

A STRATEGY FOR POLICY & PRACTICE: *2006-2007*

Purpose

1. The purpose of this paper is to set out a strategy for the policy and practice functions within the RTPI. It is also intended to draw out issues, themes, linkages between them and means whereby they can be addressed across the policy and research directorate and RTPI as a corporate entity. It is intended to establish the basis for a strategy that is:
 - **directed** – providing a clear vision;
 - **aligned** – conscious of, responsive to and timely in respect of corporate plan priorities, the corporate budget process, priorities set elsewhere in the policy and research directorate and in other directorates.

Structure

2. This paper addresses:
 - **direction** –
 - background issues bearing on a policy and practice strategy;
 - the aims and objectives that that the strategy serves;
 - **alignment** –
 - the structure of the policy and practice team;
 - the functions of the team;
 - the linkage context within which the team operates; and
 - the process context within which the team operates.
 - **implementation** – making it happen.

DIRECTION

Background Issues

3. Policy and practice functions are closely linked with a wide range of partner functions. Some of these lie within the role of the policy and practice team, some lie within the broader policy and research directorate, some lie within other RTPI directorates, some lie within the purview of external stakeholders and some are the responsibility of several of these.
4. This strategy works across these linkages. It extends outside the normal 'line management' approach found in a typical service plan. However, it does not intend to direct work that is taking place outside the policy and practice team: rather it intends to identify opportunities for greater partnership and more effective joint delivery, through processes of alignment within the RTPI and with partner organisations.
5. The RTPI has complex governance and membership integration structures¹ with diverse roles in the development and delivery of policy and practice products. As a number of the higher level structures meet infrequently, it is necessary to establish an effective cut off between matters of directional strategy (that need to be resolved at high level) and matters of implementation that must, as a matter of timeliness, be dealt with under a delegation framework by officers or smaller groups of members. However, this issue also raises an opportunity to 'backfill', by making better and more targeted use of the expertise of members of governance and membership integration structures, between formal meetings.

Aims

6. All policy and practice work undertaken is within the framework of the RTPI's New Vision for Planning, in summary that:

The New Vision: [t]he New Vision for Planning is ...

- *Spatial - dealing with the unique needs and characteristics of places*
- *Sustainable - looking at the short, medium and long term issues*
- *Integrative - in terms of the knowledge, objectives and actions involved*
- *Inclusive - recognising the wide range of people involved in planning*

In all these matters Planning is:

- *Value-driven - concerned with identifying, understanding and mediating conflicting sets of values*
- *Action-oriented - driven by the twin activities of mediating space and making of place²*

¹ The term 'membership integration structures' is used in this paper to denote the broad range of mechanisms whereby the RTPI seeks and incorporates the views and expertise of Members, ranging from General Assembly and the committee structures, to countries, regions, networks panels and task groups.

² 'A New Vision for Planning', RTPI, June 2001 at page 2.

7. Policy

The policy work undertaken by the team aims:

- Policy Aims*
- to establish consistent RTPI views about the current and desired future directions of planning policy and the development of planning systems and to inform the public at large, governments, local governments, members and other stakeholders (such as professional or campaigning institutions) of these views;
 - to establish frameworks consisting of aims, objectives, strategies and criteria whereby the team's own policy actions and those of the directorate and the RTPI as a whole can be prioritized, work guided and performance evaluated;
 - to engage with RTPI governance and membership integration structures in carrying out these tasks; and
 - to forge information and delivery partnerships with external stakeholders who share key elements of the RTPI's New Vision for Planning.

