



Welcome

One of the best things about NIPA's Early Years Practitioners (EYP) network is the energy people bring to it. EYPs are getting stuck in - sharing ideas, learning from one another and helping to shape how we talk about and deliver infrastructure across the UK.

EYPs across the network are already doing brilliant work – contributing to industry discussions, collaborating within practice groups within NIPA, bringing insight from their day-to-day roles, and helping to connect different disciplines, from planning and communications to engineering and legal. That mix of experience and perspective is what makes the EYP community such a valuable part of NIPA.

As you may know, our EYP Steering Group continues to meet regularly, helping to shape what the programme looks like next and making sure activity reflects what our EYP members want to get out of it – and it has already been a busy start to 2026!

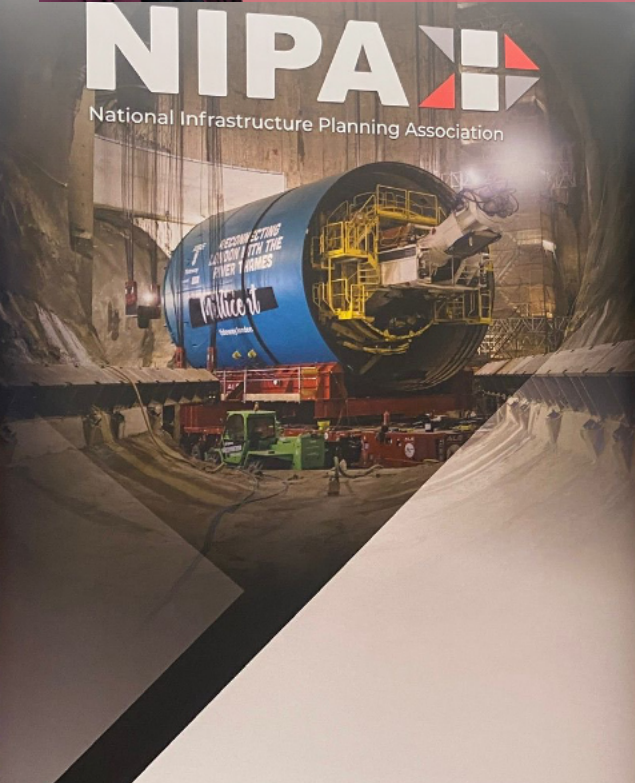
We've just come together for the Step into Spring - Early Careers Infrastructure Social (18 March), with lots of members heading to London to catch-up and connect. We've also held the first EYP mentoring lounge of the year in Birmingham (26 March), which was a great opportunity to meet peers, hear different career stories and make new connections.

There are loads more NIPA events on the horizon, so plenty of chances to be part of the action and join in the fun.

If you're wondering how to get involved, the answer is: however suits you. Come along to an event, join a discussion, share your experience, or support the network through collaboration – curiosity and willingness to get involved go a long way.

Keep an eye out for the next get-together. I'm looking forward to seeing as many EYPs at our upcoming events as possible!

Alex Higgin, Chair of the NIPA EYP Steering Group





Update from the working groups

Engaging and growing a diverse membership

The Working Group have continued to work with members to host NIPA events across the country, including our inaugural event in Wales, with more on the horizon.

Our lunchbox talks continue to offer free CPD to NIPA members from the comfort of their own desks.

We've also hosted our inaugural Introduction to Infrastructure Planning for Planning Students Webinar and are looking to run more sessions for other courses and professions in the future.

Learning and Research

We have launched the new 'NIPA Award' initiative which seeks to engage with post-graduates attending accredited planning schools. The award invites entrants to submit a 1500-word essay and present their thoughts on key areas of infrastructure delivery. The closing date for entries is 30 April. All prize winners and shortlisted entrants will be invited to attend the NIPA Annual Conference on 06 July 2026.

Our research project looking at the future of infrastructure consultation is now in the final stages of report writing following a detailed literature review and a survey of consultation experience. The research team were delighted with the response to surveys. More recently a number of focus groups have been held to capture the perspectives of different groups of stakeholders on the themes emerging from the research. The report on this research will be published later this year.

Policy and Practice

We continue to monitor and prepare consultation responses in a dynamic policy environment. So far this year, we have submitted two responses to:

- ▶ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero in relation to "changes to energy infrastructure planning application fees"
- ▶ Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government in relation to the "National Planning Policy Framework: proposed reforms and other changes to the planning system"

Policy Update: After three years, the Government have put Environmental Outcomes Reports (EORs) back on the agenda. The working group has registered interest and will be collaborating with government and PAS to drive change. We will be seeking members inputs, views, thoughts and suggestions on how to shape both the guidance, templates and policy that emerges, and practical delivery of the transitional period moving from EIA to EOR.

Skills Working Group

The skills working group will consider and agree the range of skills and competences necessary to deliver good national infrastructure planning; consider how to best develop and deliver these skills and competences for existing practitioners; and consider how best to embed and train new entrants into National Infrastructure Planning.

