



DIGITAL PLANNING CAPABILITY SCOPING FOR SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

Invitation to Tender by Royal Town Planning Institute

April 2021

1 Introduction

This is an invitation to tender to examine the operating environment to embed digital planning in Scotland. The Scottish Government's digital planning programme is working towards the introduction of new systems and ways of working, designed to facilitate a planning system that is more inclusive, efficient and which supports sustainable economic development both locally and across Scotland.

The commission will involve undertaking research to identify the current 'state of play' on the readiness of planners to embed digital planning and will assess the level of skills and knowledge on digital planning across the players involved; identify the needs, challenges and opportunities of a skills programme; and scope and test what an effective skills development programme could look like.

2 Project Partners

The **Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI)** is the UK's leading planning body for spatial, sustainable and inclusive planning and is the largest planning institute in Europe, with over 25,000 members and over 2,000 members in Scotland.

To this end, the RTPI promotes research into planning practice, theory, policy development and education. The RTPI's strategic research agenda in the UK aims to:

- Promote the funding and dissemination of research activity informing and evaluating planning policy and practice;
- Promote awareness and engagement of planning practitioners in planning research at local, national and international scales;
- Encourage interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral research and dialogue;
- Support research in planning education and lifelong learning.

This research is being funded and procured/ cliented/ managed by RTPI on behalf of the Scottish Government using 100% funding from the Scottish Government.

The **Scottish Government** is the funder of this research and will play a steering role in the project. The Scottish government is responsible for the oversight of the operation of the town and country planning system in Scotland by Scottish local authorities. It is also responsible for National Planning Policy and the National Planning Framework.

The project will also be assisted by an advisory group which will be made up of representatives of the Government plus those responsible for delivering the planning function.

3 Policy Background

Transforming Places Together: digital strategy for planning

In November 2020 Scottish Government published [Transforming Places Together: digital strategy for planning](#). This strategy defines a long-term strategic direction for how Scotland's planning system will digitally transform, embracing the opportunities new digital

technologies and data present. It sets out what they intend to deliver, why this is needed and the benefits this transformation will bring.

The strategy sets out Five Missions as priorities for delivery. Each mission has an identified overall objective, 5 Year Goals and the initial 18-24 month Priority Actions to start work on once the programme formally begins in spring 2021. The missions are:

- Mission 1: Data - Unlock the value of planning data
- Mission 2: Digital Technologies - Deliver an end-to-end digital planning experience
- Mission 3: Ways of working - Create the conditions for digital to flourish
- Mission 4: People - Use digital tools to drive collaboration and engagement
- Mission 5: Innovation - Embed a culture of digital innovation

An action plan is being developed to implement the strategy and a budget of £35m over 5 years has been allocated to it.

The Benefits of Investing in a Digital Planning Service research

The strategy was informed by research undertaken by the RTPi. The Benefits of Investing in a Digital Planning Service research series is funded by Scottish Government. In commissioning RTPi to undertake this work Scottish Government aimed to explore the evidence base in implementing a Digital Planning Strategy through examining:

- the economic and societal benefits arising from digital transformation
- efficiencies that accrue within the planning system from investment in new technology and validation of the estimated cost and time savings
- the costs (financial and other) of not taking forward digital approaches across the planning service.

For this research RTPi Scotland has coordinated a programme of work analysing the need, demand and possible impacts of supporting a digital planning strategy. This comprises:

- [An economic impact analysis](#), which was undertaken by KPMG, to assess the potential efficiencies that could be provided from a digital planning service
- [A user and customer impact analysis](#) setting out the benefits for planning authorities, planning applicants and communities
- [A policy impact analysis](#) setting out the range of policy ambitions that rely upon a digital planning service
- [Case studies](#), which have been written by KPMG, analysing the impact that digital planning could have on Scottish Government aspirations on its net zero carbon targets, in tackling health inequalities and as part of post Covid-19 recovery.
- [A summary document](#) setting out the key findings across the papers
- [An infographic](#)

Skills in Planning Research

The [Skills in Planning Research Paper](#), commissioned by Skills Development Scotland (SDS) for Partners in Planning (PiP), of which RTPi is a member, sets out 25

recommendations to raise the profile of planning and attract more students and young people into the profession.

