

# Future Planners Project Report

July 2022



# Contents

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i. Purpose of the Report	5
ii. Key Findings and Actions	6
Key Findings: Promotion	6
Key Findings: Recruitment	6
Key Findings: Retention	7
Actions	7
iii. Recommendations	11
1. Background Context	12
2. Research Aim and Methods	16
3. Research Findings	17
3.1 Promotional campaigns used by Scotland’s Public Sector	17
3.1.1 Adult Social Care	17
3.1.2 Careers in Teaching	19
3.1.3 Scottish Tourism	20
3.1.4 Public Sector Relocation Incentives	20
3.1.5 Summary	21
3.2 Promotional strategies identified, and their potential applicability to planning	21
3.2.1 Poster advertising; TV and radio campaigns; and pop-up stalls	21
3.2.2 A dedicated website and associated materials for career promotion	22
3.2.3 Free advertising of job vacancies on myjobscotland	23

3.2.4 Reinforcing the importance of the career and the unique benefits of the job	24
3.2.5 Targeted promotion at universities/presence at careers fairs	25
3.2.6 Providing high starting salaries and rural relocation incentives	27
3.2.7 Conclusion	27
3.3 Recruitment	28
3.3.1 Widening access to university planning education	28
3.3.2 Introducing a planning apprenticeship scheme	30
3.3.3 Expanding work experience opportunities at all levels of education	31
3.3.4 Increasing applicant numbers for planning vacancies	31
3.3.5 Conclusion	33
3.4 Retention	33
3.4.1 Reasons for staff departures	33
3.4.2 Strategies to improve retention	34
3.4.3 Conclusion	35
4. Potential Further Research	36
5. Key Actions	37
5.1 Outputs, key leads and resource requirements	37
5.2 Prioritising key actions	65
6. Recommendations	69
Recommendations for the High-Level Group	69

This research paper was commissioned by **Scottish Government** and its scope agreed at the **High-Level Group for Planning Performance**. The remit of the group includes supporting improved planning performance and linking performance with planning fees. The Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) co-chair the group with the remaining members comprising:

- ▶ Heads of Planning Scotland
- ▶ the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives
- ▶ the Society of Lawyers and Administrators in Scotland
- ▶ the Royal Town Planning Institute

The research was undertaken by **Heads of Planning Scotland (HOPS)** and **RTPI Scotland**.

HOPS is the representative organisation for senior planning officers from Scotland's local authorities, national park authorities and strategic development planning authorities. The purpose of HOPS is to:

- ▶ Promote the profile of public sector land use planning
- ▶ Support and promote excellence in planning leadership
- ▶ Ensure the delivery of a culture of continuous improvement in planning authorities, and
- ▶ Provide advocacy and coordination to ensure that planning authorities are properly resourced to deliver quality outcomes.

The Royal Town Planning Institute champions the power of planning in creating prosperous places and vibrant communities. It is a leading membership organisation and a Chartered Institute responsible for maintaining professional standards and accrediting world-class planning courses nationally and internationally. RTPI Scotland aims to support people and organisations to create great places for people across Scotland, through leading thinking on how to create great places for people, supporting its members to develop their skills, sharing its knowledge, and working with key influencers on planning issues.

The research is published by the **Improvement Service**, the go-to organisation for local government improvement in Scotland. The IS was established in 2005 to deliver improvement support that would help councils to provide effective community leadership, strong local governance and deliver high quality, efficient local services. This is achieved by providing a range of transformational change, performance and improvement support, data and intelligence services and digital public services. The IS also provides business support to Heads of Planning Scotland.

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# i. Purpose of the Report

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It was agreed at the meeting of the High-Level Group on 8th December 2021 that Heads of Planning Scotland, the Royal Town Planning Institute and the Improvement Service would undertake collaborative research to explore the options available to support the growth of entrants into the planning profession in Scotland. The objectives and expected outcomes of the research were to:

- ▶ Assess the current situation in terms of recruitment of planners in local authorities, mapping of current approaches taken to recruitment and of ‘gap filling’ being undertaken at present;
- ▶ Identify the destinations of planning staff who leave local authorities;
- ▶ Scope routes into the planning profession and their effectiveness, outcomes and impact including apprenticeships, vocation training, flexible study options and ‘grow your own’ initiatives;
- ▶ Scope interventions already put in place to increase the attractiveness of critical professionals and disciplines such as bursaries, subsidies, salary enhancements, incentives and diversified routes such as apprenticeship and vocational training;
- ▶ Scope work being undertaken to increase rates of retention of staff looking at upskilling, training, staff pooling and attracting returners and retired members to provide a flexible ‘on demand’ resources;
- ▶ Scope how critical careers and disciplines have been promoted, including examination of other professions and disciplines in Scotland and the UK and planning profession in other countries;
- ▶ Assess the current position regarding promotion of planning as a career, looking at awareness in schools, colleges and universities, the role of Skills Development Scotland, the awareness and perceptions of the profession; and
- ▶ Scope initiatives undertaken by professional and trade bodies across sectors and countries aimed at increasing entrants into their discipline.

The research was undertaken between January – April 2022, and this report is the culmination of the work undertaken during this timeframe.

The research is focused on the needs of supporting new entrants into planning authorities however many of the recommendations will be relevant and pertinent to other employers including Scottish Government, Key Agencies, planning consultancies and third sector planning organisations.

## ii. Key Findings and Actions

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### Key Findings: Promotion

- ▶ The following promotional strategies were considered the most suitable for use in planning at present, based on the views collected as part of this research:
  - Diverse media materials to promote job opportunities such as videos and social media posts;
  - Making better use of existing materials and platforms for career promotion;
  - Reinforcing the importance of the career and the unique benefits of the job in career messaging and job advertisements; and
  - Pursuing targeted promotion at universities and regular engagement in secondary, further and higher education settings.
- ▶ In lieu of a large-scale recruitment campaign, there are existing websites and resources – such as the RTPI’s new Planning Your World platform – that could be used more effectively to promote planning careers, and planning authorities could be supported to produce their own promotional materials.
- ▶ Reinforcing the importance of planning as a career, reconsidering the wider messaging around vacancies and jobs in the sector, and promoting this more widely in educational settings are all actions that could be achieved relatively quickly with commitment from planning authorities, and greater collaboration between educational institutions and planning authorities.

### Key Findings: Recruitment

- ▶ Routes into a planning career in Scotland remain very narrow and broadening these routes will be a key component in bringing more people into the sector in the next 5-10 years.
- ▶ The most common route into planning is now through an RTPI-accredited postgraduate course. In order to increase the number of qualified planners entering the system through this route, two barriers need to be addressed:
  - a. The financial costs of undertaking a postgraduate planning course and the limited funding available to assist with these costs; and
  - b. The increasing number of overseas students studying planning in Scotland returning to their home countries – there was a suggestion by interviewees that visa requirements can be a factor, but there is a lack of research clarifying the extent of this issue.

- ▶ As well as addressing the above barriers, there remains a crucial need to broaden the routes into the profession beyond RTPI-accredited degrees. The RTPI are exploring the possibility of implementing an accredited Chartered Town Planning apprenticeship scheme in Scotland (as exists in England) and are in discussions with Skills Development Scotland about this.
- ▶ In the short-term, other strategies for increasing the number of qualified applicants for vacancies include: expanding opportunities for young people interested in planning careers to gain work experience; looking at the interchangeability of skills and roles within councils and other local government bodies; considering how job opportunities can be provided to facilitate career changes; and looking at RTPI membership or qualification requirements for certain roles

## Key Findings: Retention

- ▶ Results from the planning authority survey cited retirement as the second most common destination for planners leaving planning authorities in the past four years, supporting previous projections by Skills Development Scotland.<sup>1</sup>
- ▶ The most common destination was other Scottish planning authorities; therefore, it is accurate to suggest that authorities are competing for staff at present.
- ▶ The most common reasons for staff departures (other than retirement) were to seek career advancement, and increased salary and benefits. Survey responses stated that staff often leave to take up promotions at other authorities where there is limited opportunity to do so at their own. 17 local authorities said they would like to see more opportunities for career progression and a move away from flat structures within teams.
- ▶ Planning authorities may not reasonably be able to offer salaries in line with the private sector, however emphasis could be placed on other benefits to staff such as: allocated training time; regular professional development opportunities; and/or payment of RTPI fees.

## Actions

With consideration to the findings outlined above, Table A (page 6-7) summarises the key actions recommended in order to improve career promotion, recruitment and retention within Scotland's planning authorities. For each action, there are suggested resource requirements, key leads and timeframes attached.

<sup>1</sup> Skills Development Scotland (2020), *Skills in Planning Research*. Link: [https://www.partnersinplanning.scot/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0016/23623/Skills-in-Planning-Research-Final-February-2021.pdf](https://www.partnersinplanning.scot/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/23623/Skills-in-Planning-Research-Final-February-2021.pdf)

Table A

Timescale	Action	Resource requirement	Key Lead	Supporting partners
Short-term (< 1 year)	1. Increasing the number of qualified planners graduating per year through funded postgraduate opportunities.	A (bursaries): £20k p.a. B (work placements): £30k each p.a. up to 10 placements	Scottish Government; Skills Development Scotland	Planning authorities; RTPI; University planning schools
	2. Considering the general messaging around planning and planning roles & 'selling the benefits' of public sector planning careers.	6 person days p.a	Planning authorities; Scottish Young Planners' Network	RTPI; Scottish Government
	3. Promoting planning at universities and careers fairs, including raising awareness of planning amongst students on related degree courses.	10 person days p.a  £5k materials	HOPS; Scottish Young Planners' Network	RTPI; Universities/ University planning schools
	8. Utilising existing careers and skills platforms to promote planning careers.	10 person days p.a	RTPI	HOPS; Scottish Government
	12. Looking at the interchangeability of roles and careers within local authorities.	20 person days p.a	Planning authorities	Skills Development Scotland
	13. Understanding how young people can be assisted with job applications and interview preparation.	10 person days p.a	Scottish Young Planners' Network	University planning schools; Sector employers



Timescale	Action	Resource requirement	Key Lead	Supporting partners
Medium-term (1-3 years)	4. Introducing a planning apprenticeship scheme.	50 person days p.a	RTPI	Skills Development Scotland/ HOPS; University Planning Schools; planning consultancies
	5.a. Extending opportunities for students at all levels to gain practical experience within a planning environment.	20 person days p.a	HOPS; Key Agencies; Other sector employers	RTPI
	9. Promoting planning in secondary schools and further education colleges	40 person days	HOPS	RTPI; Scottish Government
	10a. Undertaking further research on how to retain more international students in the UK and consider what is preventing this at present.	20 person days p.a £5k	Scottish Government	RTPI
	10b. Making the case for Planning to be included on the UK Government list of 'shortage occupations' which qualify applicants for a Skilled Worker visa.	20 person days p.a £5k	Scottish Government	RTPI

Timescale	Action	Resource requirement	Key Lead	Supporting partners
Long-term (3-5 years)	6. Enabling universities to maintain the viability of RTPI-accredited planning courses and increase numbers of home students where possible.	20 person days	Universities	RTPI; Scottish Government
	7.a Undertaking annual workforce strategy & skills survey.	30 person days p.a	Scottish Government; HOPS	Planning authorities
	7.b Work to understand how many students would need to be put through Scottish universities to fill the future demand for planners.	20 person days	RTPI	University planning schools
	5.b. Embedding work placements into the university curriculum for planning courses.	20 person days p.a	University planning schools; RTPI	Sector employers
	11. Considering how career structures can be improved within public sector planning careers.	20 person days p.a	Planning authorities	RTPI

## iii. Recommendations

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The background context to this report identified that planning authorities are already operating in an environment of continued budget cuts, increased complexity within the planning system, and an increase in the number of statutory planning duties, whilst also struggling to recruit and retain qualified and skilled staff. This research highlights that there is a need to pursue a number of actions over the next five years in order to alleviate this problem, all of which require either monetary resourcing, staff hours, or in most cases both. In order for these actions to be achievable, there must be a commitment to providing the necessary funding to enable planning authorities to offer the time and resources needed to achieve these actions, to the benefit of the whole sector in the long-term. If meaningful progress cannot be made towards delivering these actions, and the requirement for ca. 700 new staff over the next 10-15 years (replacement and additional demand) is not met, there is a real danger that Scotland's planning authorities will simply not have the skills, resources, and staff hours available to deliver a high-quality, functioning planning system.

Based on the Key Findings and Actions, this report makes the following recommendations to the High-Level Group:

1. Consider and agree the study and report covers the scope of the research commissioned.
2. Discuss and seek agreement on all of the actions outlined in Table A, identifying priorities if there are any.
3. Consider whether there are any actions not currently included in Table A that also need to be included going forwards.
4. Agree to establish a short term task group over the next 12 months, comprising representatives from Heads of Planning Scotland, the Royal Town Planning Institute, Scottish Government and each of the planning schools to follow through on the agreed actions and to provide ongoing progress updates to the High-Level Group; and to agree a Chair (suggested Heads of Planning Scotland).

# 1. Background Context

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If Scotland is to create and maintain an effective, high-performing public sector planning service, there is a need to ensure that the planning workforce is equipped to meet the future demands that will be placed upon the sector. However, at present there are a number of interconnected pressures on the Scottish planning system – namely the increase in the number of statutory planning duties, the increased complexity particularly in planning application and infrastructure delivery, a decade of underfunding in planning authorities with ongoing issues with resourcing, and challenges in the recruitment and retention of staff – which mean that this is a problem which cannot be solved with one simple solution.

The new Draft Fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4)<sup>2</sup> sets out an ambitious vision for a planning system which plays a key role in achieving net zero targets, tackling the climate emergency, supporting a post-COVID-19 green economy and delivering both major infrastructure investment and new homes, creating quality places across Scotland. Considering these new aims, the demand for trained and qualified planners with the necessary skills to apply these new concepts in public sector practice is set to increase further. Draft NPF4 recognises the importance of investing in the planning service to benefit Scotland’s economic recovery, and addressing the recent decline in the capacity of planning authorities.

