



# The role of local government and its cross-sectoral partners in financing and delivering a net-zero

March 2023

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## Introduction

This briefing aims to inform MSPs ahead of the debate on Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee Debate: The Role of Local Government and its Cross-sectoral Partners in Financing and Delivering a Net-zero Scotland which takes place in the Parliament on the afternoon of Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> March.

## The Report

RTPI Scotland broadly supports the report and in particular would draw your attention to the following recommendation:

“for the Scottish Government to address the churn, repetition and delay in the planning process that is holding up major renewables and other projects necessary to help meet net zero goals and has a chilling effect on investment. The long-term decline in numbers of Council-employed planners must be reversed in order to meet the ambitions of the new National Planning Framework, and one measure we call for is the **introduction of planning apprenticeships**”

## Context

Scotland’s 4th National Planning Framework (NPF4) was adopted on 13 February. RTPI Scotland has been broadly supportive of its aims and ambitions, however, the key challenge that we have highlighted is resourcing its implementation and delivery. This is especially critical as the planning service is the one of the most severely affected of all local government services in terms of budgets with [a reduction of 38% since 2010 and a quarter of planning department staff lost since 2009](#).

Also, the future demands on planners are increasing. The 2019 Planning Act has introduced 49 unfunded duties to local authorities which could cost between £12.1m and £59.1m over 10 years to implement and it is estimated by [research commissioned by Skills Development Scotland](#) that over the next 10 to 15 years the planning sector will have demand for up to 730 entrants.

To this end, last year Planning Minister Tom Arthur supported RTPI Scotland, Heads of Planning Scotland and the Improvement Service to undertake research looking at how to develop the pipeline of people entering the planning profession in Scotland. The key findings of the [Future Planners](#) report included a need to:

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- promote and reinforce the importance of planning as a career by developing materials in career messaging and job advertisements; pursuing targeted promotion at universities; and undertaking regular engagement in secondary, further and higher education.
- broaden routes into the profession; explore how to increase the number of overseas students studying planning in Scotland being able to take up jobs; and expand opportunities for young people interested in planning careers to gain work experience
- explore how to retain planners through career progression and benefits such as allocated training time, regular professional development opportunities and payment of RTPI fees.

### **A Planning Apprenticeship Scheme**

In taking this forward RTPI Scotland is leading on the development of a planning apprenticeship and have found:

- the RTPI-accredited Chartered Town Planner apprenticeship programme in England, launched in 2019, is already providing training to over 400 apprentices.
- The demand for a Scottish scheme has been evidenced with all planning authority respondents to a poll giving support to the principle for an apprenticeship. The introduction of apprenticeships is seen as being important in offering another route into the profession, particularly when there are fewer graduates entering the public sector.

Mr Arthur has said in an answer to a [Parliamentary Question](#): “We recognise the value such an apprenticeship scheme would bring and we are engaging with the Royal Town Planning Institute to support introduction of a planning apprenticeship scheme in Scotland.” Also, the need to increase the number of planners was highlighted by a number of MSPs during the parliamentary debate on NPF4.

RTPI Scotland has subsequently submitted a detailed business case to the Scottish Government prior to Christmas setting out the case for specific Chartered Town Planner Apprenticeship in Scotland. It is built on a solid evidence base and shows how it will support Scotland’s planning system to deliver the country’s strategic green recovery and net-zero transition goals. **We would appreciate MSPs’ support for this to be taken forward by the Scottish Government.**

### **The RTPI**

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 2100 members in Scotland and a worldwide membership of over 25,000. RTPI Scotland’s members will in large part be responsible for the successful implementation of the National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) once enacted.