8. These aims are served by the following policy objectives:

- Policy Objectives*
- **to promote continuous improvement in spatial planning policy in a manner that is tangibly connected to the views and expertise of members and officers of the RTPI;**
 - **to promote and continuously improve public understanding of the discipline of spatial planning, both as it is at present, and as the RTPI desires it to develop;**
 - **to raise the profile of the RTPI as the 'thought leader' in spatial planning and as expert in the design and operation of planning systems and policies;**
 - **to promote integration between spatial planning and those disciplines and practices engaged in the sustainable direction and management of terrestrial, marine and atmospheric resources and the actions of societies and economies in respect of these resources;**
 - **to provide timely responses to policy consultations undertaken by governments, local governments and agencies with spatial planning responsibilities, where the issues raised bear on the New Vision for Planning and on these objectives;**
 - **to formulate RTPI policy and responses that address the New Vision for Planning and these objectives and to communicate this to Members, stakeholders and the public; and**
 - **to support decision makers in their adoption and implementation of RTPI policy concepts.**

9. Practice

The practice work undertaken aims:

- Practice Aims*
- in consultation with stakeholders and members, to identify consistent RTPI understandings of best and acceptable spatial planning practice;
 - to identify emerging practice trends;
 - to communicate current best practice expectations and emerging practice directions to members, stakeholders and the public; and

- to recognise practice differences that are necessary to support the distinctiveness and sense of place of countries and regions; but
- within this framework to support the concept of a common core of spatial planning practice relevant to all countries and regions and to all chartered members.

10. These aims are served by the following practice objectives:

- Practice Objectives*
- **to develop, publish and promote practice advice, establishing and maintaining awareness of a strong and single RTPI ‘brand’;**
 - **to promote continuous improvement in spatial planning practice in a manner that is tangibly connected to the views and expertise of members and officers of the RTPI and to the practice outcomes of RTPI research;**
 - **to promote the RTPI as the ‘thought leader’ and key adviser to members, stakeholders and the public on questions of best and adequate practice;**
 - **to underpin the RTPI’s partnerships with tertiary education providers;**
 - **to underpin the RTPI’s professional standards role;**
 - **to maintain understandings of the presence and adequacy of practice advice developed by others;**
 - **to ‘signpost’ to practice advice developed by others where this is core to the practice of spatial planning and meets RTPI understandings of adequacy;**
 - **to prioritise new practice advice work that fills gaps in the availability of professional advice; and**
 - **to continuously review the relevance, content and quality of existing RTPI practice advice.**

11. Integration

In addition to the aims and objectives set above for the individual areas of policy and practice, there are the following integrated aims:

- Integrated Aims*
- to ensure integrated and effective policy and practice development within the RTPI; and
 - to optimise use of RTPI member, officer and financial resources in preparing and communicating policy and practice products.

12. There are also the following general objectives:

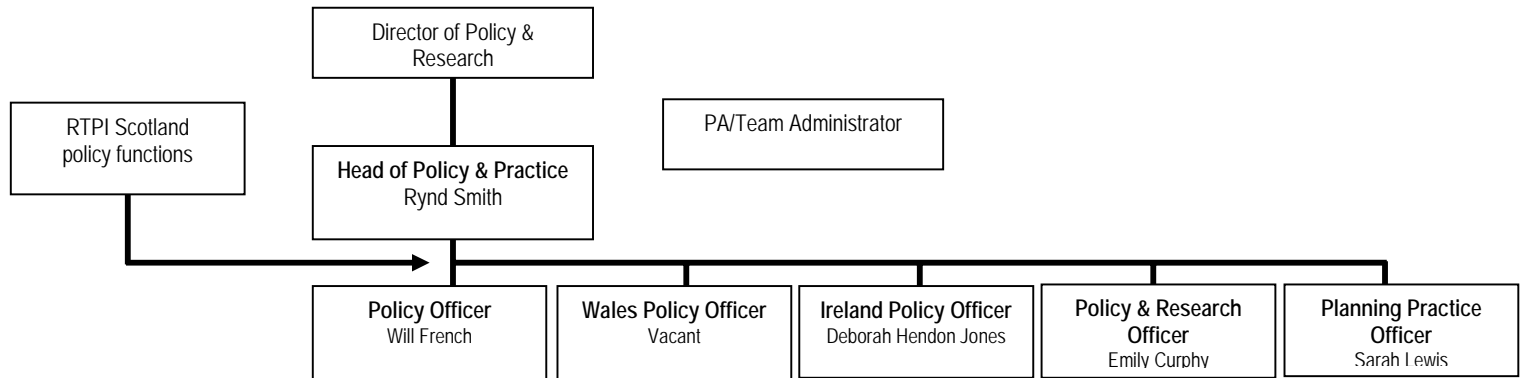
- Integrated Objectives*
- **to maximise the value to be obtained from RTPI sponsored debate and research on planning theory, policy and practice;**
 - **to strengthen linkages between research, policy and practice, communications, public affairs, professional conduct and education activities across the RTPI;**
 - **to engage effectively with the different jurisdictions and planning systems within the United Kingdom, whilst retaining a broader overview of policy and practice overseas, where this is relevant to either global sustainability or directly to United Kingdom policy or practice;**
 - **to strengthen links with Member integration structures - countries, regions, networks, panels and task groups - recognising them as**

