



The Rt Hon. the Baroness Smith of Malvern
Minister for Skills, Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings, 20 Great Smith St
London
SW1P 3BT

The Royal Town Planning Institute
41 Botolph Lane
London
EC3R 8DL
T +44 (0)370 774 9494
contact@rtpi.org.uk
www.rtpi.org.uk

By email: smith.ps@education.gov.uk

28 November 2024

Dear Baroness Smith,

I am writing to express my concerns, on behalf of the Royal Town Planning Institute, regarding recent Government announcements relating to Level 7 (L7) apprenticeships, in particular the announcement on employers having to fund some L7 apprenticeships outside of the new skills and growth levy.

As you may know, the Royal Town Planning Institute is the UK's largest professional institute for the planning profession across all four nations and in England's regions. We speak for 27,000 planners across the UK and internationally and are the only Institute to grant Chartered membership, the highest standard of profession and ethical achievement for planners.

The Chartered Town Planner degree apprenticeship is an L7 apprenticeship which provides an excellent pipeline of qualified town planners into an already under resourced sector and will be significantly impacted. The RTPI is the End-Point Assessment Organisation for this apprenticeship.

This Government is driving forward a growth strategy and has already identified the key role that planners play in delivering this mission. The capacity constraints in the planning sector are well documented, but Housing and Planning Minister, Matthew Pennycook MP, has highlighted the role of planners as agents of change and drivers of growth.

In a [recent letter to the RTPI President](#), Lindsey Richards, he expressed support for the vital role of professional planners in building the homes we need, recognising "the critical role that planners and related professions, working hand in hand with elected members, have and will play in unlocking the growth the country needs". He went on to say that "the Government knows how important it will be to bolster **capacity and capability** in planning departments up and down the country."

In the Autumn Budget it was announced that the Government would support 300 new planners into the planning system. The Chartered Town Planner apprenticeship is a vehicle through which a capacity boost can be delivered.

Up to 70% of those studying the Chartered Town Planner apprenticeship work and train in Local Government. Without access to levy funding, those 70% of apprentices will not be able to train and enter the planning workforce, having a large impact on Local Authorities who will not be able to fund this training. This is further evidenced by one of our university delivery partners, who have stated that given the impacts of austerity and constrained local government budgets, they would not be able to provide funding for the 75% of apprentices at their institution who train in Local Government.

The Government's own Pathways to Planning programme, a £1.59 million grant to the Local Government Association to support aspiring students into the planning sector, will be severely impacted. The programme is designed to recruit diverse talent and ensure councils represent the communities they serve and currently uses the apprenticeship levy to fund the training.

With no access to levy funding and the predicted downturn in apprentice numbers, there are wider implications for those Higher Education Institutions delivering Town Planning courses, and some may be forced to cease delivery of accredited degrees, as these courses become less viable.

With the Government aiming to strengthen capacity and capability within planning departments in order to deliver on their growth mission, the RTPI is concerned about the negative impact of a reduction in employer access to the apprenticeship levy, new skills or growth levy, to recruit or upskill town planners at a time when the sector needs to increase capacity with qualified town planners to drive forward the ambitions of Government.

The RTPI has also made a submission outlining the above concerns to the Department for Education's public consultation mailbox. We would welcome confirmation from the Department for Education that the Chartered Town Planner Level 7 Apprenticeship will be exempt from reforms in access to the apprenticeship levy and that employers will continue to be able to access the apprenticeship levy to fund Chartered Town Planner Level 7 Apprentices to support a pipeline of skilled and well-trained town planners into the sector, delivering the homes and infrastructure that are a priority for the Government. I would be happy to meet with you to further discuss any of the above.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Victoria Hills MRTPI FICE FRSA
Chief Executive
Royal Town Planning Institute

cc: Mr Matthew Pennycook MP psmatthewpennycook@communities.gov.uk