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Skills in Planning Research Paper

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The research was undertaken by **EKOS**. Established in 1993, EKOS is a leading independent consultancy practice specialising in economic and social research. Working across a broad portfolio, we help our clients to deliver economic growth and promote social well-being.
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The research is published by **Partners in Planning** a collaboration that aims to:

- build the capacity we need to deliver quality places that promote wellbeing, sustainable communities and inclusive growth
- pull together the skills, knowledge and behaviours of those working with Scotland's planning system to maximise their contributions to achieving these outcomes
- promote high quality and fit for purpose planning education and lifelong learning to support planning in Scotland

The members of Partners in Planning are:

- Royal Town Planning Institute
- The Improvement Service
- Heads of Planning Scotland
- Scottish Government
- University of Dundee
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- University of Glasgow
- PAS (Planning Aid for Scotland)
- Scottish Planning Consultancy Forum
- COSLA
- Key Agencies Group
- Scottish Young Planners' Network
- Homes for Scotland

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The purpose of planning is to manage the development and use of land in the long term public interest.

Planning (Scotland) Act 2019

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Key Findings and Actions

Introduction

This research paper has been prepared on behalf of Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and Partners in Planning (PiP) to review the skills challenges and gaps within the planning sector in Scotland. We have examined numerous sources of evidence (legislation/policy review, baseline and consultation) to identify the scope, nature and drivers of these issues.

Bringing together this evidence and taking on board the insights and reflections of the sector, this paper outlines a wide range of actions for PiP, the RTPI and wider stakeholders/partners to take forward to help address and mitigate these issues.

The Scottish Planning Sector – Key Data and Trends

Workforce and Employment Trends

- in contrast to the important role it plays within the everyday lives of people, communities, businesses, etc the planning sector is relatively small - the workforce consists of around 1,600 employees across Scotland. There has been an estimated decline of -5% since 2014, mainly driven by a decline in local government;
- the public sector has been a key employer and destination for graduates for many years and accounts for 60% - 69% of employment, although the balance now seems to be shifting slightly as the impact of public sector efficiency measures and downward pressure on frontline service budgets takes effect. Central government and the private/third sectors are now playing an increasingly important role as a source of employment;
- the sector is forecast to grow up to 2030 (+11%), which is greater than the overall Scottish economy, however, the absolute numbers are modest, 130 additional planners;
- the workforce is relatively gender balanced, with females making up around 40% of the workforce; and
- the sector/profession faces some significant short to medium term demographic challenges with an ageing workforce coupled with a lack of younger workers and graduates entering the sector.

Local Authority Profiles

- planning departments within the local authorities appear to be experiencing a challenging operating environment, with reducing budgets and headcount, increasing workloads and demographic/succession planning challenges;
- across the sector there is an estimated replacement demand of c. 500 planners over the next 15 years. In addition to the numbers that will need replaced through retirement, the majority of these will likely be senior and more experienced planners. This will potentially create a knowledge gap within the profession as this expertise and experience is lost (this will likely be most acutely felt within the public sector); and
- while employment in the public sector has been falling for a number of years (-22% since 2013/14) it is unlikely that planning departments will experience any further notable workforce decline or contraction without experiencing a significant knock on effect upon service delivery. There is a threshold (in terms of employment/headcount) below which the sector could not operate and consultation suggests that further budgetary reductions/cuts would have further negative impacts.

Education Skills and Training provision

- looking at the supply side, while there are 23 courses across seven institutions (10 of which are RTPI-accredited) that offer planning related education, the total number of courses has decreased and the majority are postgraduate courses;

- while the number of students enrolling and graduating has shown positive growth (albeit from a small base), the number and proportion of international students has also increased. It is unclear whether this is as a result of decreasing demand from indigenous students, increasing demand from international students, or universities seeking to increase tuition fee income (it is likely a combination of these factors). Over the medium to longer term, a sustained reduction in the number of indigenous students qualifying/graduating could have significant negative impacts within the sector - increased competition to recruit from a shrinking pool of graduate talent; and
- planning graduates are highly employable, and this is an attractive selling point for the sector with nine in ten ending up in employment or further study six months after graduating. In addition to local government, the construction and real estate sectors are common destinations for graduates.

The Planning Sector Post-Covid

The planning sector has not been immune to the impact of Covid-19 and it has created a number of short-term operational challenges (e.g. stalled development, delays in processing applications, public consultations going online, etc). The pandemic has also created some more structural challenges in terms of local governments' future fiscal capacity and international students deferring their studies (potentially jeopardising the commercial viability of some courses).

While the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic will be felt across many aspects of daily life and the economy for a number of years to come, we also need to start looking beyond the immediate challenges and begin discussing and agreeing the strategic role that the planning sector can play in supporting the recovery.

The Advisory Group on Economic Recovery (AGER) are working to develop Scotland's response and identify priorities for intervention/action. The initial report, *Towards a Robust, Resilient Wellbeing Economy for Scotland*[1], was published in June 2020. There are 25 recommendations and we have noted those which we believe the planning sector has the greatest role to play in terms of support, facilitation, and delivery.

An investment-led recovery - The UK and Scottish Governments should commit to securing significant increase in access to capital investment to support the recovery. This should maintain the Scottish Government's commitment to a Mission to raise infrastructure investment and it is imperative that the Scottish National Investment Bank opens this year.

Enterprise and regional economic development - the economic development landscape in Scotland should pivot to a more regionally focused model in order to address the specific new challenges of economic recovery. This model should be tasked to drive delivery of place-based and regional solutions, especially the City-Region Growth Deals.

Planning and regulation - the Scottish Government, regulatory bodies and local authorities should review their key policy, planning and consenting frameworks, especially for key infrastructure investments such as marine renewables, to accelerate projects.

[1] Towards a Robust, Resilient Wellbeing Economy for Scotland, see here

Digital Infrastructure - the UK and Scottish Governments should mobilise investment in Scotland's digital infrastructure, covering broadband and mobile networks, to build resilience and enhance exports.

Prioritisation and delivery of green investments - the green economic recovery is central to recovery overall. The Scottish Government now needs to establish a priority on delivering transformational change with clear sector plans, where the coincidence of emissions reductions, the development of natural capital and job creation are the strongest.

People, place and community - the Scottish Government should support a renewed focus on place-based initiatives, building on lessons learned from initiatives on Community Wealth-Building. It should also accelerate investment in housing, in particular through the Scottish National Investment Bank.

The Four Capitals - to promote an approach to economic policy that values all of Scotland's assets, the Scottish Government should consider adopting a Four Capitals framework in forming its future economic strategy, and reporting against it.

Consultation Feedback

We completed 20 interviews with PiP Steering Group members and wider stakeholders across national and local government, key agencies, the RTPI, private sector, third sector and the planning schools/universities.

Current Demand

Overall, the "market" for planners is relatively small when compared with other built environment professionals such as architects or surveyors and demand has varied across different sectors (local government, national government/key agencies and the private sector).

As the main employer of planners, within local government the demand for planners is intrinsically linked to budgets which have seen year-on-year decreases. As a result, one of the clear trends is for roles/positions to be mothballed across existing teams.

The scope of demand has remained fairly consistent across all grades/levels with the 'middle tier' (e.g. team leader and senior planners with 10+ years' experience) in higher demand across all sectors (although challenges more pronounced in the public sector). Conversely, within central government, the key agencies and private sector demand has increased.

Future demand

Consultees found it difficult to predict the scope and scale of any future demand - this uncertainty will be amplified due to the Covid-19 pandemic with contraction predicted in the short-medium term.

Externally, demand will be driven by policy/legislation and initiatives such as the City Region/Growth Deals, major infrastructure investment and delivering against housing targets.

It was noted that the statutory requirements/duties of the new Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 will increase the need/demand for resources (financial and staffing). The RTPI has estimated that the potential cost to the public sector to deliver these duties is £12m to £59m over the next 10 years[2].

[2] Financial Implications of Implementing the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, see here.

Recruitment Challenges

Across local government most consultees identified that they have had issues in terms of the quantity and quality of candidates. Consultees provided recent examples of posts taking six+ months to fill and adopting a "grow your own" approach due to a lack of good quality external candidates.

More specifically, consultees reported widespread challenges with recruiting at the middle management, team leader level (quality and quantity of candidates) - which generally requires both professional expertise and experience of working within a corporate/political environment.

Skills Challenges and Shortages

Some of the main drivers of these observed skills challenges/shortages were considered to be:

- awareness of opportunities - planning does not seem to be part of the taught curriculum to any great extent and not understood or promoted by careers advisers and possibly gets "lost" in the crowd amongst other built environment professions;
- image of the profession - over recent years a "blurring" across the built environment professions has meant that planning does not have its own distinct identity and become the "hidden profession" within the wider built environment. In addition, as the primary employers of planners, local authorities are regarded as increasingly challenging environments to work in due to downward budgetary pressure;
- routes into the profession – recent changes adopted by the RTPI to widen and simplify (accredited education/training) routes into the sector have been well received and there is emerging support for additional work based/vocational training programmes to further broaden the reach;
- linkages with the planning schools – there are limited and variable linkages between the planning schools/universities (as the key suppliers of graduates) and local government (as the key employers of graduates); and
- the introduction of dual accredited courses and the need to ensure that the provision appeals to, and attracts, international students has led to a level of homogenisation and dilution within the curriculum.

Skills Gaps

The sector felt that there were some gaps within the skills base that need addressed and areas identified for further training/continuous learning support included:

- core planning, technical and knowledge skills:
  - principles of good design
  - development finance and viability of proposed developments
  - how planning "fits" with other services (e.g. Community Planning, economic development) and particularly its role in place-making and contributing to wellbeing (e.g. health, quality of life); and
- employability skills:
  - project management
  - conflict resolution
  - team working

- operating in a corporate/political environment
- critical, creative and strategic thinking.

Future Skills Gaps and Training Support Needs

There are three areas (driven by changing legislation and policy) where stakeholders felt further support is likely required to ensure that actors in the sector have the skills and training to help deliver these national priorities, these include:

- implementing the new Planning (Scotland) Act;
- climate change; and
- digital transformation.

Strategic Action Framework

The aim of this Strategic Action Framework is to support PiP (as the lead body) to co-ordinate an effective response amongst key partners and stakeholders to address current (and future) skills gaps and challenges facing the planning sector in Scotland.

Our research has identified two core challenges/issues that require collective and collaborative action.

The Challenges

1. Meeting replacement and expansion demand

Evidence identifies that over the next 10 - 15 years the planning sector will have demand for an additional 680 - 730 entrants into the sector (comprised of 550 - 600 replacement demand and 130 expansion demand).

The research has shown that challenges exist at every stage along the supply pipeline: the image/brand of planning; awareness and understanding of the potential career opportunities (particularly among young people); the availability of university level teaching provision and throughput of indigenous students; increased competition for talent; and diversification of graduate destinations / career choices.

This has led to increased competition for graduates, decreasing graduate retention rates (non-indigenous students leaving Scotland upon completion of their studies), difficulties recruiting for vacant posts (across all grades/levels and specifically within local government) and demographic challenges within the workforce (an ageing workforce due to a lack of new talent entering the sector).

The evidence and data suggests that the sector may struggle in the future to attract and retain a sustainable workforce.

2. Ensuring that the workforce has the skills and experience required to deliver policy priorities

The data shows that many experienced planners will exit the sector over the medium term (e.g. retirement), and with this, a significant amount of experience and understanding of the wider role, relevance and importance of planning as a professional discipline may be lost.

In addition to delivering essential statutory services, planners and the planning sector have an increasingly important role to play in supporting Scottish Government and partners deliver a wide range of evolving place, economic development and sustainable development policy priorities.

Partners need to be proactive in ensuring that those operating in the sector and the next generation of planners have access to appropriate levels of resources and training/development support to respond effectively to current and emerging priorities.

It is therefore vital that partners commit resources to implement collective action so that the planning sector can support the development of a sustainable pipeline of talent to meet the demand of employers, and ensure that the existing workforce has the necessary skills and experience to deliver a sustainable planning service and respond to Scottish Government policy priorities.

Implications of Inaction

It is worth noting that the challenges facing the sector have intensified over a number of years and are likely to become more acute in the future due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The implications and potential impact of inaction that could arise will be seen/experienced at both the micro and macro level.

Over the short to medium term the impacts will be felt most acutely within the public sector where challenges with recruitment and attracting new entrants could negatively impact service delivery. This is both in terms of struggling to meet their statutory duties (e.g. the Planning (Scotland) Act has identified a number of new duties/responsibilities) but also the impact of reduced resources/capacity on the quality of service provided (e.g. delays in processing applications, reduced income from planning fees and tax base and the potential costs of having to participate and respond to appeals, etc).

The longer term macro level effects of inaction are harder to understand and quantify. However, given the important strategic role of planning (which may become more prominent to help support economic recovery and restructure in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic), failure to address skills challenges and gaps could negatively impact upon the sector’s ability to support delivery of a range of national policy priorities. This may include for example, achieving net zero emissions by 2045 and new housing targets (affordable and socially rented accommodation).

