

Appointments to the Design Commission for Wales

Julie James, Minister for Housing and Local Government, today announced four new appointments to the Board of Directors of the Design Commission for Wales.

Four new Commissioners, Mike Biddulph, Jon James, Cora Kwiatkowski and Joanna Rees, will all take up their roles on 1 April of this year. These appointments are from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2025.

Established in 2002 by the Welsh Government, the Design Commission for Wales (DCFW) is a national organisation which champions good design for better buildings, spaces, and places now and for future generations. DCFW draws on the skills of a multi-disciplinary team of professional planners, urban designers, architects, transport planners, sustainability specialists and engineers to deliver expert advice and support for commissioning clients, training for local planning authorities and built environment professionals, placemaking guidance and Wales' national strategic Design Review service.

Commissioners of the DCFW are Members of its Board of Directors. They are not paid, but are reimbursed for reasonable travel and subsistence costs. They have a time commitment of approximately two days per month.

Julie James said:

“I am pleased that four new Commissioners have been appointed to the Board of the Design Commission for Wales and they each bring with them a wide range of new skills and experience. These appointments will undoubtedly support the DCFW in its important role to implement our national planning policies on design and placemaking in order to create better places for the people of Wales.”

Gayna Jones, Chair of the DCFW Board, said:

“The Design Commission extends a warm welcome to our new Commissioners and we look forward to them contributing to our strong and diverse board. Our core role of promoting design quality for excellent places is very much about helping to achieve positive outcomes for town centres, cities, villages and communities the length and breadth of Wales as we recover from Covid-19.

We welcome our colleagues to our team and are confident that they will help us continue to play a crucial role in supporting Welsh Government's objective and key national priorities for better places and good homes and sustaining and developing a vibrant economy, for our towns and city centres. Good design decisions and excellent quality are essential in the route to achieving decarbonisation and climate resilience, developing strong ecosystems and improving the health and well-being of our communities.”

Carole-Anne Davies, Chief Executive of the DCFW, said:

“It is my great privilege to work with the skilled Board of Directors and staff team here at the Commission. Our new Commissioners will further strengthen that team and our work in helping to make Wales a better place. Their skills and experience will add a new dimension to DCFW and we're delighted to welcome them to the team.”

The appointments comply with the Governance Code on Public Appointments. All appointments are made on merit and political activity plays no part in the selection process. However, in accordance with the original Nolan recommendations, there is a requirement for the political activity of appointees (if any are declared) to be published.

None of these persons have carried out any political activities in the last five years or hold any other Ministerial appointment.

Biographies

Mike Biddulph

Dr. Mike Biddulph is an urban designer working for Cardiff Council. He is a graduate of the urban design programme at Oxford Brookes University. At the start of his career he worked for Oxford City Council and then lectured in urban design at the Universities of both Liverpool and then Cardiff, where he founded and initially directed their MA Urban Design. He maintains a keen interest in how design is dealt with by UK planning processes, and has published extensively on urban design theory and principles, neighbourhood planning, master planning and design coding practices, various approaches to urban regeneration and renewal, as well as street and public realm design. He was, in particular, at the forefront of efforts to get home zones introduced into the UK.

For a period of time he was a Trustee of Play Wales and always tries to advocate on behalf of children and young people in planning and design. For Cardiff he provides design comments on significant planning applications, and is helping to shape the urban extensions to the city, the design of new council housing projects and contributes ideas and suggestions to public realm schemes.

Being a strong advocate for the work of the Design Commission over many years, he has supported it through officer and councillor training, contributions to Design Review, research and the authoring of material for its website and various publications. If he is not doing this, he will probably be drawing.

Jon James

Jon James is an experienced Architect and certified Passivhaus Designer. With 20 years' experience in the industry, he has worked on projects across many sectors including small scale residential, commercial, education and masterplans. He has a strong reputation for working closely with his clients, creating and delivering buildings that exceed expectations. Jon has spoken at several influential conferences over the years on topics such as education and sustainable buildings.

Jon has worked for a number of award winning national and international practices. During his time as a Director at Scott Brownrigg he worked on a number of acclaimed schemes including Cardiff Pointe, Cardiff North-West Masterplan and Coleg Cymunedol Y Dderwen in Bridgend. The new community school achieved a BREEAM 'Outstanding' rating at design stage and became an exemplar project for the Low Carbon Research Institute.

Jon leads his own practice, Jon James Studio Architecture, based in the Vale of Glamorgan with a focus on sustainable buildings. He is currently working on several

sustainable/ Passivhaus buildings and works with the Welsh School of Architecture as a consultant.

Cora Kwiatkowski

Cora is a chartered architect with over 20 years' international experience and Divisional Director/Sector Lead for Higher Education at Stride Treglown, as well as a RIBA Client Adviser with a special focus on strategic advice, briefing and user experience.

With her strong design background, she has been responsible for high-value and change inspiring projects, including higher education, student accommodation and workplace schemes.

Cora is experienced in working with the public and private sector to deliver award-winning projects. As a multi-disciplinary design team leader, she led, for example, on the €200m train station in Cologne, designed the innovative Shilling Building at Royal Holloway and worked on the world-class £56m Bristol Business School as Technical Adviser for the University of the West of England, as well as on masterplans and design codes for up to 2,200 residential units.

Cora has demonstrated encouraging design excellence as thought-leader through co-chairing the Design Review Panel at the Design Commission for Wales and Design West. She further supports this aim as Board Trustee for the Architecture Centre and a member of the Higher Education Design Quality Forum. Cora was Finalist in the 'Best Woman Architect' category at the Women in Construction and Engineering European Awards 2019.

Joanna Rees

Jo is a lawyer and partner at Blake Morgan in Cardiff where she specialises in construction and development schemes and heads the firm's cross discipline Infrastructure team. She has considerable experience of large scale public and private development work, regeneration schemes and infrastructure projects.

Originally from Porthcawl she graduated from Bristol University and worked in the City before rediscovering the attractions of Welsh life. She now lives with her family and two large Airedales in the Vale. Jo is also a trustee of Wales Millennium Centre, a member of the Cardiff Business Council ac mae'n siarad Cymraeg.