



RTPI

mediation of space · making of place

Royal Town Planning Institute East of England

(Charity registered in England 262865 and Scotland SC 037841)

East of England Region Business Plan 2012 – 2014

**Following discussions at the Regional Activities Committee
14 July 2011**

*Regional Office: 4 Opus House, Elm Farm Park, Great Green, Thurston,
BURY ST EDMUNDS, Suffolk, IP31 3SH*

Registered Office: Royal Town Planning Institute, 41 Botolph Lane, London, EC3R 8DL

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1. INTRODUCTION

Role

Through the membership and, particularly, by the actions of the Regional Management Board (RMB) and the Regional Activities Committee (RAC), advance the art and science of town and country planning in all its aspects for the benefit of members of the RTPI and the general public in the East of England Region.

In achieving this we will meet the Corporate Objectives set out in the RTPI's Corporate Plan.

2. REGIONAL CONTEXT

The Region's geographical area is based on the aggregate area of the traditional counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire.

The special characteristics that influence the nature of the Region's activities are:

- The relatively large geographical area that means those based away from the location of activities will have fair distances to travel to take part in the activities.
- Its relative proximity of the Greater London metropolitan area, where a large number of Conferences and Seminars are held. This has implications for the location, nature, form and pricing of the Region's events.
- The Region has large rural populations (some of which are quite remote from developed areas) as well as "high technology growth clusters". These areas give rise to particular planning issues.
- In parts of the region high levels of economic growth and development pressures are being experienced. There are also, however, pockets where the economic decline of traditional industries is being experienced and there are areas with high levels of resident ethnic minorities.
- The area is well located in relation to continental Europe and the EU to which it has good transport links. The southern part of the Region has strong socio-economic links to London and the south-east. With good infrastructure links generally, most of the Region is readily accessible to surrounding regions.

3. IDENTIFICATION OF TARGETS

A Statement of the intentions of the Region for the three-year period is expressed in relation to the RTPI corporate objectives.

Empowering Communities

Provide support for the Planning Aid Service through membership of the Working Party by RTPI Members.

Developing and Shaping Planning Policy and Practice

Actively participate in planning issues by responding to policy consultations.

Developing Knowledge and Raising Standards

- Organise and promote the East of England Planning Achievement Award, which will promote Best Practice and raise awareness of planning excellence in the East of England.
- Present the Maurice Hellier Memorial Prize. The Award is made annually to the student achieving the best overall academic performance on the Anglia Ruskin University BSc (Hons) Environmental Planning course.

Delivering Services for, and supporting members in, the Region

CPD:

- Monitor and maintain progress on the 2012 conference programme of a minimum of 8 (preferably 10) one day conferences.

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- Under the direction of the Senior Vice Chair, annually produce a programme of a minimum of 8 one day conferences for the following year, including the identification of topics, venues, dates and the organiser(s) responsible for each conference.
- Ensure the following year's conference programme is completed by the end of the current year to enable advance bookings to be made and to allow for a more accurate assessment of the financial progress of the programme to be monitored.
- Encourage, support and promote the organisation of Local Centres to provide CPD ½ day or shorter events throughout the Region.
- Promote and publicise the CPD events of other bodies, such as colleges, local authorities and other professional bodies, who are holding courses.

Newsletter

Produce four electronic editions of the Regional Newsletter, the East of England Express. Seek appropriate sponsorship to improve the presentation, quality and finances of the Newsletter.

E-bulletins

To produce regular e-bulletins to provide information to Regional members.

Prioritising Membership and Attracting New Members

- Careers Events: The East of England Region does not currently undertake any activities in this field.
- Recruitment Drives. It is considered that recruitment, retention and returning lapsed members to the Institute are vital activities.
- The Region will actively promote the profession through:
 - The Regional Planning Achievement Awards and
 - By campaigning with Senior Officers in local government and the Heads of Practices in the private sector to recognise the value and importance of their planning staff being Chartered Members of the Institute and to encourage and support their staff to undertake Continuing Professional Development, particularly by participating in those events organised within the East of England Region.

4. EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

Regional Management Board and Regional Activities Committee

The delivery of services within the East of England Region is the responsibility of the Regional Management Board, which is supported by the Regional Activities Committee. The **Regional Management Board** is responsible for the governance of the Region. This enables the RTPI Executive Board to satisfy themselves and the Charity Commissioners that the actions of the Institute and its Regions are demonstrably accountable. The Regional Management Board consists of the Regional Chair, Regional Senior Vice Chair, Regional Junior Vice Chair, Regional Secretary, Regional Treasurer, Regional Immediate Past Chair and Regional Representative on the General Assembly. The Secretary and Treasurer are elected annually. There is an automatic progression from Junior Vice Chair to Senior Vice Chair to Chair in succeeding years, therefore only the Junior Vice Chair Post is elected annually, and the Regional Representative on the General Assembly is elected every second year.

The Regional Management Board is supported by a **Regional Activities Committee** which, as its name implies, assists with the activities arranged by and for the Members of the Region. The East of England Regional Activities Committee consists of 24 Corporate members (including the Regional Management Board members), 1 Technical member and 5 Student/Licentiate members. Corporate Members and the Technical Member are elected for two years (half of the Committee's Corporate members are elected each year) and the Student/Licentiate members are elected for one year.

The RMB will meet as required and the RAC will aim to meet six times in 2012.

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The Board and Committee are supported by a Co-ordinator, part-time, and a Clerical Assistant, part-time. The Co-ordinator works from the Regional Office in Thurston, the Clerical Assistant is home-based.

Succession Planning

There is a system in place for the succession of the Regional Chair through Junior and Senior Vice Chair over a two year period, enabling the post holders to obtain on-the-job advice and experience. The post of Deputy Representative on General Assembly provides a similar opportunity for training for the post of Regional Representative on the General Assembly. As there is no system in place for succession planning or training for the posts of Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer, it is proposed that the informal posts of Assistant Treasurer and Assistant Secretary are created to enable the “training up” of successors during 2012.

5. EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE BUSINESS PRACTICES

Operational Details

The RMB will produce the Regional Business Plan and its associated Regional Budget; the Annual Report of the Region; the arrangements for the requisite RMB meetings and six RAC meetings, the Annual General Meeting and the arrangements for the annual President’s visit to the Region.

To ensure the efficient and effective administration of the Region’s activities, the Region has the benefit of a Regional Co-ordinator and a Regional Clerical Assistant. The staff’s priorities will be to ensure that conferences and CPD events are organised, advertised and promoted, take bookings and settle accounts, maintain financial records and pay income into the Region’s account; circulate agendas, papers and minutes of RMB and RAC meetings; maintain membership records; produce and distribute the East of England Express and regular e-bulletins, advertise the Regional Planning Achievements Award and assist with the organisation of the Award Presentation event and other social events.

A Regional Office is maintained at Elm Farm Business Park, Thurston, near Bury St. Edmunds. In 2009 the Region’s reserves were used to pay for the lease of the Regional Office as the proposed revision of Regional funding, which would have seen Regional Grants replaced by a central funding of each Region’s activities (including the costs of premises), had been abandoned. This run-down of Regional reserves was in line with the RTPI’s instructions to Regions. Funding the lease of the office from reserves cannot continue. Provision is made in the 2012 Budget and Business Plan to meet this expenditure from income from the Conference Programme. This item of expenditure will be kept under review and alternative cheaper accommodation will be sought annually, although it must be recognised that the disruption and expense of moving office must also be kept to a minimum. The lease on the current office in Thurston expires in February 2012.

Communications

The Regional Newsletter, the East of England Express, will be published electronically four times a year. Promotional material for each conference will be made available electronically and additional promotion of the Region’s activities and other news will be done by regular ebulletins, but these not reach all members.

Finance

The Region has two main sources of income, the Regional Grant from central funds and surplus revenue from the one-day Conference Programme. Major outgoings are staff salaries and office accommodation.

Staff

The Regional Co-ordinator is employed for 29 hours a week. The Co-ordinator is assisted by a Clerical Assistant, employed for 2.5 hours a week. In addition, there are the voluntary roles of Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer.

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Equipment

The Regional Office is equipped with a computer, monitor, printer/copier/scanner, telephone/answering machine and other miscellaneous items. The Region also has a laptop computer for use at conferences. Provision needs to be made in the budget for replacement and procurement of additional items of equipment as required.

