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RTPI Survey of Employers in Wales

This survey was designed to help the RTPI better understand the impacts of the recession and reduced public sector spending on local planning authorities and consultancies. It also sought to better understand issues relating to CPD and the recruitment of planners and graduates.

The survey was sent to 23 consultancies and 25 Local Planning Authorities (LPAs). 11 consultancies (48%) and 17 LPAs (68%) responded to the survey.

The survey represents the views of 28 employers (58% of those employers contacted). The survey was carried out between September and October 2010.

Survey by numbers:

68% of LPAs and 48% of consultancies responded to the survey

Between April 2009 and March 2010:

- 308 chartered planners were employed.
- 73 non-chartered planners undertaking MRTPI level work were employed
- 44 Licentiate members were employed
- 60 graduate level planners were employed
- 57% of employers were did not employ any Licentiate members
- 10 planners were recruited by 7 LPAs
- 26 vacancies were held open to save money, 25 of those vacancies were within LPAs.
- The average spend on CPD per person was £338.14.
- Four chartered planners, and one graduate planner were made redundant. 4 planners retired.

Between April 2010 and March 2011:

- 10 LPAs considered holding open 16 vacancies to save money, the majority in development management.
- 3 LPAs and 1 consultancy will make a total of 10 positions redundant
- 10 LPAs expect to leave a total of 16 development management vacancies open to save money.
- 5 LPAs expect to leave 7 policy team vacancies open to save money.
- 5 LPAs expect to recruit 9 graduates

Between April 2011 and March 2012:

- 11 redundancies are expected from four LPAs. None are expected from consultancies.

1. Planning represented with Council Management structures

The survey asked councils the name of the most senior planner within their organisation, and whether this planner was employed in a 1st, 2nd, 3rd or 4th tier management position. For the purpose of the survey the management tiers were described as:

- 1st tier post holder = Chief Executive
- 2nd tier = Director
- 3rd tier = Head of Service
- 4th tier = Planning manager

Two of the 17 responding LPAs did not answer this question. From the 15 that did:

- One LPA had a planner employed at the 1st tier (Chief Executive)
- One LPA employed a planner at the second tier
- 11 LPAs employed a planner at the third tier (71% of respondents)
- One LPA employed a planner at the 4th tier

2. Recruitment and Retention

The survey asked the responding employers to advise how many of the following planning staff were employed within their organisation between April 2009 and March 2010.

2.1 Chartered Town Planners

A total of 308 chartered planners were employed, with LPAs being the largest employer. One LPA employed 47 professional planners, the largest single number employed. A total of 247 professional planners are employed within the responding LPAs. The average (median) number of chartered planners employed by an LPA is 12.

A total of 61 chartered planners are employed within the responding consultancies. The average (median) number of chartered planners employed by a consultancy is five, the largest number employed by a single consultancy is 14.

2.2 Non-chartered planners undertaking MRTPI level work

The survey sought to find out how many planners who are not professionally qualified, are employed to perform duties at a level undertaken by professionally qualified planners. The survey allowed each employer to decide whether the level of work was comparable with that carried out by professionally qualified planners.

68% of employers confirmed they employ non-chartered planners to carry out MRTPI level work, a total of 73 staff, with three of the 28 employers (11%) employing slightly more non-chartered planners than professionally qualified planners. The average (median) number of non-MRTPI planners employed is 2.5. 32% of employers do not employ non-chartered planners to carry out MRTPI level work.

The number employed is slightly higher within LPAs. The average (median) number of non-MRTPI planners employed is 4.5. The largest number of non-MRTPI planners employed by a council is 13, the lowest is 0. A total of five consultancies and four LPAs (32% of responding employers) only employ chartered planners to undertake MRTPI level work.

2.3 Licentiate members

A total of 44 Licentiate members are employed by 12 of the 28 employers who responded to the survey. The majority of employers (57%) do not employ Licentiate members. Nine LPAs employ a total of 38 Licentiate members, and three consultancies employ a total of six. The average (median) number employed is three.

The largest number of Licentiate members employed by any one employer (an LPA) is eight.

2.4 Graduate level planners employed

A total of 60 graduate level planners are employed. 82% of responding LPAs employ a total of 40 graduates. The majority of responding consultancies (64%) do not employ graduate level planners. From those that do, a total of 20 graduate level planners are employed, with one consultancy employing the single largest number of graduates (14).

