to reshape the public realm around people.

At Anderston Cross, for example, interventions beneath the M8 have helped reconnect Argyle Street with the West End, improving permeability and making it easier to move through. It is

a small but important instance of how working with existing infrastructure can begin to repair divisions.

What stands out to me is that this approach is not about wholesale removal, it is about retrofit, improving the spaces around major infrastructure so they work harder for people as well as vehicles. Done well, it can unlock parts of the city that have been overlooked for decades and bring value to regeneration.

We are seeing similar thinking in Copenhagen, the Cykelslangen (Cycle Snake) has transformed a former industrial waterfront route into a dedicated cycling connection, making active travel a part of everyday movement.

The future of the M8 will continue to be debated, and rightly so, but regardless of where that debate leads, there is a more immediate opportunity to focus on how we improve what already exists. Glasgow's emerging City Development Plan sets out a long-term framework for how the city will grow, connect and adapt in the years ahead. Retrofitting existing infrastructure to better support people, place and movement must be an important part of that conversation. By taking that approach, we can create a more connected, more liveable Glasgow.

Career insights from Central Scotland Outreach

The Women in Property Central Scotland team are Outreach trailblazers! They recently celebrated with 21 young people from Falkirk High School, after the S2 class (Year 9 in England and Wales) completed a ten-month initiative aimed at giving them an insight into property and construction careers.

The programme was devised by the Women in Property Outreach volunteers, in partnership with Kier Construction, MLA Architects and BakerHicks, and kicked off in August last year. Combining monthly visits from professionals who came into the classroom to talk through their role, alongside a 'real life' project, the students learned about the spectrum of careers available, as well as understanding teamwork and presentation skills.

They heard from sustainability consultants, quantity surveyors, architects, planners, engineers, bid writers, and marketing and business development managers, all of whom set out to inspire them to one day join the industry. Their newly acquired

knowledge was then put to use in a challenge to create proposals for what they would like to see at the new Falkirk Town Hall site.

This is where the teamwork came in. They worked through all the stages of a development brief: interpreting the Falkirk Council client brief, and responding through visioning workshops, site planning, structural solutions, MEP and carbon reduction considerations and budget limitations. And, if inspiration was still needed, the Class also visited BE-ST, Scotland's national innovation centre for construction, where they saw how Scottish-grown timber is being engineered into sustainable building materials.

The project culminated in May at the Rosebank Distillery in Camelon, when it was time to test their presentation skills in front of an invited audience. The students reported not only expanding their knowledge, but also building confidence and learning public speaking, taking them well beyond their comfort zones.

Jill Love, Central Scotland Outreach lead, said, "Construction is diverse and inclusive for all, and we're here to educate young people on the opportunities available to them. What this group has achieved over the past ten months – the depth of knowledge, the teamwork, the quality of their presentations – shows what's possible when young people are given the chance to see the full picture."

If you are interested in finding out more about this project or would like to undertake a similar programme in your area, please contact jill.love@kier.co.uk



Great Effort Steppers!

Healthy competition is alive and well, as demonstrated by another superb achievement for the #StepIntoSummer2026 steppers!

Collectively they logged their steps over two weeks, working together to complete a virtual route – this year the trails between (some of) the USA landmarks and icons, amounting to over 30,000km or 43,495,044 steps in total.

57 teams took part, both members and non-members, with the winning team - Buro Happy Feet - clocking up a staggering 1,396,560 steps!

Congratulations to everyone who took part, particularly the winning team Rhian Anderson, Louise Holway, Lucia Sancho and Elena Cros. All profits from #StepIntoSummer go to support charities including Women in Sport and Smart Works Charity. A huge thank you to our incredible sponsors Buro Happold, FulkersBaileyRussell, and Stride Treglown. We hope to see you all again next year!



Branch News



Central Scotland members enjoyed two exclusive site visits, one to the National Centre for Music, at the former Royal High School, led by Turner & Townsend, Robertson Group and the Royal High School Preservation Trust. The tour offered a behind-the-scenes look at the sensitive restoration of Thomas Hamilton's Grade A listed building, which is set to become a world-class cultural venue, with a 300-seat hall and additional smaller venues to support music education.

The other visit was to the restored Palm Houses at the Royal Botanic Garden, both in Edinburgh. Smith Scott Mullan and RBGE shared insights into the careful conservation of this A-listed 19th century landmark, including the restoration of thousands of curved glass panes, sensitive ironwork repairs and the return of the plant collections.