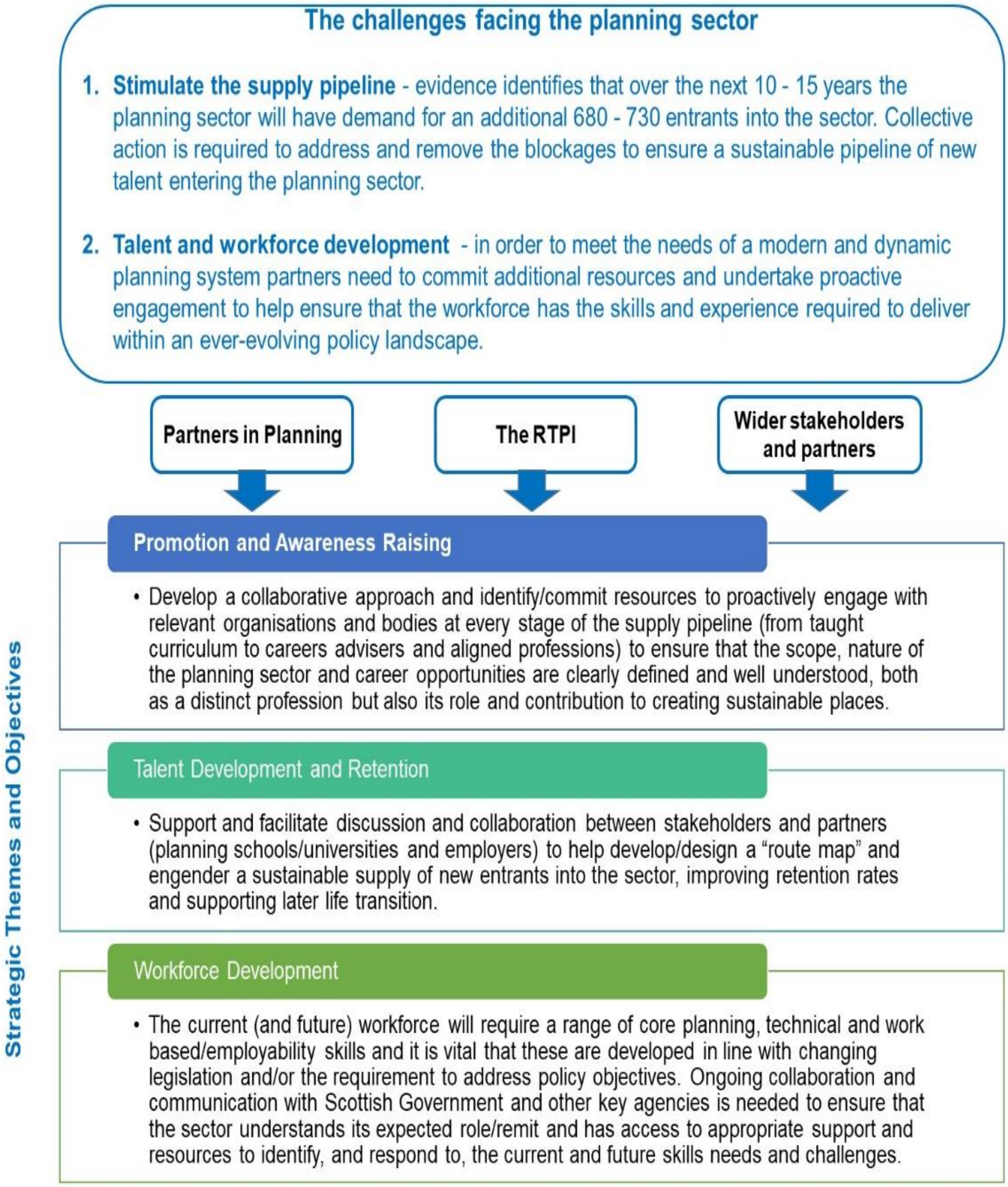

Figure 1: Strategic Action Framework

Strategic Theme 1: Promotion and Awareness Raising

Objective: Develop a collaborative approach and identify/commit resources to proactively engage with relevant organisations and bodies at every stage of the supply pipeline (from taught curriculum to careers advisers and aligned professions) to ensure that the scope, nature of the planning sector and career opportunities are clearly defined and well understood, both as a distinct profession but also its role and contribution to creating sustainable places.

Inputs - Strategic Lead and Resources: The promotion and awareness raising actions should be led by the RTPI with support provided by PiP, HOPS and Scottish Government. However, the responsibility for promoting and championing the sector lies with a number of bodies and actors, including careers advisers and schools.

The additional engagement and advocacy activity will require partners to leverage and/or commit additional resources to support these actions.

Priority Action S1 (1): Review and understand the external perception and image/brand of the wider planning sector amongst key stakeholders with a view to developing a promotional campaign/intervention to publicise/advocate a stronger, more compelling and distinct message and narrative for the sector.

Action S1 (2): The planning sector should investigate opportunities to collaborate and work on targeted promotional campaigns with other sectors, groups and firms in aligned professions within the built environment/place.

Action S1 (3): Better utilise existing and established programmes such as the RTPI future planners' initiative to engage further with the curriculum (focus on secondary education) and careers advisers.

Action S1 (4): Continue to engage with the Scottish Government through forums such as PiP and HOPS to ensure planning is part of the national discussion.

Outcome: The "brand", image and reputation of the planning sector is enhanced/improved amongst a wide range of key actors (individuals, aligned professions, careers advisers and taught curriculum) which helps to stimulate interest in, and support a strong pipeline of new talent.

Strategic Theme 2: Talent Development and Retention

Objective: Support and facilitate discussion and collaboration between stakeholders and partners (planning schools/universities and employers) to help develop/design a "route map" and engender a sustainable supply of new entrants into the sector, improving retention rates and supporting later life transition. The actions under this theme have been designed to address the main drivers of skills shortages and blockages within the supply pipeline.

Inputs - Strategic Lead and Resources: The talent development and retention actions will be led by PiP and the RTPI to review the development of additional work based/vocational training opportunities. The RTPI plans to undertake a review of its education policy in 2021 and it is recommended that these actions could/should be incorporated within this wider review.

HOPS and the planning schools/universities will lead on developing approaches to establishing closer strategic linkages.

Priority Action S2 (1): The planning schools/universities to consider approaches to encourage and attract Scottish students onto (accredited and non-accredited) planning courses in order to help achieve a sustainable balance in terms of indigenous and international students coming through the pipeline. The impact of Covid may present a short term opportunity to attract more indigenous students (e.g. as "replacement" for those international students that defer their studies). This is only a short term solution and going forward the focus needs to be on growing the total numbers coming through the education system in a sustainable way (both indigenous and international students).

Priority Action S2 (2): Consider opportunities to adapt and enhance existing provision to develop a vocational/work based learning programme over the short to medium term as an immediate solution to developing the routes into the sector with a potential longer term aspiration for a new/augmented Apprenticeship scheme to support talent development. Partners should also consider how appropriate the current offering is for “career changers” in aligned professions.

Action S2 (3): Consider opportunities and approaches to strengthen the linkages, relationships and lines of communication between the planning schools/universities (as the key suppliers of graduates) and local government (as the key employers of graduates).

Outcome: Developing new opportunities and opening up the pathways/routes for studying (such as work based learning) will help ensure that the education offering is fit for purpose to support a modern workforce, and through working collaboratively across partners, that there are clearly defined routes and opportunities into employment and training. This will help support the sector meet the replacement and expansion demand for new talent and address the identified skills shortages.

Strategic Theme 3: Workforce Development

Objective: The current (and future) workforce will require a range of core planning, technical and work based/employability skills and it is vital that these are developed in line with changing legislation and/or the requirement to address policy objectives.

Ongoing collaboration and communication with the Scottish Government and other key agencies is needed to ensure that the sector understands its evolving role/remit and has access to appropriate support and resources to identify, and respond to, the current and future skills needs and challenges.

The actions under this theme will target and address the current and emerging skills gaps within the workforce and help to better align the supply side (education/training providers) with the needs of the demand side (employers).

Inputs - Strategic Lead and Resources: Scottish Government has a key role to play in informing the future support/training needs, with actions taken forward by a wide range of partners (possibly through development of a new skills/training needs advisory group) and the support of advisory bodies (e.g. Zero Waste Scotland). PiP are best placed to lead on this strategic objective, however, we would highlight that the organisation is comprised of members that participate on a voluntary basis, and delivery of this objective will likely require commitment of funding/resources to help support (sustained) ongoing engagement between partners to undertake the “horizon scanning” work.

The succession planning activity will be led by individual authorities and Regional Partnerships with support from HOPS.

Priority Action S3 (1): Establish a Scotland-wide advisory group that specifically looks at the training and skills development needs of the sector and helps to develop/inform the planning school/university curriculum.

Action S3 (2): Prepare a formal “ask” of the Scottish Government to provide greater guidance and clarity on the expected/required role of the planning sector to support delivery of emerging priorities:

- Action S3 (2a): Addressing the climate emergency;
- Action S3 (2b): Digital transformation and improving service delivery;
- Action S3 (2c): Supporting inclusion and community wellbeing; and

- Action S3 (2d): Planning (Scotland) Act 2019.

Action S3 (3): Succession planning - local authorities (working collaboratively if appropriate) should develop workforce planning strategies and undertake internal reviews/audits that identify the scale of replacement (and expansion) demand, and the necessary competencies and employee development needs to ensure continuity of service.

Action S3 (4): Planning authorities should look into collaborative approaches to address short term or specialist skills challenges and gaps such as developing and procuring a pool of shared and/or specialist planning resources on a shared service model or other basis.

Outcome: The planning workforce has the technical and thematic skills and experience to support the delivery of a wide range of place, economic development and sustainable development policy priorities.

1. Foreword

1.1 Introduction

In recent years, across the planning profession in Scotland there has been a growing evidence[3] base that there is an emerging skills deficit impacting on planners and the planning profession. This has been driven by two broad issues:

1. Skills challenges related to a contraction within the workforce which has primarily been driven by reducing public sector budgets and rationalisation of planning departments within local authorities, and a demographic shift towards an ageing workforce without the complementary supply of new talent coming into the sector.

2. Skills gaps and the demand for planning related skills changing as a result of external drivers such as the new Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 and policy priorities such as addressing the climate emergency.

The research has been undertaken on behalf of Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and Partners in Planning (PiP) with the overarching objectives of the research to: understand what is driving these challenges, what is the current and future impact resulting from inaction and the scale and scope of intervention required to address these.

Within this, it is important to understand the scale and scope of these challenges and we have outlined the potential replacement and expansion demand over a 10 - 15 year period.

1.1.1 Study Objectives

The specific study objectives can be summarised into two core areas of research:

1. Understand the skills challenges and skills gaps in planning, with a specific focus on:
    - the need to raise awareness and improve perceptions of the sector;
    - routes into the sector and how these have changed:
        - current blockages
        - role of universities/planning schools
        - student base
        - alternative destinations and career progression
        - opportunities to develop entry points e.g. Apprenticeship model and mechanisms to support later life transition;
    - upskilling and reskilling requirements of the existing workforce;
    - workforce demographics – scale and scope of the challenges within Scotland; and
    - implications of ‘the big challenges’ e.g. climate energy, decarbonisation, implementing the new Planning Act (2019), public health reform, Brexit, growing international student population, etc.

2. Outline potential approaches to addressing these issues/challenges and identify where further research and collaborative action is required.

[3] For example, RTPI briefing paper, see here

Please note that this research is focused specifically on the Scottish planning landscape; however, the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) is also undertaking a broader piece of skills and recruitment research at UK level. The *Understanding the Future Planner Pipeline* research programme is exploring issues around skills shortages and gaps and problems in recruitment and retention. The programme is engaging with a variety of stakeholders, including employers, accredited universities, students and schools, with a view to understanding the future planner pipeline and addressing any potential loss of future talent. The findings will inform a review of the RTPI education policies, resultant education action plans, including strategies around engagement and widening access, and delivery of the RTPI Corporate Strategy 2020-2030.

The study will be completed by the end of 2020/early 2021 and it is the intention that the EKOS study both informs the evidence base and 'dovetails' with this wider research.

1.2 Background

Planning is a devolved power in Scotland and the planning system is established through legislation, which sets out a range of actions and activities that planning authorities in Scotland are responsible for. The legislation provides the context for delivering new development in the right places.

A recent independent review of the planning system, '*Empowering Planning to Deliver Great Places'*[4], found that legislation alone cannot enable planning to realise its potential to deliver great places but requires behavioural change from all those with a role and interest in the planning system, including the built environment. This involves improving the way we involve people in the planning process, reducing bureaucracy and strengthen resources.

In response to the review recommendations, at the beginning of this year Scottish Ministers consulted on the future of the planning system in *'Places, People and Planning'*[5]. The changes proposed confirm the unique contribution the planning system can make to shaping the future of places and communities. Planning is central to the delivery of great places and homes, enabling economic growth and a force for positive, collaborative change in achieving better outcomes for communities.

1.3 Research Method

The research method has been based on four stages as follows:

- initial inception meeting with SDS and PiP Steering Group;
- background desk research to understand the key policy drivers (including potential implications of the Covid-19 pandemic) and to develop a baseline of the planning sector that considers trends within the workforce and education, skills and training provision;
- a series of telephone interviews with a range of stakeholders including: Scottish Government and key Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPB); commercial planning and related practices; local authorities; and the higher education sector; and
- analysis and reporting of findings to address the agreed objectives.

Details of the organisations consulted are included at **Appendix 2**.

[4] Empowering Planning to Deliver Great Places', Scottish Government. See here.

[5] Places, People and Planning', Scottish Government. See here.

2. Planning Policy and Context

2.1 Introduction

Planning has a far reach with a range of organisations including: Scottish Government and key agencies/NDPBs, local authorities, third sector organisations, sector bodies and commercial companies. Given the breadth of functions and services that these organisations deliver, the exact scope and definition of "planning skills" in relation to a national skills context can be challenging to define.

2.2 Impact and Implications of Covid-19

Please note that the analysis/synthesis of the research and reporting was undertaken during the period March to July 2020, which coincided with the Covid-19 pandemic.

The majority of the primary research was completed before this period and therefore the potential impact and implications for the planning sector with regards to Scotland's response to resilience, recovery and restructure were not explicitly covered.

Nonetheless, we have provided some initial thoughts and insights[6] based on emerging research[7][8] and feedback from consultees that could be explored further as part of the RTPI's *Understanding the Future Planner Pipeline* research programme.

The first point to note is that the Scottish Government set up an Advisory Group on Economic Recovery (AGER) to develop Scotland's response and identify priorities for intervention/action. The initial report, *Towards a Robust, Resilient Wellbeing Economy for Scotland*[9], was published in June 2020. There are 25 recommendations and we have noted those which we believe could have the greatest bearing/impact within the planning sector.

An investment-led recovery - The UK and Scottish Governments should commit to securing significant increase in access to capital investment to support the recovery. This should maintain the Scottish Government's commitment to a Mission to raise infrastructure investment and it is imperative that the Scottish National Investment Bank opens this year.

Enterprise and regional economic development - the economic development landscape in Scotland should pivot to a more regionally focused model in order to address the specific new challenges of economic recovery. This model should be tasked to drive delivery of place-based and regional solutions, especially the City-Region Growth Deals.

Planning and regulation - the Scottish Government, regulatory bodies and local authorities should review their key policy, planning and consenting frameworks, especially for key infrastructure investments such as marine renewables, to accelerate projects.

Digital Infrastructure - the UK and Scottish Governments should mobilise investment in Scotland's digital infrastructure, covering broadband and mobile networks, to build resilience and enhance exports.

Prioritisation and delivery of green investments - the green economic recovery is central to recovery overall. The Scottish Government now needs to establish a priority on delivering

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[6] Please note that the issues detailed here are not intended to be exhaustive and represents EKOS early thinking on the most significant issues/challenges.

[7] Pragmatic and prepared for the recovery. The planning profession's rapid response to Covid-19, RTPI. See here

[8] Wider insights from the Profession. The planning profession's rapid response to Covid-19, RTPI. See here

[9] Towards a Robust, Resilient Wellbeing Economy for Scotland, see here

transformational change with clear sector plans, where the coincidence of emissions reductions, the development of natural capital and job creation are the strongest.