In addition to the new vision set out in Draft NPF4, the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 places 49 new and unfunded duties on Scotland’s planning authorities; research by the RTPi estimates that this could cost between £12.2 million and £59.1 million to deliver over the next ten years, and “if this is the case, it is estimated that staff numbers will need to increase from between 1.9% and 9.4% to merely maintain a ‘business as usual’ planning service”.<sup>3</sup>

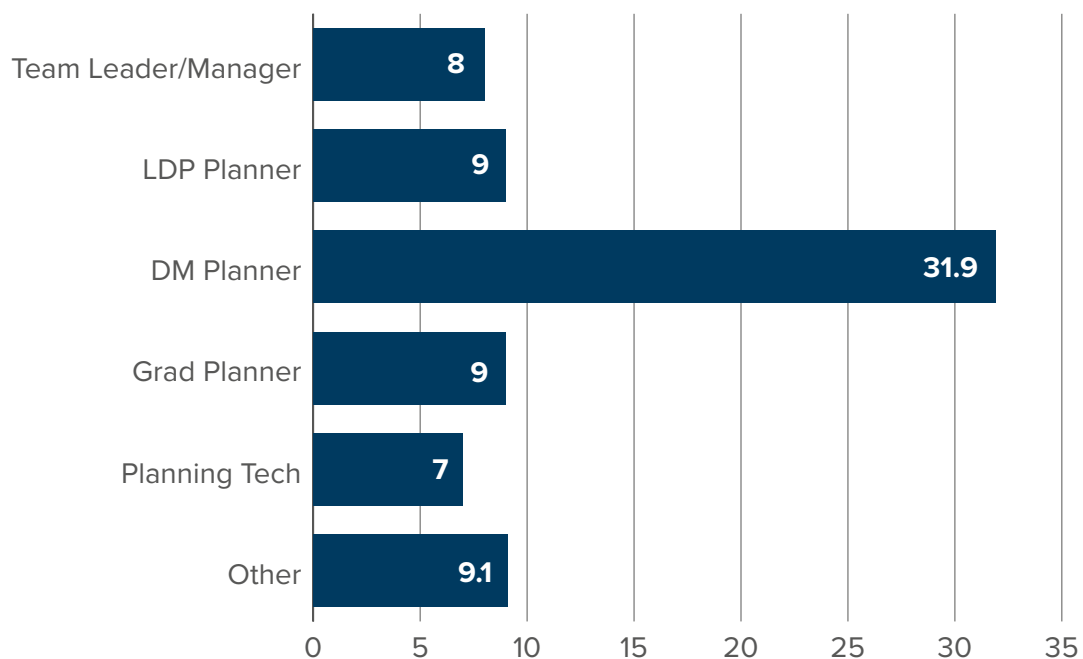
Initial results from a survey of Scotland’s planning authorities undertaken for this research show that there are currently 74 vacant FTE posts in the 26 authorities that provided this information. Fig 1 shows the breakdown of these posts by types of posts, and demonstrates that there is therefore a demand for 74 planners to fill the vacancies in Scottish planning authorities (as at 4th April 2022).<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that this vacancy rate pre-dates the introduction of revised statutory planning fees, which has resulted in some planning authorities creating additional posts, thereby increasing this vacancy rate.

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2 Scottish Government (2021). *Draft Fourth National Planning Framework*. Link: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotland-2045-fourth-national-planning-framework-draft/>

3 RTPi Scotland (2019), *Financial Implications of Implementing the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019*, page 2. Available: <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/1211/rtpi-scotland-financial-implications-of-implementing-the-planning-scotland-act-2019.pdf>

4 Based on a sample of 26 out of 34 planning authorities in Scotland; as at 4th April 2022.

**Fig 1: Vacancies in Scotland's Planning Authorities**

Research by Skills Development Scotland in 2020 found that the planning workforce across all sectors consisted of around 1,600 employees across Scotland – it was noted that “while employment in the public sector has been falling for a number of years (-22% since 2013/14) it is unlikely that planning departments will experience any further notable workforce decline or contraction without experiencing a significant knock on effect upon service delivery”.<sup>5</sup> The scope of demand for planners was found to have “remained fairly consistent across all grades/levels with the ‘middle tier’ (e.g. team leader and senior planners with 10+ years’ experience) in higher demand across all sectors (although challenges more pronounced in the public sector)”.<sup>6</sup> The research estimates that over the next 10-15 years, approximately 550-600 planners will be needed to meet replacement demand due to retirements, and an additional 130 planners will be needed to cover a projected 11% growth in the Scottish planning sector up to 2030.<sup>7</sup>

The same research by SDS has demonstrated that challenges currently exist at every stage of the supply pipeline, concerning:

- ▶ the image and brand of planning;
- ▶ awareness and understanding of the potential career opportunities available (particularly among young people);
- ▶ the availability of university level teaching provision and throughput of indigenous students;

5 Skills Development Scotland (2020), *Skills in Planning Research*. p. i. Link: [https://www.partnersin-planning.scot/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0016/23623/Skills-in-Planning-Research-Final-February-2021.pdf](https://www.partnersin-planning.scot/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/23623/Skills-in-Planning-Research-Final-February-2021.pdf)

6 Ibid, p.iii.

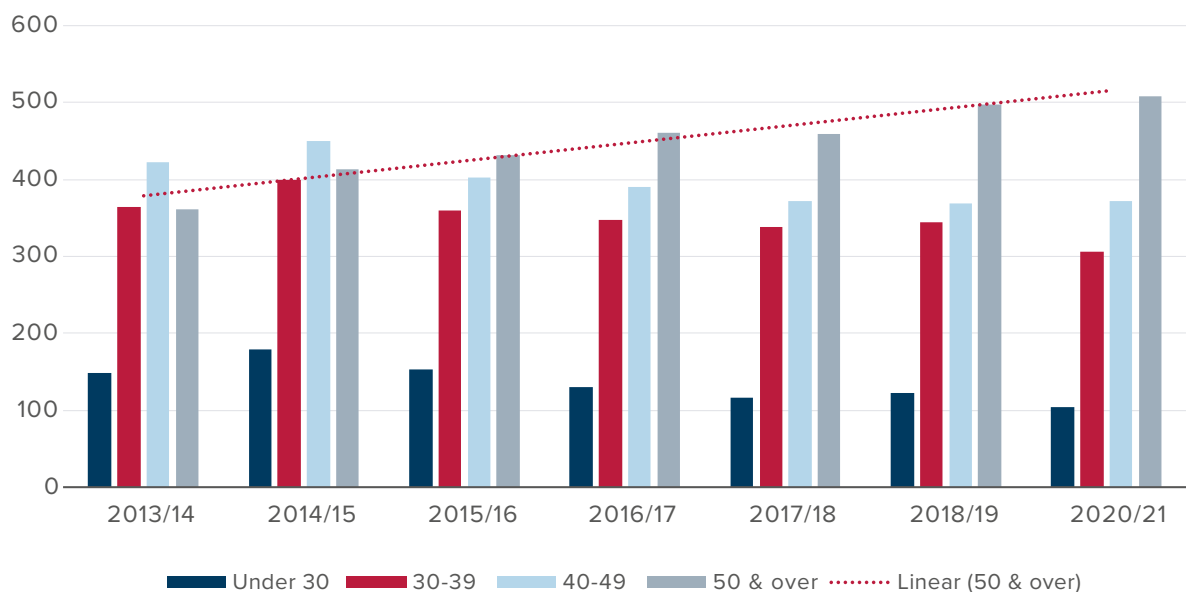
7 Ibid. pp. ii-v.

- ▶ increased competition of talented applicants;
- ▶ and the diversification of graduate destinations and career choices across the UK.<sup>8</sup>

This has led to increased competition for graduates, decreasing graduate retention rates (non-indigenous students leaving Scotland upon completion of their studies), difficulties recruiting for vacant posts (across all grades/levels and specifically within local government) and demographic challenges within the workforce (an ageing workforce due to a lack of new talent entering the sector).

The ageing workforce in particular is set to compound the problems planning authorities are facing, as many experienced planners are expected to exit the sector over the medium term. This trend may result in a significant amount of experience and understanding of the wider role, relevance and importance of planning as a professional discipline being lost in the near future (see Fig 2).<sup>9</sup> Fundamentally, if the vacancies created due to staff retirement over the next 5-10 years cannot be filled, this will pose a significant risk to the planning service across Scotland and the deliverability of the planning system.

**Fig 2: Planning Staff Age Profile**



The evidence presented thus far therefore suggests that the planning sector will face significant challenges in attracting and retaining a sustainable workforce in the future. This particular research has Scottish local authority staffing as its focal point; however, it must be acknowledged that issues around recruitment and retention are being felt across the whole planning sector, and that Government Key Agencies, third sector employers, and private sector companies will also compete in the same employee

<sup>8</sup> Skills Development Scotland (2020). p.v

<sup>9</sup> Data taken from annual Planning Performance Frameworks.

marketplace to seek solutions to their resource problems in future. It is hoped that the findings from this research will ultimately benefit the sector in its entirety, by forming recommendations that will lead to greater numbers of qualified, skilled, and work-experienced planners entering the workforce in Scotland.

Given the complexity of the issues outlined above, it is important to identify the usefulness of any short-term measures and opportunities for 'quick wins', as well as to consider the long-term strategy for growing the local authority planning workforce in Scotland. Consequently, the aim of this research is set out in section 2.

## 2. Research Aim and Methods

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The aim of this research is to identify the fundamental issues that planning authorities are facing in recruiting and retaining skilled planning staff, and to consider best practice examples from within planning and other sectors to ascertain how planning can mitigate some or all of these issues in the short, medium and long term.

The research therefore seeks to answer the following four research questions:

1. What kinds of strategies have been utilised in other promotional campaigns in Scotland's public sector, and could these be applied to promote planning careers?
2. What are the particular challenges facing Scotland's planning authorities in recruiting planning staff?
3. What are the particular challenges facing Scotland's planning authorities in retaining planning staff?
4. What actions will be needed in future in order to improve career promotion, recruitment and retention within Scotland's planning authorities?

A four-phase methodology was used to answer the above research questions, consisting of:

1. Desk-based research into promotional work by other sectors;
2. A survey sent to all 34 Scottish planning authorities – 26 authorities provided responses.
3. External interviews with stakeholders working in key agencies, Government roles, universities, industry bodies, skills sector organisations, and the private property sector; and,
4. A survey sent to early career planners with experience of the Scottish planning system – 94 responses were gathered.

This report will now set out the findings gathered from the research in section 3, before outlining the opportunities for potential future research (section 4); key future actions (section 5) and finally a set of conclusions and recommendations (section 6).



## 3. Research Findings

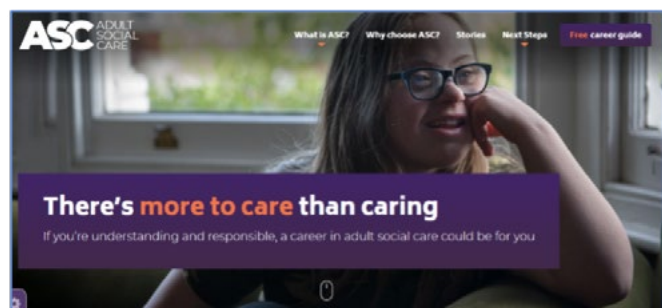
### 3.1 Promotional campaigns used by Scotland's Public Sector

This section will outline the strategies used in other recruitment and promotional campaigns in Scotland's public sector, before considering how feasible it would be to employ these strategies to the public sector planning profession.

#### 3.1.1 Adult Social Care

In January 2020, Scottish Government launched an eight-week recruitment campaign for adult social care, entitled, *There's More to Care Than Caring*. Phase 1 saw a public campaign of **poster advertising, radio and local media features, and pop-up stalls** in shopping centres and railway stations across Scotland. Furthermore, a number of Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) Career Ambassadors were out in the community sharing their stories of working in social care, in order to challenge negative perceptions and inform people of the day-to-day realities of the jobs available.

This campaign was complemented by the launch of a **dedicated campaign website** at [caretocare.scot](http://caretocare.scot). The website is a collaboration between the SSSC and Scottish Government and includes various resources for both stakeholders and interested candidates. It also links to the SSSC careers website with case studies of people working in social work, social care and early years.



Those interested in learning more about entering into the profession can download a **guide to a career in adult social care**, which contains information such as:

- ▶ entry requirements and on-the-job training
- ▶ explanation of the different roles in adult social care
- ▶ career progression overview
- ▶ regulations and safety of social services workers and people using services in Scotland
- ▶ finding the right employer

- ▶ where to find and apply for jobs
- ▶ links to further education and training

In addition, a **stakeholder toolkit** was developed to advise stakeholders on how to support the recruitment campaign, including information on key messages and suggested social media posts, as well as digital materials to be advertised more widely such as leaflets and banner advertisements.

As part of the campaign, employers were offered the opportunity to **advertise adult social care vacancies for free** on myjobscotland. Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic and the emphasis this placed on the need to fill social care vacancies, this offer has been extended multiple times and currently runs up to 31 March 2022. Since the start of the campaign and the offer of free advertising, 302 private and third sector recruiting organisations have advertised over 3,185 jobs and received over 13,000 job views on myjobscotland as part of the campaign.

The latest phase of the campaign began in November 2021 and ran for five weeks; it included a **programme of virtual events** with the aim of showing people ‘what it’s really like to work in care’. This included a focus on the values needed to work in adult social care, as well as the rewards and job satisfaction it offers. Information was also provided on the qualifications you can gain, and the career opportunities available.

As well as this ongoing recruitment campaign, in February 2022 Scottish Government announced a dedicated £1 million of funding to support the wellbeing of staff working in social care. The **Workforce Wellbeing Fund for Adult Social Work and Social Care** will be managed by Inspiring Scotland and provide grants of up to £10,000 until December 2022. It is noted that social care “faces unique challenges in accessing available funding since it consists of a mix of local authority, private and voluntary sector provision”.<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, the SSSC also produces an **annual workforce data report**, which combines administrative data from the Care Inspectorate and local authority data collected by the SSSC to form a comprehensive picture of the paid workforce employed in the social service sector in Scotland in each calendar year. Annual headline findings can therefore be easily presented on e.g. the size of the workforce, the stability index of the workforce, the median age of the workforce and the percentage of roles held by men/women.<sup>11</sup> In 2021, the SSSC further produced a **workforce skills report** which looks at the current provision of qualifications for the social work, social care and early years workforce, as well as demand for qualifications and how they meet current skills needs. It also considers barriers to undertaking qualifications and what new skills are needed for the future.<sup>12</sup>

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10 Scottish Government (2022). *Looking after Social Work and Social Care Staff*. Link: <https://www.gov.scot/news/looking-after-social-work-and-social-care-staff/>

11 Scottish Social Services Council (2021). Link: <https://data.sssc.uk.com/>

12 Scottish Social Services Council (2021). *Workforce Skills Report*. Link: <https://data.sssc.uk.com/21-workforce-skills-report/272-workforce-skills-report-2020-2021>

### 3.1.2 Careers in Teaching

Various recruitment campaigns have sought to increase the number of applicants for teaching jobs in Scotland, both at a national and local level. Nationally, a **dedicated website** at [teachinscotland.scot](http://teachinscotland.scot) provides a breadth of resources for those interested in career in teaching, including information on salary scales and career progression, the different routes into the profession, and the funding and fees for potential applicants to teaching careers.