The **Lancashire & Cumbria Hub** hosted a special evening of networking and collaboration at the beautiful Brockholes Nature Reserve, in partnership with Work Boutique. The event showcased the latest range of women's PPE and workwear available through Work Boutique, highlighting the growing importance of ensuring women have access to properly fitting, high-quality safety clothing and equipment.



Northern Scotland made a return visit to the newly completed Crop Innovation Centre at the James Hutton Institute in Invergowrie. Members enjoyed a guided tour of state-of-the-art facilities showcasing plant science research through the Advanced Plant Growth Centre and International Barley Hub. The visit highlighted innovations in phenotyping and vertical farming and how the centre supports crop science, food resilience and sustainable agriculture.



Kindly sponsored by Embryo, the **North West** branch recently held an insightful roundtable exploring the real challenges and opportunities around authentic thought leadership for women in the property industry. Key barriers included time and team capacity, hesitation around striking the right tone, and the practicalities of getting ideas approved within a corporate structure.



A common misconception is that thought leadership requires constantly reinventing the wheel or producing a perfect piece every time. In reality, building a sustainable content engine is not about working harder, but about creating a system that turns everyday insights into engaging content without draining time or energy. The key takeaway: Be brave and stop sitting on the fence!



South East hosted another joint event with the Chartered Surveyors' Company, with breakfast at The Clink Prison in Brixton. 80 attendees enjoyed an excellent breakfast served by current inmates and heard from Donna-Marie Edmonds of The Clink Charity, about its life-changing work. Founded in 2009, The Clink has become one of the UK's leading prison rehabilitation charities.

Branch News Continued

providing hospitality, catering and horticultural training to people in custody, as well as mentoring and employment support on release.

The Branch will be partnering with the Chartered Surveyors' Company again, on 23rd September, for a networking breakfast in support of City Giving Day, which raises funds for the Lord Mayor's Appeal.

The **South West** branch remains busy with site tours as part of the ever-popular Spotlight Series. Among the recent events were a tour of the new Waterside PBSA scheme, with a presentation from project architects Chapman Taylor and a talk from main contractor GMi. A joint WiP and YEP site tour of a new PBSA scheme delivered by Canada



Life for the University of the West of England. A joint WiP and BCO event in June sponsored by YTL Developments, discussing plans for the 400-acre former airfield site including new residential, student accommodation, offices and Aviva Arena, and a spotlight on Bristol Cathedral, with Shu Architects and Skeletal Consulting Engineers, on the works undertaken to transform Bristol Cathedral's Café, structural changes, followed by a tour of the Cathedral.

Yorkshire and North East celebrated Eid al-Adha in Leeds, with a Mehndi Masterclass, aiming to fully embrace the traditions of Islam, while keeping it creative and accessible enough to



attract those who don't personally celebrate it. Arouge from Leeds Henna led the event, giving everyone the opportunity to learn the traditional henna patterns on wooden hearts and canvases, which they were able to take home. Arouge then applied beautiful, traditional henna designs for everyone who wished to have it done on the day. The group enjoyed traditional teas, desserts, and fruit while everyone networked. To help spread awareness and reach a wider audience the event was held in collaboration with Northern Muslim Professionals, a fantastic newly formed networking group.



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Success Stories

Women in Property members are doing great things! Congratulations to:



Ashleigh Attiwell has been promoted to Senior Project Coordinator at Ryder Architecture.



Mia Deaville recently passed the RIBA Advanced Diploma in Professional Practice in Architecture and is now a qualified Architect.



Nicola Insley was recently promoted to partnership at CMS. She is based in the Aberdeen office and as a planning specialist compliments the existing real estate team.



Hannah Lewis-Jones, South Wales committee member has been promoted to Client and Partnership Director at Mott MacDonald. Hannah is also riding from Bristol to Bordeaux

to fundraise for Props Bristol – a charity that aims to empower young adults with learning and physical disabilities, supporting them with skills support and work opportunities.



Reece Raymond at Centro Planning Consultancy has had an exceptional few months. She has achieved her CMI Chartered Manager status, been promoted to Director of Operations and

Partnerships at Centro and has been named one of the Top 50 Women of Influence in Planning by The Planner.

And congratulations to three WiP members, all finalists in this year's Inspiring Women in Property Awards, run by Property Week – wishing you every success at the Awards event on 22nd September!

Maddie Difazio Wright, mdw Consulting – for Innovator of the Year

Gillian Murray, Slipperfield Building Consultancy – for Leader of the Year, Professional Services and Woman of the Year, Commercial Services

Kezia Smart, KWB – for D&I Champion of the Year

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VIEW THE FINALISTS

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The Inspiring Women in Property Awards returns on **22 September** at the **Royal Lancaster London**.

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