People, place and community - the Scottish Government should support a renewed focus on place-based initiatives, building on lessons learned from initiatives on Community Wealth-Building. It should also accelerate investment in housing, in particular through the Scottish National Investment Bank.

The Four Capitals - to promote an approach to economic policy that values all of Scotland's assets, the Scottish Government should consider adopting a Four Capitals framework in forming its future economic strategy, and reporting against it.

The wider implications and considerations for the planning sector include:

- the Covid-19 pandemic is likely to lead to a significant reduction in the Scottish Government's fiscal capacity in the next few years. This will potentially lead to further reductions in the total funding package made available for local government;
- at an operational level, the diversion of local authority resources and staff to deliver 'resilience' measures such as the processing of business grant applications has created backlogs and delays in the planning system. This will have a knock-on effect, particularly within areas such as development management (processing/approving applications);
- social distancing and restrictions on travel/movement has meant that important activities such as sites visits, and face-to-face public consultation has stopped. While digital platforms make some level of consultation with communities and stakeholders feasible, this still presents challenges and concerns that local authorities' decisions may be more vulnerable to complaints/appeals due to a lack of inclusive consultation/engagement;
- in order to address some of the operational challenges faced by the sector, the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020[10] came into force in April 2020 and includes the following provisions:
    - extending duration of planning permissions about to expire
    - publishing planning documents online rather than at physical locations
    - allowing authorities to exclude people from meetings for public health reasons;
- in a wider context, the construction sector has experienced a significant downturn with all non-essential construction work banned, specifically housebuilding has been the most affected sub-sector which has seen 85% of all work stop during the Covid-19 pandemic[11]. In the short-medium term, changes to Site Operating Procedures (SOP) will mean fewer people on site at any one time – reducing productivity. As a result, approved applications are not going ahead and the longer-term implications of this include the sector not being able to meet housing targets; and

- with regards to the planning schools/universities, restrictions on movement/travel, implementing social distancing measures and the move to delivering elements of teaching online (at least for part of semester 2020/21) will likely result in students (particularly international students) deferring their studies. Estimates of deferrals range from one-fifth to one-third, and in addition, the number of English students

[10] The Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020, see here

[11] Construction Products Association research, see here

studying at Scottish universities is likely to be capped[12]. However, there is an opportunity to attract more indigenous Scottish students to help fill theses gaps.

2.3 What do Planners do?

Planners support the design and delivery of high-quality, successful places which are distinctive, safe, pleasant, welcoming, adaptable, resource efficient and easy to navigate. Distinctive high-quality places are vital to the social, environmental and economic success of our cities, towns and rural communities, and to our health and wellbeing[13]

> "A planner's main aim is achieving sustainability. This means balancing different social, environmental and economic issues when official decisions are made on whether a piece of land is built on or not. Another way to describe this job is 'making places', such as towns, for people to live, learn and work." **RTPI**[14]

From a skills perspective, a town planner helps balance the demands placed on land and the environment by housing, business, transport and leisure, with the needs of the community[15].

This section is presented to set the wider context, and we recognise that the definitions outlined above may present an oversimplified definition of the sector, which covers a broad range of areas and sectors. For example, planning offers opportunities to specialise in a number of areas such as: transport, urban design, environment, utilities, regeneration, conservation and marine.

Employers operate across the public, private and third sectors and include: local government departments, national government agencies, large engineering or transport firms (e.g. construction professionals such as builders, architects and engineers), private development consultancies, house builders, energy companies, universities, environmental think-tanks, charities and aid organisations.

For the purposes of gathering and reporting data to inform the socio-economic baseline (**Chapter 3**), planners have been defined as town planners within the RTPI membership data and those working within planning in Local Authorities.

Planning (Scotland) Act 2019

The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019[16] introduced new legislation to transform and modernise the planning system in Scotland. A summary of key changes, many of which have skills and training implications for planners and the planning profession, are highlighted.

1. The introduction of a statutory link between development and community planning with communities being invited to draft their own 'local place plan'.

2. The removal of strategic development plans (and strategic development planning authorities) and the introduction of Regional Partnerships to prepare Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS).

[12] Universities Scotland, see here
[13] Scottish Government, see here
[14] Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI), see here
[15] SDS my World of Work, see here
[16] Planning (Scotland) Act, 2019 - see here

3. Regional priorities and housing numbers are to be set by the Scottish Government at a national level through the National Performance Framework (NPF). The NPF will be integrated with Scottish Planning Policy, which will become part of the Development Plan for every planning authority.

4. LDPs to be adopted every 10 years rather than a five year time horizon, but with scope to amend sections of the plan as circumstances change.

5. The replacement of the Main Issues Report with an Evidence Report which will be subject to a 'gatecheck' by Scottish Government Reporters. The Evidence Reports require greater levels of pre-plan engagement and consultation with communities (including a requirement to engage with seldom heard groups).

6. The introduction of 'Masterplan Consent Areas' (MCAs) to allow planning authorities to specify descriptions of development for which authorisation is granted without the need for formal planning consent.

7. Increased financial penalties for breaches in planning control.

8. More decisions to be made locally – with an increased remit for the Local Review Body.

9. Changes to Development Management:

    - public health - there is a requirement to measure the potential impact on health in relation to consenting national or major development.
    - major development application must give notice of the application to relevant elected members, including: Local Authority Councillors, Members of the Scottish Parliament, and Members of the House of Commons.
    - Planning Authority's Enforcement Charter shall contain a statement in relation to the planning authority's monitoring of compliance with planning permissions which have been granted in respect of major developments.

10. New requirements for Councils to produce annual performance reports and the appointment of national planning performance co-ordinators to monitor performance.

11. Requirement for Elected Members to undergo training before being able to vote on planning decisions.

12. Requirement for Councils to identify/appoint a 'Chief Planning Officer' to advise the authority on the carrying out of functions under the Planning Act and any other relevant functions relating to development.

Scottish Government and the National Planning Framework

Within the UK, responsibility for planning has been devolved to the Scottish Government who provide the regulatory and legislative framework within which the planning system operates.

The National Planning Framework (NPF) sets the national context for development planning in Scotland and provides a framework for the spatial development of Scotland as a whole[17]. It seeks to ensure that the planning system develops to support inclusive economic growth and delivers for investors and communities.

[17] National Planning Framework, Scottish Government. See here.

> The aim of the planning system is to deliver a planning service that is efficient, inclusive, fit for purpose and sustainable. The planning system plays a key role in delivering high-quality places for Scotland. It balances competing demands to make sure that land is used and developed in the public's long-term interest.
> ***Scottish Government, see*** ***here***

The four National Planning Outcomes for Scotland are:

1. a successful sustainable place - supporting economic growth, regeneration and the creation of well-designed places;
2. a low carbon place - reducing our carbon emissions and adapting to climate change;
3. a natural resilient place - helping to protect and enhance our natural cultural assets and facilitating their sustainable use; and
4. a connected place - supporting better transport and digital connectivity.

NPF4 is being prepared (currently out for consultation) and will guide spatial development to 2050, set out national policies, designate national developments and reflect regional spatial priorities. Following on from the previous framework, NPF4 seeks to promote sustainable and inclusive economic growth across all Scottish regions, and to create high-quality, diverse and sustainable places that promote wellbeing and attract investment.

At the time of reporting, Scottish Government noted that due to the impact of Covid-19, a draft NPF4 will now be laid before the Scottish Parliament in 2021 (date to be confirmed) for review/consultation, with a view to the final version being adopted by Scottish Ministers in 2021 or 2022.

Planning Authorities

The primary responsibility for the delivery of the planning service in Scotland lies with the 32 local authorities and the two national park authorities: the Cairngorms National Park (CNP) and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park (LLTNP).

Planning authorities have a statutory responsibility for administering the three main parts of the planning system:

- development planning – setting out how places should change in the future using spatial plans such as the LDP;
- development management – making decisions on planning applications and other consents. Decisions must be guided by policies established in the LDP; and
- enforcement – making sure development is carried out correctly and taking corrective action when required.

Regional Planning

Historically, there were four Strategic Development Planning Authorities (SDPAs): Aberdeen City and Shire, Glasgow and the Clyde Valley, Edinburgh and South East Scotland, and Dundee, Perth, Angus and North Fife.

Please note that the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 introduced legislation to replace the four SDPA areas with RSS. The RSSs will not be restricted to the city-regions and will be prepared by all planning authorities, setting out the long term spatial strategy for the region – identifying 'strategic' development opportunities and sites/locations.

Heads of Planning Scotland

Heads of Planning Scotland (HOPS)[18] is the representative organisation for senior planning officers from Scotland's planning authorities (local authorities, national parks and (formerly) SPDAs).

The organisation has identified three over-arching strategic priorities to support the development of the sector, summarised as:

- the planning system needs to be repositioned as a strategic enabler;
- the planning system needs investment to properly resource a high performing system capable of delivering national and local outcomes; and
- the planning system needs to be streamlined to ensures it is efficient and effective.

National Agencies

Scottish agencies and NDPBs, such as Scottish Water, Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), Transport Scotland, Marine Scotland, Enterprise Agencies (Scottish Enterprise and Highlands & Islands Enterprise) Historic Environment Scotland (HES), and NHS Scotland (Health Boards), have a statutory duty to engage in the development plan process at different stages (such as the writing of the main issues report and proposed plan and the preparation of the action programme).

The Key Agencies Group[19] was established in 2008 to encourage agencies and authorities to work together on the preparation of development plans, providing specialist knowledge and expertise (please note that the group includes other national and regional bodies that, while not having a statutory involvement in development planning sector, nonetheless, are regarded as important stakeholders/partners).

In addition, these bodies may also be required/invited to provide a response/evidence to a planning enquiry, public consultation or individual planning application.

A list of the key agencies are detailed in **Appendix 1**.

Partners in Planning

PiP is a collaboration of education and training providers, employers, Improvement Service, Scottish Government, Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), and the RTPI.

The organisation has a strategic overview of the sector and aims to:

- help build capacity to deliver quality places that promote wellbeing, sustainable communities, and inclusive growth;
- pull together the skills, knowledge and behaviours of those working with Scotland's planning system to maximise their contribution to achieving these outcomes; and
- promote high quality and fit for purpose planning education and lifelong learning to support planning in Scotland.

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[18] Heads of Planning Scotland (HOPS), see here.
[19] Key Agencies Group, see here

Planning Aid for Scotland (PAS)

PAS[20] is a voluntary organisation at which 20% of planning professionals in Scotland volunteer. It offers an independent, free and professional advice service on planning applications and the planning process. It also runs training and education programmes designed to raise awareness and to provide capacity building support on planning matters with elected members, community groups, seldom heard groups, children and young people.

Commercial Planning and Private Practice

There are an increasing number of companies operating in the commercial sector which include an element of planning within their scope or remit and these include:

- standalone planning consultancies;
- other multi-disciplinary consultancy practices; and
- construction and infrastructure companies.

A more detailed market assessment is provided in the next Chapter.

2.4 The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI)

The RTPI is a membership organisation, the UK's leading professional planning body, and a Chartered Institute responsible for maintaining professional standards and accrediting planning courses nationally and internationally. The institute has four "pillars" as detailed in the recently approved RTPI Corporate Strategy 2020-2030[21]:

1. Promoting the value of membership and professionalism.
2. Supporting planning services.
3. Raising the profile of planning.
4. Promoting equality, diversity and inclusivity.

Details on membership and RTPI accredited universities and courses are presented in **Chapter 3.2**.

Chartered Membership

In order to gain Chartered Membership, candidates' professional experience and competencies are assessed against 10 broad criteria:

[20] Planning Aid for Scotland – see here
[21] RTPI Corporate Strategy 2020-2030, see here

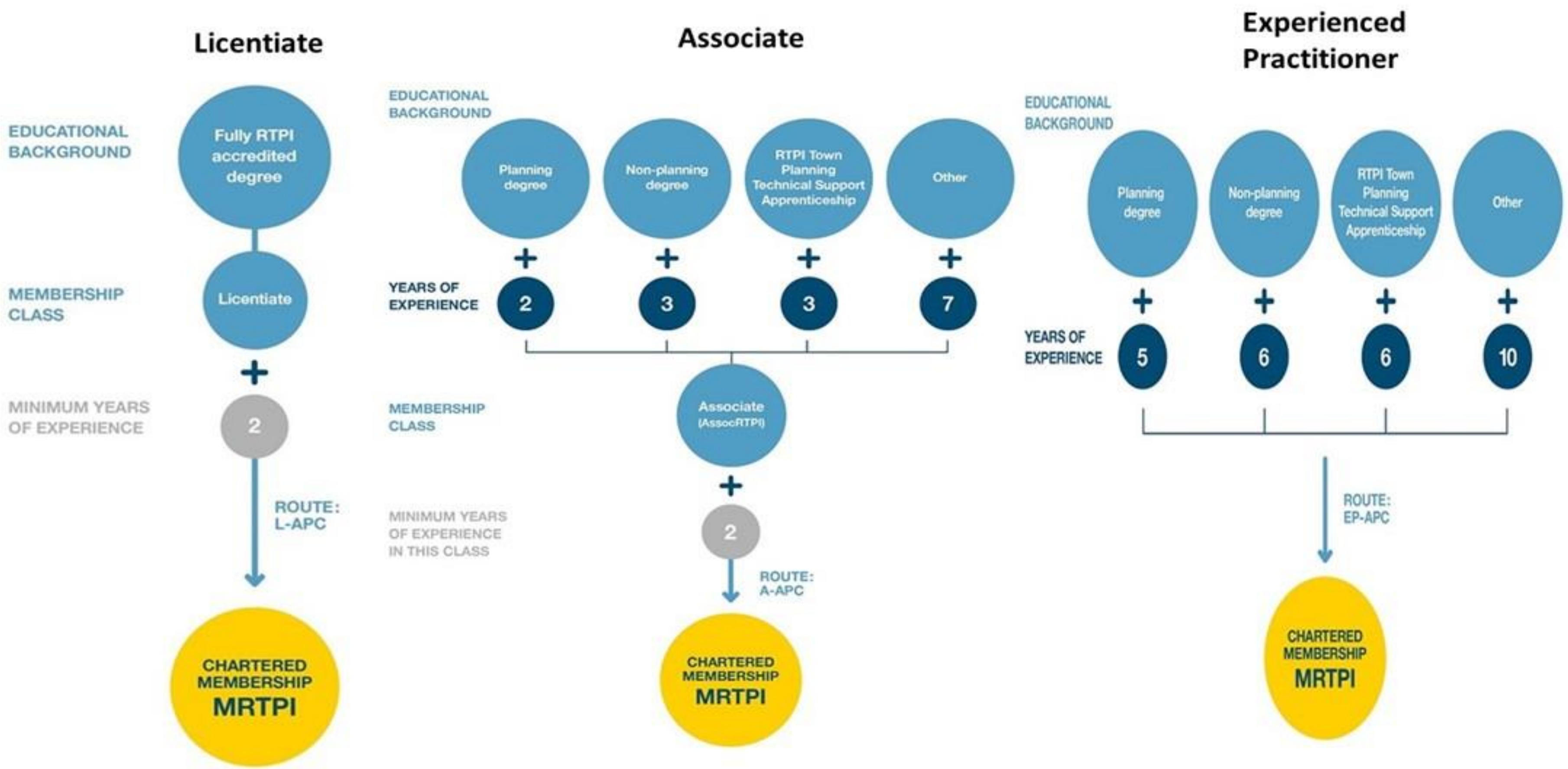
• ethical and professional conduct • the spatial planning context • identifying and analysing issues • gathering appropriate information • identifying and evaluating alternative courses of action • the legal framework	• initiating and implementing a course of action or, for academic applications, dissemination and application of knowledge • the political framework • the economic context • reflection and review

Competencies are assessed through three written outputs: Practical Experience Statement (PES), Professional Competence Statement (PCS) and a Professional Development Plan (PDP).

