



RTPI Scotland

mediation of space · making of place

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Dear Sir/Madam,

Call for evidence on the High Hedges (Scotland) Act 2013

The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) is the champion of planning and the planning profession. We work to promote the art and science of planning for the public benefit. We have around 2,100 members in Scotland and a worldwide membership of over 24,000. We:

- Support policy development to improve approaches to planning for the benefit of the public; maintain the professional standards of our members;
- Support our members, and therefore the majority of the planning workforce, to have the skills and knowledge they need to deliver planning effectively;
- Maintain high standards of planning education;
- Develop and promote new thinking, ideas and approaches which can improve planning;
- Support our membership to work with others who have a role in developing places in Scotland;
- Improve the understanding of planning and the planning system to policy makers, politicians, practitioners and the general public.

RTPI Scotland welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to the Local Government and Communities Committee scrutiny of the High Hedges (Scotland) Act 2013.

The introduction of the Act has informally placed new duties upon planning services across Scotland. High Hedge Notices are not specifically a planning function, but in the absence of the Act designating responsibility for implementation, the work involved has in many cases fallen to planning departments. This has come at a time of tight budgetary constraints in the planning service. RTPI Scotland analysis of Planning Performance Framework data shows that since 2010 almost 25% of planning roles have been lost from local authority planning teams. This means fewer local government planners preparing development plans, processing planning applications and pursuing delivery of important sites and projects. While the Act stipulates that local authorities are able to charge fees for High Hedge Notices to cover their administrative costs, this additional income is unlikely to be at a level that will compensate for planners being diverted from their primary duties.

The current Scottish Government consultation *Places, People and Planning* states that 'We want planning to re-establish itself as a visionary profession, rather than the micro-management of the built environment the [independent review] panel referred to. RTPI Scotland urges the Committee to consider how the current arrangements for the implementation of the High Hedges (Scotland) Act 2013 support or hinder the realisation of this ambition.

I trust that you will find these comments helpful. If you would like to discuss any aspect, or require clarification of any points raised, please contact me on 0131 229 9628 or by email to kate.houghton@rtpi.org.uk

Yours sincerely,

Kate Houghton