Involvement of Active Members

At present almost all active members' involvement is by members of the RAC or by volunteers in the Planning Aid Service.

6. STATEMENT OF THE INTENTIONS OF THE REGION

Through the membership and, particularly, by the actions of the Regional Management Board (RMB) and the Regional Activities Committee (RAC), the Region will advance the art and science of town and country planning in all its aspects for the benefit of members of the RTPI and the general public in the East of England Region.

To achieve this we will:

- Provide a range of services to RTPI East of England Region Members;
- Maintain and enhance the public awareness of the planning system and the role of professional planners within it;
- Run the Region in an efficient and effective business-like manner, ensuring service delivery and financial stability;
- Undertake its business and activities in an environmentally friendly and sustainable manner;
- Promote and support the principle of equal opportunities within and by the planning system and in the profession itself;
- Maintain and enhance communications and good relations between the Region and the Institute at national level and the between the RAC/RMB and the Regional membership to optimise service delivery and efficiency at all levels.

Strategy for delivery of the Statement of Intentions

The Regional Management Board will deliver the sound governance and activities of the Region through the effective use of the Regional staff and volunteers from the membership.

The administration of the Region and its activities will be undertaken by the Regional staff and the Region's officers, particularly the Chair, Treasurer and Secretary. The other main activities of the Region will be undertaken by members of the following Sub-Groups, mainly recruited from the members of the Regional Activities Committee. The aims and functions of these sub-groups are set out below:-

Conference Programme

Aims:

- To monitor and maintain progress on the 2012 conference programme of a minimum of 8 (preferably 10) one-day conferences.
- In collaboration with the Senior Vice Chair, to produce a programme of a minimum of 8 one-day conferences for the following years, 2013 and 2014, including the identification of topics, venues and organisers responsible for each conference.
- To ensure the 2013 conference programme is completed by December 2012 to enable advance bookings to be made and to allow for a more accurate assessment of the financial progress of the programme to be monitored.

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- To hold discussions with the Planning Officers Society and other built environment professional organisations in order to identify topics and issues for the following year's Programme and to organise joint events.
- The pricing structure will enable a premium to be charged for the most popular Conferences - the Councillors' Conference and the annual Planning Law Update.

CPD Network Group

Aims:

- To encourage, support and promote the organisation of ½ day or shorter CPD events throughout the Region. The provision of ½ day or shorter CPD events is being met in part by Young Planner events. These should be jointly marketed with other events to obtain maximum benefits to the membership.
- Promote and publicise the CPD events of other bodies, such as colleges, local authorities and other professional bodies. Joint meetings would have the benefit of increased attendance and shared work loads.
- Discuss with the Regional Consultation Secretary whether it is feasible to have discussion/information meetings about current consultations at short notice.

Press, Media & Promotion

Aims:

- To promote and raise awareness of Regional Planning issues, publicising the benefits of planning and the contribution made by Planners in the East of England.
- Produce a report of the proceedings after each one-day conference, to be published in the East of England Express.
- To produce 4 editions of the Regional Newsletter, the East of England Express. Advantage will be taken of appropriate sponsorship offers to improve the presentation, quality or finances of the Newsletter.
- To organise and promote the East of England Regional Planning Achievement Award and associated Presentation Event.
- To organise social events within the Region, some to cover the whole Region, others, based similarly to the Local Centres principle, to meet the local needs for social events and to undertake events for specific groups of members, e.g. Young Planners.
- To provide "Planning" magazine with interesting articles and issues - but they must be topical and up to date.
- Provide a forum for discussion on major planning issues. A guest speaker at appropriate RAC meetings giving a presentation on a topical planning issue will inform the Committee and, importantly, provide a basis for an article, conference or CPD roadshow around the Region.
- Produce and maintain a list of contacts in each county who are prepared to provide a press statement or a press release on regional issues when called for.
- To advise local media of conferences and, particularly, of the Regional Planning Achievement Award. The publicity for the latter event is usually enthusiastically supported by the winner's PR department. The annual President's visit is publicised within the Region with the assistance of press releases from Botolph Lane.