Routes to Chartered Membership and Continuing Professional Development

The RTPI recently (2017) streamlined the routes for planners to attain Chartered Membership. There are now three routes to Chartered Town Planner status, all of which have bespoke criteria with regards to: education background, years of experience in the industry and assessing professional competence. These are summarised in **Figure 2.1** on the next page.

Figure 2.1: RTPI Routes to Chartered Membership*



Source: RTPI
*Note: RTPI is currently updating this to include a new pathway for apprenticeships (recently introduced in England)

From a skills perspective, all RTPI members except students, affiliates and retired members must follow the requirements in the Code of Professional Conduct to maintain and develop their skills through Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

Individual members are required to:

- write a PDP identifying learning needs for the next two years;
- review the PDP every year or when circumstances change;
- undertake and record at least 50 hours of CPD in each two year period;
- reflect on and explain what has been learned from each CPD activity;
- reflect on whether CPD has helped to achieve goals and objectives; and
- submit records when asked to do so by the RTPI.

Accreditation and Planning Schools

The RTPI is also responsible for accrediting planning schools and university courses based on a framework established by the RTPI Education and Lifelong Learning Committee. While the Institute does not prescribe curricula, universities wishing to present courses for, and maintain, RTPI accreditation must demonstrate that they can meet in full a series of learning outcomes (see **Appendix 4**) and that any accredited programmes will be delivered by a 'Planning School' that itself meets a set of five quality criteria.

It should be noted that there are a few RTPI accredited courses taught at Scottish planning schools that have dual accreditation with the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS).

Further detail on the current education provision is presented at **Section 3.5**.

Planning Apprenticeships

In Scotland RTPI accreditation only applies to undergraduate and postgraduate education.

There is a different set-up in England[22], where, as well as accrediting undergraduate and postgraduate provision, the RTPI, with support from public and private sector employers and Institute for Apprenticeships (IfA), introduced a Level 7 Chartered Town Planner first-degree level apprenticeship in 2019[23] and is currently developing a Level 4 Town Planning Assistant apprenticeship.

In England there are currently over 140 chartered Town Planner apprentices across eight universities and an additional two universities will be offering the apprenticeship from September 2020. The data suggests that 75% of apprentices have been employed on the postgraduate route and 25% are following the undergraduate route.

Wider Role of the RTPI

Finally, the RTPI is involved in promoting awareness and understanding of the planning sector through its wider networks and schemes, specifically we would highlight.

[22] Please note that there are a number of fundamental differences between the Apprenticeship model in Scotland and England, see here for more information.

[23] RTPI accredited Apprenticeship, see here.

The RTPI Scottish Young Planners' Network (SYPN)

The SYPN is a constituted organisation that represents young planners across Scotland. It aims to address the needs of, and encourage the involvement of, young planners in Scotland and to assist in raising the Institute's profile in Scotland, and promoting the Network.

The RTPI Ambassadors

A volunteer scheme where 'Ambassadors' engage with schools and the wider curriculum (e.g. university careers fairs, Geographical Associations, etc) to help raise awareness of town planning, and championing/promoting career opportunities.

Other activities targeted at young people include the 'Agent Plan-It' animated series, comic and competition and free classroom resource 'Place Makers'.

RTPI Bursary Programmes[24]

The RTPI offer two bursary programmes for students at accredited Planning Schools, including those in Scotland – the RTPI Trust Bursary (for undergraduates) and the RTPI Future Planners Bursary (for postgraduates).

2.5 Training Providers

There are range of organisations that provide CPD and wider training provision for the planning sector, including:

- Scottish accredited Planning Schools/universities (Dundee; Heriot Watt; Glasgow);
- Improvement Service - Planning Skills Series[25];
- PAS;
- the RTPI (including the national training programme and e-learning platform, RTPI Learn);
- HOPS/local authorities (in-house and external);
- Scottish Government;
- Scottish Planning Consultancy Forum;
- Key Agencies Group (led by Architecture and Design Scotland);
- SYPN;
- Homes for Scotland; and
- private sector.

The type of training ranges from webinars to day release programmes and covers a range of topics from public inquiries, disputes/resolution, transport, Main Issues Reporting, to more specialist subjects such as conservation.

As noted in the consultations, many of the larger multi-disciplinary private sector firms will have access to their own bespoke in-house training provision.

[24] RTPI bursary programmes, see here.

[25] Improvement Service - Planning Skills Series. See here

Summary

As identified above, the planning landscape is complex and diverse in terms of the organisations/bodies/institutions responsible for setting policy, implementation and enforcement, and delivery of education provision and training.

All of these organisations have a role to play in creating a planning sector that is fit-for purpose, sustainable, supports the delivery of great places and homes, enables economic growth and acts as a vehicle for positive change in achieving better outcomes for communities.

It is therefore important that there is ongoing collaboration and communication between all the different organisations, bodies and institutions to ensure that the planning sector has access to appropriate support and resources to identify, and respond to, the current and future skills needs and challenges.

3. The Planning Sector

3.1 Introduction

The baseline review presents a range of socio-economic data relating to the planning workforce and students/graduates in Scotland to help identify historical trends/performance, and inform future action planning.

In order to gain a broad understanding of the sector, we have analysed data from both the workforce and employers or the “demand side” i.e. employers that require planners and those with planning skills; and the education, skills and training provision or “supply side” i.e. planning schools that provide undergraduate and postgraduate teaching, and the RTPI who are responsible for accreditation of planning courses and the awarding of Chartered Town Planner status.

3.2 Definitions, Data Sources and Limitations

As noted above, the planning sector/profession is fairly broad and diverse and spans activity across the public and private sectors (e.g. town planners, technicians, urban designers, enforcement, building standards, and specialist planners such as conservation and archaeology, etc).

3.2.1 Workforce and Employment Data Sources

The Annual Population Survey (APS)[26] is a key data source for analysing workforce and employment trends (employment and demography). That being said, it is survey based and relies on respondents’ self-reporting of their occupation. The ‘population’ of town planners is relatively small and therefore within the historical trend data there are issues with data suppression (i.e. data not reported or rounded) and Confidence Intervals (i.e. the sample responding to the APS survey is small and therefore subject to under/over representation).

In order to address these issues and substantiate/validate the findings, we have instead drawn on information provided through:

- The RTPI - membership data[27] and Members Survey (2013 and 2017); and
- the Planning Performance Framework[28] (PPF) which gathers a range of qualitative and quantitative performance data from all planning authorities (Local Authorities, National Parks and (formerly) the SDPAs).

Limitations of Data Sources

Whilst the RTPI data is considered to be the most robust that is available, there are limitations that need to be considered, the main issues being that:

Membership data:

- data has been filtered based on membership type/class – while this is a very useful proxy it cannot capture the whole sector. For example, not all those operating in the planning sector are required to hold chartered membership with the RTPI (although

[26] The Annual Population Survey (APS) is a continuous household survey and covers employment trends and demography. For more information see here.

[27] Please note that the membership data has been filtered to remove the records of those that have an affiliation or interest in planning, but are not directly employed within the planning sector – this includes students, retired people and Affiliate Members. Further details on our approach is presented in **Appendix 3**.

[28] Planning Performance Framework, available here.

as noted in **Chapter 4**, many employers have careers grades linked to achieving and maintain membership. Therefore, the data presented is likely to underestimate the overall size and composition of the sector;

- some membership classes require applicants to have been working/operating in the sector for a specified number of years (see **Figure 2.1**). There will be people currently operating in the sector and working towards gaining membership that have not yet met the required criteria and are not represented within the data; and
- there may be some employees working within aligned sectors that hold membership (and included in the data) but are not directly involved in planning on a day-to-day basis; and
- historical trend data is only available for the type/class of membership and we are unable to view wider trends e.g. by gender or sector of employment.

Member survey:

- the member survey results only provide a snapshot in time and respondents are not tracked; and
- the survey is self-selecting, and we are unable to assess how representative the results are in terms of the wider population (the RTPI regard the survey as "broadly representative" of their membership in terms of gender, ethnicity, sector, etc).

3.2.2 Education, Skills and Training Provision Data Sources

The supply side review considers undergraduate and postgraduate enrolment, graduation/qualifications and destination data from courses aligned to the planning sector/profession from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).

3.3 Workforce and Employment Trends

The RTPI membership data provides a trend review of total numbers operating within the sector and an up-to-date (2020) picture of the internal characteristics/ dynamics.

3.3.1 Employment Trends

Table 3.1 and **Figure 3.1** reports on the total number of town planners that are estimated to be active in the sector.

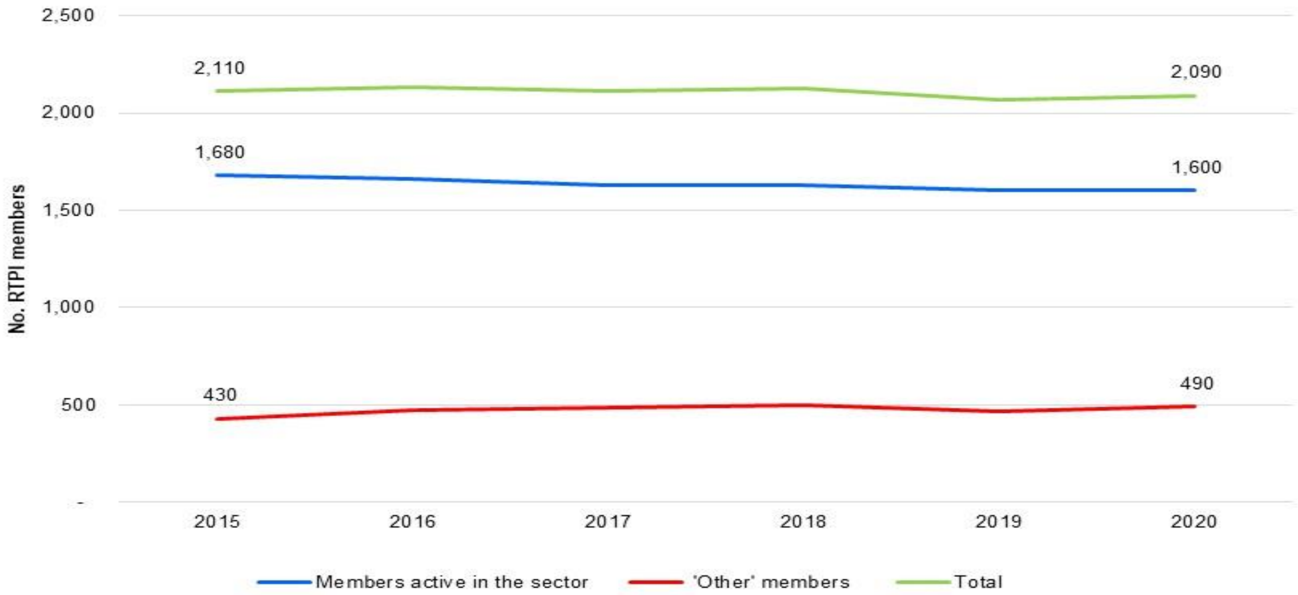
Table 3.1: Town Planners in Scotland (2015 - 2020)

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	5 year average	Change	% Change
Town planners	1,680	1,660	1,630	1,630	1,600	1,600	1,630	-80	-5%

Source: RTPI membership data

Note: Data rounded to nearest 10

Figure 3.1: Town Planners in Scotland by type of RTPI member (2015 - 2020)



Source: RTPI membership data
Note: Data rounded to nearest 10

In 2020 there are an estimated 1,600 town planners in Scotland operating within the sector. To put this into perspective, there are 21,700 professionals working under the broad built environment definition of 'architects, town planners and surveyors' in Scotland (2019 data). Town planners therefore comprise c. 7% of built environment professionals. The sector is therefore relatively small/niche (in absolute terms), which is in stark contrast to the important role that planners and planning plays within our everyday lives.

Since 2015, the total number of RTPI members estimated to be active town planners has remained relatively flat, although experienced a decline of -5% (100 members). In contrast 'other' members has grown by +16% (66 members) over the same period, and has been driven by free student memberships.

As considered further in **Section 3.4** which looks at trends within local government, the contraction of active town planners is likely driven by a reducing public sector workforce.

The survey of members gathers data on the employment status of town planners, presented in **Table 3.2**.

Table 3.2: Employment Status of Town Planners in Scotland

	2013 survey data	2017 survey data	Average
Full Time / Part Time Split			
Full-time employed	78%	78%	78%
Part-time employed	22%	22%	22%
Employed / Self Employed Split			
Employed	91%	92%	91%
Self-employed	9%	8%	9%

Source: RTPI members' survey (2013 and 2017)

The majority of town planners (four out of every five) are estimated to work on a full-time basis and only 9% are self-employed. The rate of self-employment is lower than the national average of 12%[29].

3.3.2 Gender Breakdown

The breakdown of employment by gender shows a similar picture (across membership data and the two most recent surveys), see **Table 3.3**. Males account for three out of every five employees operating in the sector (59%).

However, there appears to have been a slight shift in recent years with females now accounting for a larger proportionate share of employment (it is unclear if this is a result of 'new' female town planners entering the sector or returners - or males leaving the sector).

Table 3.3: Gender Breakdown of Town Planners in Scotland

	Female	Male
RTPI Membership data	41%	59%
Survey data average	41%	59%
2013 Survey data	*39%*	*61%*

[29] Business Register and Employment Survey

2017 Survey data	*44%*	*56%*

Source: RTPI membership data and member survey (2013 and 2017)

Traditionally, the wider built environment professions (which includes planning) have been male-dominated professions (although planning has often resisted this trend). The gender split among town planners is not reflective of other built environment professions, where females continue to be underrepresented (based on 2019 data): architects (11%), quantity surveyors (13%) and chartered surveyors (18%)[30].