- resources of forward intelligence, expertise, direct inputs into policy and practice development and channels for communication; and**
- **to establish subject or task based expert advisory teams from within the Member integration structures and the broader Membership as required to resource policy and practice tasks.**

ALIGNMENT

Team structure

13. The policy and practice team is currently structured as follows.



Team functions

14. The policy and practice team has the following functions.

- A role in the making and setting of RTPI policy, including leadership in developing and articulating the new vision.
- Identifying and responding to new developments in treaties, legislation and policy with a bearing on planning, developed in the international, national (UK and Republic of Ireland) and country (England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland).
- Identifying and responding to new developments in regional and local planning policy
- Monitoring the need for, providing practice advice and signposting advice provided by others.

15. **RTPI Policy**

The RTPI develops institute policy positions. These should aim to inform the public at large, governments, local governments and other stakeholders (such as professional or campaigning institutions) of RTPI views about the current and future directions of planning policy and the development of planning systems and practices. The RTPI has the vision and strength to lead in the development of better planning systems and policies and should use its policy function to make its agendas clear.

16. **International, National and Country Policy**

The RTPI responds to treaty, legislative and policy proposals, consultations, inquiries and reviews that are established from time to time by international organizations and governments and that bear on planning policies or processes. Examples of relevant issues include:

- at the international level, treaties relating to the definition and delivery of sustainable development, the sustainable management of natural resources and having a bearing on the wise use of land, marine and air environments, together with treaties, directives, regulations and programmes providing for spatial direction, inter-regional co-operation,

structural adjustment and environmental impact assessment in European Union member states;

- at the national level, matters such as a UK spatial development framework and the physical/sustainable development implications of national infrastructure programmes, together with regulation of the marine and atmospheric environments;
- at the national level also, planning legislation, systems and policy for the Republic of Ireland;
- at the country level, spatial planning legislation, systems and policy for England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and other jurisdictions such as the Isle of Man.

17. Regional and Local Policy

RTPI has responded to policy proposals, consultations, examinations in public and inquiries that address the development of regional and local policy. Normally this work proceeds at the relevant region or chapter level. Assistance from the policy team and advice on policy consistency is always available.

18. Practice Advice

The RTPI develops and provides practice advice to its members. This is a role that reinforces its functions in partnership in the delivery of professional education and in the maintenance of educational standards. A major issue to be addressed in respect of this function is that much existing practice advice requires to be updated to retain its currency. However, there are also options to 'signpost' to advice provided by others, where RTPI does not consider that the advice is of a 'core' nature that it must provide and accepts that this is of an appropriate quality.