We were really pleased with the response to our previous call out for members but we would love more members to get involved in our work. Our priorities for 2026 include:

- ▶ Considering what skills and competences are required for effective Consents delivery? (Skills matrix/set of skills)
- ▶ Reviewing/mapping current NSIP training and providers, identifying content gaps, and proposing options to fill them
- ▶ Scoping the potential content and delivery of training in response to requests; and
- ▶ Exploring and considering delivery options and models (including potential delivery partners)
- ▶ Our kick off meeting is planned for April.
- ▶ NIPA across the regions

Building on the established events of the north, and with the inaugural Scottish event in Glasgow last year, attention moves to Wales for the long awaited inaugural event in the Welsh capital in March. Recognising national infrastructure across the UK and northern Ireland is a key objective of our NIPA Plan, which was heavily informed by the member feedback in 2025. We welcome further suggestions of regional representation of our membership and the sharing of best practice and major project implementation across our geography.

What we've done

NIPA Prize 2026 Launch **9 JAN**
Viral Desai (Atkins) and Matthew Anderson (Ardent) **VIEW**

NIPA Board and Council Meeting **26 JAN**
NIPA Board and Council

NIPA Leadership Away Day **28 JAN**
NIPA Board, Council, EYP Steering Group and those involved in driving core activities (various)

CONSULTATION RESPONSE: Changes to energy infrastructure planning application fees **1 FEB**
Sarah Drljaca (Orsted), Matt Sharpe (Quod), Robbie Owen (Pinsent Masons), David Grattan (Grattan Planning) **VIEW**

Breakfast Share: Manchester **17 FEB**
Charlotte Nelson (Motts)

Lunchbox talk: storytelling for NSIP Projects **18 FEB**
Greg Phillimore (Camargue)

An Introduction to Infrastructure Planning for Planning Students Webinar **23 FEB**
Anna Sutherland-Bamber (Iceni), Jordan Martin (DWD), Emily Moulson (Jacobs), Lucia Blaylock-Gould (Pinsent Masons)

Waterfront Conference – Chairing, Speakers and Panel Members **25 & 26 FEB**
Tom Carpen (Thames Water), Ali Leeder (Aeos), Anna Sutherland-Bamber (Iceni), Viki James (Ardent)

CONSULTATION RESPONSE: NPPF: proposed reforms and other changes to the planning system **10 MAR**
Robert Garden (CMS), Jan Bessell (Pinsent Masons), Jonathan Douglas-Green (Mott MacDonald), Amy Hallam (WSP), Martyn Jarvis (Town Legal), Lucia Maclachlan (Arup), Robbie Calvert (RTPI), David Grattan (Grattan Planning) **VIEW**

Step into Spring – Early Careers Infrastructure Social **18 MAR**
Alex Higgin (Quod)

NIPA Wales inaugural meeting, Cardiff **19 MAR**
Greg Phillimore (Camargue)

NIPA EYP mentoring lounge (Birmingham) **26 MAR**
Lottie Townsend (Camargue), Alicia Merricks (Gowling), Joanna Camille-St.Marie (National Grid)



Spring – Summer 2026

A full list of events is on the [NIPA Website](#). we advise checking regularly to see what is coming up.

NIPA Board and Council members will be at UKREiF this year in a variety of formats – please check back on the website for more information.

Social: Leeds 14 APR

Phil Emison (Costain), Orla Downs (Ardent)

NIPA AGM 2026 28 APR

NIPA Prize Deadline 30 APR

Viral Desai (Atkins) and Matthew Anderson (Ardent)

Lunchbox talk: APR TBC

Site and route selection for DCOs

Andrew Prior (Aeos)

NIPA EYP Site Visit: APR / MAY TBC

Eakring Training Centre

Tom Beckford (National Grid)

NIPA RTPI Collaboration Event - London 05 MAY

Alex Higgin (Quod)

NIPA North, Newcastle 9 Jun

Social: Birmingham JUN TBC

Lottie Townsend (Camargue)

NIPA Annual Conference 2026 6 Jul

NIPA EYP mentoring lounge (Leeds) TBC

Orla Downs (Ardent)

NIPA EYP mentoring lounge (Bristol) TBC

Lottie Townsend (Camargue)

How you can get involved

Lunch box talks and social events

We are looking for volunteers to host lunch time events on their favourite topic or to organise breakfast shares and networking socials. Please contact [Alex Crow](#), [Lottie Townsend](#) or [Oliver Spencer](#).

Working group volunteers

We are always looking for passionate and enthusiastic individuals to support our working groups. If you're interested, please get in touch at info@nipa-uk.org.

Policy and practice consultation responses

Any NIPA member can get involved in our responses, and our collaboration with regulators and stakeholders, please get in touch with [Peta Donkin](#) and [David Grattan](#).

Site visits

We are looking for projects which are able to host site visits for NIPA members. If you have a site you can host a visit, please [complete this form](#).

NIPA Matters

Something on your mind for NSIPs? Host a NIPA Matters supported by us – just get in touch with [Vicki Redman](#) or [Phil Emison](#).

Skills and Competence workstream

We are about to kick off our 2026 work programme: priorities include skills requirements; NSIP training; current providers review; attracting new talent; and developing a skills strategy. If you have an interest in NSIP skills, then we would be delighted to hear from you. Contact [Mark Southgate](#) for further information.