Given the high proportion of town planners operating in the public sector (see **Table 3.6**), the gender split may be indicative of public sector policies to address gender imbalances in the workforce and encourage/support more females into traditionally male dominated roles.

3.3.3 Demographics

Tables 3.4 and **3.5** present the demographic structure of the sector. It should be noted that while the two sources do not present demographic data over consistent age brackets, there are numerous similarities and consistencies.

Table 3.4: Town Planners Demographic Breakdown based on The RTPI Membership Data (2020)

	Under 30	30 - 39	40 - 49	50 - 59	60+
Town planners	6%	24%	26%	25%	10%

Source: RTPI membership data

Table 3.5: Town Planners Demographic Breakdown based on The RTPI Surveys (2013 and 2017)

	Under 25	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65 or over
Survey data average	1%	24%	25%	27%	18%	4%
2013 Survey data	*2%*	*28%*	*22%*	*25%*	*19%*	*4%*
2017 Survey data	*1%*	*19%*	*30%*	*30%*	*17%*	*4%*

Source: RTPI members' survey (2013 and 2017)

The sector has an ageing workforce and based on the membership data, those aged over 50 represent over one-third of the workforce (35%), and those aged 45+ represent half the workforce (49%).

Some important observations on the demographic structure of the sector include:

- like much of Scotland, the town planning workforce is ageing and will face a large replacement demand, for example, due to individuals retiring or exiting the sector over the next 10 to 15 years. The most recent RTPI membership data (2020) shows

[30] Annual Population Survey

that over 35% of planners were aged 50 years or over. Assuming an average retirement age of 65, the total age related cumulative replacement demand amounts to 550 - 600 town planners over the next 10 to 15 years;

- there are less than 100 town planners (6%) that are aged under 30, survey data, consultation feedback and trends within the wider built environment sector would suggest that this demographic shift is becoming more pronounced (i.e. less younger people entering the profession); and

- 6% of the workforce is aged 65 or over, which reflects the extension of careers beyond the traditional retirement age. Nationally, the proportion of those aged 65+ in employment is 3%. As noted in the consultations, many retired and semi-retired planners continue to support the sector through volunteering for organisations such as PAS.

A level of "churn" or employee turnover due to older workers retiring or moving employer or changing roles (i.e. replacement demand) does not necessarily have a negative impact on a firm/sector/economy, and in fact, a "healthy" level of employee turnover can often help to drive productivity.

However, the absolute numbers of 550 - 600 town planners, and the proportionate share of the workforce that is forecast to exit the planning sector in Scotland over the next 10 to 15 years is cause for concern, not least because the planning sector is operating from a fairly small base of c. 1,600 employees and these figures do not take into account any expansion demand.

It should also be noted that this replacement demand does not include closely aligned professions such as town planning technicians, who play an important role within the sector.

The issue appears to be more acute within local authorities (see **Section 3.4**), where the retirement of older (and generally more experienced) planners is likely to mean that there will be a greater share of vacancies in more senior and corporate/ management roles.

As supported through the consultation work, these positions tend to be more difficult to fill, and the data would suggest (**Sections 3.4 and 3.5)** that the pipeline supply of new planners is somewhat constrained.

Therefore, the demographic challenge facing the town planning sector in Scotland appears to be two-fold. First, the sector needs to increase the number of new entrants (including younger entrants - those aged 30 and under), and secondly, to ensure that those already operating in the sector gain appropriate levels of skills, experience and training to help meet this replacement demand and fill more senior roles/positions.

3.3.4 Sectors

Table 3.6 presents data on sector of employment/occupation (i.e. where do town planners work).

Table 3.6: Town Planners Sector of Employment

	Public sector	Private/third sector	Other
RTPI Membership data	60%	40%	0%
Survey data average	69%	30%	1%
2013 Survey data	*68%*	*31%*	*1%*

2017 Survey data	*69%*	*28%*	*2%*

Source: RTPI membership data and member survey (2013 and 2017)

The public sector is the largest employer of town planners and accounts for the majority of employment (estimated at 60% - 69%). Of the estimated 960 to 1,100 town planners that work within the public sector, the RTPI membership data identifies that 86% work in local government with a further 13% in national government/NDPBs.

As noted later in this section, the PPF data and consultation feedback point to a slight shift in the destination of town planners, with a greater proportion now operating in the private sector e.g. consultancies and multi-disciplinary firms.

Of note, a survey of UK planning consultancies undertaken by Planning Magazine (2019) identified "bullishness" in the private sector market (consultancies and multi-disciplinary firms) with 56% of respondents anticipating growth over the next few years - driven by the housing development and infrastructure markets[31].

The available data therefore suggests that, while the public sector remains the largest employer of town planners, demand is no longer exclusively concentrated within local government. The decline within the public sector workforce is likely driven by both an increase in employment opportunities within other sectors and aligned professions (e.g. growth in the construction sector which has grown by +5% / £940m over the period 2015 - 2018), and the increasing downward pressure on public sector budgets.

As noted in the consultations (**Chapter 4**) the public sectors' approach to driving efficiency savings through its frontline services has included rationalising and mothballing of jobs, contracting-in staff from other local authorities and the private sector, and job-sharing for more specialist roles.

Not only have these efficiency saving measures had an impact on the total size of the public sector town planning workforce, it has also potentially had a negative impact on the attractiveness of the public sector as an employer. New entrants and planners may increasingly choose to seek employment in other sectors that have not been as adversely affected by budgetary constraints and can potentially offer more opportunities for career progression.

3.3.5 Ethnicity

The membership data estimates that 97% of town planners are from a white ethnic group/background and only 3% are from Black And Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups. This is broadly in line with other occupations and Scotland's population (4% belong to a BAME group)[32].

From the available data it is hard to identify any specific challenges with regards to barriers in accessing employment opportunities within the sector for BAME groups. However, it is worth noting that, while the overwhelming majority of Scottish university students, and therefore entrants into the sector are from non-BAME backgrounds, barriers might relate to wealth and social class which intersects with ethnicity; for example, Master's programmes along with the accreditation process involve significant costs.

[31] See details of the survey here, based on 148 responses, UK wide.

[32] National Record for Scotland

This highlights the importance of developing more inclusive routes into the profession, such as promoting careers awareness, apprenticeships and internships (discussed further within the consultations, **Chapter 4**).

3.4 Local Authority Profiles

The significant majority of planners work within local authorities (estimated at 60% - 69% based on RTPI data). The PPF provides data on local authorities' workforce and staff age profiles - providing a more granular analysis of trends.

As seen in **Table 3.7**, there are 1,181 people employed across the 34 planning authorities (headcount) with Aberdeenshire and the larger city authorities of Glasgow and Edinburgh accounting for the greatest proportionate share.

Since 2013/14, 29 planning authorities (out of 34) have experienced fairly significant reductions in staff numbers, while only five[33] have reported an increase in staff. As a result of decreasing budgets and efficiency saving measures, overall, between 2013 and 2018 employment within the planning authorities has declined by 264 jobs (-18%).

Within the five authorities that have experienced growth, Aberdeenshire and Scottish Borders have experienced the largest absolute and proportionate growth.

The notable increase in planning staff within Aberdeenshire (+49 jobs / +52%) is likely driven by the sustained growth within the North Sea oil and gas sector. The region has seen (high) sustained numbers of planning applications, approvals and completions - driven by both residential and commercial development opportunities.

Similarly, across the Scottish Borders (+37 jobs / +119%) the opening of the Borders Rail line has stimulated activity in the housing market, most notably at sites in close proximity to stations on the line such as Tweedbank and Galashiels.

[33] Aberdeenshire / Cairngorms National Park / East Ayrshire / East Renfrewshire / Scottish Borders)

Table 3.7. Change in local/planning authority Headcount (2013/14 – 2017/18)

	2013/14	2016/17	2017/18	Change	% Change
Aberdeen City	54	50	38	-16	-30%
Aberdeenshire	95	148	144	49	52%
Angus	33	32	26	-7	-22%
Argyll and Bute	45	44	27	-18	-39%
Cairngorms NP	10	10	11	2	18%
Clackmannanshire	8	7	7	-1	-13%
Dumfries and Galloway	47	44	33	-14	-30%
Dundee City	26	25	21	-5	-20%
East Ayrshire	33	43	38	5	15%
East Dunbartonshire	32	30	16	-16	-49%
East Lothian	25	28	27	2	10%
East Renfrewshire	24	29	36	12	48%
Edinburgh	165	0	76	-90	-54%
Falkirk	45	28	30	-15	-33%
Fife	66	65	64	-2	-3%
Glasgow City	120	111	99	-21	-18%
Highland	84	55	57	-27	-32%
Inverclyde	21	20	18	-3	-14%
LLTNP	21	17	18	-3	-15%
Midlothian	27	30	27	-1	-2%
Moray	28	29	25	-3	-11%
North Ayrshire	22	14	15	-7	-33%
North Lanarkshire	83	0	38	-44	-54%
Orkney	20	21	17	-4	-17%
Perth and Kinross	53	50	44	-9	-17%
Renfrewshire	28	27	20	-9	-30%
Scottish Borders	31	64	68	37	119%
Shetland	25	26	15	-10	-40%
South Ayrshire	31	32	20	-11	-34%
South Lanarkshire	59	54	40	-19	-33%
Stirling	28	23	24	-4	-13%
West Dunbartonshire	15	15	14	-1	-7%
West Lothian	30	17	20	-10	-32%
Western Isles	17	15	12	-4	-26%
All Scotland	**1,446**	**1,201**	**1,181**	**-264**	**-18%**

Source: Planning Performance Framework
Note: headcount figures round to nearest whole number

The data shows that between 2013 and 2018, the decline in headcount across some Local Authorities is quite significant. Among the largest reductions (absolute and proportionate) were Edinburgh (-90 jobs / -54%) and North Lanarkshire (-44 jobs / -54%), followed by East Dunbartonshire (-16 jobs / -49%).

Please note that these figures should be interpreted with an element of caution as (currently) there is no consistent approach across the local/planning authorities for reporting data. For example, a review of the 2018/19 Framework identifies that the individual authorities provide varying degrees of detail, from comprehensive organigrams with individual staff names and roles/disciplines, to high level structure charts. In addition, some of these fluctuations may be as a result of corporate restructuring within local authorities i.e. planning gets enveloped into an aligned service e.g. community planning or vice versa.

3.4.1 Role and Disciplines

The PPF reports against four broad planning disciplines: development management, development planning, enforcement and ‘other’, see **Table 3.8** for a breakdown of the changes in headcount across the roles/disciplines since 2013/14[34].

Within this, ‘other’ can include a wide variety of roles, including: surveyors, technicians, country/park rangers, heritage/conservation/biodiversity officers, building standards and transport, and may be influenced by what department or service planning sits within. It is also unclear how local authorities record and report those that have a dual role or where they share or “buy in” specialist services from other authorities such as conservation specialists.

[34] Please note that due to changing duties of planning officers and the difficulty in allocating staff to these defined groupings, in 2018/19 HOPS asked authorities to provide a staff structure diagram to more accurately map out the planning staff within authorities.

Table 3.8. Change in Planning Staff Disciplines/Roles

	Change in Headcount, 2013/14 - 2017/18			
	Dev Man'ment	Dev planning	Enforcement	Other
Aberdeen City	-10	-3	1	-4
Aberdeenshire	-29	-5	0	83
Angus	-2	0	-2	-3
Argyll and Bute	-8	-9	-2	1
Cairngorms NP	0	2	0	0
Clackmannanshire	-1	-2	0	2
Dumfries and Galloway	-18	-5	-2	12
Dundee City	-5	-4	-2	5
East Ayrshire	-5	2	0	8
East Dunbartonshire	-5	-1	0	-10
East Lothian	-2	2	0	3
East Renfrewshire	-4	-4	0	19
Edinburgh	43	20	0	14
Falkirk	-5	-4	-2	-5
Fife	-21	-8	-4	31
Glasgow City	-21	-8	-3	11
Highland	-30	-10	-1	14
Inverclyde	-6	-3	0	7
LLTNP	-6	-3	-2	8
Midlothian	-5	-1	3	3
Moray	-8	-4	1	8
North Ayrshire	-4	-3	-1	1
North Lanarkshire	-21	-17	3	-9
Orkney	-4	-5	0	6
Perth and Kinross	-19	-5	0	15
Renfrewshire	-4	-11	0	7
Scottish Borders	-1	-5	-6	49
Shetland	-9	-8	-1	7
South Ayrshire	-7	-1	-2	-2
South Lanarkshire	-4	-4	-1	-10
Stirling	-9	-2	0	7
West Dunbartonshire	-4	-2	1	4
West Lothian	-9	-4	-1	4
Western Isles	-5	-3	-1	-4
All Scotland	**-245**	**-118**	**-24**	**83**

Source: Planning Performance Framework. Note: data for some authorities missing.

From the available PPF data, it is somewhat challenging to get an accurate picture of the landscape as some positions/roles have been amalgamated and mothballed as a result of rationalisation and efficiency savings, whilst others have likely been re-classified as part of restructuring across departments (e.g. job sharing).

Development management, which relates to the process of reviewing applications and other related consents is the service that has been hardest hit with a reduction in headcount of 245, representing a -36% decrease. Counter to this, the headcount of those classified as ‘other’ within the PPF has increased by 83, (+160%).

Multiple authorities have begun to report staff figures in ‘other’ roles compared to 2013/14 when these roles were reported to have no staff e.g. increases in total staff appear to be driven by recording ‘other’ roles in Aberdeenshire (where these went from 0 to 83); Scottish Borders (from 0 to 49), and East Renfrewshire (5 to 19).

While there are some challenges with the consistency and interpretation of the data, there are clear trends emerging that, in general, the planning authorities have experienced notable decreases to their workforce over the past five years.