Linkages

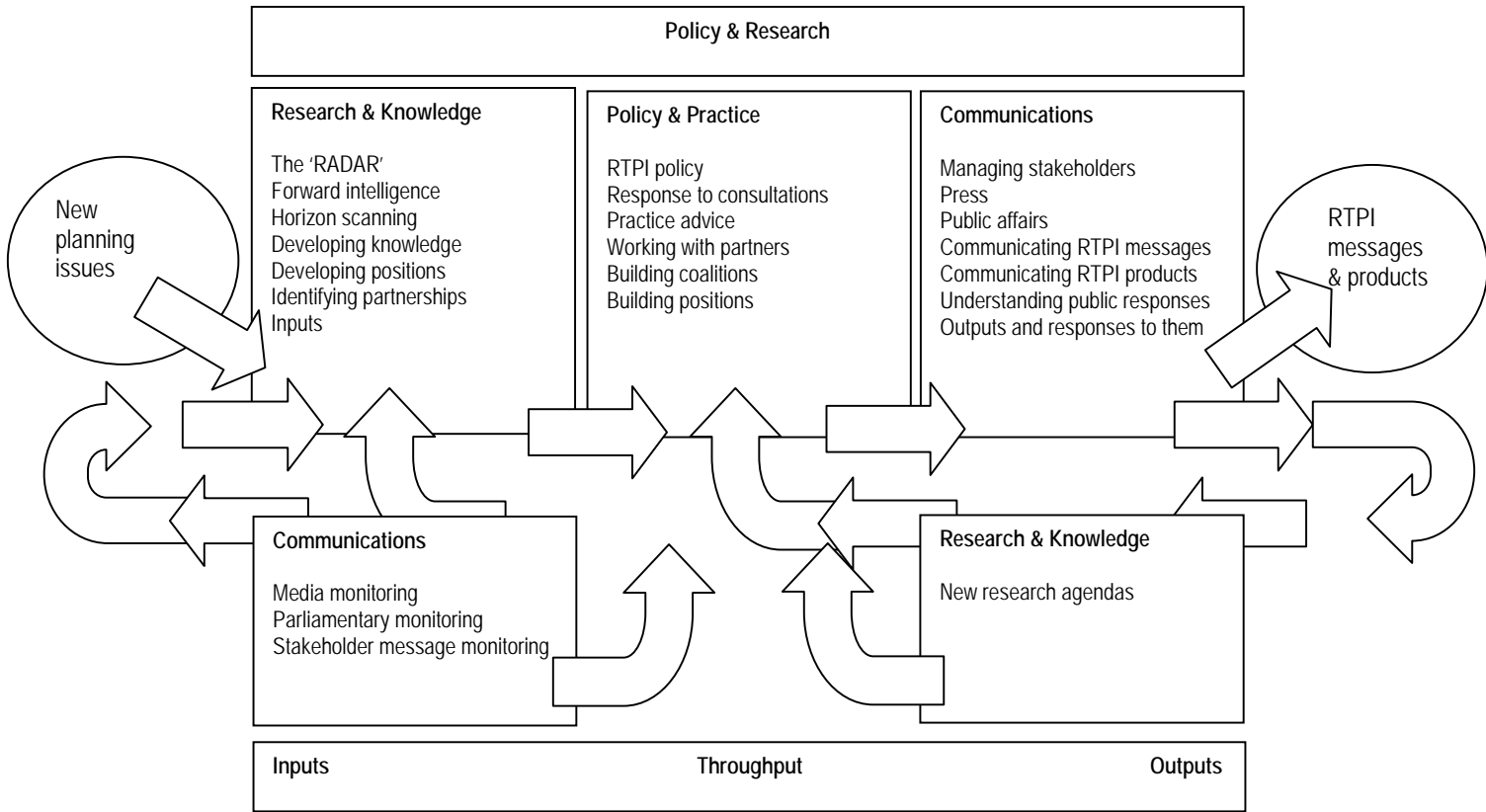
19. Internal linkages

The policy and practice team has the following functional linkages, internal to the Policy and Research Directorate (see diagram overleaf). It is important to recognise that the policy and practice team functions as an integrated part of a broader whole.

