

Reference	BOT25/FEB/18
Date	26 February 2025

---

Board of Trustees February 2025

**Chief Executive's Report**

Report from the Chief Executive

---

**FOR INFORMATION**

The Board of Trustees is invited to note the contents of this report.

---

**1. Introduction**

---

The new year started with the excellent news that five leading planning professionals have been honoured in the King's New Years Honours, four being RTPI members. It would appear the momentum behind a renewed recognition of the importance of planning and planners has continued into the new year, and I'm taking this as a positive sign for the immediate future:

[RTPI | Dr Wei Yang receives OBE in 2025 New Year Honours List](#)

The Chief Executive's new year blog, setting the tone for the year ahead, can be found here: [RTPI | Dr Victoria Hills: New year, new planning policy](#)

In addition to the welcome news of our members have been recognised, we also start the year with some good news in our membership. Despite a challenging environment for membership organisations, we were able to grow in 2024. A summary of the highlights includes:

- 0.35% overall growth in membership. This is the highest percentage growth we've had since 2021.
- 0.76% growth in Chartered members. This is the highest percentage growth we've had since 2020 so again a positive sign considering the 7% fee increase last year.
- 1.17% growth in paying members. This is welcome news in a challenging economy environment.
- We achieved the highest overall retention rate see in the last three years.

So, a strong base from which to build on in 2025, and whilst the outlook is positive, there is little room for complacency and the focus remains on targeted our limited resources to where members would most like to see them deployed.

This paper sets out a selection of high-level deliverables and does not include all activity undertaken by RTPI colleagues and volunteer members during this period.

## 2. Delivering for Members

---

A comprehensive summary of all the most recent activities by the RTPI is included in the annex to this paper in the 'RTPI Delivery Updates' document. After the February board meeting, the document will be shared with the standing committees and panels of the institute.

### Highlights since the last meeting

Since the December board meeting, the following items are noted to be of particular interest for the board to be aware of.

- A dedicated webpage featuring the new style end of year film and annual report has been promoted to members: [RTPI | 2024 Annual Report](#)
- The Minister (England) reiterates respect for the planning profession with a public letter of gratitude to the President: [RTPI | Minister of State reiterates enormous respect for the planning profession](#)
- In response to the Government's proposed changes to apprenticeships in England, the RTPI has joined forces with sister institutes to call for exemptions to the proposals, so that the Level 7 apprenticeship can continue: [RTPI | Built environment bodies call for exemptions to Level 7 apprenticeships changes](#) In addition to this intervention, we have submitted detailed and comprehensive evidence to the DfE, attended all available information sessions and webinars, have kept in close liaison with IfATE/Skills England, signed an industry-wide letter to HMT, and convened all our networks and appropriate contacts to submit evidence to the Government. We are clear that we are not against reform to the levy but that we need an exemption for the Level 7 town planning apprenticeship to support the pipeline of planners coming into the profession.
- The RTPI was the only built environment professional institute to be invited to attend the Deputy Prime Minister's 19 December launch of the devolution white paper (England): [RTPI | Devolution White Paper a positive step for strategic planning in England, says RTPI](#)
- The RTPI noted the sad passing of serving Trustee Professor Tony Crook FRTPI, with the President, Chief Executive and other Trustees and RTPI representatives in attendance at the funeral on 13 December: [RTPI | Professor Tony Crook CBE FRTPI, RTPI Trustee, passes away](#)
- The RTPI's independent research continues to deliver excellent value for our members, and in the second half of 2025 we will consult with our members and then publish a new Research Strategy. This important work will shape our research outputs for the next two years (and potentially up to five, aligned with the Strategic Plan).
- The RTPI backed the Government's 'Plan for Change' calling for a national spatial

framework (England): [RTPI | RTPI backs Government's 'Plan for Change' to align housing](#) and backed the NPPF proposals calling for a route map for the interim period: [RTPI | The RTPI backs Government's planning overhaul, but warns of transitional hurdles](#)

- Work continues on the important Education for Everyone project, and positive feedback has been received from the Planning Schools Forum. The oversight group is continuing to engage with the MEC and ELLC in January, with a further meeting of the Oversight Group in early February before the Board receive an update at the first meeting on 26 February. Further information available here: [RTPI | Education for Everyone](#)

### 3. The RTPI's Strategic Plan

- The RTPI's 2020-2030 Corporate Strategy remains in place and is our useful 'north star' guide as we continue to navigate the changing professional and policy landscape. In December 2024 the Board of Trustees agreed the priorities for the 2025-2030 Strategic Plan, which, when launched later in the year, will replace the existing Corporate Strategy.
- The timetable of the Strategic Plan is aligned to coincide with the rebranding of the RTPI, which is a substantial project and well underway. We are taking the opportunity to overhaul our CMS (Content Management System) as we move to further develop our digital offer to members, making it easier for members to access and navigate the tools and materials needed to support their professional development and practice.
- Therefore, the launch of the Strategic Plan will be choreographed to benefit from the RTPI's investment into the brand strategy project and the CMS overall, and we can expect to see a launch in late summer.