3.4.2 Local/Planning Authority Workforce Age Profiles

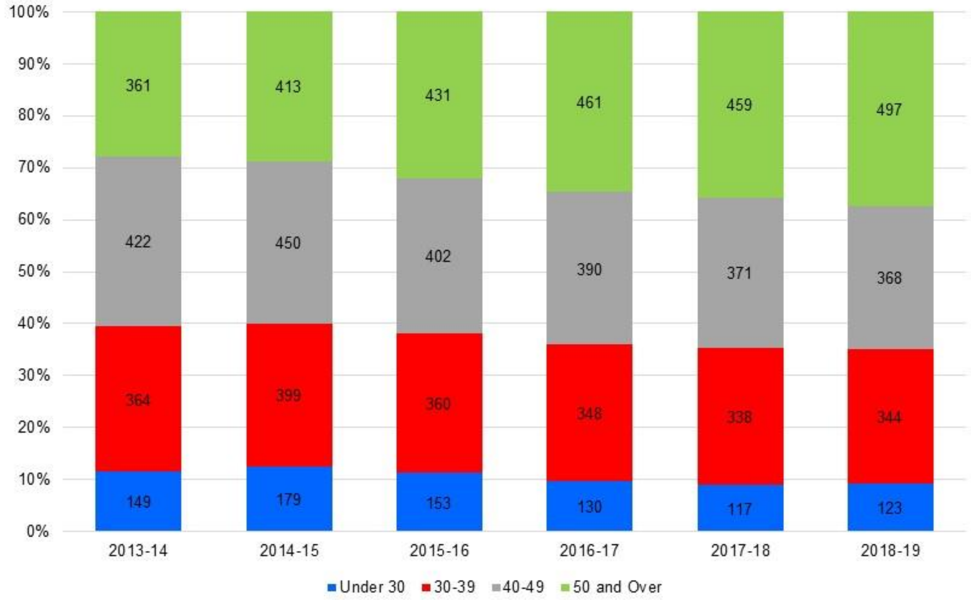
The PPF provides a breakdown by age band, presented in **Figure 3.2**. This adds further emphasis to the demographic data presented above (**Tables 3.4** and **3.5**).

Demographic challenges in the public sector planning authorities reflect those of the wider town planning sector. The workforce is ageing, with almost two out of every five (37%) employees aged 50 and over, and those aged 40-49 comprising the second largest group (28%).

In turn, the proportion of the workforce aged under 30 has decreased in the past five years, which suggests that there are less graduates and younger entrants moving into the public sector.

In absolute terms, assuming an average retirement age of 65 and no change in the overall demand for staff, there will be replacement demand for c. 500 planners within the public sector over the next 15 years. Many local authorities are therefore likely to experience some significant recruitment and succession planning challenges, both in terms of replacement demand for staff retiring or leaving the sector, and attracting new recruits into the sector.

Figure 3.2. Local/Planning Authority Staff Age Profiles



Source: Planning Performance Framework. Absolute numbers within columns.

3.4.3 Job Vacancies

Information on job vacancies (i.e. demand for planners) is available via Burning Glass Technologies, who provide analysis on job postings across employment sectors and occupations that are available on publicly accessible websites, however, this does not include internal vacancies.

Table 3.9 provides detail on the annual number of postings related to town planners and architectural and town planning technicians[35].

Table 3.9: Annual Job Postings

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*	4 year average (2016 – 2019)
Town planners	126	93	92	139	63	113
Architectural and Town Planning Technicians'	22	12	4	13	2	13

Source: Burning Glass Technologies, 2019

*Data available up to May 2020

While there has been some minor fluctuations, the four year average is 113 postings advertising positions/jobs related to town planners and a further 13 for technician roles.

At the time of this study, around 40 live vacancies for town planners/planning engineers in Scotland were found across online job search websites. A majority of these were in the private sector for senior and associate level positions, with many posted anonymously through recruitment agencies.

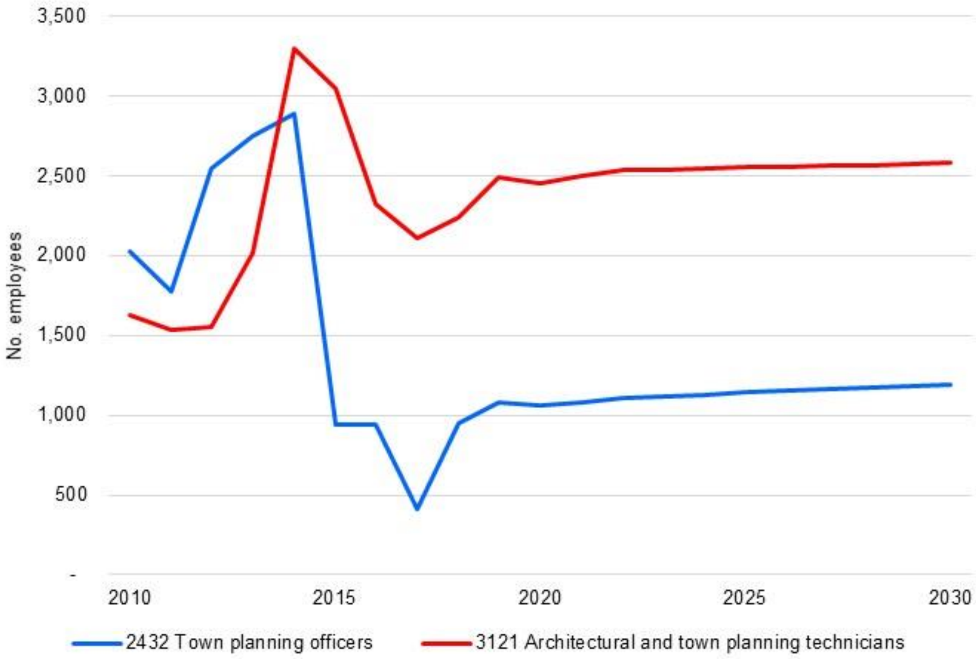
[35] 'Town Planning Officers' (SOC code 2432) and 'Architectural and Town Planning Technicians' (SOC code 3121).

A small number of vacancies were additionally found in local authorities (via the myjobScotland portal).

3.4.4 Employment Forecasts

The final section looks at the forecast performance of the sector and **Figure 3.3** shows workforce forecast data (based on 2020 data) for town planners and architectural and town planning technicians.

Figure 3.3. Employment Forecasts for Core and Secondary Group, 2010-based



Source: Oxford Economics, 2020, Skills Development Scotland

Note 1: Forecasts were prepared in April 2020 and consider Oxford Economics COVID-19 related assumptions at that point in time.

Note 2: Data is shared for the named project only, no secondary use is permitted.

While the forecast data will never be entirely accurate, the longer term trends are of value and interest.

Over the next 10 years (up to 2030) the sector is forecast to experience modest expansion demand growth for both town planners (130 / +11%) and architectural and town planning technicians (130 / +5%). This compares to a forecast of +3% growth in employment within the Scottish economy by 2029[36].

While the proportionate forecast growth of town planners will outstrip the wider economy, the absolute numbers are fairly small, growth of +11% represents c.130 additional town planners across all sectors (public, private, third).

[36] Skills Development Scotland, 2019 (these forecasts were prepared pre-Covid 19 pandemic)

3.5 Education, Skills and Training Provision

3.5.1 Available Course Provision

Currently, RTPI-accredited courses in urban or spatial planning are provided at Dundee, Glasgow, and Heriot-Watt Universities.

Most RTPI accredited courses offered are at postgraduate level while Dundee and Heriot-Watt also provide MA and BSc courses.

In addition, Aberdeen and Stirling Universities offer aligned postgraduate provision (surveying and environmental management) which includes an element of planning, while Glasgow Caledonian offers aligned undergraduate and postgraduate provision in environmental management and urban climate and sustainability. It should be noted that these courses are "planning-related", rather than focusing on core, spatial, planning, which is the focus of the fully accredited courses.

Table 3.10 and **3.11** shows that there are seven universities in Scotland offering 23 undergraduate/postgraduate planning or planning-related courses, of which 10 are RTPI accredited[37].

[37] Please note that planning courses have been identified and defined using the HESA principal subject definition: (A) Architecture, building and planning and subgroup (K4) Planning (urban, rural and regional).

Table 3.10: Undergraduate and Postgraduate Planning and Planning-Related Courses (2019/20) – RTPI Accredited

	Under Grad	Post-Grad	Duration (Years) / Mode of study (Full/Part time)
University of Dundee[38]			
Urban Planning	MA (Hons)		4 FT
Spatial Planning with Environmental Assessment		MSc	1 FT
Spatial Planning with Sustainable Urban Design		MSc	1 FT
Spatial Planning with Marine Spatial Planning		MSc	1 FT
Spatial Planning with Geographic Information Systems		MSc	1 FT
Spatial Planning with Urban Conservation		MSc	1 FT
Master of Architecture with Urban Planning		MArch	2 FT
University of Glasgow			
City Planning		MSc	1 FT / 2 PT
City Planning and Real Estate Development		MSc	1 FT / 2 PT
Heriot-Watt University			
Urban Planning and Property Development	BSc (Hons)		4 FT
Real Estate and Planning		MSc	1 FT / 2 PT
Urban and Regional Planning		MSc	1 FT / 2 PT

Source: RTPI, HESA, planning schools

Note: Some of the courses have dual accreditation with RTPI and RICS.

[38] The University of Dundee is also a member of the Joint Distance Learning Consortium, delivering the part-time distance learning MSc Urban and Rural Planning with Leeds Beckett and London South Bank Universities

Table 3.11: Undergraduate and Postgraduate Planning and Planning-Related Courses (2019/20) – Non Accredited

	Under Grad	Post-Grad	Duration (Years) / Mode of study (Full/Part time)
University of Dundee			
Geography and Planning	MA (Hons)		4 FT
University of Glasgow			
Spatial Planning		PGC	1 FT
Urban Analytics		MSc	1 FT / 2 PT
Urban Research		MSc	1 FT / 2 PT
Urban Studies		PGC	0.5 FT / 1 PT
Urban Transport		MSc	1 FT / 2 PT
Glasgow Caledonian University			
Environmental Management	BSc (Hons)		4 FT
Heriot-Watt University			
Geography, Society and Environment	BSc (Hons)		4 FT
Urban Strategies		MSc	1 FT / 2 PT
Sustainable Urban Management		MSc	1 FT / 2 PT
University of Stirling			
Environmental Management		MSc	1 FT / 2 PT

Source: RTPI, HESA, web searches

The most recent data shows that in 2018/19 across all planning courses (not just those that are RTPI-accredited), there were 370 undergraduates and 435 postgraduate students enrolled across Scottish universities (**Tables 3.12** and **3.13**).

Table 3.12: Undergraduate Students Enrolled in Planning and Planning-Related Courses (2014/15 – 2018/19)

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	Change	% Change
University of Aberdeen	5	0	0	0	0	-5	-100%
University of Dundee	25	30	30	30	40	15	60%
Glasgow Caledonian University	130	110	110	115	125	-5	-4%
Heriot-Watt University	110	130	160	195	205	95	86%
Total	**270**	**275**	**300**	**340**	**370**	**100**	**37%**

Source: HESA

Across the undergraduate provision, the largest student cohort is within Heriot-Watt which offers two planning courses: Geography, Society and Environment, and Urban Planning and Property Development. Since 2014, the intake of students at Heriot- Watt has almost doubled (95 / +86%) and is the main driver for the growth across Scottish universities which have seen growth of +37% since 2014/15.

Table 3.13: Postgraduate Students Enrolled in Planning and Planning-Related Courses (2014/15 – 2018/19)

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	Change	% Change
University of Aberdeen	15	15	20	15	15	0	0%
University of Dundee	40	25	20	10	25	-15	-38%
Glasgow Caledonian University	0	0	0	0	15	15	-
University of Glasgow	155	175	170	170	165	10	6%
Heriot-Watt University	110	135	115	135	135	25	23%
University of Stirling	90	110	95	85	80	-10	-11%
Total	**410**	**460**	**415**	**415**	**435**	**25**	**6%**

Source: HESA

Both Glasgow (seven courses) and Heriot-Watt (four courses) offer the greatest number of postgraduate teaching and account for over two-thirds (68%) of all postgraduate students.

The total number of postgraduates enrolled at Scottish universities has remained relatively static since 2014/15 (minor increase of +6%), although Dundee University has seen a decrease of -38% (equivalent to 15 students).

If we look at planning as part of the wider architecture, building and planning education provision, in 2018/19 planning students made up 8% of undergraduates and 22% of postgraduates.

3.5.2 Gender Breakdown of Students

Data on the gender breakdown shows that the split between male and female students is (broadly) balanced, with women comprising 43% of undergraduates (-2 percentage point decrease since 2014/15) and 56% of postgraduates (+4 percentage point increase since 2014/15).

Table 3.14. Gender Breakdown of Undergraduate Students Enrolled in Planning and Planning-Related Courses (2014/15 – 2018/19)

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
% male students	55%	54%	54%	57%	57%
% female students	45%	46%	46%	43%	43%

Source: HESA

Table 3.15. Gender Breakdown of Postgraduate Students Enrolled in Planning and Planning-Related Courses (2014/15 – 2018/19)

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
% male students	48%	48%	47%	46%	44%
% female students	52%	52%	53%	54%	56%

Source: HESA

This broadly reflects the proportionate split in the workforce and based on the available data, there does not appear to be any obvious gender-based constraints or challenges with representation, with a fairly even number of male and female students choosing to study planning at both undergraduate and postgraduate level.

3.5.3 Non-indigenous Student Base

While institution specific data is not available through HESA open data sets, we are able to get a sense of the scale of international/non-Scottish students enrolling in planning courses by comparing the proportion of Scottish-domiciled and non-Scottish domiciled students, see **Table 3.16** and **3.17**.

Table 3.16: Scottish and non-Scottish domiciled Undergraduate Students Enrolled in Planning and Planning-Related Courses (2014/15 – 2018/19)

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	Change	% Change
Scottish domiciled students	240	225	245	280	305	65	27%
% of total students	**89%**	**82%**	**82%**	**82%**	**82%**	**-**	**-**
Non-Scottish domiciled students	30	50	55	60	65	35	117%
% of total students	**11%**	**18%**	**18%**	**18%**	**18%**	**-**	**-**

Source: HESA

Table 3.17: Scottish and non-Scottish domiciled Postgraduate Students Enrolled in Planning and Planning-Related Courses (2014/15 – 2018/19)

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	Change	% Change
Scottish domiciled students	265	330	290	275	245	-20	-8%
% of total students	**65%**	**80%**	**71%**	**67%**	**60%**	**-**	**-**
Non-Scottish domiciled students	145	80	120	135	165	20	14%
% of total students	**35%**	**20%**	**29%**	**33%**	**40%**	**-**	-

Source: HESA

Overall, one in every five (18%) undergraduates and two out of every five (40%) postgraduates are not Scottish-domiciled (i.e. their primary residence is not in Scotland).

This represents an increase of +7 percentage points and +5 percentage points since 2014/15 across the undergraduate and postgraduate base, respectively. As identified in the consultation feedback, a large proportion of the overseas students come from outwith the EU, in particular China, the Middle East and Africa.

