

RTPI Cymru Response to the Big Conversation

RTPI Cymru responded to the Minister for Climate Change's, Julie James MS, request to better understand the well-being of planners in Wales in the context of restricted budgets. To explore the issues, RTPI Cymru launched the Big Conversation with the profession in Wales during 2022, which had a very good response.

The report of the findings was published in January 2023, and this follow-on paper provides the initial response by the RTPI of what we are able to offer and upcoming plans, tailored to Wales. The RTPI will also be encouraging others to respond to the findings, where they are best placed to.

1. Introduction

In our Corporate Strategy the RTPI commits to be the leading advocate campaigning for well-resourced, effective planning functions that support the outcomes local communities want to see. This underpins the heart of the reason for the Big Conversation – planning services in Wales need more investment and support to enable them to deliver.

Our response to the specific issues raised through the Big Conversation are set out below and we will raise the profile of the findings with stakeholders across Wales to encourage them to also take action to address the issues raised.

2. Support for RTPI Members

2.1. Well-being support for RTPI Members

The RTPI has partnered with Health Assured to provide a comprehensive and trusted well-being service to all members. From 18 January, RTPI members will have access to 24/7, 365 well-being and legal advice helplines, providing counselling support, legal guidance and more.

We will also sign post members to the RTPI's mental health hub, which provides a variety of resources for members to support them: www.rtpi.org.uk/new/mental-health-and-wellbeing-hub/

2.2. RTPI Trust

The RTPI Trust is a registered charity, independent from the RTPI. It exists to provide support to members of RTPI and their families who are in genuine financial hardship. We will promote RTPI Trust with support for individuals, we will also consider proposals to the Trustees to support members. www.rtpi.org.uk/about-the-rtpi/rtpi-trust/

2.3. RTPI's Code of Professional Conduct

A review of the RTPI's Code of Professional Conduct is underway to provide members with clear guidance on how to operate. The Code of Conduct is available here: www.rtpi.org.uk/membership/professional-standards/code-of-professional-conduct/

We will promote the RTPI's accompanying Probity Practice Advice Note: [Probity and the Professional Planner](#) to give members support

2.4. Member Survey

Our member survey to be undertaken in 2023 will explore in further detail member requirements. We will also be undertaking an update to the State of Profession Report, providing further evidence. The Planner Magazine will also be launching its own well-being survey of planners across the UK in January.

2.5. Chief Planning Officers

We will continue to campaign for Chief Planning Officers in every local authority. In Scotland, this has been successful through the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 which introduced a provision where each planning authority in Scotland must have a chief planning officer. The key role of the Chief Planning Officer should be to provide advice to the local authority as a whole on the spatial and place-based implications of decisions and investments in the short, medium, and longer term.

2.6. Engagement

We will continue to proactively engage with and support the Planning Officers Society Wales (POSW). We will also scope out a Wales Planning Consultants' Grouping to enable information sharing and engagement.

We will scope out and propose to Welsh Government the establishment of a Planning Stakeholder Group for Wales. The aim will be to establish a high-level stakeholder group of key organisations to discuss issues and provide a Team-Wales approach to delivering a positive planning system in Wales.

3. Perceptions of Planning

We will use and promote the Planning for Tomorrow's Environment resources to support understanding of planning and what it can deliver. planningfortomorrow.rtpi.org.uk

RTPI Cymru will develop a Communications strategy, for engaging with the media in Wales on Welsh planning topics.

We will continue to participate in cross-professional networking to promote an improved understanding of planning including Constructing Excellence Wales, the Cross-Party Group on Construction, the Built Environment Alliance Cymru and with individual professional bodies, including the Royal Society of Architects Wales (RSAW) and RICS Wales.

We will use the RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence to capture good practice and promote and share this with different audiences and to celebrate strong planning.

4. Growing our own

The 'pipeline' of planners is an important part of the solution to addressing some of the issues faced by the profession in Wales. We will implement a programme to promote planning as a career, as well as promoting the value of Chartered Planners.

4.1. Promoting planning as a career

We will promote the website Planning Your World to open up the world of planning careers www.planningyourworld.org.uk

The RTPI will work with Cardiff University to consider opportunities for promoting planning as a career and explore the opportunities for studying planning through the medium of Welsh.

We will embark on a programme of careers promotion with schools and colleges, including identifying areas and themes of those under-represented from the profession, such as those from deprived communities, or from Black and Asian communities or Welsh speaking or those from rural areas. This will include working with Techniquet on delivering town planning days with schools.

4.2. Apprenticeships and Routes to being qualified

The RTPI will further discuss the opportunity for the introduction of planning Apprenticeships with Welsh Government either at Level 4, the Chartered Planner Apprenticeship or both.

We will also explore bursaries as a way of supporting new planners.

The RTPI will promote the use of planning placement students from RTPI accredited courses, as a way of employers growing their own, through sharing our experience as well as from other employers.

4.3. Chief Planners of Tomorrow

We will promote the Chief Planners of Tomorrow initiative to encourage development and raise aspirations in the profession. www.rtpi.org.uk/find-your-rtpi/networks/rtpi-young-planners/chief-planners-of-tomorrow/

5. Public Engagement

We have an on-line learning tool to support planners on how to champion the planning profession through press and social media. Telling the Planning Story is available from RTPI Learn.

The RTPI will also be launching a Welfare and abuse programme in 2023, this will include developing social media guidance to support planners use and manage social media to its best effect.

5.1. Politicians

Following the local government elections in May 2022, RTPI Cymru published its asks of members www.rtpi.org.uk/media/11631/planning-for-local-communities-may-2022.pdf We will continue to promote these and seek ways of promoting understanding of planning with politicians. As part of this we will investigate with the WLGA an event to explore planning with lead politicians involved in planning under the PiPN banner in Wales.

We will explore other training offers to support Council Members and Planning Committee Members.

We will develop a programme to promote knowledge and understanding of the RTPI and planning with Senedd Members.

6. Digital Planning

The RTPI is in a position to share learning from digital planning strategies pursued elsewhere and will encourage Welsh Government to embark on such investment.

The RTPI has been supporting Scottish Government's Digital Strategy for Planning¹ which was published in November 2020. This is a plan to use data and technology to transform the planning system and put "Data at the heart of decisions that create and shape great places in Scotland." In 2021, they launched a 5-year digital planning programme that will introduce new systems and services, underpinned by a commitment of £35 million.

www.rtpi.org.uk/research/2020/november/transforming-planning-places-and-scotland-summary-of-findings/

"Launching the programme means that we have completed our initiative assurance activities and the programme has been certified as ready to get underway. We can now begin to develop and deliver new systems and services."

7. Further activities

This report is the initial response to the findings of the Big Conversation; RTPI Cymru will continue to develop its activities in response to the Big Conversation and work with others to support the profession.

The full report can be read at: www.rtpi.org.uk/BigConversationWales

17th January 2023

¹ **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 we intend to deliver, why this is needed and the benefits this transformation will bring." [Transforming Places Together: digital strategy for planning - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/resources/documents/2020/11/Transforming_Places_Together_digital_strategy_for_planning.pdf)