In 2017, then-Deputy First Minister John Swinney launched a recruitment campaign called *Teaching Makes People*,<sup>13</sup> which **targeted university students** studying STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) as well as people working in STEM industries. The campaign aimed to build on a 2016 recruitment drive for 'Inspiring Teachers', which saw a 19% increase in applications for education postgraduate diplomas (PGDE) at Scottish universities compared to the previous year. The dedicated STEM campaign sought a strong presence at careers events and university campuses across Scotland, in order

to change the fact that teaching was often 'overlooked' by STEM graduates. This was backed up by social media, online and radio advertising, and billboard adverts in specific locations.

More recently following the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, a recruitment campaign in the Glasgow region highlighted the results of a survey, commissioned by Scottish Government and facilitated by YouGov, which **reinforced the importance of teaching** as a career. In responding to the survey, almost half of adults (48%) said they value the role of primary and secondary school teachers more than they did previously, whilst just over a fifth (23%) said they had learnt something new about being a teacher in Scotland since the first coronavirus lockdown.<sup>14</sup>

Moreover, in August 2021 it was announced that temporary Covid recovery **funding of £80 million** for Scotland's education workforce would be made permanent, and from April 2022 this will be allocated annually to the local government settlement. This funding is on top of the £65.5 million of permanent addition funding allocated to local authorities to recruit a further 1,000 teachers and 500 support staff, which will also be allocated from 2022 onwards.<sup>15</sup>

13 Scottish Government (2017). *Teaching Makes People*. Link: <https://www.gov.scot/news/teaching-makes-people/>

14 Glasgow World (2020). *Recruitment Campaign Finds Teachers in Glasgow are Valued More Now Than Before the Pandemic*. Link: <https://www.glasgowworld.com/education/recruitment-campaign-finds-teachers-in-glasgow-are-valued-more-now-than-before-the-pandemic-3072468>

15 Scottish Government (2021). *Extra Funding For Teachers to Continue*. Link: <https://www.gov.scot/news/extra-funding-for-teachers-to-continue/>

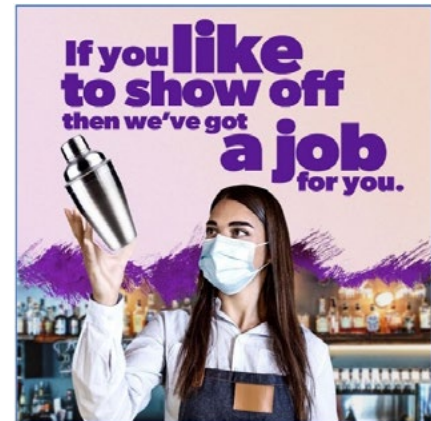
### 3.1.3 Scottish Tourism

In the Summer of 2021, Scottish Government allocated £100,000 of funding to a recruitment campaign encouraging people to choose a career in Scotland's hospitality and tourism industries. The Scottish Tourism Alliance were a lead partner, and the wider hospitality and tourism sector also inputted to and supported the strategy. The campaign, marketed under the title Do What You Love, was necessitated by the recruitment challenges facing the sector in the wake of both COVID-19 and Brexit-related workforce shortages.

The campaign was publicised to industry business with the following aims:

“(1) To support your business in recruiting talent for the diverse range of positions which are currently available.

(2) To inspire young people aged 18 - 30 to play an important role in the recovery of Scotland's valuable tourism and hospitality industry, by choosing a job within the sector.”<sup>16</sup>



The goal of the campaign was to “showcase the **unique benefits** of working within Scotland's tourism and hospitality sector, namely that careers in tourism give young people unrivalled scope to meet people, travel and that no two days are ever the same.”

Businesses were encouraged to list their current vacancies on a **central careerscope portal**, and to get involved in the campaign by sharing the hashtag #dowhatyoulove across their own social media channels. A **stakeholder toolkit** included a range of promotional images which could be displayed in venues and shared online. Moreover, a short video was also developed for online promotion.

The campaign ran from 5 July to 15 August 2021 and was supported more widely by Skills Development Scotland, Springboard, HIT Scotland, UKHospitality, Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and South of Scotland Enterprise.

### 3.1.4 Public Sector Relocation Incentives

**NHS Scotland:** A Remote Area Allowance was introduced within the dentistry profession, enabling dentists working in remote areas of Scotland to claim up to £9,000 annually.<sup>17</sup> NHS Orkney is also offering a relocation allowance of up to £8,000 per annum for those who take up jobs at the Balfour Hospital on the island (subject

16 Visit Scotland (2021). *Recruitment Toolkit*. Link: <https://www.visitscotland.org/news/2021/recruitment-toolkit>;

Scottish Tourism (2021). *Do What You Love*. Link: <https://scottishtourismalliance.co.uk/dowhatyoulove/>

17 NHS Scotland (2021). *Apply for the Remote Areas Allowance*. Link: <https://www.nss.nhs.scot/dental-services/allowances-claims-and-payments/apply-for-the-remote-areas-allowance/>

to eligibility).<sup>18</sup> This allowance is paid on top of the Distant Islands Allowance, which is applied to salaries on a pro rata basis.

**Teaching in Scotland:** Newly qualified teachers in Scotland can expect a starting salary of £28,113 in 2022<sup>19</sup> (a substantially higher figure than the average entry level salaries offered for public sector planning jobs<sup>20</sup>). New graduates are given a financial incentive for being open to where they're posted for their probation year – those who do not specify the locations in which they would like to work will receive a 'preference waiver payment' of up to £8,000. Where Distant Islands Allowance applies to the role, this can also be applied on top of the waiver payment.<sup>21</sup>

### 3.1.5 Summary

In summary, the recruitment campaigns used in other public sector professions in Scotland (and outlined above) provide the following examples of strategies for recruitment and promotion:

- a. Poster advertising; TV and radio campaigns; social media usage; and pop-up stalls;
- b. A dedicated website and associated materials for career promotion, including career guides for applicants, and stakeholder toolkits for employers;
- c. Free advertising of job vacancies on myjobscotland;
- d. Reinforcing the importance of the career and the unique benefits of the job;
- e. Targeted promotion at universities / presence at careers fairs;
- f. Providing high starting salaries and rural relocation incentives.

With consideration to the findings from the planning authority survey, stakeholder interviews, and young planners survey, this report will now consider the general applicability and suitability of each of the above strategies to the public sector planning profession in Scotland.

## 3.2 Promotional strategies identified, and their potential applicability to planning

### 3.2.1 Poster advertising; TV and radio campaigns; and pop-up stalls

Findings from the planning authority survey and stakeholder interviews indicate that neither Scottish Government nor individual planning authorities have ever undertaken

18 NHS Orkney (n.d.). Link: [http://www.parlamaid.scot/S5\\_HealthandSportCommittee/Inquiries/201609-RR018\\_NHS\\_Orkney.pdf](http://www.parlamaid.scot/S5_HealthandSportCommittee/Inquiries/201609-RR018_NHS_Orkney.pdf)

19 Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers (2022). Link: [https://www.snct.org.uk/wiki/index.php?title=Appendix\\_2.1](https://www.snct.org.uk/wiki/index.php?title=Appendix_2.1)

20 Prospects Careers (2022). Link: <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/job-profiles/town-planner>  
Payscale.com (2022). Link: [https://www.payscale.com/research/UK/Job=Town\\_Planner/Salary](https://www.payscale.com/research/UK/Job=Town_Planner/Salary)

21 Teach in Scotland (2022). *Teaching in Rural Areas*. Link: <https://teachinscotland.scot/come-a-teacher/teaching-in-rural-areas/>

a major media recruitment campaign to attract new planners into the sector. With dedicated funding and commitment from Scottish Government and planning authorities, as was secured in the examples above from social care, teaching, and tourism, planning could seek to produce similar advertising campaign materials as were used in those sectors.

However, stakeholders interviewed felt that a large-scale media campaign may be a more useful solution later down the line, after more fundamental issues have first been addressed – namely, broadening the pool of applicants for planning jobs beyond the ‘usual’ demographic, and increasing the available routes into the profession for people seeking a career in planning. Failing to address these issues would inherently limit the success that could be gained from any large-scale promotional campaign. The background to these issues, and the potential solutions to them, will both be discussed in more detail later on in this report.

Nevertheless, the planning authority survey highlighted that there are examples of smaller scale media that has been produced by planning authorities to advertise jobs, with some success. Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park, City of Edinburgh Council and Fife Council have produced promotional videos outlining the potential career benefits of working in planning in their localities.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, a number of planning authorities noted that they had upped their efforts to promote job vacancies on social media, both on the council accounts and their personal accounts, in order to give a more human aspect to some of the roles. These kinds of materials and strategies could be used more often by planning authorities to increasingly ‘sell’ the benefits of both careers in planning and, more specifically, careers in planning in their respective local areas. Materials of this type would be created and implemented on a council-by-council basis, but learning and best practice could be shared between all authorities.

Thus, whilst a large-scale, cross-media promotional campaign may not be a pressing concern at this time, there are a number of smaller scale media actions, such as short videos and social media promotion, that could be utilised more effectively to promote planning careers.

### 3.2.2 A dedicated website and associated materials for career promotion

In the absence of a Government-hosted website for hosting materials related to planning careers (as seen in the examples above for social care and teaching), it is noted that the RTPI website already provides a number of materials of this type, such as career guides, entry requirements etc. In addition, the new [Planning Your World website](#) launched by the RTPI in January 2022 includes case studies of the different routes taken by planners into the profession, and this was noted as a useful tool in

22 City of Edinburgh Council (2022). *Work in Planning in Edinburgh*. Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vvXQwf64hd4>;

Loch Lomond and the Trossachs (2019). *Want to be our new planning assistant?* Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cuqbTJH5-CM>;

Fife Council (2022). *Working in Fife Council's Planning Team*. Link: <https://sway.office.com/b45GxT-FezACImW6g?ref=LinkedIn&loc=play>

responses to the planning authority survey. This serves as a reminder that there are several other existing websites which offer more generalised careers advice and could be utilised more effectively to provide young people with up-to-date information about planning and raise awareness of careers in the profession. These websites include, but are not limited to:

- ▶ [Careers in Scotland](#)
- ▶ [Prospects](#)
- ▶ [Young Persons Guarantee](#)
- ▶ [Graduate Career Advantage Scotland](#)
- ▶ [Scottish Schools Education Research Centre \(SSERC\)](#)
- ▶ [My World of Work \(SDS\)](#)
- ▶ [HCI Skills Gateway](#) (Edinburgh and South East Scotland only).

In light of this, the following two options should be considered:

- ▶ **Either** create a central website with links to information that is already available from the RTPi, (such as is the case with the caretocare.scot website which links to materials hosted by the Scottish Social Care Council);
- ▶ **Or**, (1) ensure that Government and planning authorities make better use of their platforms to promote and distribute the existing information provided by the RTPi and to expand this to include some focus on Scotland, e.g. through the 'Plan Your World' platform and associated career case studies; (2) make better use of other more general careers platforms to ensure that planning is included as an option and that the information provided about the profession is up to date and engaging.

### 3.2.3 Free advertising of job vacancies on myjobscotland

A key aspect of the adult social care recruitment campaign was to enable vacancies in the sector to be advertised for free on myjobscotland. In that instance, the offer was mainly taken up by private and third sector recruiting organisations, rather than public sector employers. This may have been due to the fact that local authorities' HR departments already tend to advertise posts via myjobscotland in the first instance; planning authority survey results show that this is indeed the case for planning roles, and the young planner's survey showed an awareness of this amongst potential candidates, with 65% of respondents recording that they 'always use this resource' when looking for jobs. Presently, councils pay an additional charge onto their COSLA membership for use of the applicant tracking system and advertising on myjobscotland, and the fee is based on the population size of the local authority. The exception is Fife Council, who opted out of using the applicant tracking system, and pay for credits to advertise roles on myjobscotland.

Owing to the nature of this annual fee which covers all council roles, and the fact

that planning is not the only profession struggling to recruit, it would potentially prove difficult to justify a reduction or removal of costs associated with the specific advertisement of planning roles on myjobscotland. Where monetary resource may therefore be better focussed in this instance is to supplement the costs of advertising on other platforms which have proven success in attracting qualified applicants. In responding to the planning authority survey, authorities noted that they are needing to advertise more widely in order to attract enough qualified candidates. Some of the other ways that planning authorities have been advertising vacancies include via LinkedIn, the RTPI's Planner Magazine, and social media. These were noted to have increased the number of applicants for posts, however all required additional monetary resource; some authorities stated that their respective budgets available for external advertising will be greatly reduced or removed entirely in the next financial year. Rather than providing free advertising on myjobscotland, there may therefore be an opportunity to consider how Government could support planning authorities to maintain their budgets for external advertising in the future.

### **3.2.4 Reinforcing the importance of the career and the unique benefits of the job**

Research findings revealed an appetite to apply this kind of strategy within planning; a common theme amongst responses to the planning authority survey was the need to consider 're-branding' the image of planning, and/or to challenge negative perceptions that are felt to be associated with the career path. It was suggested that this could be done by highlighting the varied range of workstreams that planners are involved in, and clarifying the important role that planning plays in tackling transformational issues that are both of national importance and somewhat 'in vogue' e.g. climate change & net zero targets, new housing developments, transport strategies, community wealth building, etc. It was also suggested by interviewees that it would be useful to establish an equivalency between planning and other professions that are better understood, such as by demonstrating how a planning officer's role is as important to achieving healthy, safe, sustainable places as e.g. an environmental health officer, an economic development officer or a climate change officer.

