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Board of Trustees April 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 year continues in a position of strength with double digit growth in Round 1 of the APC applications, and significant opportunities provided for advocacy and profile raising across a number of Government committees and meetings across nations and internationally.

In England, a new Planning and Infrastructure Bill has dominated much of the work of the policy and public affairs team, and the research team has successfully commissioned new research into New Towns amongst other priorities.

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 April board meeting, the document will be shared with the standing committees and panels of the institute, as well as members of the GA.

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

- A dedicated planning reform hub has been launched to set out the key legislative asks of government on behalf of the profession: [RTPI | Planning reform 2025 hub](#)
- RTP research awards have been renamed and relaunched: [RTPI | RTPI opens 2025 research awards with renamed categories](#)
- The first in a new series of blogs from the Chair of the Board has been launched, keeping members up to date on the important developments of the institutes business: [RTPI | Keeping your Institute on the right track](#)
- RTPI Cymru warms up for celebrations of its 25th birthday: [RTPI | Aneurin Môn Parry: Its a significant year for RTPI Cymru](#)

- The work experience initiative and toolkit for employers is gathering interest across the profession: [RTPI | More young people consider careers in planning following RTPI work experience programme](#) and see blog: [RTPI | Sanjay Soneji: The RTPI's work experience programme was lifechanging](#)
- The Chief Executive was delighted to attend the RTPI Northern Ireland held celebratory annual dinner as chain of office transferred: [RTPI | Handing over the chain of office to the new RTPI Northern Ireland Executive Chair](#)
- RTPI Scotland responds to a number of high profile consultations including [RTPI | RTPI Scotland's response: Scottish Government's Fourth National Planning Framework](#) and [RTPI | RTPI Scotland response: how permitted development rights can be used to address the housing emergency](#)
- 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](#) Comprehensive engagement continues across Government departments, and at the time of writing, it remains unclear on the way forward.
- Work continues on the important Education for Everyone project, with the Board of Trustees agreeing to the policy statement at the February board meeting. The oversight group is preparing to move the project forward into Phase three of the project. Further information available here: [RTPI | Education for Everyone](#)
- The Chief Executive and Director for Wales and Northern Ireland attended MIPIM in March, with full update provided on the RTPI's LinkedIn pages. A highlight was the opportunity to meet with the new UN Executive Director Anaclaudia Rossbach to discuss closer collaboration between organizations to support capacity and capability building across rapidly urbanizing parts of the world.
- More broadly, the RTPI's LinkedIn page goes from strength to strength with over 36,000 followers now signed up to receive RTPI updates. Work is now underway to deliver and promote 'showcase' pages across nations as this increasingly popular communication medium continues to take shape. For current updates see the page here: [\(6\) Royal Town Planning Institute: Overview | LinkedIn](#) and members are requested to please 'follow' if not already done so, which will help to further drive digital interest in the content.

3. Summary & outlook for the next period

- Despite sluggish growth in the UK's economy and the significant challenges facing the public sector generally across the nations, there has been impressive growth in APC applications for chartered membership during the first application rounds of the year.
- The continued spotlight and interest in planning in supporting the UK Government's growth ambitions is leading to a reported increased workload of our members with some previously stalled sites coming forward for development and infrastructure projects becoming 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 and new towns.

- In England there will be local elections in May in some local authority areas, whilst others have had their early devolution status confirmed, with local government reorganisation discussions underway. Across the devolved nations, preparatory works have commenced in the lead-up to the 2026 Parliamentary elections in Scotland and Wales.
- In Northern Ireland and Ireland, there is continued work to support members as they navigate their way through changing practice and policy landscapes. In Ireland there have been recent developments with incentives announced to lure back Irish planners and attract international talent to help plug the capacity deficit.
- Internationally, there has been a ramping up of engagement activity with UN-Habitat in delivering the sustainable development goals, following a successful meeting at MIIPIM in March. Other international work has seen discussions with other international planning partners, for example through confidential trade deal notations, which may provide opportunities for professional qualification recognition.
- Despite the tight financial outlook for the UK economy, planning professional services across the public and private sectors seem to be resilient and growing. The outlook across the academic sector is more nuanced, with some universities reporting redundancies and reorganisations, whilst others are eagerly waiting for RTPI accreditation. Our Education and Membership teams continue to be exceptionally busy responding to all these opportunities and challenges.
- The overall outlook for the next period until the June Board meeting is one of continued positivity, although a few bumps are expected along the way as we keep a close eye on the academic sector and await news from the Government regarding the Level 7 apprenticeship.

4. Delegated Authority

Extension of Public Practice memorandum of understanding

- The RTPI is a partner of Public Practice, a Government funded arms length body, which aims to support public sector opportunities for planners and the broader build environment sector. The existing partnership agreement was for a three-year term and was due to expire. The agreement has been extended under delegated powers by another three years.
- The RTPI makes an in-kind contribution over the term of three years, comprising two years of RTPI Affiliate membership for each Public Practice Associate, a speaking slot at the 2025, 2026 and 2027 RTPI national conferences, and sponsorship of the 2025, 2026 and 2027 RTPI Local Authority of the Year Award at the main RTPI Planning Excellence Awards.

Victoria Hills, Chief Executive, 19 March 2025

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