The report highlights that there has been an estimated decline of five per cent in Scotland's planning workforce since 2014, with the sector forecasted to grow 11 per cent by 2030. There will be a replacement demand of approximately 500 planners over the next 15 years as older planners retire, which will also result in a knowledge gap as experience is lost. It also says that the Covid-19 pandemic is also likely to exacerbate challenges already facing the sector and the impact of inaction could be felt at both the micro and macro level.

The report identifies three key areas for action: promoting and raising awareness of planning, developing a 'route map' to ensure a sustainable supply of new entrants into the sector and developing skills within the workforce.

4 Purpose of This Research

The research will assess the current 'state of play' regarding skills and knowledge on digital planning. This will aim to:

- assess the level of skills and knowledge on digital planning
- assess the level of skills and knowledge gaps on digital planning, including higher education
- develop a baseline to allow for the mapping of progress
- identify the challenges and opportunities to inform the development and delivery of skills programme
- scope and test what an effective digital skills and capability programme could look like
- discover what is happening elsewhere that we can learn from

The research commission will therefore provide a picture of the skills, knowledge and behaviour changes required to ensure that those working in the planning system can embed digital planning into their work along with the opportunities and barriers faced in implementing these, at different levels of the profession including graduate, mid and senior career. It will inform the drawing up of a skills development programme including a menu of tools and activities that will support the upskilling of planners on digital approaches. This will be used to agree a systematic and integrated programme of work focussed around 4 areas of activities including sharing best practice and learning; networking and connecting those involved; shaping practice; and championing digital planning and challenging stakeholders to embed it into their work. The RTPi will deliver this programme, in association with relevant partners, between October 2021 and March 2025.

The audience for this research is the Scottish Government Digital Planning Team and the RTPi and partners who will take forward the implementation of the digital planning transformation programme. It will also be useful for organisations employing planners in providing a broad outline of the skills and knowledge needs of planners and the barriers and opportunities to embed digital planning into their work practices.

The research will be used to inform the development of the digital planning transformation programme by identifying planners' skills and knowledge needs, behaviours and their preferred learning methods.

5 Work Programme

Stage 1 - What can we learn from elsewhere?

Stage 1 will involve desk based analysis of embedding digital planning in other sectors or settings and scoping on skills needs in planning.

Stage 2 - Where we are now?

Stage 2 will provide an insight on the current capacity of a range of players in the planning process to embed digital planning within their work. This will include:

- experienced local authority planners - through Heads of Planning Scotland
- planners working in central government – through Scottish Government and Key Agencies
- the broad profession in Scotland - through RTPI Scotland
- future leaders - through the Scottish Young Planners' Network and working together with PAS
- planning consultants and developers – through Scottish Planning Consultants' Forum, Homes for Scotland, Scottish Property Federation and Scottish Renewables
- corporate services in the public sector including Chief Executive's - through SOLACE Scotland
- Education and training providers – through Partners in Planning, and RTPI accredited planning schools

It will:

- assess the level of skills and knowledge on digital planning
- assess the level of skills and knowledge gaps on digital planning, including higher education
- develop a baseline to allow for the mapping of progress

The findings of these surveys/ conversations/ focus groups/ workshops will be tested by an advisory group. An analysis and baseline report will be published setting out the perceived skills gaps, needs and challenges.

Stage 3 - What support should be put in place?

Stage 3 will draft and shape what a digital skills and capability programme should look like. It will ask stakeholders outlined above to:

- identify the challenges and opportunities to inform the development and delivery of skills programme
- scope and test what an effective digital skills and capability programme could look like

Milestones

| Week commencing | Milestone |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------|
| 6/4/21 | Publish ITT |
| 12/4/21 | Deadline to ask questions |
| 19/4/21 | Close of tender period |
| 20/4/21 | Inform shortlisted firms |
| 23/4/21 | Interview of short listed firms |
| 26/4/21 | Award of contract |
| 29/4/21 | Project Initiation Meeting |
| 29/4/21 | Research begins |
| 21/6/21 | Stage 1 and Stage 2 report finalised |
| 28/6/21 | Advisory Group meeting |
| 23/8/21 | Stage 3 report finalised |
| 30/8/21 | Advisory Group meeting |
| 13/9/21 | Final report agreed and published |
| 20/9/21 | Dissemination |