The draft Fourth National Planning Framework places particular emphasis on the role of planning in tackling the climate crisis, and there is therefore scope to align with this by looking to promote planning as a 'green job' – architectural and planning skills have recently been recognised by the United Nations Environment Programme as important for young people looking to embark on 'greener' careers.<sup>23</sup> Responses to the Young Planners survey also showed that people are drawn into the profession due to the broader opportunities to work on environmental and community-based projects; when asked what had led them to choose a career in planning, the top four answers respondents chose were:

1. Interest in building design or architecture (70%)
2. Interest in environmental issues / climate change (55%)

<sup>23</sup> UNEP (2021). *Geo-6 For Youth Chapter Four Factsheet*. Link: <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/35099/G4Y4F.pdf>



3. To pursue structured career progression (38%)
4. Interest in working with communities (36%)

There is therefore a potential opportunity for public sector employers to draw out these themes in job advertisements and to emphasise how the role would allow the applicant to pursue these interests during their career. Survey results revealed that some planning authorities have already begun to update job advertisements to reflect the broader placemaking remit of planning, rather than only the technical aspects of the job role. Planning authorities have begun sharing updated job adverts on the Knowledge Hub site for Heads of Planning Scotland, and this type of collaboration and knowledge-sharing can continue to be facilitated both via the Knowledge Hub and the HoPS sub-committees.

### 3.2.5 Targeted promotion at universities/presence at careers fairs

The need to promote planning more widely in educational settings – at all levels of schooling, not only higher education – was deemed important by both external interviewees and planning authority survey respondents. This is therefore a promotional strategy that could be utilised more effectively by public sector planning, and there are already several organisations in both the public and private sector that carry out outreach work with school-aged children in Scotland, including but not limited to:

- ▶ [The RTPI Ambassadors programme](#)
- ▶ [Career Ready in Scotland](#)
- ▶ [Savills with Schools](#)
- ▶ [Building Standards Ambassadors](#)
- ▶ Individual Planning Authority initiatives

The RTPI in particular noted that their work in this sphere could benefit from additional funding and a broadening in scope. An interviewee from Savills stated that the work that the company undertakes in schools has been focussed particularly on diversifying the pool of candidates applying for their internship and graduate schemes; this has involved long-term work with schools with a broad demographic of students, with the aim of increasing awareness of planning careers amongst a wider range of potential applicants. If this type of outreach work were to be expanded by public sector volunteers, then it will be worth considering the role that Skills Development Scotland careers advisors play in guiding young people and school leavers – it may be necessary to ensure that these advisors have an up-to-date knowledge of planning careers enabling them to promote this as an option to a greater range of potential applicants.

44% of respondents to the Young Planners survey said that they had first found out about planning as a career option during their undergraduate study programme, and this was the most popular answer by some distance. Whilst this does point to a need to raise awareness of planning careers at earlier stages of education, it also indicates

that there is a recognised pipeline into planning amongst undergraduates exploring their career options. At a university level, there is therefore an opportunity to raise awareness of planning careers amongst students studying on related undergraduate courses – the draft NPF4 sets out an ambitious vision for a planning system which overlaps with a number of academic disciplines such as geography; social policy; economic development; ecology and others. Increasing awareness of how planning can contribute to other policy agendas could therefore increase the number of university students interested in pursuing a planning career.

Over the past year, colleagues in Building Standards have offered their professional expertise to help deliver bespoke training modules as part of the building surveying degree course with Glasgow Caledonian University.<sup>24</sup> This approach to delivering training and education was in part necessitated by the fact that there is not a dedicated Building Standards postgraduate qualification as exists for planning; this approach could nonetheless be replicated by planning professionals in the form of a standalone module that could be delivered to students studying on the related courses listed above. The feasibility of such an approach could be considered within the ongoing RTPI Education Policy Review; the development of this type of module or modules may in fact be necessitated in future as universities explore options to consolidate their approach to planning education and potentially offer a more generalised undergraduate course that subsequently steers students onto the postgraduate planning programme. In the meantime, greater collaboration could be sought between public sector planning employers and universities in order to e.g. provide guest lectures on planning practice or offer field trips or tours of local projects to raise awareness of day-to-day work.

In addition, interviews with external stakeholders working in Building Standards, Housing, and Environmental Health revealed that all of these sectors are facing similar problems to planning with regards to the unclear messaging and lack of awareness around the available job opportunities in these spheres. There may therefore be value in HOPS and RTPI working with the equivalent bodies<sup>25</sup> in each of these aforementioned sectors to consider how best to promote ‘built environment’ or ‘placemaking’ careers in a holistic way, thereby raising the profile of careers in local government and benefitting all of the sectors that are currently struggling with recruitment.

Promoting planning at all levels of education, e.g. by regular attendance at careers fairs, is a commitment that could be sought from chief planners in order that this becomes a regular occurrence and lays the groundwork for a long-term presence of planning in educational and careers settings. As the shape of Planning Performance Frameworks is to be reviewed, performance related to the promotion of planning as a career could be an indicator.

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24 Scottish Government (2021). *Building Standards Workforce Strategy One Year On*. Link: <https://blogs.gov.scot/building-standards/2021/12/13/building-standards-workforce-strategy-one-year-on/>

25 Local Authority Building Standards Scotland (LABSS); UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence (CaCHE); Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland (REHIS).

### 3.2.6 Providing high starting salaries and rural relocation incentives

As highlighted from the example of teaching in particular, post-qualification roles for new teachers offer substantially higher salaries than roles for planning graduates. There are also incentives for teachers to be paid more if they are willing to be placed in any area in Scotland. However, the potential to apply similar strategies to planning is perhaps limited, as (a) planning service budgets are already stretched, therefore there is little capacity to offer higher salaries, and (b) there is no centralised national system through which planning jobs for graduates are allocated, as is the case with placements for new teachers. The Distant Islands Allowance will however apply to planning jobs in the authority areas covered under the scheme.

Whilst the option of providing higher salaries for graduate posts may be impractical for most planning authorities, greater consideration could instead be given to the other benefits that planning authorities could potentially provide to new graduates, e.g. regular opportunities for Continued Professional Development, or support in achieving chartered membership of the RTPI. The young planners survey showed that 60% of respondents were already chartered members of the RTPI, 30% said they would like to pursue this in future, and 10% had no interest in doing so. Of those who did wish to pursue it, the barriers to doing so at present were cost and time – concern was expressed about the costs associated with the RTPI chartership process, particularly with the rising costs of living at present. Moreover, there were respondents who felt that their personal workloads, and the workloads of mentors or wider teams, meant there was little time left to work on the chartership application or for colleagues to support them with this. If planning authorities were able to cover the costs of RTPI membership or CPD requirements, or to allocate staff set time within their working hours to pursue training, this could be one way for planning authorities to provide financial incentives as well as clear support for staff development.

### 3.2.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, all of the promotional strategies identified from other public sector campaigns detailed in section 3.1 could be applied to planning to some extent; however, some are more feasible than others. In lieu of a large-scale recruitment campaign, there are existing websites and platforms that could be used more effectively to promote planning careers, and planning authorities could be supported and encouraged to produce their own promotional materials and given financial assistance to advertise positions more widely where this incurs a monetary spend. Where high starting salaries for new graduates are impractical, more emphasis could be placed on other financial incentives for new starters, such as allocated training budgets. The strategies which are the most feasible and could provide the most benefit to planning at this stage include reinforcing the importance of planning as career, reconsidering the wider messaging around vacancies and jobs in the sector, and promoting this more widely in educational settings. This could be achieved relatively quickly if planning authorities can consider implementing these changes in any future job adverts, and with greater collaboration between educational institutions and planning authorities, to raise awareness and experience of planning careers at all levels of study.

## 3.3 Recruitment

This report will now outline findings pertaining to recruitment strategies for public sector planning roles and consider the potential improvements that could be made to both widen access to planning careers and increase the number of applicants for planning vacancies.

### 3.3.1 Widening access to university planning education

At present the routes into a planning career in Scotland remain very narrow. Broadening routes into the planning profession will be a key component in bringing more people into the sector in the next 5-10 years. Planning authority survey results showed that 90% of authorities specifically recruit to fill planning vacancies that arise, and 77% of authorities advertise specific posts for graduates where vacancies arise. Beyond this, there is a clear lack of other routes for new or existing planners to enter public planning authorities.

The majority of planning roles advertised by planning authorities require applicants to hold, or be eligible to complete, an RTPI-accredited qualification. At present, these qualifications are only offered by universities (of which there are three in Scotland) with the option to complete either a four-year undergraduate degree course or a one-year postgraduate course. The most common route into planning is now through a postgraduate course, and all UK students are eligible to receive a loan to cover the costs of a postgraduate course, which is provided either by the Scottish Government (Scottish-domiciled students) or the UK Government (all other UK students). However, unlike for undergraduate courses where a separate maintenance loan is available to cover some living costs, the postgraduate loan is expected to cover all costs associated with postgraduate study (fees and living costs). In practice this means that once the loan has been used to cover course fees, students are left with between £0 - £3800 to live on during the academic year.<sup>26</sup> At present, only Heriot-Watt University deliver a planning course through distance learning where required, meaning that most planning students in Scotland are expected to relocate to cities with higher living costs, thus requiring them to have other sources of funding or support available, beyond the postgraduate loan, in order to cover housing, food and other outgoings.

100% of respondents to the Young Planners survey used at least two sources of funding to pay for their planning studies. Whilst 45% of respondents received either an undergraduate or postgraduate student loan, 40% had a part time job during their studies, 30% received financial support from their families, 27% used their personal savings, and 24% benefited from bursary or scholarship awards. These responses reveal that (a) there is a tendency for students of planning courses to have savings available to them, either from personal or familial backing, and (b) there is a clear value in making additional financial support available to postgraduate planning students in the form of bursaries or even salaried job opportunities. There are existing examples of employers within the planning sector who offer work/study arrangements, enabling

<sup>26</sup> Depending on the institution chosen (Dundee, Heriot-Watt or Glasgow) and the loan amount provided (Scottish or UK Government).

employees to study for their RTPI-accredited qualification whilst also earning a salary and gaining practical experience of planning roles – examples of planning authorities that currently offer this model include Fife Council, Shetland Council and The Highland Council, though the latter two authorities expressed some concern about the ongoing availability of RTPI-accredited distance learning courses, which is usually the option for staff posted in these areas due to the geographical distance from universities in Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow.

On top of funding considerations, the entry requirements for planning degree courses at both undergraduate and postgraduate level are relatively high, and university staff interviewed felt that institutions are reluctant to lower these due to the perceived impact on their reputation. In addition, university staff felt that the future of undergraduate planning degrees in Scotland could not be guaranteed, as the traditionally smaller class sizes bring in minimal income for universities through course fees, leading planning to subsequently be positioned as a ‘minority’ subject. In a reversal of the historic position, postgraduate planning courses are however less vulnerable to viability pressures, as class sizes tend to be larger with more overseas students, resulting in greater fee income alongside fewer outgoing costs associated with a one-year course. It is important to note that the year-on-year increase in international students studying on RTPI-accredited courses at Scottish universities since 2014/15, has led to significant added revenue for these universities.<sup>27</sup> However, SDS research observes that “a significant number return to their country of origin on completion of their studies, taking with them their experience, skills and learning”.<sup>28</sup> At present it is unclear exactly how many of those returning to their countries of origin have done so due to issues with securing a visa to remain in the UK; however a number of stakeholders interviewed expressed the view that current visa requirements at point of job application may be a barrier for some. Interviews with university staff revealed that each of the universities offering RTPI-accredited postgraduate courses have slightly different experiences with regards to the size and make-up of their classes; all however suggested that they would like to see more UK-domiciled students applying to the courses and that, barring an unprecedented increase in the number of applicants for the courses, there would be no fundamental reason why they could not accept higher numbers of ‘home’ students on postgraduate courses each year.

Considering all of the factors detailed thus far, if the number of qualified planners entering the system through the route of university planning courses is to increase, there are two barriers that will first need to be addressed:

1. The financial cost of undertaking a university degree, particularly at postgraduate level. The full-time taught master’s programmes offered by the University of Dundee, Heriot-Watt University and the University of Glasgow are the quickest route into planning and produce qualified planners in 9-12 months. An expansion in the bursaries available for those seeking to enter the planning profession via this route, could provide an incentive for more students to take on the costs associated with postgraduate study and help to diversify the number of students applying from

27 Skills Development Scotland (2020), Skills in Planning Research. Link: [https://www.partnersinplanning.scot/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0016/23623/Skills-in-Planning-Research-Final-February-2021.pdf](https://www.partnersinplanning.scot/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/23623/Skills-in-Planning-Research-Final-February-2021.pdf)

28 Ibid, page 35

a range of financial backgrounds. Alternatively, or additionally, the option for more students to be employed in salaried planning work whilst studying for their master's degree would provide students with valuable practical experience whilst also alleviating the financial burden of full-time study.

2. The increasing number of international students who are studying on planning courses in Scotland and subsequently returning to work in their home countries. Visa requirements for those wishing to remain could be alleviated by including planning on the UK Government's list of 'shortage occupations' which would thereby qualify international applicants for a Skilled Worker visa. Architecture and engineering are currently already included on this list. In order to achieve this, it would be necessary to make a strong case, backed up by numerical evidence and strong political support, as to the future consequences of not including planning on this list. Whilst recognising this is a UK challenge, there is an opportunity for the Scottish Government to lead with such an action in partnership with RTPI. Political influence and leadership will be key.

### 3.3.2 Introducing a planning apprenticeship scheme

Beyond increasing the number of students who are aware of and able to study on planning degree courses, a crucial step in broadening the pool of future planners will be looking at other routes into the profession beyond RTPI-accredited degrees. An RTPI-accredited apprenticeship scheme has already been rolled out in England: there are approximately 280 apprentices studying the Chartered Town Planner apprenticeship across 10 RTPI-accredited training providers in England.<sup>29</sup> A second Town Planning Apprenticeship is also currently in development.<sup>30</sup> When asked if they were aware of any other professions in the public sector that had undertaken a specific career promotion campaign, eight planning authorities mentioned the Workforce Planning Strategy developed by colleagues in Building Standards and the related apprenticeship routes which have been progressed over the past year.<sup>31</sup> There is therefore an awareness within Scotland's planning authorities that opportunities exist to broaden routes into local government careers and the built environment sector.