### 4. Outlook for 2025

- Despite sluggish growth in the UK's economy and the significant challenges facing the public sector generally across the nations, the Chief Executive makes a new year's prediction that 2025 will see a growth in opportunities for our members, who will remain busy during 2025. The justification is informed, in part, by the scale and speed of the planning reform taking place in England and across the nations. These significant policy changes, such as those we are likely to see in England, could see stalled sites coming forward for development and infrastructure unlocked. Beyond the English policy legislative changes, we are also likely to see significant investment in infrastructure unlocked by reform in pensions funding across the UK which could unlock funds for energy, transport and logistics projects for example, as well as new homes.
- The success of our work with politicians to promote the RTPI Planifesto in England and to influence policy leading up to and beyond the UK's General Election has been clear to see. In 2025 we'll be seeking to achieve similar influence this year in the lead-up to the 2026 Parliamentary elections in Scotland and Wales. In Northern Ireland and Ireland, we'll work hard to support our members as they navigate their way through changing practice and policy landscapes, and internationally, we'll support the work of UN-Habitat in delivering the sustainable development goals, as well as working with other

international planning partners.

- In tight financial times, the membership sector must work harder than ever to demonstrate value to its members, and the RTPI will be no different to other professional bodies in needing to do so. However, the hand we have been dealt in recent months should give us reason for a positive outlook for the year ahead.
- The overall theme for 2025 is one of continuity, providing exceptional value for our members who look to their professional body to support them every step of their professional journeys. There is a sense of optimism amongst the membership, and if working together we can harness this energy, passion, and commitment, then we can all look forward to an excellent year ahead.

## 5. Delegated Authority

### Extension of existing 'B·E· Inclusive' memorandum of understanding

- The RTPI is a signatory to an MoU with the CIOB, ICE, LI, RIBA and RICS to work together to create a more equitable, diverse and inclusive built environment sector. This means the parties have agreed to cooperate with the purpose of creating a built environment sector that is as diverse as the communities it represents; that acts inclusively, treats everyone fairly and provides a culture that delivers the best outcomes for the diverse societies in which and for whom our collective memberships work.
- The signatories recognise the potential of our combined membership to affect a meaningful and tangible improvement in Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) standards across the built environment. The partnership is known as 'B·E· Inclusive'.
- The existing MoU was for a three-year term and was due to expire. The MoU has been extended under delegated powers to a five-year term, to 2030.

### RTPI Scotland Office

- The existing office in Atholl Crescent, home to RTPI Scotland in recent years, is coming to an end, following a number of recent term extensions. Looking to the future and following a number of operational issues associated with the building, including accessibility, the opportunity has been taken to consider alternatives.
- After a thorough search and discussions with the RTPI Scotland Convenor and Executive Committee, a new office location at 121 George Street Edinburgh has been identified. RTPI Scotland will move to George Street for a three-month rent-free period from 1 April 2025, vacating Atholl Crescent by the end of May 2025. The decision to take a five-year lease at 121 George Street has been taken under delegated powers.

## 6. Non-Executive positions

- Following discussion with the Chief Executives Appraisal Panel, from 2025, it was agreed that an annual summary of the Chief Executives' non-executive positions would be provided at the first Board meeting of the year.

- For most of 2024, up until November 2024, the Chief Executive Officer was a Board Member of the Advisory Board of the Office for Place. This was a public appointment to an arms-length-body of the Ministry of Homes Communities and Local Government, which has now been disbanded.
- A number of informal appointments are currently held. They are 'light touch' advisory positions and none are registered appointments with Companies House. The time commitment in totality of these additional advisory positions totals no more than one day a month, and time is accommodated around working arrangements, with additional RTPI work requirements met outside of hours in lieu of these additional positions.
- A summary is given here:
  - Interim Chair Audit Risk Advisory Committee (ARAC), Office for Place – this is an interim arrangement which continues until the end of the current financial year
  - Advisory Board member, Black Professionals in Construction (BPIC): four meetings a year – usually out of office hours in person
  - Advisory Board member, Greener Transport Council – now renamed to Transport Knowledge Hub Board: four virtual meetings a year
  - Commissioner, Essex Climate Action Commission, Essex County Council, four virtual meetings a year
- In spring 2025 the Chief Executive will join the Board of the Considerate Constructors Council (CCS). This appointment was discussed at the December 2024 board meeting, and requires four in-person meetings a year, in London. Please note this information remains confidential until an announcement is made by CCS.

## 7. Summary

- The year is off to a strong start, and the executive team look forward to working with all members, including the Board of Trustees, General Assembly, Presidential Team, and the wealth of committees, boards and panels that we have in place to support the important work of the RTPI.
- The RTPI executive remains grateful for the wealth of expertise and experience that members bestow on their professional institute to support shared aims and objectives.

*Victoria Hills, Chief Executive, 12 February 2025*

**ANNEX to Chief Executives Report:**  
**RTPI Updates document**