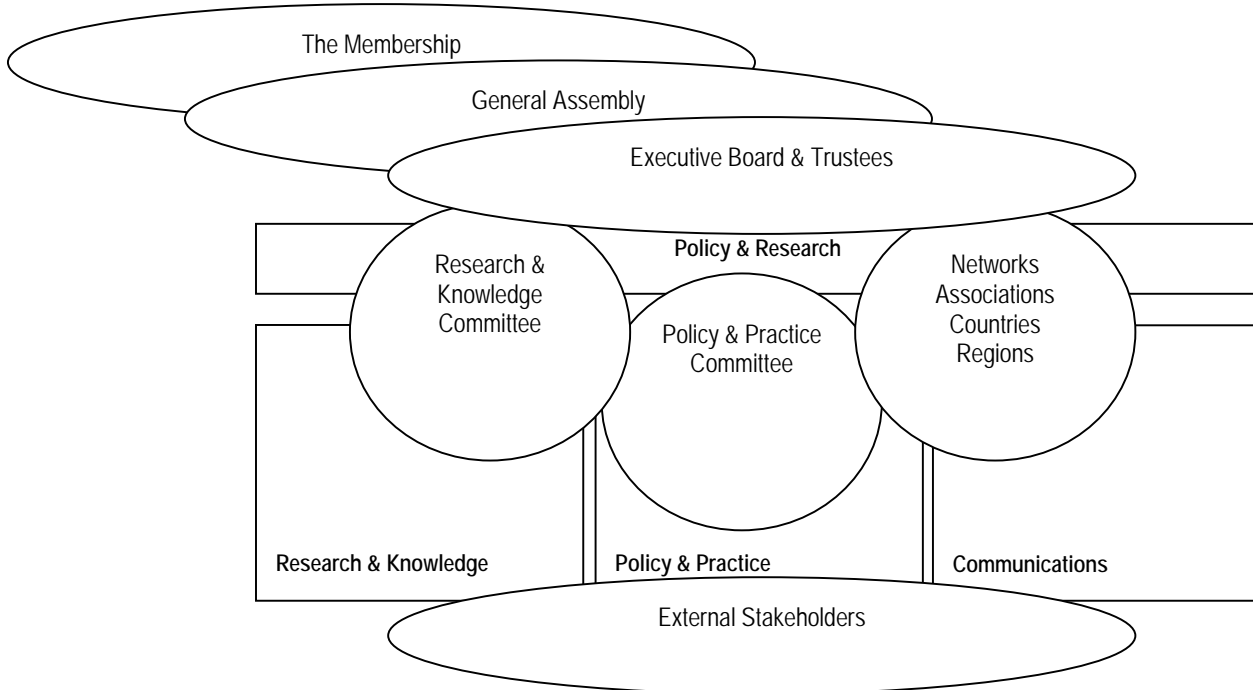
20. The research and knowledge function acts an input - a provider of forward intelligence to the policy and practice function. In recognition of this role, combined policy and research priorities were set for 2005-6 and again for 2006-7. It is proposed that this linkage role will be continued through the medium of an annual joint meeting between the Planning Policy & Practice and Research and Knowledge Committees in following years. It also acts as an output, where it is recognised that new research is required. Again, this role provides a strong basis for the continued setting of joint work priorities.

21. The communications function also acts as an input to policy and practice. Media, parliamentary and some stakeholder message monitoring take place. The results are fed to the policy and practice team, providing valuable forward intelligence. Critically also, the communications team has a role in ensuring that policy and practice messages are communicated as part of broader RTPI messages, particularly through media, parliamentary and stakeholder communications.

Internal Linkages



Broader Linkages



22. **Broader linkages**

The policy and practice team has the broader functional linkages, beyond the Policy and Research Directorate (see diagram above).

23. The RTPI has a number of existing mechanisms whereby policy can potentially be proposed or commented upon and good practice identified. These are as follows:

- The Membership
- The General Assembly
- The Executive Board
- Policy and Practice Committee
- Research & Knowledge Committee
- RTPI Countries & Regions
- Networks
- Panels, Working Parties and Task Groups
- Partnerships
- RTPI Officers

24. **Integrated Policy and Practice**

It is important to establish how and where within the RTPI policy and practice advice are formally made and to clarify the expectations for partnership, involvement and consultation within the policy and practice making processes.