6 Deliverables

The output required will be a report which:

- Assesses the level of skills, knowledge and gaps on digital planning across planners including a baseline of planners' skills and knowledge needs that can be used as the starting point to measure progress throughout the transformation programme
- Identifies the challenges and opportunities to inform the development and delivery of skills programme
- Describes what is happening elsewhere that we can learn from, incorporating case studies

Reports should be written in plain English, no more than 12,000 words and adhere to RTPi's publication template. Final reports should include a clear 2- page executive summary, written in plain English and suitable for the wider dissemination of these conclusions (including to politicians and individuals or groups in communities with an interest in the subject).

Drafts of the reports and executive summaries should be provided to the RTPi first as described elsewhere. The supplier should plan in time for editing in response to comments, as indicated by the key dates in the project timetable.

7 Tender Information

Budget

This project will be funded up to a maximum and fixed sum of £50,000 (to include all disbursements but excluding VAT) with the intention that this be paid in three instalments according to agreed project milestones (i.e. on signing of the contract, on the delivery of an interim report and on the final report being assessed to be of acceptable quality).

Eligibility

Tenders are invited from research/ economic/ planning consultancies, RTPI accredited planning schools and other appropriate organisations. Collaborations between organisations are welcome.

Governance

The day to day project manager at RTPI will be Richard Blyth, Head of Policy Practice & Research, overseen by Craig McLaren, Director of RTPI Scotland and Ireland. The RTPI will coordinate with the other main project partners.

It is envisaged that the Advisory Group for this project will meet twice and comprise representatives from, for example, the following:

- Digital Planning, Scottish Government
- RTPI
- Heads of Planning Scotland
- Key Agencies Group
- COSLA (local authorities' confederation)
- Improvement Service (local authorities' innovation entity)
- Planning Aid Scotland
- Connected Cities Catapult
- Homes for Scotland
- Scottish Property Federation
- Scottish Planning Consultants Forum
- Society of Local Authority Chief Executive's Scotland (SOLACE)
- Selected local authorities

This group will comment on draft project outputs and will meet at two stages during the project to hear updates and provide a steer on next steps.

Tender Submission

Organisations/project teams should submit a tender document that includes:

- Analysis of the context of the research;
- Proposed methodology including detailed timetable;
- Proposed outputs, demonstrating conformity with the project purpose and brief;

- Project team and general experience;
- Statement of experience relevant to the project, and selected projects that demonstrate relevant experience;
- Proposed approach to project management, identifying risks and mitigation strategies, and specifying how the project will be delivered on time and do a high standard;
- Total cost of the project and budget breakdown between the stages, daily rates and personnel inputs.

Evaluation

Applications will be evaluated against six criteria:

1. Quality, rigour and depth of the proposed methodology and analysis;
2. Experience/ track record/ knowledge relevant to the project – in particular the preparation of evidence to support strategic business cases,
3. Knowledge of the Scottish context;
4. Experience of effective and impactful partnership working (i.e. with research commissioners and clients);
5. Capacity to undertake and deliver the commission in the timescale;
6. Value for money.

An assessment panel appointed by the RTPi will evaluate tenders and decide which application to support.

Submission Deadline

Tenders should be submitted electronically to: research@rtpi.org.uk

Tenders should be received by no later than **9am on 19 April 2021**.

Further steps in the procurement process are outlined in the table on milestones above.

Intellectual Property

The Scottish Government will retain ownership of the work, but will grant the researchers the right to publish and re-use the material submitted to them, and will be fully credited for their work. Researchers and institutions should not apply if they will not be able to agree to these provisions. The researchers should acknowledge the support from the Scottish Government and other funders in any subsequent publications and activity based on the supported projects.

Enquiries

We welcome enquiries about this project. Please submit them to research@rtpi.org.uk by 12 April 2021. All responses to enquiries will then be issued as (anonymised) Q&As online

on the [tender page](#) . For this reason it may also be worth checking this page before you submit your tender.