2.5 Redundancy and retirements

The survey asked for numbers of staff taking voluntary or compulsory redundancy, or early retirement/retirement, between April 2009 to March 2010. A total of four Chartered planners were lost due to voluntary or compulsory redundancy, two within one LPA (one in development management and one in policy), and two from two separate consultancies. One graduate level planner was made redundant by a consultancy. No other planners were made redundant.

Four chartered planners retired or took early retirement from a total of two LPAs, three worked in development management, one in planning policy. No other planners took retirement.

The survey also asked employers if they had made any redundancies, or were likely to make redundancies between April 2010 to March 2011, and April 2011 to March 2012.

During April 2010 to March 2011, three LPAs made or will make a total of nine redundancies in the following areas; two Development Management posts, five Administrative posts, one Economic Development post and one unspecified post were made redundant. One consultancy had made one unspecified post redundant.

During April 2011 to March 2012, four LPAs consider it likely that they will make redundancies which are as follows: six Development Management posts, two Planning Policy posts, one Enforcement post, one Tree officer post and one unspecified post. Two of the LPAs also made redundancies in the period between April 2010 to March 2011.

No redundancies were planned in the private sector.

2.6 Recruitment

The survey asked employers if they had recruited any planners between April 2009 to March 2010. There was very little recruitment activity during this period. Ten planners were recruited by seven LPAs; four chartered planners, two non-chartered planners undertaking MRTPI level work, one Licentiate member and three graduate level planners. The majority were employed in development management positions. Five planners were recruited by four consultancies.

Employers were asked whether, during the same period, they held open vacancies to save money. A total of 26 vacancies were held open to save money. All were within

LPAs, with the exception of one vacancy, described as an 'industry placement', which was held open by a planning consultancy.

13 LPAs (76%) held open a total of seven vacancies in planning policy, and 12 vacancies in development management. Two enforcement vacancies were also held open, as was one senior conservation officer vacancy and three administrative vacancies.

Employers were also asked whether they would hold vacancies open to save money during the period April 2010 to March 2011.

Ten LPAs said they would consider leaving a total of 16 development management vacancies open. Five LPAs said that they would leave a total of seven vacancies in the policy teams open, with one LPA is considering leaving three administrative positions open. Only one consultancy reported they would consider leaving a vacancy open.

For the period April 2010 to March 2011, employers were asked if they had offered, or are considering offering, voluntary, temporary or permanent positions to graduates.

Five LPAs had recruited a total of nine graduates. Four graduates were employed in planning policy on temporary contracts, with an additional graduate taken on as a voluntary work placement. Four graduates were employed in development management, one permanent and three on temporary contracts.

Two LPAs were considering offering a total of two temporary positions within development management, with another LPA considering offering a voluntary work placement.

Four consultancies recruited four graduates into permanent positions, with another consultancy recruiting a graduate in a temporary position, and another considering offering a temporary position. No consultancy had offered voluntary work experience to graduates.

2.7 Graduate level planning positions advertised and interviewed.

The survey asked employers whether they had recently advertised a graduate level planning position, and if so how many applications did they receive. Seven LPAs had advertised a graduate position; the combined number of applications submitted to these vacancies was between 123 and 132. The median average number of application per vacancy was 15. The highest number of applications for one position was between 51-60.

Five consultancies had also advertised graduate positions, attracting between 261 and 270 applications in total. The median average was 50 applications for each position. The highest number of applications for a vacancy was 100.

2.8 Job applications and interviews.

Employers were asked to think to rate the importance of the following categories when deciding which applicants to interview for any vacancy.

- Non-RTPI accredited degree
- RTPI accredited degree
- The classification awarded
- Relevant work experience
- Membership of the RTPI (for graduate level positions)
- Corporate membership for middle and senior planner positions

The categories were to be rated as Essential, Important, Fairly important or Not important. The following charts details the responses.

Chart 1 lists each category rated by their importance. Chart 2 gives further weight to how employers rated each category.