The potential to implement an apprenticeship scheme for planning careers in Scotland is an exciting prospect, and this research has resulted in initial steps being taken towards achieving this. Both Skills Development Scotland (operating nationally) and HCI Skills Gateway (operating in the East of Scotland) are open to continuing, collaborative discussions with HOPS, RTPI and planning authorities on how to design and implement a planning-specific apprenticeship route. Initial discussions with Skills Development Scotland explored the possibility of incorporating a planning pathway into their existing framework for 'Construction & Related' apprenticeships; however this was eventually deemed to be impractical due to the progress that has already been made on updating this framework, and the difficulty of adding in planning at this

29 RTPI (2022). Apprentice Stories. Link: <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/become-a-planner/apprenticeships/chartered-town-planner-apprenticeship/apprentice-stories/>

30 RTPI (2022). Town Planning Assistant Apprenticeship. Link: <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/become-a-planner/apprenticeships/town-planning-assistant-apprenticeship/>

31 Scottish Government (2021). Building Standards Workforce Strategy One Year On. Link: <https://blogs.gov.scot/building-standards/2021/12/13/building-standards-workforce-strategy-one-year-on/>

late stage. This therefore means that a standalone planning apprenticeship would need to be developed, and discussions are ongoing between SDS and the RTPI in terms of the design and implementation of such an apprenticeship. The next stage of this will be for the RTPI to present a business case to SDS as to the demand for and value of a planning apprenticeship, and this will draw on findings and results from the RTPI apprenticeship scheme in England; it was felt that the progress of the scheme in England could well provide a significant springboard upon which to develop a scheme in Scotland – whilst there is no guarantee at this point that SDS will be able to deliver a planning apprenticeship in Scotland, collaboration is continuing and discussions remain positive – if SDS were able to commit to prioritising this, they estimate that an apprenticeship scheme could be in place in around 12-18 months, with the potential for this timeframe to be reduced depending on which elements of the English apprenticeship scheme could potentially be adapted for use by SDS.

### **3.3.3 Expanding work experience opportunities at all levels of education**

In the more short-term, expanding the opportunities to give young people interested in planning careers work experience in public sector planning roles could be a ‘quick win’ for both applicants and employers, allowing the former to get a real-life feel for the role, and the latter to potentially ‘grow their own’ planning staff of the future. Interviewees felt that it was important for anyone interested in pursuing a planning career to gain practical experience where possible, supplementing the more theoretical education provided by the degree course and providing a robust foundation for career progression. Around 50% of respondents to the Young Planners survey reported that they had undertaken some form of planning work placement alongside their studies; all of these respondents said that this had been useful and had enabled them to learn skills that they would not otherwise have gained from their studies alone. Moreover, of the respondents who had already completed their planning studies, 71% felt their qualification could have been improved with the additional development of technical knowledge, and 64% with the inclusion of work experience; of the respondents studying a planning course in the 2021-22 academic year, the latter figure rose to 9/10. The planning authority survey results revealed that practical experience is one skill that applicants for public sector planning jobs are often deemed to be lacking, and a number of planning authorities suggested that they would like to see more integration between theoretical and practical planning education. Therefore, it would be mutually beneficial for both employers and applicants if the opportunities to gain work experience were increased. Opportunities to utilise Employability Funding to create shorter placements could be further explored, and some authorities have already successfully tapped into this funding to create internships or similar. Moreover, greater collaboration could be fostered between universities and planning authorities in order to explore how work experience placements could be embedded as part of the curriculum. Such initiatives would be a simple and fast solution to help planning authorities retain talent in the Scottish planning system, with the added benefit of supporting and developing the skillsets of young planning professionals.

### **3.3.4 Increasing applicant numbers for planning vacancies**

Alongside the more fundamental work that could be done to broaden routes into

planning education, there are also a number of smaller-scale actions that could be taken to increase the number of eligible applicants for planning vacancies. These could include:

- ▶ Looking at the interchangeability of skills and roles within councils or other local government bodies. As the placemaking agenda broadens, there may be other career areas, both within and outwith councils, that may equip employees with relevant skills that could be successfully transferred into planning careers – e.g. roads and transport, housing, economic development, public health, community planning etc.
- ▶ Considering in greater detail how job opportunities across different age ranges can be provided, akin to current Employability Funding.<sup>32</sup> Planning authority survey results showed that some planning authorities already use Employability Funding to create posts for planners under the age of 24. However, statistics on the ages of students on all postgraduate (taught) programmes in Scotland (the main route into the planning profession at present) found that only 38% were aged 24 or under in the academic year 2020/21.<sup>33</sup> Roughly the same number (39%) were aged 30 or over; therefore, there is a potential need to consider which funding streams are available to create posts for new planners entering the profession at a later stage in life.
- ▶ Looking into the requirements for RTPI membership or qualification for certain roles. This would need more consideration at this stage, however there may be some roles where candidates could be supported and encouraged to pursue RTPI membership whilst on the job, but where this may not be a mandatory requirement for new staff. An Apprenticeship programme could assist in delivering this. Moreover, the membership options available to those moving into planning with multiple years of experience in related professions, rather than specifically in planning, could also be further explored.
- ▶ Considering the feasibility of broadening the geographical range in which potential applicants can be based. Respondents to the Young Planners survey noted that whilst some younger people entering the planning profession may be willing and able to relocate for a job, not everyone is in a position to do so if they are committed to remaining in a particular location due to e.g. home ownership, their partners' employment status, caring responsibilities, etc. The requirement for staff to be present in offices would need to be agreed on an individual basis between the planning authority and the specific candidate; however, planning authority survey results suggest that all authorities are looking to a hybrid approach in future. It was also acknowledged that non-customer facing roles such as planning technicians or data analysts could potentially be suitable for remote positions.

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32 Employability in Scotland (2022). Link: <https://www.employabilityinScotland.com/employability-services/employability-fund/>

33 Higher Education Statistics Agency (2022). Link: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/whos-in-he>



### 3.3.5 Conclusion

To sum up, there is currently only one main pathway to gaining an RTPI-accredited planning qualification in Scotland, and this is through university study. The costs associated with a postgraduate qualification (the most common choice at present) and the shortfall in funding available to cover these costs may preclude people who are not able to tap into additional financial support from accessing this route into planning. Students could thus be given more financial assistance to undertake planning study, either in the form of bursary payments or salaried job roles in planning authorities that enable them to work and study simultaneously. Work to explore introducing a planning apprenticeship scheme in Scotland is ongoing and being led by the RTPI – this would provide a second route into the profession and allow applicants to gain skills on the job whilst also completing an RTPI-accredited qualification. Beyond widening access to planning education, there is a need to increase applicant numbers for planning vacancies through other means, namely by: looking at the interchangeability of skills between planning authority roles; considering how to create posts using existing available funding (e.g. Employability Funding); looking into whether requirements for RTPI membership could be removed for certain roles; and considering the feasibility of broadening the geographical range in which potential applicants can be based.

## 3.4 Retention

Consideration will now be given to issues of retention within planning authorities. Improving staff retention will be a key aspect of ensuring the staffing of Scotland's planning authorities over the next 5-10 years, as it is crucial that any efforts to improve career promotion and recruitment are not subsequently undermined once vacancies have been filled.

### 3.4.1 Reasons for staff departures

Initial results from the planning authority survey regarding recent retirements support the projections outlined in the Skills Development Scotland research, with retirement cited as the second most common destination for planners leaving planning authorities in the past four years. The most common destination was identified as other planning authorities in Scotland, therefore showing that the perception within authorities that there tends to be competition for existing staff is an accurate assessment at present.

Other than retirement, the most common perceived reasons for staff leaving planning authorities were to seek out career advancement and increased salary and benefits (both in the public and private sector). Comments from planning authorities stated that staff were often leaving in order to take up a promoted post in another authority when opportunities to do so at their current authority were limited. Reduced commuting or being closer to home were also frequent factors and may also go some way to explaining the movement of staff around planning authorities. The question is therefore raised as to how planning authorities can themselves offer the benefits that are cited as reasons for staff leaving. When asked how to better retain staff, 17 authorities stated that they would like to see more opportunities for staff to pursue career progression, as

well as a move away from flat structures and perhaps return to career grade structure. Moreover, 38% of respondents to the young planners surveys indicated that one of the main reasons they decided to become a planner was ‘to pursue structured career progression’. If this is a key factor bringing people into the profession, yet authorities perceive it to be weakness within public sector careers at present, then this has the potential to cause future retention issues if young planners move elsewhere to seek the progression they are looking for.

There was also recurring mention of the issues that temporary contracts pose in retaining staff, both in the planning authority survey and the Young Planners survey. Several planning authorities noted that they often have to start staff on temporary contracts, particularly where staff are being recruited to ease workload pressures on the wider planning team, as has been happening more often in recent years. Wherever possible, planning authorities are keen to turn these temporary roles into permanent posts; however, this is not always feasible, meaning that this talent may depart either to another planning authority or to the private sector. Several young planners in turn recounted how they had held a number of temporary posts before gaining permanent employment, with some still yet to be given a permanent contract. When asked how important they would consider the offer of a permanent contract when applying for a job, 61% of respondents scored this a 5/5 for importance, and a further 21% scored this a 4/5.

### 3.4.2 Strategies to improve retention

Considering the information detailed above, if planning authorities were given budgetary support to offer a greater number of permanent contracts, this would enable planning staff to stay in post, thus potentially reducing the number of talented planners that end up leaving the public sector.

In addition, comments from both the planning authority survey and interviews suggested that one strategy to retain staff in public sector planning roles would be to offer higher salaries that are more in line with private sector roles and reflect the high work rates expected of staff in public planning authorities. However, it was also acknowledged that at this point in time, the public sector cannot realistically compete with private sector salaries; the budget constraints placed on Scotland’s planning authorities at present mean it is unlikely that public sector salaries will ever be equivalent. Moreover, current workloads in planning departments are very high<sup>34</sup> and there remains a risk that any new planners attracted into the sector may not stay for any length of time if workloads become too great. This was another reason cited in the young planners survey as to why not all early career professionals are able to pursue RTPI chartership, thus also potentially precluding them from moving up into higher paid roles. In this context, it may therefore be more useful to focus more on the other benefits that planning authorities could offer staff beyond salaries, such as opportunities for flexible working arrangements, allocated time within working hours to

34 HOPS (2021). Resourcing the Planning System. Link: <https://hopscotland.files.wordpress.com/2021/11/hops-briefing-paper-resourcing-the-planning-system-final-published-9th-nov-2021.pdf>  
 Scottish Government (2021). Planning Performance Statistics. Link: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/planning-performance-statistics-2021-2022-quarterly-april-2021-september-2021/>

pursue training opportunities or work on chartership submissions, regular Continued Professional Development, or payment of RTPPI fees.

In interviews with external stakeholders, a culture of leadership was felt to be an important element in staff retention, as those who choose to work and remain in planning authorities are often motivated by a common set of principles that extend beyond financial benefits such as salaries. It is not possible, nor desirable, to systemise such a culture across planning authorities as this is somewhat dependent on the individual approaches of team leaders and managers and how staff engage with this; however work could be done to ensure that all public sector staff are given regular opportunities to pursue creativity and big-picture thinking within or alongside their regular workstreams.

### **3.4.3 Conclusion**

Retention is a piece of the puzzle that should not be overlooked in considering how to ensure staffing of Scotland's planning authorities in the coming years, as there is little value in promoting careers and recruiting staff if these new recruits are not retained in the public sector in the long-term.. Retirement is a common reason for staff departures, and this trend is set to continue. If more young people are thus to be attracted to and retained in roles within Scotland's planning authorities, thought needs to be given to how staff can be guaranteed opportunities to pursue ongoing learning and professional development without this falling by the wayside when day-to-day workloads become very high – ensuring that this is possible may be dependent on the culture of leadership within planning authorities and the importance that is placed on professional development as a core part of a career in planning.

## 4. Potential Further Research

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As outlined so far, there are several potential actions that have emerged from this research which could help to alleviate at least some of the issues that the public planning sector is facing with regard to the future pipeline of staff. As well as this, there is a need to pursue some further research in order to gain a fuller understanding of where best to focus the efforts for future improvement. Further research and workstreams beyond this study which would therefore be useful in this regard include:

- ▶ Work to understand how many students would need to be put through Scottish universities to fill the planning gap. To do this we would need to better understand the current numbers coming through universities. Moreover, it would be useful to collect more quantitative evidence on whether current visa requirements are presently a barrier to international students remaining in Scotland to pursue planning careers. This could link into the ongoing RTPI Education Policy Review.
- ▶ Research to identify the point in the overall planning authority system at which the planning system is in danger of breaking down/ceasing to function effectively. This has been done in the past by colleagues in Environmental Health,<sup>35</sup> and would improve understanding of the level of risk within planning.
- ▶ Undertaking a more detailed annual workforce strategy from across the planning authorities to better understand the ongoing trends and data beyond what is currently gathered through PPFs. Alongside this, undertaking a regular (annual or biannual) skills survey will be important in future to understand the requirements of the new planning duties and in turn clarify the upskilling needed in order to perform these duties. Understanding the skill gap to implement NPF4 will be important to its success. Both of these workstreams could reasonably fall under the remit of the new National Planning Improvement Coordinator.

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<sup>35</sup> Environmental Health colleagues have been contacted about providing the source for this research.



## 5. Key Actions

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With consideration to the findings detailed so far in this report, this section will now outline the key actions recommended in order to improve career promotion, recruitment and retention within Scotland's planning authorities. The final section of this report (section 6) will then list a set of conclusions and recommendations to take forwards.

### 5.1 Outputs, key leads and resource requirements

Each action will now be developed further, and the potential outputs, leads, resource requirements and timeframes will be considered, along with the benefits that could be gained from delivering the action and the potential alignment with other policies and priorities. Some actions have been considered in pairs where the delivery of both would require a similar process, or where the delivery of one is dependent on another.