International students are a key driver of revenue for Scottish Universities and the number of foreign students has been growing (non-EU international student base grew by +9% since 2013/14 across all Scottish institutions), with many Scottish universities now having overseas campuses and strategic links with international institutions and industry bodies.

In addition, international students coming to Scotland to study also have a significant economic impact on the Scottish economy[39] and it is clear to see why there has been a trend to promote Scotland's universities on the global stage.

[39] The Impact of International Students in Scotland, Scottish Government, see here

That being said, the counter argument to this growing international student base is that a significant number return to their country of origin on completion of their studies, taking with them their experience, skills and learning. As the share of international/non-Scottish domiciled students' increases (with no absolute increase in the indigenous student base) this could constrain the future supply of graduates entering the sector.

As noted above, the Covid-19 pandemic will likely have some impact on the international student population, at least in the short term, with early indications that a notable proportion will defer their studies (estimated decrease of one-third across Scottish Universities which could lead to a funding deficit of c. £0.5billion in 2020/21[40]). Longer term, the yet unknown implications of Brexit may also impact the number of students studying in Scotland.

It is fair to say that currently there is significant uncertainty across the Scottish Higher Education sector and the planning schools and courses will not be immune to this.

3.5.4 Graduate Data and Destinations

Over the past five years there have been c. 300 to 400 per annum undergraduate and postgraduate students graduating annually from a Scottish university with a degree in planning, see **Table 3.18** and **3.19**.

In 2018/19 a total of 80 undergraduates and 305 postgraduates were awarded a degree, an increase of +7% and +33% since 2014/15, respectively.

Table 3.18: Undergraduates Qualifying in Planning and Planning-Related Courses (2014/15 – 2018/19)

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	Change	% Change
University of Aberdeen	5	0	0	0	0	-5	-100%
University of Dundee	10	10	5	5	15	5	50%
Glasgow Caledonian University	35	25	40	35	25	-10	-29%
Heriot-Watt University	25	25	30	30	40	15	60%
Total	**75**	**60**	**75**	**65**	**80**	**5**	**7%**

Source: HESA

[40] Universities Scotland, see here

Table 3.19: Postgraduates Qualifying in Planning and Planning-Related Courses (2014/15 – 2018/19)

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	Change	% Change
University of Aberdeen	10	10	10	10	15	5	50%
University of Dundee	20	25	15	15	10	-10	-50%
Glasgow Caledonian University*	0	0	0	0	0	0	-
University of Glasgow	95	65	175	175	190	95	100%
Heriot-Watt University	75	60	90	90	55	-20	-27%
University of Stirling	25	70	40	40	30	5	20%
University of Strathclyde	0	0	0	0	0	0	-
Total	**230**	**230**	**330**	**330**	**305**	**75**	**33%**

Source: HESA

*course only recently launched so no graduation data is available

Graduates within planning and the built environment have a high employment rate (one of the highest of any subjects[41]) and just over two-thirds of those that graduate from a Scottish University with a degree in Architecture, Building and Planning go into work in the UK (69%). A further 4% go overseas for work and 18% go on to further study or a combination of working/studying, see **Table 3.20**.

Table 3.20: Destinations of all Architecture, Building and Planning Graduates, Scotland (2012/13 – 2016/17)

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
UK work	66%	67%	69%	72%	69%
Overseas work	6%	4%	5%	4%	4%
Combination of work and further study	8%	7%	5%	4%	4%
Further study	14%	16%	14%	14%	14%
Total in work or further study	94%	94%	94%	93%	92%
Unemployed	4%	4%	4%	5%	6%
Other	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%
Total of known destination	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Unknown	335	290	355	390	410
Total	**1,335**	**1,230**	**1,245**	**1,320**	**1,320**

Source: HESA.

HESA also reports destinations of architecture, building and planning graduates by industry (based on Standard Industrial Classification data[42]), (**Table 3.21**).

[41] RTPI research of HESA data identifies that graduates have the 4th highest employment rate of any course

[42] Further data on SIC codes available here

As the data reports on all built environment degrees (architecture, building and planning), we are unable to separate out the specific destination of those who graduate from an RTPI-accredited or other planning aligned course. Nevertheless, there are four broad sectors that comprise the majority of destinations.

Table 3.21: Top Industry Destinations for Graduates in Architecture, Building and Planning

	Undergraduate	Postgraduates
Professional, scientific and technical activities	30%	43%
Construction	34%	6%
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	6%	13%
Real estate activities	5%	15%
Other sectors	25%	23%

Source: HESA

Note: ‘other sectors’ includes coverage across all other SIC defined sectors (ranging from 0% -5%)

Unsurprisingly, three of the top employing sectors are directly linked to the physical and built environment and ‘public administration and defence; compulsory social security’ relates to the public sector.

Using the employment data above (**Section 3.2)** we can make an assumption that the majority of graduates with planning specific degrees will go on to work for local government, however, this is reducing, as can be evidenced by the lower proportion of the public sector workforce aged under 30.

3.6 Key Messages

The relatively small size of the planning sector and its cross-cutting nature (presenting challenges with defining it) means that the availability and accuracy of data is variable. That being said, there are a number of key messages that we can both substantiate and surmise from the analysis of secondary data, considered below:

Workforce and Employment Trends

- the planning sector is fairly small - the workforce consists of around 1,600 employees across Scotland. There has been an estimated decline of -5% since 2014, mainly driven by a decline in local government;
- the public sector has been a key employer and destination for graduates for many years and accounts for 60% - 69% of employment, although the balance now seems to be shifting slightly as the impact of public sector efficiency measures and downward pressure on frontline service budgets takes effect. Central government and the private/third sectors are now playing an increasingly important role as a source of employment;
- the sector is forecast to grow up to 2030 (+11%), which is greater than the overall Scottish economy, however, the absolute numbers are modest - 130 additional town planners;
- the workforce is relatively gender balanced, with females making up around 40% of the workforce; and

- the sector/profession faces some significant short to medium term demographic challenges with an ageing workforce coupled with a lack of younger workers and graduates entering the sector.

Local Authority Profiles

- planning departments within the local authorities appear to be experiencing a challenging operating environment, with reducing budgets and headcount, increasing workloads and demographic/succession planning challenges;
- across the sector there is an estimated replacement demand of c. 500 planners over the next 15 years. In addition to the numbers that will need replaced through retirement, the majority of these will likely be senior and more experienced planners. This will potentially create a knowledge gap within the profession as this expertise and experience is lost (this will likely be most acutely felt within the public sector); and
- while employment in the public sector has been falling for a number of years (-22% since 2013/14) it is unlikely that planning departments will experience any further notable workforce decline or contraction without experiencing a significant knock on effect upon service delivery. There is a threshold (in terms of employment/headcount) below which the sector could not operate and consultation suggests that further budgetary reductions/cuts would have further negative impacts.

Education Skills and Training Provision

- looking at the supply side, while there are 23 courses across seven institutions (10 of which are RTPI-accredited) that offer planning related education, the total number of courses has decreased and the majority are postgraduate courses;
- while the number of students enrolling and graduating has shown positive growth (albeit from a small base), the number and proportion of international students has also increased. It is unclear whether this is as a result of decreasing demand from indigenous students, increasing demand from international students, or universities seeking to increase tuition fee income (it is likely a combination of these factors). Over the medium to longer term, a sustained reduction in the number of indigenous students qualifying/graduating could have significant negative impacts within the sector - increased competition to recruit from a shrinking pool of graduate talent; and
- planning graduates are highly employable, and this is an attractive selling point for the sector with nine in ten ending up in employment or further study six months after graduating. In addition to local government, the construction and real estate sectors are common destinations for graduates.

4. Stakeholder Engagement

4.1 Introduction

This Chapter sets out the main feedback, insights and findings from the consultations undertaken with strategic stakeholders. We completed 20 interviews with PiP Steering Group members and wider stakeholders:

- Heads of Planning and Service (Local Authorities) - four interviews;
- Scottish Government and NDPBs/key agencies - six interviews;
- commercial companies - four interviews;
- the RTPI - two interviews;
- PiP (Chair of the Board) - one interview;
- third sector - one interview; and
- Universities/planning schools - three interviews.

While in the main, the interviews sought feedback from organisations that operate in the 'demand side' i.e. those that need planners, we also gained valuable insights from three universities/planning schools that provide most of the undergraduate and postgraduate teaching. This has helped provide a more comprehensive view of the sector and wider landscape.

Further details on the organisations that participated are presented in **Appendix 2**.

A summary of the main discussion points and feedback are detailed below.

4.2 Current and Historic Demand for Planners

4.2.1 Current Demand

Overall, the "market" for planners is relatively small when compared with other built environment professionals such as architects or surveyors. However, it is important to note that small does not mean unimportant - all interviewees expressed the view that planners and the role of planners was crucial across built, natural and historic environments, and the wider contribution it makes to areas such as economic development, health/wellbeing and inclusion.

It was recognised that the demand for planners has varied across different sectors (local government, national government/key agencies and the private sector) although overall has been relatively static for a number of years, albeit with some interesting internal dynamics e.g. growth in some sectors and contraction in others.

Across local government, it was considered important to recognise that demand for planners should be viewed in the context of reducing public sector budgets, they are intrinsically linked and budgets have seen year-on-year decreases. This has understandably had a knock-on effect on both effective demand for planners and how that demand is met.

While the scale of demand has been declining, the scope of demand has remained fairly consistent across all grades/levels – team leader, senior planners, junior planner and graduates, with the 'middle tier' (e.g. team leader and senior planners with 10+ years' experience) in higher demand. This is a well-recognised challenge within the sector and the

RTPI are currently undertaking further research (independent of this study) for the UK as a whole as part of their '*Understanding the Future Planner Pipeline'* research work.

To illustrate, it was reported that it was becoming more common that job vacancies (as a result of promotion or replacement) are not being advertised (internally or externally) and that roles/positions are mothballed across existing teams.

It was noted that, although all councils have experienced a period of sustained budgetary reductions across various service departments, planning is one of the frontline services that has been hardest hit.

Within individual authorities where there has been an increase in demand for planners, this generally reflects the availability of funding and identified priorities. For example, City-Region deals, major transport infrastructure projects and the release of housing development land were noted as catalysts for an increased demand for planners in some local authorities.

Third sector organisations such as PAS which relies on volunteer time and support commented that their pool of qualified volunteer planners has contracted in recent years.

Conversely, within central government demand has increased within areas such as the Scottish Government's Planning and Environmental Appeals Division (DPEA) who have been relatively active in recruiting over the past five or so years (two recruitment exercises for reporter posts, c. eight posts).

This has been driven by a need to increase resources but also a desire to reduce the reliance on contractors and enhance the longer term sustainability of the service.

Within the private sector, as noted in the baseline review, it was reported that growth has mainly been driven by expansion demand within commercial firms – housing, masterplanning and transport infrastructure being the main catalysts. However, even where there was expansion demand in central government and the commercial sector, the absolute numbers were not large.

Across academia, as the number of bespoke courses declines and course provision becomes more generalised (universities are offering courses across the built environment with an option to specialise in planning in later years) the demand for specialist planning teaching staff has also declined.

4.2.2 Future Demand

Consultees found it difficult to predict the scope and scale of any future demand - this uncertainty will be amplified due to the Covid-19 pandemic with contraction predicted in the short-medium term. Beyond that, modest growth is expected to continue across the private sector in the short term which will be driven by demand in housing development and infrastructure investment.

Across local and central government it was noted that the statutory requirements/duties of the new Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 will increase the need/demand for resources (financial and staffing). The RTPI has estimated that the potential cost to the public sector to deliver these duties is £12m to £59m over the next 10 years[43].

Utilising employee co-efficient data for the planning sector available from the Scottish Annual Business Statistics (SABS)[44], this investment is equivalent to supporting 110 to 550 annual jobs.

It is also recognised that planning will have a role to play in helping deliver wider policy priorities such as achieving net zero emissions by 2045 (addressing the climate emergency) and inclusive economic growth, to name a couple (discussed further in **Section 4.4**).

4.2.3 Recruitment Challenges

Across local government, while vacancies have generally all been filled, most consultees identified that they have had issues in terms of the quantity and quality of candidates. Consultees provided recent examples of posts taking six+ months to fill and adopting a "grow your own" approach due to a lack of good quality external candidates.

Graduate recruitment is reported to be a mixed bag (both in terms of quantity and quality), the perception was that those local authorities in close proximity to the universities that offer courses were more likely to have a relationship and/or contacts and as result, have had greater success in recruiting straight from university.

Consultees reported some widespread challenges with recruiting at the middle management, team leader level (quality and quantity of candidates) - which generally requires both professional expertise and experience of working within a corporate/political environment.

A common view was that salaries are not a (significant) factor as senior planner and team leader posts in the public sector are generally well paid and competitive with the private sector.

Others simply reported that recruitment challenges were as a result of budgetary constraints, and that vacancies were not filled but rather mothballed between team members.

In the main, local authorities tended to recruit from one another – usually as a result of a relocation opportunity and/or a promoted post. It was recognised that this to some extent was contributing to the stagnating growth of the workforce.

Discussed further below at **Section 4.3.1**, awareness of career opportunities and challenges with the image and identity of planning were believed to be contributing to current recruitment challenges.

It should be noted that not all recruitment challenges were viewed as a function of the constraints on the supply. For example, some were location specific with some local authorities out with the city-regions facing greater pressures.

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43 Financial Implications of Implementing the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, see here.

44 SABS is available here. Employee co-efficient refers to the level of income required to support one planning job for a period of one year.

Again, there seems to be a clear divide between the experiences of local government and central government and the private sector. Central government have experienced no similar challenges and have reported significant oversubscription for advertised vacancies from a large pool of qualified candidates.

Similarly, the private sector consultees did not report many challenges, although it was mentioned that they are now recruiting more at the graduate level and providing relevant CPD, while historically they would have recruited directly from local government after planners' gained a few years' experience – this pool of mid-level planners has decreased significantly. This was a key issue as in the past the local authorities are seen as a "pool of talent" from which the commercial sector would look to recruit.

4.3 Skills Shortages

As noted in the introduction, there has been an increasing body of evidence that the planning sector is facing skills shortages – in the context of this research we mean having vacancies which has/will be difficult to fill because of a lack of a skilled or qualified person(s) to take the job (i.e. not enough people with a particular skill to meet demand).

Overall, the consensus from consultees was that the effective supply of planners was restricted/shrinking, whether it be new graduates, those currently operating in the sector or those transitioning into a new career.

The specific points of detail are discussed and considered below.

4.3.1 Awareness of Opportunities and Image of the Profession

One of the most significant issues raised (and one that seems to be growing in prominence/severity) was in relation to awareness of the opportunities in planning as a career, image, perception and understanding of the planning profession.

