

Welcome to the south west

Home to the biggest single employer of landscape architects in the entire country, the south-west region offers exciting opportunities for development and redevelopment. **Lionel Fanshawe** considers the challenge of ensuring that the associated pressures on the land and environment are managed sympathetically

The south-west branch of the LI covers an area that stretches over 250 miles from East Hampshire to Lands End and includes the counties of Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, Avon, Wiltshire, Dorset, Hampshire, the Isle of Wight and the Channel Islands. The landscape can be as stunning as it is varied, with three of Britain's 12 national parks (Dartmoor, Exmoor and the New Forest) and much of a new one in the offing (South Downs) as well as 15 of England's 36 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The geology has provided rolling chalk downlands, stark granite moorland outcrops, red sandstone cliffs, the extraordinary formations of the Cheddar Gorge, Chesil Beach and the Needles and distinctive landscape patterns such as the Somerset Levels, Salisbury Plain and Scilly Isles. The area's ancient heritage includes Stonehenge, Glastonbury and Tintagel and it boasts the cathedral cities of Winchester, Exeter, Salisbury and Wells and the ports of Bristol, Portsmouth, Southampton and Plymouth. The economy, historically linked with the sea and with agriculture, has seen the coming and going of mining and quarrying and is now one of the UK's main tourist regions. Unspoilt nature, Hardy's Wessex, De Maurier's Cornwall and Austen's Hampshire are juxtaposed by the modern interventions of the Eden Centre, Spinnaker Tower and Twyford Down.

With over 500 members, LISW is currently the third largest of the 11 local branches, spread through numerous local authorities and government departments (Hampshire County Council is the biggest single local government employer of landscape architects in the entire country) and 64 private practices. Although members are dispersed throughout the region, significant concentrations are found in the Bristol/Bath and Winchester/Southampton areas.

Many of these organisations do not specifically

work locally within the region but have chosen it as a base for quality of life and workplace. However, member's workloads within the region appear to be at an all-time high, covering the full spectrum of landscape expertise.

On the larger scale, some of the most challenging issues relate to the increasing importance of landscape character assessment within the planning system. Pressures for landscape change loom large on the horizon and landscape character assessment has become a useful tool in defining sensitivities to change and capacities for development.

Pressures do not just come from development, but also from land management such as changing agricultural practices (diversification, new subsidies) and renewable energy initiatives (energy crops, wind turbines) and in due course the effects of climate change will become an important factor.

On the medium and smaller scales, a buoyant economy is bringing about unparalleled development and redevelopment, which in turn brings related pressures to both busy private practices and local authorities in an often beleaguered planning system. Both public and private sector spending has been high and agencies such as SWRDA, CPR and 'EP are active in targeted areas. Public realm regeneration has been noticeable throughout the region.

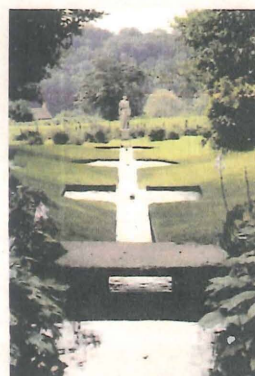
The south-west branch aims to be a forum for discussion, encouraging the organisation of lectures and events that bring together the region's widely dispersed membership and is available for consultation by LI central office when documents need review. A quarterly newsletter detailing the latest events can be found on the LISW website.

In the last year, we have helped organise many events, including a talk by LI President Kathryn Moore and the second of two regional PPE

Chartership Roadshow events in Bristol – the first of which was held in Winchester; sponsorship of the 'Doing It in Public' design seminar with Solent Architecture and Design Centre at Southampton to launch Architecture Week, again with Kathryn Moore speaking; an AGM on the Wiltshire/Hampshire border visiting the model of sustainability, Cholderton Estate; assistance to the student body SLIC for their summer camp in Cornwall; and seminars set up by local members on landscape matters in Cornwall and on urban design in Bournemouth. In addition, there has been the usual round of local social events such as the Christmas pub quiz (organised this year in Southampton). Committee members have also represented the branch when invited to judge competitions or discuss policy and attended a very successful LI branch forum organised by the new president in London in July.

We hope you will enjoy this issue of *Landscape* and its focus on the south west and we welcome contact from members both inside and outside the region via our website.

Lionel Fanshawe FLI is current chair of LISW and principal of Hampshire based Terra Firma Consultancy www.lisw.org.uk



In 2004, to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the Landscape Institute, the LISW produced a publication celebrating members' work in the region. Copies are available at a discounted price of £2.50 (inc p&p) per copy from Liz Ford, The Mallards, Langstone, Havant PO9 9SS; T 023 92 711970