## Action 1: Increasing the number of qualified planners graduating per year through funded postgraduate opportunities.

### Output

- a. One-off £2,000 bursary payments to UK-domiciled students studying on RTPI-accredited postgraduate courses in Scotland, to assist with course fees and living costs.  
These bursaries could operate as a continuation of the [current Future Planners bursaries offered by the RTPI](#) (these were financed by Scottish Government with a limited funding pot). These would be aimed at UK-domiciled students studying full-time on an accredited course, giving them a financial incentive to complete the course in one year – this would be the shortest possible route to becoming a qualified planner. Whilst this would encourage more people to enter the sector overall, there is no guarantee that bursary recipients would end up working in a local authority role, though there is perhaps scope that such payments could come with a requirement for e.g. short work experience placements in local authorities (1-2 weeks).
- b. Part-funded posts (2-year part-time roles) in local authorities aimed at people looking to move into the planning profession, enabling them to pursue a work/study model and complete a postgraduate planning qualification over two years. In this case, the student would receive a salary which would therefore help to cover associated living and study costs, whilst also enabling them to gain work experience in planning rather than taking a job in another sector during their degree. This route would take two years to develop a qualified planner.

There may other options to be explored such as employers directly paying course fees for staff.

### Key leads

- a. Scottish Government, with potential distribution of funds by RTPI (as with current Future Planners bursaries).
- b. Scottish Government, to explore securing funding through Skills Development Scotland for planning authorities to provide a minimum 50% resourcing on the basis that this would secure posts/work in planning authorities.

### Resource requirements

- a. A dedicated funding stream from Scottish Government to provide £2,000 bursaries for up to 10 students per year, with funding considered annually over the next 4 years to 2026. This would entail a resource requirement of up to £80,000. The existing Future Planners bursaries provide bursaries to 9 students per year; therefore this would ensure the continuation of the bursary scheme and provide funding for one extra person per year.

It is noted that in order for Scottish Government colleagues to support the case for such funding, it may be necessary to collect evidence on the success of the

current RTPI bursary scheme that was funded by Scottish Government. This work could therefore be undertaken by RTPI in the short-term.

b.

- A minimum of 50% funding from Skills Development Scotland or other partners to assist planning authorities in employing students part-time whilst they complete their postgraduate course. £30k of funding would be sought for each post (based on a gross cost of £60k for a two-year, part-time post).
- For this action to have meaningful impact on the numbers of planners trained each year, it is proposed that 10 posts per year would need to be created, at a cost of £300k per annum over the next four years to 2026. In order to achieve this, Scottish Government colleagues could explore the potential of securing Skills Development Scotland funding for these posts.
- Planning authorities would then provide the match funding up to 50% to create a 2-year post based on a part-time work schedule, with the rest of the time spent studying for the degree.

Ongoing discussions will be required between Scottish Government, Skills Development Scotland and HOPS to ascertain the best use of any funding available.

### **Impact of delivering this action**

There is a clear and substantial gap between the funding available for postgraduate taught masters programmes and the total costs associated with studying and living in the cities of Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Dundee. The increase in fees for the Glasgow course in particular means that the maximum available funding from Government loans and RTPI bursaries would leave students with a maximum of £68 per week to live on (assuming they receive a bursary, which only three students do at present). This means that students must have other available funding in order to complete a one-year master's course at present, and the most common sources noted in the Young Planners survey were from family and part-time jobs (usually a combination of the two). There is therefore an assumption that the types of people able to study a planning master's course at present (1) have personal savings or familial assistance to help them with rent and living costs; (2) are able to commit to other work whilst also studying on a full-time postgraduate degree course.

The present Employability Fund aims to help deliver on the Young Persons Guarantee, providing work opportunities for all young people in Scotland aged 16-24. Some planning authorities have been able to utilise this resource in order to create posts for young people to join their planning teams, which is positive for the planning service. However, age profiles of all those studying on all postgraduate (taught) degree programmes in Scotland found that only 38% were aged 24 or under in the academic year 2020/21. This means that the majority of graduates from postgraduate courses in Scotland would not be eligible for posts created using the Employability Fund. Moreover, roughly 39% of postgraduate (taught) students

in 2020/21 were aged 30 or over, suggesting that there is a significant proportion of people that return to study or seek to change career paths at this stage in life. Therefore, being able to fund posts aimed at those looking for new career opportunities would benefit a large number of potential applicants for planning roles. This also links into action 13 which considers how staff working in other local authority teams could move across into planning.

The impact of delivering on this action would therefore be:

- An increase in the number of home applicants for master's courses if there were clear financial incentives to study a postgraduate planning qualification.
- A potential increase in the diversity of applicants on the course if there were less reliance on familial support to cover costs associated with the qualification.
- Increased work experience for graduates if study is completed alongside work in planning authorities.
- Guaranteed staff for planning authorities if students are tied to a 1-2 year contract following the completion of their studies.

### **Alignment with other policies or priorities**

There is a need to increase the diversity of the planning profession [as recognised by the RTPI](#). Delivering on this action would therefore align with other initiatives to bring people with a broader range of backgrounds into planning and increase the range of perspectives that are represented in the profession to support the National Strategy for Economic Transformation and wider strategic priorities.

The RTPI has already successfully delivered a bursary scheme in Scotland, so the precedent exists to continue a programme of this nature and for it to be beneficial to students and the profession.

Postgraduate fees are fixed for all courses at a university level. The increase in fees is therefore out of the control of staff associated with planning courses specifically. Currently this report has not unearthed the reasons or persons responsible for setting course fees, however the sharp increase in fees for postgraduate study at the University of Glasgow in particular is concerning. It may be the case in future that planning as a discipline could add its weight to any broader conversations about the continuing increase in fees for postgraduate education in Scotland. Moreover, there may be potential for Government colleagues to have their say in any broader conversations about the amount of postgraduate funding offered by SAAS in order to cover postgraduate courses, as this is insufficient at present.



## Action 2: Considering the general messaging around planning and planning roles & 'selling the benefits' of public sector planning careers.

### Output

- Dedicated promotional materials created by planning authorities, e.g.
  - videos
  - staff testimonies
  - application packs
- Job descriptions focusing more on the transformational power of planning & placemaking
- Presence at careers fairs and schools events (expanded elsewhere)

### Key leads

- Individual planning authorities and Heads of Service, with scope for coordination and shared learning through Heads of Planning Scotland and the Improvement Service.
- Existing RTPI resources (e.g. Planning Your World website) can also be utilised.
- There will also be an opportunity for the National Planning Improvement Coordinator to consider the messaging around planning in Scotland, capture any learning, and measure and evaluate outcomes.
- The Scottish Young Planner's Network can provide case studies and relevant role models.

### Resource requirements

Heads of Service and managers would need to consider a change in approach when writing future job adverts for planning roles. There is already buy-in from a number of heads of service and some planning authorities have already begun to update job advertisements to reflect the broader placemaking remit of planning. Planning authorities have begun sharing updated job adverts on the Knowledge Hub site for Heads of Planning Scotland, and this type of collaboration and knowledge-sharing can continue to be facilitated both via the Knowledge Hub and the HoPS sub-committees

Draft or template job descriptions could be shared between authorities through HoPS or the IS to promote best practice. Moreover, authorities such as City of Edinburgh who have successfully developed a promotional video to advertise roles in their planning team can also share any learning from this through HoPS or the IS.

The new RTPI [Planning Your World](#) website has a number of key messages and materials that could be utilised and promoted by planning authorities in Scotland in

order to update the messaging around planning roles. These resources could be used when writing job advertisements or promoting vacancies.

Committing to such an image change in the long-term will require presence at careers fairs and in schools; these actions are discussed elsewhere in this report.

### **Impact of delivering this action**

The Young Planners survey revealed that the three top reasons that young people chose to study planning were:

1. Interest in building design or architecture;
2. Interest in environmental issues and climate change
3. To pursue structured career progression;
4. Interest in working with communities.

There is therefore a benefit to writing job descriptions that go beyond the technical requirements of the role and draw out the ways in which planning jobs meet these criteria that are deemed attractive by potential applicants. It is envisaged that delivering on this action would increase the number of talented and suitably motivated graduates applying to public sector planning roles.

### **Potential alignment with other policies or priorities**

The NPF4 places new emphasis in the role of planning in tackling climate change and this therefore presents an opportunity for the profession to re-position its image in a way that makes it attractive and relevant to applicants looking to engage with this policy agenda – Planning has been recognised as a ‘green career’ for young people<sup>36</sup> and this could be capitalized on to attract younger generations into the profession.

Other built environment sectors such as building standards and environmental health are also experiencing similar issues with recruitment and retention and are working to raise awareness of careers in these areas – working with these sectors to jointly improve the messaging around ‘built environment’ careers in the public sector could prove to be of mutual benefit to wider local authority services and efficacy.

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36 UNEP (2021). Geo-6 For Youth Chapter Four Factsheet. Link: <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/35099/G4Y4F.pdf>

### **Action 3: Promoting planning at universities and careers fairs, including raising awareness of planning amongst students on related degree courses.**

#### **Output**

- Regular and planned attendance from Heads of Planning Scotland representatives at university careers fairs and other sector careers fairs.
- Where feasible, practical input from HOPS to students on university courses e.g. by offering guest lectures or field trips centred around interesting sites or projects.

#### **Key leads**

HOPS, with backing from the Scottish Young Planners' Network, RTPI and support from universities careers departments and university planning schools in keeping HOPS updated with planned careers events.

#### **Resource requirements**

A letter will be issued on behalf of HOPS detailing their members' commitment to attend university careers fairs. This will be sent to universities as well as published on the HOPS website. This letter could be co-signed by the RTPI or a similar approach could be taken by the RTPI as a separate organisation. HOPS will also keep an up-to-date list of volunteers for such events, and it may be possible to ensure that all heads of service or senior staff commit time to attend these as part of their roles. This can build upon the work currently undertaken by the Scottish Young Planners' Network in providing an outline of the role of the RTPI, the profession and their own personal experiences of being a planner at Planning Schools' lectures.

Individual authorities with notable sites or projects that they would be willing to showcase to university students could also put themselves forward in order to promote the diverse range of work that can be undertaken within planning roles. This could be done through guest talks or field trips where this would be feasible.

HOPS would require support and collaboration from universities in order to keep volunteers updated on any upcoming careers events to ensure that HOPS can guarantee a presence at such events. There is scope for this to be achieved through the existing Partners in Planning platform, if more regular meetings of the group could be secured in the future, as it is noted that this has been lacking in recent years. There are public sector planners who sit on both HOPS committees and University Partnership Boards who may be a useful point of contact to bridge between the educational institutions and local authorities in this regard.

#### **Impact of delivering on this action**

This action is linked to Action 1 and thus delivering on this action would in turn

help to improve the image of planning and promote planning careers more widely. 44% of respondents to the Young Planners survey stated that they first found out about planning as a career option during their undergraduate degree, so there is an existing pipeline of applicants that could be widened by a stronger presence at careers fairs and a greater effort to establish the links with relevant undergraduate courses beyond geography (history; sociology; engineering; architecture; economics; ecology; etc.).

Moreover, any opportunities for students to increase their awareness or understanding of how planning operates 'on-the-ground', either through guest lectures or field trips, would be a valuable addition to their planning education and produce more rounded applicants for public sector positions in future.

### **Potential alignment with other policies or priorities**

This action aligns with the need to improve the general messaging around planning careers, and also highlights the opportunity to foster better communications and links between Scotland's planning authorities and higher education institutions, to the benefit of both, and to the benefit of students.

## Action 4: Introducing a planning apprenticeship scheme

### Output

A new route to becoming a qualified planner in Scotland through an RTPI-accredited apprenticeship scheme.

### Key leads

The RTPI would lead on the development of this scheme as it would need to meet their educational requirements. Moreover, the RTPI have already set a precedent for the adoption of this kind of apprenticeship scheme thanks to the recent roll-out of both Level 6 and Level 4 apprenticeships in England.

There will, however also be a need for buy in and commitment from employers and education providers.

There will also be a role for Scottish Ministers and officials to lend support to the scheme.

### Resource requirements

#### 1. Buy-in from Skills Development Scotland:

As part of this project, discussions with SDS have begun and there is a promising opportunity to develop a planning apprenticeship. Though initially it had been hoped that this could form part of their existing 'Construction and Related' framework, it was considered more appropriate to develop a new apprenticeship model to serve planning. This means that there is an initial requirement to present a business case to SDS as to why a planning apprenticeship is needed in Scotland. The progression of the RTPI apprenticeship in England has come at an opportune time to help make this business case, as the first apprentices are now reaching their end assessment. RTPI Scotland are therefore already starting to link up with colleagues in England to access statistics and data on the success of the programme.

Assuming that the business case is successful and SDS agree to create a new planning apprenticeship route, the timescale from inception to delivery is expected to be around 12-18 months. However, there is a possibility that this timeframe could be shortened, as although the apprenticeship model in England is subtly different from that in Scotland, some of the work done in developing the English apprenticeship could potentially be adapted for use in the Scottish context, rather than starting again from scratch. How much of this work could be adapted will need to be agreed in principle by SDS.

At the Technical Expert Group (TEG) stage of apprenticeship development, commitment and buy-in would be required from all key sector partners, including universities, planning authorities, key agencies and the private sector.

There is also an important role for Scottish Government Ministers and officials to communicate the importance and potential impact a planning apprenticeship scheme within government and with SDS, employer and education providers.

### 2. Discussions with Housing, Construction and Infrastructure (HCI) Skills Gateway

There is an opportunity to offer some funding for courses or an apprenticeship through the existing HCI Skills Gateway funding, and representatives from the programme were open to ongoing discussions about how they could provide the most useful support. This however has geographical limitations, being part of the Edinburgh and SE Scotland City Region Deal, and therefore would only be applicable to courses offered by Heriot-Watt University.

### 3. Available places at university for graduates to study on the course.

Undergraduate planning courses in Scotland are understood to be coming under some pressure, as they are less financially viable than the postgraduate route and class sizes are becoming smaller. The current SDS model for graduate apprenticeships sees students study undergraduate courses, so if there is an assumption that this would be the same for planning, there would need to be an assurance that undergraduate planning courses would continue to exist. Therefore, there would be a potential need for Government intervention within universities to secure the future of undergraduate planning courses.

### **Impact of delivering this action**

Delivering on this action would provide a much-needed second route into planning beyond traditional university study. This solution would take more time than simply increasing uptake on the available postgraduate planning courses, however introducing this route is important in order to give applicants more options for studying planning and to thus increase the diversity of applicants beyond those who are able to apply to postgraduate courses. A planning apprenticeship scheme may also have potential to help address some of the specific recruitment challenges in rural and island authorities.

Any opportunity for early career planners to gain practical experience alongside theoretical education would be wholly welcomed by both employers and young professionals, and an apprenticeship would certainly provide that opportunity.