25. There is an inherent tension in the making of policy and the identification of good practice, between the urge to form these at the highest level, the urge for wide inclusion of expertise and views and the urge for timeliness in delivery. Responding to this tension, processes for policy and practice delivery that are based upon the following principles.

▪ **High Level Direction**

The RTPI has articulated its new vision for planning. The General Assembly will review this and will debate key emerging policy issues in the light of its directions. The Policy and Practice Committee and the Research and Knowledge Committee will translate this work and their own expertise into combined priorities, to be set on an annual cycle. Priorities will be set in October each year, in sufficient time to influence RTPI budget processes. All internal consultations on policy and practice matters are sent to the Policy and Practice Committee members.

▪ **Internal inclusion**

It is important that Members are included in the development of and able to influence policy and practice products. Participation through General Assembly and the committee structure is but one means to achieve this. Other key means are through participation in Countries and Regions, networks, panels and associations and the like and protocols are under development to support the relationship between these functions and the policy team. However, it is also important that Members have the opportunity to participate in expert discussions that inform policy and practice developments in the 'gaps' between the meetings of committees and other formal structures. It is also important that policy and practice work obtains the benefit of the

valuable resource that is represented by Member expertise.

Expert advisory teams and working parties can be appointed or can coalesce from groups of Members with common interests. These are likely to emerge from amongst the members of committees, to 'cover' the periods between formal meetings and from amongst the members of networks, panels and associations. It is proposed that these will be informal entities designed to facilitate discussion and transmission of information and vises to inform the policy and practice functions. They will be constituted as required and may dissolve if no longer required.

The RTPI website also provides a powerful tool by which to engage members directly in policy and practice development.

- **External Partnership**

The RTPI will continue to forge strategic alliances and partnerships with external partners, where the work of these bodies meet its policy and research priorities. However, it will not do so in a manner that could compromise its position as a professional body for all town planners, nor its position as source of critical and independent thought on the development of town planning policy or practice.

- **Subsidiarity and Delegation** }

- **Continuity of Effective Service** }

It is critical that RTPI continues to provide timely and effective planning policy and practice services. It will be critical that government and stakeholder expectations as to the time within which responses are required are met. For this reason, it is proposed that the ongoing and more reactive work of policy responses and practice development should be pursued within the framework of committee set priorities and the strategic policy framework.

- For high priority work or work that is not clearly within the established priorities and strategic framework, officers will undertake internal consultations before formulating responses. Consultees views will be requested before responses are formed.
- For lower priority work that is core to staff expertise and is also the established priorities and strategic framework, officers will directly formulate responses.
- For lower priority work that is not core to staff expertise, relationships with expert advisory teams, regions, chapters, networks and associations will ensure the formulation of timely responses.
- All policy and practice products will be reported to the following Planning Policy & Practice Committee and made available on the RTPI website.

IMPLEMENTATION

Priorities

26. The making of RTPI policy is a largely proactive function that should enjoy a high priority. It is our opportunity to address:

- public and stakeholder perceptions of the roles and community benefits to be derived from the planning profession, planning policies and planning processes; and
- government agendas in the development of planning policies and processes – where the RTPI should have the ambition to be a thought leader and develop its concept ownership of spatial planning.

It will be necessary to engage with a wide range of internal and external stakeholders to form and implement such policy. Joint priorities have been established with the RTPI's research and knowledge and communications functions to deliver intelligence to assist in the formation of priorities around the issues that policy should address.

27. The priority subject matters for this work in 2006-7 were the subject of the joint consideration and setting of policy and research priorities by the RTPI planning policy and practice and research and knowledge committees. The following priority areas have been agreed, and this report expands on them for the purposes of making their role in RTPI policy formation clear.