Chart 1

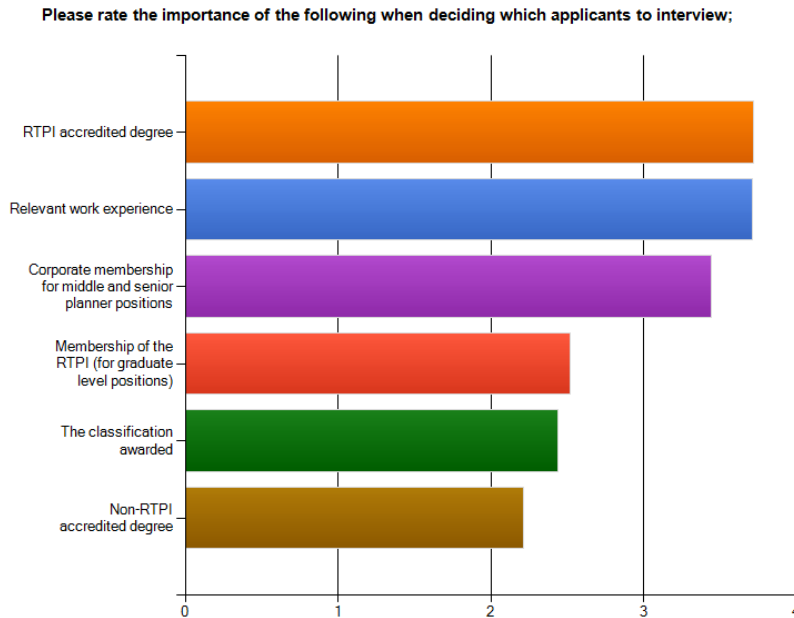


Chart 2:

Please rate the importance of the following when deciding which applicants to interview;

	Not important	Fairly important	Important	Very important	Essential
Non-RTPI accredited degree	27.3%	31.8%	18.2%	0.0%	9.1%
RTPI accredited degree	7.1%	3.6%	10.7%	53.6%	14.3%
The classification awarded	21.4%	28.6%	17.9%	21.4%	0.0%
Relevant work experience	0.0%	10.7%	21.4%	35.7%	17.9%
Membership of the RTPI (for graduate level positions)	17.9%	28.6%	28.6%	7.1%	7.1%
Corporate membership for middle and senior planner positions	14.3%	3.6%	25.0%	21.4%	25.0%

The following comments were received by employers as important.

- *Ability to write fluent and accurate English. Evidence of leadership skills, strong organisational ability or commercial flair.*
- *cost, communication skills, academic track record and learning potential, Welsh language skills,*
- *Council recruitment policy is weighted against formal qualifications*
- *General skills (customer care, teamwork, communications)*
- *Personality / communication skills / attitude / potential for team working*
- *Presentation skills*

3. Continuing Professional Development

All employers who responded to the survey said they were supporting some form of training for their staff. The average spend on training between April 2010 and March 2011 was £338.14 per person, but there was a wide range of different expenditures, from £31.25 per planner to £1000 per planner and there is no tendency for bigger or smaller budgets depending on the sector.

This average spend is slightly higher than the national average of £320 per employee in the private sector and £116 per employee in the public sector (CIPD Learning and Talent Development Survey 2010).

Although 39% of employers said their budget would go down in 2011, 11% said that their budget would increase, and a further 11% said their budget could go up or down in response to learning needs.

Employers carry out a variety of types of learning including internal courses, qualifications and e-learning, organising internal seminars to share expertise, collaborating with other authorities and inviting specialists and organisations to give free sessions to staff. One affordable option is on-the-job training, although this can be an unreliable way to provide effective learning for staff. One employer is making sure that on-the-job learning works effectively in their organisation through coaching and mentoring by senior staff.

The RTPi is grateful to the following employers who contributed to this survey:

Asbri Planning Ltd, Atkins Ltd, Barton Willmore, Blaenau Gwent. BC, Bridgend County Borough Council, Cardiff Council, Ceredigion County Council, City and County of Swansea, Cyngor Gwynedd Council, Denbighshire County Council, DLP Planning Ltd, DPP LLP, Flintshire County Council, Monmouthshire County Council, Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners, Neath Port Talbot CBC, Pembrokeshire County Council Powys County Council, Redrow Homes South Wales, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, RPS Group plc, RWE NPower Renewables, SLR Consulting, Torfaen County Borough Council, Vale of Glamorgan Council, West Coast Energy Ltd, Wrexham BC, Ynys Mon County Council



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