### **Alignment with other policies or priorities**

There is a need to increase the diversity of the planning profession [as recognised by the RTPI](#). Delivering on this action would therefore have some alignment with initiatives to bring people with a broader range of backgrounds into planning and increase the range of perspectives that are represented in the profession.

As discussed, there is already an existing RTPI apprenticeship scheme operating in England, therefore there is a precedent for an existing scheme to be introduced in Scotland providing this can be agreed with SDS.

NPF4 places a number of new skills requirements on planners, and this would therefore be a good time to design an apprenticeship model that could include on-the-job training and assessment to cover a range of new skills and areas that will be needed from the planners of the future. There is also alignment with other priorities identified in this report to increase the opportunities for planners to gain work experience in the early stages of their careers.

**Action 5: a) Extending opportunities for students at all levels to gain practical experience within a planning environment; b) Embedding work placements into the university curriculum for planning courses.**

**Output**

- a. Supplementing formal planning education with practical experience of working in a planning role. This could be achieved through a variety of routes, aimed at students at different levels of education:
  - Practical engagement tasks with school-age children around e.g. urban design;
  - 1-2 week placements for S3 students required to undertake work experience as part of the curriculum;
  - Weekend volunteering opportunities on e.g. community engagement projects or climate adaptation work;
  - Project-based competitions led by employers for college or university students;
  - 3-month salaried summer placements in a planning-related role;
  - 6-12 month salaried early-career placements for new or recent graduates.
- b. Work with universities to understand what they would require in order to embed work experience into the curriculum e.g.
  - how employers could support and supplement university planning education;
  - what types of work would be of benefit to students;
  - when this would best fit into the degree programme;
  - how learning could be assessed if this were needed.

**Key leads**

- a. Planning sector employers; RTPi
- b. Scottish Planning Schools; RTPi (for accreditation and learning requirements)

**Resource requirements**

The latter two examples of work experience for graduates during or after gaining their qualification would need to be salaried posts, therefore planning authorities would need to find the resource for this – however there may be the opportunity to utilise Employability Funding for this purpose.

The other examples would be voluntary work experience positions and planning authorities could cover e.g. travel expenses where possible. There would however



be a time commitment required in order for students to come away with a positive experience, therefore planning authorities with particularly high workloads may struggle to support work experience unless they could think creatively about how best to utilise this person to help alleviate some of that workload whilst also learning e.g. by helping with administrative tasks or by shadowing senior staff.

### **Impact of delivering this action**

All of the respondents to the Young Planners survey who had undertaken some form of planning work placement alongside their studies said that this had been useful and had enabled them to learn skills that they would not otherwise have gained from their studies alone. Moreover, of the respondents who had already completed their planning studies, 71% felt their qualification could have been improved with the additional development of technical knowledge, and 64% with the inclusion of work experience; of the respondents studying a planning course in the 2021-22 academic year, the latter figure rose to 9/10. The planning authority survey results revealed that practical experience is one skill that applicants for public sector planning jobs are often deemed to be lacking, and a number of planning authorities suggested that they would like to see more integration between theoretical and practical planning education. Therefore, it would be mutually beneficial for both employers and applicants if the opportunities to gain work experience were increased.

As well as providing more work experience opportunities for planning students in higher education, increasing opportunities for primary and secondary school children to interact with planning would also serve to increase awareness of planning careers at a time when students are learning more about the world of work and the options available to them.

### **Alignment with other policies or priorities**

This action would align with other actions which seek to broaden the range of educational opportunities within planning whilst also raising awareness and increasing the profile of the profession amongst children and young people

## Action 6: Enabling universities to maintain the viability of RTPI-accredited planning courses and increase numbers of home students where possible.

### Output

- Maintaining undergraduate planning courses at Scottish Universities.
- Increasing the number of home students studying on both undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

### Key leads

Universities

RTPI

Scottish Government (where influence can be had)

### Resource requirements

The pressures being placed on undergraduate planning courses in Scotland are complex and tied to the wider financial outcomes of the universities as institutions. There is therefore limited scope for the staff that design and teach undergraduate planning courses, or the RTPI as the accrediting body of such courses, to influence the viability of these courses should the universities deem them to be unsustainable. There is therefore a risk that there may in future be no undergraduate planning courses in Scotland. If this were to happen, the impact would be significant.

Should this be the case, the RTPI could work closely with Scottish institutions to ensure that there is still a pathway for undergraduate students to receive a form of planning education and to thus be encouraged into postgraduate planning study. This may involve the development of one or more modules that could be delivered as part of an undergraduate course; geography would be the most obvious choice, however this module could also be opened up to students on a broader range of courses such as e.g. architecture, history, sociology, economics, etc. The RTPI currently joint accredit planning courses with other professional bodies .

Scottish Government may be able to influence how universities view the importance of undergraduate degree courses beyond just viability, by showing their support for planning education and the need for Scottish institutions to continue to deliver it. There could be an opportunity to hold a public-facing conference or meeting between university teaching staff, university deans and admissions staff, RTPI, Heads of Planning Scotland, Scottish Government Planning & Architecture Colleagues and the Planning Minister. This could be used to highlight the public backing for planning as a profession and the need to secure future workforce planning within the sector, which universities have a key role in.

In terms of increasing the number of home students on planning courses, this could tie into the bursaries aimed at UK-domiciled students to encourage them into planning – the universities suggested that there would not be an issue of capacity on postgraduate courses, therefore any incentives to attract more home students onto courses would be welcomed.

### **Impact of delivering this action**

Delivering this action would help to ensure the future of undergraduate planning education in Scotland, whether that is through a dedicated planning course or a ‘gateway’ course where elements of planning education are covered in other undergraduate courses.

It would also help to increase the number of ‘home’ students that study on planning courses in Scotland, thus also increasing the number of students who are eligible to live and work in Scotland upon graduating.

### **Alignment with other policies or priorities**

Russell Group universities have called for sustainable government funding for higher education, stating that this would be used to lower tuition fees for students, reintroduce means-tested maintenance grants, reduce the interest applied to loans during study, and reforming student loan repayment conditions so they are repaid over a longer period.<sup>37</sup> The Group note in particular that cutting tuition fees without additional grant funding from Government “could impact student choice if it became financially unsustainable for some universities to continue offering certain courses”.<sup>38</sup> Elsewhere, the argument has been made that any Government spending review must consider the crucial role that universities and a university education will play in tackling the future of climate change.<sup>39</sup> There is therefore a potential opportunity for Scottish Government to support universities in any upcoming policy or spending reviews and to make the case for the continued sustainable funding of planning as a higher education pathway.

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37 Russell Group (2020). *Sustainable Funding for Higher Education*. Link: <https://russellgroup.ac.uk/policy/policy-documents/sustainable-funding-for-higher-education/>

38 *ibid*

39 The Times (2021). *To address climate change, universities need sustainable funding*. Link: <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/blog/address-climate-change-universities-need-sustainable-funding>

## Action 7: a) Undertaking an annual workforce strategy and skills survey; b) Work to understand how many students would need to be put through Scottish universities to fill the future demand for planner

### Output

- a. Annual workforce strategy; annual skills survey.
- b. One-off piece of research to understand how many students would need to be put through Scottish universities to fill the future demand for planners in Scotland's public sector

### Key leads

Scottish Government - National Planning Improvement Coordinator

Collaboration with HOPS, RTPI, and individual planning authorities.

### Resource requirements

- a. Scottish Government would be best placed to lead on an annual workforce strategy and annual skills survey for planning, potentially through the remit of the new National Planning Improvement Coordinator when this post is appointed. There could also be changes made to Planning Performance Frameworks in order to capture more data about the make-up of the current workforce and the skills requirements within planning at present. It is noted that the building standards workforce strategy has utilised partnership working between Scottish Government, Local Authority Building Standards Scotland (LABSS) and Building Standards Division (BSD) "to ensure strategy actions are appropriate and outcomes are in the best interests of verifiers".<sup>40</sup> A working group was established in order to achieve this, and a similar collaborative approach could be taken by Scottish Government, HOPS and RTPI to develop a workforce strategy for planning.
- b. Work to understand how many students would be needed to fill the future demand for planners in Scotland's public sector could potentially form part of any workforce strategy – otherwise this could be a standalone piece of work by e.g. RTPI, SDS. At present it has been difficult to find information on student numbers in Scotland due to this being confidential – therefore this would need to be considered when undertaking any further research in this regard.

### Impact of delivering this concept

Delivering on this concept would enable a greater understanding of exactly how many 'extra' home students (i.e. as surplus to normal applicant levels) would need to graduate from planning courses in Scotland each year in order to meet the future demand for planners outlined in the Skills Development Scotland research from

<sup>40</sup> Scottish Government (2020). *Building Standards Workforce Strategy*. Link: <https://www.gov.scot/policies/building-standards/workforce-strategy/#:~:text=The%20workforce%20strategy%20for%20the,over%20a%20three%2Dyear%20period>

2020.<sup>41</sup> This would thus enable a more focussed approach to deciding e.g. how many places are needed on courses, and how many study bursaries and salaried work/study placements to allocate in future.

### **Alignment with other policies or priorities**

Undertaking this work would enable more effective prioritisation of some of the other actions in this report, such as e.g. work to understand international student numbers, work to widen bursary schemes or salaried work/study roles, etc.

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41 Skills Development Scotland (2020), *Skills in Planning Research*. Link: [https://www.partnersin-planning.scot/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0016/23623/Skills-in-Planning-Research-Final-February-2021.pdf](https://www.partnersin-planning.scot/__data/assets/pdf_file/0016/23623/Skills-in-Planning-Research-Final-February-2021.pdf)

## Action 8: Utilising existing careers and skills platforms to promote planning careers

### Output

1. RTPI approved copy for use on external websites in order to explain what planning is; why it is attractive career option; and the available routes into the profession (including any graduate work placements; incentives; or bursaries agreed as part of this work).

Suggested external websites are as follows:

- [Careers in Scotland](#)
  - [Prospects](#)
  - [Young Persons Guarantee](#)
  - [Graduate Career Advantage Scotland](#)
  - [Scottish Schools Education Research Centre \(SSERC\)](#)
  - [My World of Work \(SDS\)](#)
  - [HCI Skills Gateway](#) (Edinburgh and South East Scotland only)
2. Greater involvement from planning professionals (HOPS/RTPI) in taking up existing opportunities to engage with young people at careers events, and in promoting existing resources and materials surrounding planning careers, e.g. those provide by the RTPI Planning Your World website.
  3. Scottish Government to lead on negotiating reduced rates for advertising vacancies beyond myjobscotland, e.g. in Planner Magazine, on LinkedIn, etc.

### Key leads

RTPI with input from HOPS performance & practice committee and support from Scottish Government colleagues.

Scottish Government to lead on negotiating reduced rates for external advertising.

### Resource requirements

- Approved text from RTPI – potential to lift existing text from careers pages
- Agreement from external websites to host a page or section on planning careers
- Commitment from HOPS/RTPI to attend/engage with external opportunities to promote careers in planning
- Commitment from HOPS/RTPI/Scottish Government to more widely promote available resources centered around planning careers, such as e.g. RTPI Planning Your World website.

**Impact of delivering this action**

Delivering on this concept would be a 'quick win' with regards to increasing the available careers messaging around planning. This would enable a swift and measurable increase in promotional activities without the need to work up a large-scale campaign.

**Alignment with other policies or priorities**

All of the websites listed above are recognised providers of resources for young people seeking careers advice. Utilising these more effectively would be a quicker way to increase awareness of planning than e.g. creating a new careers website.

Delivering this action would also be in alignment with the Scottish Government's Young Persons Guarantee to ensure career opportunities for all those aged 16-24 living in Scotland.

## Action 9: Promoting planning in secondary schools and further education colleges.

### Output

- Regular and planned attendance from Heads of Planning Scotland representatives in secondary schools and at further education colleges (potential for this to be undertaken by early career professionals).
- Exploring the opportunities for practical engagement with secondary school pupils e.g. through field trips or interactive work with tools like Lego or Minecraft.
- A tender from Scottish Government for an organization to take the lead on collaboration within schools and working with teachers to promote planning as a career over the next 3 years.

### Key leads

HOPS; RTPi; Scottish Young Planners' Network

Scottish Government

### Resource requirements

HOPS will keep an up-to-date list of volunteers for outreach work in planning or secondary schools; it may be useful to utilise the experiences of early career professionals in order to engage with school age children and young people.

HOPS will seek to engage with current providers of outreach work within schools, such as e.g. the [STEM Ambassadors Hub](#), [Planning Aid Scotland \(PAS\)](#), and [DEC \(Design, Engineer, Construct\)](#), in order to learn from these existing programmes and contribute to successful engagement with young people. The RTPi ambassador programme could also be boosted within Scotland, as this has become less active in recent years.

Providers such as those listed above could be invited to tender for a budget to lead on collaboration with schools and work with teachers over the next 3 years.

### Impact of delivering this action

Eight respondents to the young planners survey (8%) said that they first found out about planning as a career option from either teaching or outreach work at their secondary school. Whilst this may be a small figure, it provides evidence that it is possible to influence secondary age students to consider a career in planning before they select their university course choices. Building on this work and delivering this action could have a positive impact on the number of university students who are already aware of planning and considering it as a career option.

Moreover, existing programmes in Scotland (such as by providers named above) offer secondary-age students the opportunity to engage in built environment



projects as part of their secondary-level qualifications, thus giving young people experience of what it means to work in planning before they choose their career path or university courses.

**Alignment with other policies or priorities**

There are already examples of outreach work with primary and secondary school pupils, such as by the STEM Ambassadors Hub and as used to be undertaken by RTPI ambassadors. There is therefore opportunities to learn from and engage with existing opportunities to go into schools and to pick up on work that was done in the past.

This action also aligns with the overall requirements to increase awareness of planning careers amongst students of all ages and to improve practical understanding of planning at all levels.

**Action 10: a) Undertaking further research on how to retain more international students in the UK and consider what is preventing this at present; b) Making the case for Planning to be included on the UK Government list of 'shortage occupations' which qualify applicants for a Skilled Worker visa.**

### **Output**

- a. Research paper investigating and detailing the reasons why international students return to their home countries after studying in the UK, and to thus identify whether this is in part linked to current UK visa requirements, as was suggested by interviewees as part of this study.
- b. Using any relevant evidence from research in (a) and other available evidence of the current skills shortages within planning, make the case for planning to be included on the UK Government list of 'shortage occupations' and thus qualify applicants for planning jobs for a Skilled Worker visa.