- **Identifying spatial planning in practice**

This addresses the roles of research and practice development in addition to policy. In policy terms, it will be a priority for the RTPI to promote emerging inclusive definitions of spatial planning as a function that enables the joined-up consideration of social, economic and environmental factors, bearing on the use, development and management of and mobility within the terrestrial, marine and aerial environments. This provides a much broader field of action than that emerging from traditional 'land use planning'. It is by no means clear that as a matter of developed law or policy, all such considerations will become or remain 'relevant to planning' under existing UK legislative frameworks. That being said, it appears necessary for the RTPI not to limit its understandings of spatial planning to those that emerge from time to time within any one body of legislation or country. It should also have some regard to policy and practice elsewhere and the developing relationships between planning and, for example, community development, architecture, urban design, transportation, river catchment planning and management, water resource planning, coastal zone planning, marine planning, environmental management and atmospheric management.

- **Evaluating spatial planning**

This priority primarily addresses the roles of research and practice development work. However, where this work identifies policy gaps, RTPI policy may need to be developed having regard to the broad working definition of spatial planning set out above.

- **Planning for healthy ecosystems**
In policy terms, it will be a priority for the RTPI to place the delivery of socially, economically and environmentally sustainable outcomes at the core of planning systems' design and decision making.
- **Inclusive decision-making**
In policy terms it will be a priority for the RTPI to call for and demonstrate means whereby stakeholders views can be effectively and efficiently included in planning decisions. RTPI should acknowledge that views can be included at different stages in planning processes. In seeking effective and efficient inclusion, the RTPI will not necessarily support traditional 'notice and objection' models. Opportunities to generate new approaches to inclusion, particularly by way of front end loading community views into development plans, supplementary planning guidance and strategies will be explored, as will means of harmonising community inclusion undertaken for planning purposes and for other aspects of government and local government policy and decision making. Opportunities will also be taken to further broaden the portfolio of tools used by planners to sample and engage community opinion, having regard to qualitative and quantitative techniques used in disciplines such as marketing and opinion research.
- **Developing the skills and knowledge base**
This priority primarily addresses the roles of research and practice development work.

28. **International, National & Country Policy**

It will be necessary for the RTPI to continue to comment on new international treaties, national and country legislation, policy and advice within these priority areas. This work will be a high priority. In the UK, the RTPI will focus on the development of a national spatial planning, framework, national approaches to marine spatial planning and national infrastructure planning. In the countries, it will focus on the development and use of national spatial frameworks for Scotland, in Ireland and in Wales.

29. It will sometimes be valuable to examine spatial planning policy approaches being developed overseas, particularly where jurisdictions share common social, economic and environmental conditions (largely EU countries) or common cultural and institutional frameworks (largely Commonwealth countries). The purpose of this work will be to derive case studies in issue and policy development and to identify 'transplantable' models. It will be medium priority.

30. **Regional & Local Policy**

As a matter of high priority, the RTPI will promote the continuing development of statutory regional planning policy and regional economic policy in England.

31. As a matter of high priority, the RTPI will promote continuing integration between community planning, corporate local government planning, sustainable community strategies and statutory spatial planning processes.

32. The RTPI will not routinely engage in the detailed subject matter of regional or local policy, where to do so involves taking partisan positions on the merits of particular planning projects about which planners may legitimately hold differing professional views.
33. **Practice**
As a matter of high priority, the RTPI will continue to engage with emerging concepts of spatial planning and in the design and delivery of new planning systems in the UK and Irish jurisdictions.
34. As a matter of high priority, the RTPI will continue to promote means whereby planning systems can be simplified and whereby planning resources can be better targeted to the delivery of agreed objectives.
35. As a matter of high priority, the RTPI will review its existing body of practice advice. It will replace advice that is no longer appropriate within the context of devolved administrations and planning systems reform. It will replace advice necessary to support the professional activities of planners in the workplace. It will also signpost to advice provided by others, where this is accepted as being appropriate to be pursued by planners.