Planning Aid

Aims:

- To provide support for the Planning Aid Service.
- The Planning Aid Service will be assisted by volunteers from the members in the East of England and will provide training for existing and new volunteers.

Communications

The Regional Newsletter, the East of England Express, will be published electronically four times a year. Promotional material for each conference will be made available electronically and additional promotion of the Region's activities and other news will be done by regular ebulletins, but these not reach all members.

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Staffing

The Region has the benefit of a Regional Co-ordinator, employed for 29 hours a week. Her duties are summarised above in the section “Efficient and Effective Business Practices - Operational Details”. The Co-ordinator is vital. The Region could not operate without the services of the Co-ordinator, volunteer time is simply not available to undertake the duties done by her. The Co-ordinator is assisted by a Clerical Assistant, employed for 2.5 hours a week. Her duties are to assist the Co-ordinator in clerical tasks and to prepare delegate items for the monthly conferences. If the Region did not have the services of the Clerical Assistant the alternative options are very limited and unsatisfactory – either the Co-ordinator is employed for an extra 2.5 hours a week to undertake the tasks (at greatly increased cost) or the members do not receive the level of service they expect and require from the Region. In addition, there are the voluntary roles of Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer, both of which are vital to the effective and efficient running of the RTPI East of England.

Finance

The East of England Region’s annual expenditure is in the order of £50,000–£60,000 (including ongoing accommodation costs) and the only guaranteed income each year is in the form of the Regional Grant which currently amounts to £21,796 (i.e. unchanged for 2 years in line with the RTPI’s current policies). The shortfall has to be covered by the surplus generated by the Conference Programme. The anticipated income flows from the current level of RTPI Regional Grant and that anticipated from the Regional Conference programme are unlikely to be sufficient to underpin greatly enhanced activity. The Conference programme is at present the main source of income for the Region but this income is unpredictable and turbulent mainly as a consequence of economic and work pressures on planners generally. The steps taken several years ago to place the control of costing and the pricing of the Conferences on a sounder footing have borne fruit in what has become a much more challenging market. Given the decline in average delegate numbers that has occurred in recent years, the income stream is clearly threatened by any potential failing to set the charging rate at the right level. Any scope to squeeze this source of income further is strictly limited. Strict control on all expenditure will be maintained and careful monitoring kept up in relation to income streams.

Volunteers

The Region’s Conference Programme, Young Planners Events and the provision of small CPD events are all heavily dependent upon the voluntary efforts of the members. It is becoming increasingly apparent that the members are having less time available for organising activities for the Region, with the volunteers struggling to complete their existing commitments. The Regional Co-ordinator assists with these activities, and she is heavily involved in the main Conference Programme, but the creativity and initiative should come from the volunteers. In the current economic and financial situation the Region cannot afford to increase the hours of the Regional Co-ordinator to cover this decrease in volunteer input unless additional funding is available from central sources.

It is considered that recruitment, retention and returning lapsed members to the Institute are vital activities. The Region will actively promote the profession through the Regional Planning Achievement Awards and by campaigning with Senior Officers in local government and the Heads of Practices in the private sector to recognise the value and importance of their planning staff being Chartered Members of the Institute and to encourage and support their staff to undertake Continuing Professional Development, particularly by participating in those events organised within the East of England Region.

The Planning Aid Service also depends on volunteer input and provides a relevant and successful training programme.

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Milestones

List of significant milestones expected in the coming years – listed by year

2012	2013	2014
Publish Conference Programme by 1 st December	Publish Conference Programme by 1 st December	Publish Conference Programme by 1 st December
Publish Young Planners Events Programme quarterly	Publish Young Planners Events Programme quarterly	Publish Young Planners Events Programme quarterly
Publish Local CPD Programmes quarterly	Publish Local CPD Programmes quarterly	Publish Local CPD Programmes quarterly
Produce the Annual Report	Produce the Annual Report	Produce the Annual Report
Hold the Annual General Meeting	Hold the Annual General Meeting	Hold the Annual General Meeting
Production of 4 editions of the East of England Express	Production of 4 editions of the East of England Express	Production of 4 editions of the East of England Express
Regional Planning Achievement Award and presentation event	Regional Planning Achievement Award and presentation event	Regional Planning Achievement Award and presentation event