### **Key leads**

- a. Scottish Government; Scottish Planning Schools
- b. Scottish Government; Planning Minister

### **Resource requirements**

- a. Resource would need to be contributed by Scottish Government to undertake a piece of research identifying the main reasons why international students who choose to study planning in the UK do not always remain in the UK to work after completing their studies.
- b. If this research were to reveal that current visa requirements are preventing international students from remaining in the UK to work, then this evidence could be used alongside other evidence of the current skills shortage within the Scottish planning sector (EKOS report, this report, etc.) to make a compelling case for the inclusion of planning on the UK Government list of 'shortage occupations'. Political pressure and backing would be key to deliver on this concept, therefore strong support from the Planning Minister would be a necessity, and potential backing from other administrations would strengthen this case further.

### **Impact of delivering this action**

- (a) Delivering on this concept would enable a greater understanding of why international students do not always remain in the UK to work after completing their studies. If this is linked to visa requirements, then progress can be made on concept (b), with the aim of eventually retaining more skilled students in the UK planning sector.

Even if the study does not identify visa requirements as a key reason why students return to their home countries, the research findings will enable the sector to understand where to target their efforts in order to encourage more students to remain in the UK.

**Alignment with other policies or priorities**

The number of international students studying on planning courses in Scotland is continuing to increase, therefore this is a growing pool of potential applicants for planning roles in Scotland if there are systems in place to encourage these students to stay on in Scotland after their studies.

There are often a number of students each year from Commonwealth nations with similar planning systems e.g. Canada, Australia, and India. Retaining students from these countries, potentially with support from the Commonwealth Association of Planners, would be of benefit to Scotland's planning authorities.

## Action 11: Considering how career structures can be improved within public sector planning careers.

### Output

- Regular opportunities for public sector planners to pursue CPD opportunities;
- Support for public sector planners to achieve chartered membership of the RTPI;
- Considering crossover with other local authority services as outlined further in concept 13.

### Key leads

Planning authorities

RTPI (where this concerns membership requirements)

### Resource requirements

38% of respondents to the young planners survey noted that one reason they opted for a planning career was the opportunity 'to pursue structured career progression'. However, progression into more senior or higher-salaried roles within local authorities is not always possible as it is dependent on the availability of posts – in small teams particularly, there may be no opportunities for junior staff to move up if senior staff are well embedded in long-term roles.

Whilst it may not be possible to guarantee upward progression within local authorities in terms of salaries and seniority, more could be done to ensure that staff who are unable to change roles are given regular opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge within their roles. Making sure that staff have access to a range of interesting workstreams and professional development opportunities may help staff to feel that they are progressing their careers in other ways and that their personal development is being encouraged and supported by their employer. Comments provided in response to the young planners survey suggest that some early career staff are unable to work on RTPI chartership applications, or be supported by colleagues in doing so, due to the high workloads across planning teams. If planning authorities were able to cover the costs of RTPI membership or CPD requirements, or to allocate staff set time within their working hours to pursue training, this could be one way for authorities to provide clear support for staff development and show that this is valued alongside the completion of day-to-day tasks.

### Impact of delivering this concept

Delivering on this concept would hopefully allow staff to feel valued and support in their career development, and create a culture of lifelong learning within planning teams. Overall this would result in planning teams with well-rounded skillsets and would enable planners to balance their day-to-day workloads with opportunities to

pursue other interests, thus potentially providing them with greater career fulfilment and encouraging them to remain in the public sector.

**Alignment with other policies or priorities**

Planning is a discipline that is continually evolving and thus continued professional development is a core element of RTPI membership. The draft NPF4 will require planners to develop new skills in the future, particularly around climate change policies, therefore there is always a need to ensure that public sector planning staff are being provided with regular, high-quality opportunities to improve and update

## Action 12: Looking at the interchangeability of roles and careers within local authorities.

### Output

Increased awareness of the routes into planning from other local authority career paths, e.g. administration roles, building standards roles, environmental health roles.

### Key leads

Planning authorities with input from Skills Development Scotland.

### Resource requirements

Planning authorities could where possible consider internal recruitment for planning roles - in response to the planning authority survey, several authorities stated that they have recruited internally for planning posts in the past where there were felt to be suitable candidates. In some cases, authorities tend to use more junior posts within planning teams, such as compliance officers or planning technicians, to enable graduates to join the planning authority – the idea is that these staff would then benefit from internal recruitment into more senior posts based on the knowledge and experience gained on the job. One downside of this was that it is dependent on these positions becoming available, and also results in another vacancy that needs to be backfilled. However, the benefit is that it does enable planning authorities to appoint someone with a proven track record within the planning service.

Planning authorities also need to consider career and pay structures within their authorities to see if these provide any alignment for those on other career paths to transfer across into planning without e.g. a loss of pay or career progression. Skills Development Scotland may be able to assist planning authorities in discerning which other public sector career paths have the most alignment with planning in terms of the skills required to be successful in the job (e.g. customer service skills, meeting deadlines, managing project workloads, etc.).

Moreover, there may be a need to consider how the requirements of the RTPi's L-APC process could be adapted to reflect experience and skills gained in other related sectors; at present, a senior staff member working in e.g. Climate Change or Economic Development would not be able to move across into a planning role with an equivalent level of seniority as this would require the completion of the L-APC, a process which takes at least two years. There is therefore little incentive at present for more experienced public sector staff to move across into planning, as this would require a step backwards in their career progression.

### Impact of delivering this action

There are a number of staff in local authorities that may choose to forego the benefits of e.g. a higher private sector salary in favour of the values and culture that they are afforded through work as a 'public servant'. Being able to tap into a

pipeline of potential staff who have already shown an aptitude for, and commitment to, public sector work would be a big asset to planning as a profession.

It is important to note that several related public sector disciplines are facing similar issues with regards to staffing and workforce planning, notably Building Standards and Environmental Health (as revealed from interviews with the relevant professional bodies). Therefore, there remains an overall need to increase the number of staff working across the built environment professions in the public sector, rather than simply re-deploying staff between these areas. Nevertheless, where staff could be offered greater personal development or have shown an interest in transferring between departments, there could be an opportunity for planning teams to recruit internally if they are able to raise awareness of the roles available, and the skills needed to be a successful planner.

### **Alignment with other policies or priorities**

Delivering this concept would encourage planning authorities to think about the internal messaging around planning careers within their own authorities, and to be creative in considering how to raise awareness of planning careers amongst suitable candidates across the authority.

Another priority identified in this report was the need to provide staff with regular opportunities for professional development and opportunities to progress within the service – considering junior staff from teams outwith planning when recruiting for planning roles may therefore provide staff with more opportunities to pursue career progression within a local authority, thus increasing retention overall within the council and that we continue to attract the right skills at the right time and help create high performing workplaces.

## Action 13: Understanding how young people can be assisted with job applications and interview preparation.

### Output

- Work to understand what assistance young planners would appreciate when applying for early career planning roles
- Resources to help with written applications and interviews, e.g. Dos and Don'ts; typical interview questions; example planning applications that have been used in past interviews.

### Key leads

Scottish Young Planners Network

Scottish Planning Schools

RTPI

Examples provided by sector employers

### What would be needed to deliver on this concept?

Some initial information gathering would be required to understand where candidates require assistance with applications and what sorts of resources they would like to see available – this could potentially be undertaken by the Scottish Young Planner's Network, as they already do some informal work in this area.

Some input would be required from employing organization in order to understand what they are looking for in a candidate and to e.g. compile a list of 'Dos and Don'ts' for prospective applicants. It would be useful if planning authorities could provide examples of planning applications that have been used in interviews with previous candidates, along with the observations that they would have expected a candidate to make about the application. This would be valuable to applicants, as this report has already highlighted that some recent graduates may not have had the opportunity to gain more practical skills, such as evaluating a planning application, during their planning degree studies.

Any resources developed could then be hosted on the website of e.g. the Scottish Young Planners Network or Heads of Planning Scotland, and these could then be publicized more widely through social media accounts and careers platforms.

### What would be the impact of delivering on this concept?

Although the overall goal is to increase the number of qualified applicants for planning vacancies, whilst the number of applicants remains around the current level, it would be useful to ensure that those who do apply are given the opportunity and assistance to present themselves and their skills in the best possible light, both within a written application and any subsequent interview. This



would give early career applicants more guidance and confidence, and also allow employers to get the most out of the applicant in the process.

**What alignment does the concept have with other policies / programmes / initiatives?**

Delivering this action would be in alignment with the Scottish Government's Young Persons Guarantee to ensure career opportunities for all those aged 16-24 living in Scotland.

It would also be of mutual benefit to both applicants and employers if young people applying for planning vacancies were able to make a good overall impression and show an understanding of the practical skills required.

Having outlined each of the proposed 14 key actions in detail, in section 5.2 consideration will now be given to the prioritisation of these actions and the potential timescales associated with each.

## 5.2 Prioritising key actions

The table below sets out the key actions identified in section 5.1 of the report, and groups these in order of proposed timescales (short to long term) and in order of priority, with red indicating a high priority action, amber a medium priority action, and green a lower priority action. 'Lower' is chosen here as all the actions included are considered to have benefit to the profession if implemented, however there are some that could reasonably be left to a later date in favour of high priority actions.

**Table A**

Timescale	Action	Resource requirement	Key Lead	Supporting partners
Short-term (< 1 year)	1. Increasing the number of qualified planners graduating per year through funded postgraduate opportunities.	A (bursaries): £20k p.a. B (work placements): £30k each p.a. up to 10 placements	Scottish Government; Skills Development Scotland	Planning authorities; RTPI; University planning schools
	2. Considering the general messaging around planning and planning roles & 'selling the benefits' of public sector planning careers.	6 person days p.a	Planning authorities; Scottish Young Planners' Network	RTPI; Scottish Government
	3. Promoting planning at universities and careers fairs, including raising awareness of planning amongst students on related degree courses.	10 person days p.a  £5k materials	HOPS; Scottish Young Planners' Network	RTPI; Universities/ University planning schools
	8. Utilising existing careers and skills platforms to promote planning careers.	10 person days p.a	RTPI	HOPS; Scottish Government
	12. Looking at the interchangeability of roles and careers within local authorities.	20 person days p.a	Planning authorities	Skills Development Scotland
	13. Understanding how young people can be assisted with job applications and interview preparation.	10 person days p.a	Scottish Young Planners Network	University planning schools; Sector employers

Timescale	Action	Resource requirement	Key Lead	Supporting partners
Medium-term (1-3 years)	4. Introducing a planning apprenticeship scheme.	50 person days p.a	RTPI	Skills Development Scotland/ HOPS; University planning schools; Planning consultancies
	5.a. Extending opportunities for students at all levels to gain practical experience within a planning environment.	20 person days p.a	HOPS; Key Agencies; Other sector employers	RTPI
	9. Promoting planning in secondary schools and further education colleges	40 person days	HOPS	RTPI; Scottish Government
	10a. Undertaking further research on how to retain more international students in the UK and consider what is preventing this at present.	20 person days p.a £5k	Scottish Government	RTPI
	10b. Making the case for Planning to be included on the UK Government list of 'shortage occupations' which qualify applicants for a Skilled Worker visa.	20 person days p.a £5k	Scottish Government	RTPI

Timescale	Action	Resource requirement	Key Lead	Supporting partners
Long-term (3-5 years)	6. Enabling universities to maintain the viability of RTPI-accredited planning courses and increase numbers of home students where possible.	20 person days	Universities	RTPI; Scottish Government
	7.a Undertaking annual workforce strategy & skills survey.	30 person days p.a	Scottish Government; HOPS	Planning authorities
	7.b Work to understand how many students would need to be put through Scottish universities to fill the future demand for planners.	20 person days	RTPI	University planning schools
	5.b. Embedding work placements into the university curriculum for planning courses.	20 person days p.a	University planning schools; RTPI	Sector employers
	11. Considering how career structures can be improved within public sector planning careers.	20 person days p.a	Planning authorities	RTPI

As shown in the table, there are therefore a total of seven actions that could be implemented within the first 12 months of publication of this report to have an immediate impact on the promotion of planning as a career and the recruitment of new staff into the profession. In the medium-term, there is work to be done to introduce a planning apprenticeship scheme and to undertake research into the destinations of international students who study in the UK. In the longer term, a more detailed strategy should be developed to enable universities to maintain the viability of their courses and to ensure that enough students are being put through universities to meet the future demand for qualified planners with practical work experience under their belt.

## 6. Recommendations

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This report has established which promotional strategies used in other public sector professions would be most suitable for use in the planning sector and identified some of the key challenges facing Scotland's planning authorities in recruiting and retaining new staff. In light of these findings, this report has set out a number of actions that will be needed in future in order to improve career promotion, recruitment and retention within Scotland's planning authorities.

The background context to this report identified that planning authorities are already operating in an environment of continued budget cuts, increased complexity within the planning system, and an increase in the number of statutory planning duties, whilst also struggling to recruit and retain qualified and skilled staff. This research has highlighted that there is a need to pursue a number of actions over the next five years in order to alleviate this problem, all of which require either monetary resourcing, staff hours, or in most cases both. In order for these actions to be achievable, there must be a commitment to providing the necessary funding to enable planning authorities to offer the time and resources needed to achieve these actions, to the benefit of the whole sector in the long-term. If meaningful progress cannot be made towards delivering these actions, and the requirement for ca. 700 new staff over the next 10-15 years (replacement and additional demand) is not met, there is a real danger that Scotland's planning authorities will simply not have the skills, resources, and staff hours available to deliver a high-quality, functioning planning system.

### Recommendations for the High-Level Group

Based on the findings of this report, the recommendations for the High-Level Group are:

1. Consider and agree the study and report covers the scope of the research commissioned.
2. Discuss and seek agreement on all of the actions outlined in Table A, identifying priorities if there are any.
3. Consider whether there are any actions not currently included in Table A that also need to be included going forwards.
4. Agree to establish a short term task group over the next 12 months, comprising representatives from Heads of Planning Scotland, the Royal Town Planning Institute, Scottish Government and each of the planning schools to follow through on the agreed actions and to provide ongoing progress updates to the High-Level Group; and to agree a Chair (suggested Heads of Planning Scotland).

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