Consultees recognised and identified blockages and challenges at various stages of the pathway.

Awareness of Opportunities

Across the primary and secondary school curriculum, whilst there are natural linkages with spatial sciences such as geography, the main view was that planning does not seem to be part of the taught curriculum to any great extent and possibly gets "lost" in the crowd amongst other built environment professions.

In addition, consultees also felt that careers advice and advisers do not fully understand the planning sector and opportunities within it.

It was noted that, amongst younger people in particular, planning has a low profile and planners are seen mainly as technicians and not strategic thinkers, and viewed as an "old fashioned" career.

This is not to say that there has not been any attempt to get planning recognised in the taught curriculum. The RTPI has had some (limited) engagement with the Scottish Association of Geography Teachers and runs engagement activities such as the Future Planners Ambassador's programme. The programme relies on volunteers and advocates of the profession to give presentations and host Q&A sessions with school pupils and attend job fairs, etc. The RTPI has also invested in a number of primary and secondary school competitions and resources for teachers for the whole UK.

However, these activities, while valuable as a way to promote the sector, are more ad hoc in nature (built on personal relationships) and have not yet achieved the levels of interest and take-up to make any significant in-roads in terms of raising awareness.

It is worth highlighting that consultees had the view (one which is shared by EKOS) that any additional or new engagement activity targeted at the curriculum would require considerable additional resources (financial and staffing) and strategic co-ordination across a range of partners.

As the professional body for the planning sector, the RTPI should play a leading role in promoting and raising awareness of the sector.

It is worth highlighting that almost all occupations are seeking to sell themselves to schools, however, the planning sector is relatively small and therefore unlikely to receive the same degree of recognition as for example, other built environment professions.

Image of the Profession

One of the most significant issues raised was that, in recent years there has been somewhat of a blurring across the professions with architects providing master planning, engineers undertaking environmental impact assessments and surveyors leading planning teams. Planning therefore has lost part of its identity and become the "hidden profession" within the built environment.

Generally, there was a consensus across consultees that planning and the wider role of planning in relation to place-making lacks a compelling story and brand.

Quotes from consultees included:

> *"It is not clear what planners are or more importantly, what they do".*
>
> *"Planners are seen as the ones who can only say no to development and most interactions with the planning system are negative."*
>
> *"What is planning in the 21st century?"*

Direct comparisons were drawn with surveying, consultees noted that planning competes with the sector to attract talent (this has intensified since the introduction of university degree courses that have dual accreditation with the RTPI and RICS).

It was felt that RICS and surveying more generally had a stronger "brand", founded on a clearer identity of what the sector is and how it interacts with other sectors, better defined career pathways and higher earning potential.

Some of the challenges with the image of the sector are simply a (mis)perception of planning that could be addressed with a stronger and more compelling narrative.

However, consultees highlighted that there is also a deeper underlying issue and some of the negative press and perceptions, specifically within local government reflect the reality on the ground.

In a wider sense, it was noted that the reputation of local authorities has taken a bit of a hit recently and are increasingly viewed as unattractive working environments with limited career development and progression opportunities.

> There was a sense that the downward pressure on budgets and rationalising of roles has/is changing and narrowing the role of planning and planners – reducing the strategic nature of the service and scope to interact and support other service areas such as economic development and regeneration, and focused more rigidly on the core statutory duties/services (processing planning applications).

Consultees provided anecdotal evidence to support these views and noted that recently when the private sector and central government have advertised vacancies (as would be expected), the vast majority of applicants were from local authorities. What is interesting however, is that the vacant posts were significantly oversubscribed and many applicants were over qualified (applying for more junior posts), and if successful would have taken (quite notable in some instances) salary reductions.

This is more of a 'structural challenge' for the sector and an area where partners probably have limited scope to intervene. Nonetheless, its significance should not be overlooked, as local government remains the largest employer of planners.

4.3.2 Routes into the Profession

There is unanimous agreement that having multiple routes into the profession remains a positive aspect. The main routes are still fairly traditional and include:

- undergraduate degree in planning with RTPI Chartered Membership;
- undergraduate degree in non-planning + MSc in planning;
- post-graduate planning Masters with RTPI accreditation; and
- post-graduate in non-planning Masters with RTPI accreditation.

As noted, stakeholders tend to recruit from one another, but new entrants mainly enter the profession through obtaining an undergraduate degree.

While not a prerequisite for employment as a planner, both public and private sector employers have career grades aligned to obtaining Chartered membership of the RTPI and regard it as important element to maintaining the professional standards of the sector. Some employers have also adopted a 'grow your own' approach where technicians, etc receive on the job learning and development.

Gaining Chartered membership was historically quite a confusing landscape to navigate, however, the recent measures to simplify have been well received by the sector.

The Associate route in particular was identified as appropriate for those not undertaking an RTPI-accredited degree or those looking to transition into planning from an aligned sector.

Consultees were unsure on the numbers that have transitioned into the planning sector in later life, or how big the potential labour market pool was. However, opening up routes for those interested in a planning career that already had 'real world' experience of a professional working environment was considered a sensible approach.

Overall it was commented that given the low absolute number of planners working and coming into the sector, any approach to simplify and widen the routes to entry would be beneficial. In this sense, one of the priorities identified for the future supply side is to grow the absolute numbers of entrants, we return to this in **Chapter 5**.

Linkages with the Planning Schools

While the universities/planning schools were regarded as a fundamentally critical part of the profession's infrastructure, it was noted that the linkages and relationships between the universities/planning schools and employers was varied.

> Almost universally across consultees, the number and proportion of international students was seen as an increasing challenge for the sector.

While consultees from the demand side recognised that international students were an important driver of revenue for the universities, particularly in light of a potentially decreasing indigenous student base (the courses may not be financially sustainable in the absence of this revenue).

That being said, there were two fundamental issues raised by consultees:

- the majority of international students return to their country of origin upon completion of their studies – draining an already limited talent pool; and
- the teaching and learning environment may be diluted due to the increasing number of students where English is not their first language – planning courses are often project based which requires conceptualising, theorising and debating. There was a sense that this could limit the opportunity for discussion and debate, particularly at post graduate level where consultees confirmed that a large proportion of students were from oversees (outwith the EU).

It was noted that the relationship and linkages between local government and the planning schools has historically been stronger. In particular when the teaching provision was delivered as sandwich courses and students had a work placement -many students worked within local authorities and this was viewed as an appropriate "softer" entry into the sector and helped strengthen the linkages between the two. This in effect was considered similar to a "year-long job interview" which was beneficial to both student and employer and often helped retention rates.

Nowadays the relationship with the planning schools are more likely to be based on proximity to the university or a personal contact.

For instance, Dundee and Heriot- Watt Universities were considered to have relatively close links with their relevant local authority (e.g. undertake collaborative project work and organise training placements and summer schools).

Others have a more informal and less well defined relationship (if any) with the planning schools.

Again, it was noted that there is a question of resources – and while consultees were supportive and recognised the potential benefits of more formal and established relationships with the planning schools – there was recognition that it would take time and effort to build and maintain these relationships, and that this was currently not viewed as a top priority by either the planning schools or local government.

Consultees from the demand side (employers) recognised that they probably do not fully understand how the university sector operates and that they need to take more responsibility for ensuring proactive engagement.

This could include helping to develop the curriculum, as the universities traditionally have been more reactive to changes in the sector/profession (e.g. legislation, Planning (Scotland) Act, climate change, etc).

In contrast, the private sector generally have a better relationship with the planning schools, presenting at lectures to provide practitioner perspective/experience, project work and promotion at jobs/careers fairs. To some extent it was felt that, in addition to more defined career progression and pathways, these established links have helped enable the private sector to “cherry pick” the best graduates. Along with the low retention rates of international graduates, this further adds to the talent drain experienced by local authorities.

The private sector developing stronger links with the planning schools is part of the evolution and diversification in recent years from the more traditional graduate destinations and career pathways. It was noted by a number of consultees that at one point in time it was almost a prerequisite for young planners and graduates to “cut their teeth” within a local authority for a few years to help better understand the internal processes, technical elements such as public inquiries, decision making, etc before moving on to the private sector.

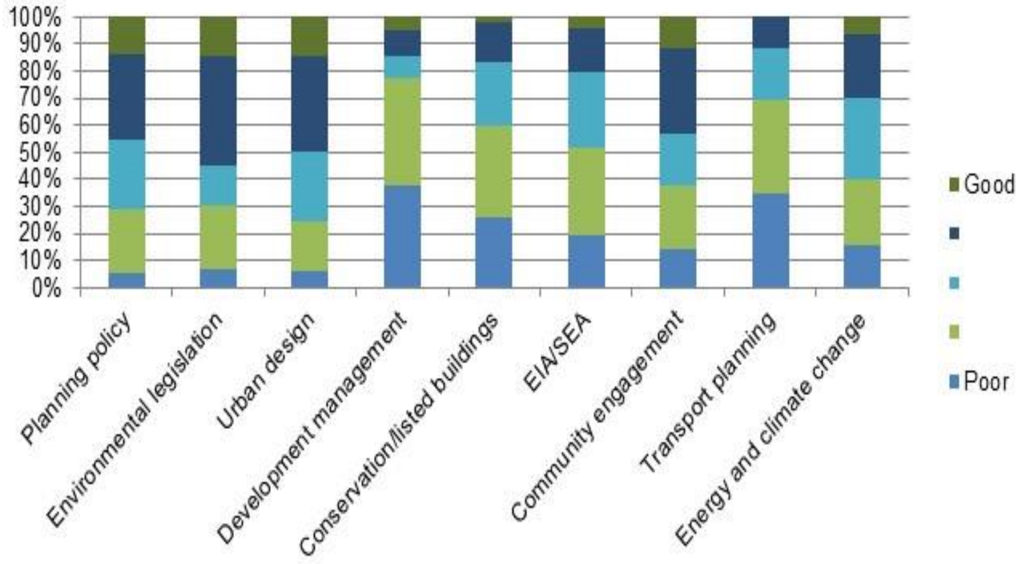
Now, however, there is reported to be a greater flow of graduates moving directly into the private sector.

Accredited and Non-Accredited Planning Course Provision

Following on from the points noted above regarding the influx of international students in planning courses, dual accreditation and blended courses, there was a concern that a gradual shift to homogenisation of planning courses has meant that graduates are not always leaving university with skills and learning that is specific to the Scottish context (recognising that the Scottish planning system is unique and there are significant difference even with the English system).

A survey of 105 planners (in employment or studying) undertaken by HOPS and the SYPN (2019) identified areas where respondents felt that their degree had a “useful” application/utility and areas that could be strengthened.

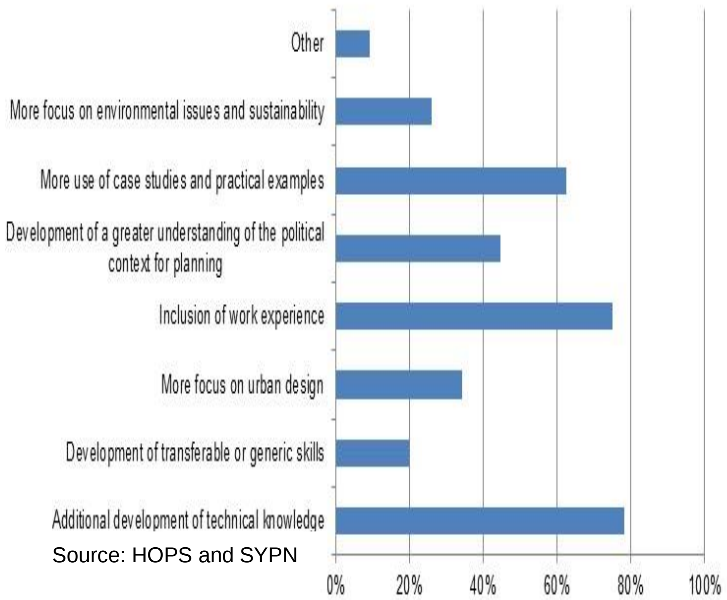
Figure 4.1: Usefulness of Qualification (Graduates)



Source: HOPS and SYPN Survey

Of note, three quarters of respondents rated the taught provision in relation to 'development management' (a key area of the planning system) as poor.

Figure 4.2: Areas where the qualification could be improved



Source: HOPS and SYPN

Opportunities to access work experience and support to develop technical knowledge were identified by 75% - 80% as areas that could be improved.

The survey findings resonate with the feedback from consultees who noted that planning was a discipline that aligned well with education models that included work based training, see below.

Apprenticeship and Work Based / Vocational Training Model

Specifically through the research we asked consultees for their feedback on developing an Apprenticeship or similar work based / vocational training programme as an approach to attract and drive more talent into the labour market. A similar approach has recently been launched in England with good success.

There was universal interest in, and support for, the Apprenticeship/vocational training programme route as a future source of talent, indeed some of the private sector consultees who had operations in England were already using this model to grow their workforce.

In line with the feedback regarding opening the routes into the sector and stimulating the pipeline at all stages, the potential to enter the profession from either school or with a Further Education qualification and to obtain a degree and professional qualification through the Apprenticeship/ vocational training programme route was seen as a potentially appealing option.

Consultees highlighted a number of potential benefits, including:

- helping to target those from different demographics and backgrounds, for example, younger people where there is an increasing desire to achieve a work, life and academic balance;
- the postgraduate route in particular can be expensive and cause students to get into debt. An Apprenticeship/ vocational training programme allows staff to earn a salary as they study, potentially making it a more attractive option;
- planning as a discipline lends itself well to an approach that combines theory and classroom-based learning with on-the-job and real world experience – much of the training undertaken by planners is undertaken in-house; and
- providing a “softer” entry into the sector that allows students to gain experience in different areas, departments, disciplines, etc. In a sense this is similar to the sandwich courses that were previously available.

It was highlighted that, from a practical perspective any Apprenticeship model or vocational training programme would require a distance learning element to ensure it was inclusive and accessible.

We return to this in the conclusions (**Chapter 5**).

4.4 Skills Gaps – Upskilling and Reskilling

In addition to skill challenges, the consultations had a focus on understanding the skills gaps faced by employers. In the context of this research, skills gaps refers to the level of skills within the existing workforce is less than required to perform a job adequately or to match the requirements of a job.

There were a number of areas highlighted that have been, or are likely to require training or support in the future:

- core planning, technical or knowledge skills; and
- soft or employability skills (e.g. team working and communication).

4.4.1 Core Planning, Technical and Knowledge Skills

The main view is that the planning schools work reasonably well and produce graduates/post graduates with required levels of technical knowledge and understanding. While not necessarily "fully work ready” (as noted above) the majority complete their studies with a good base for development. The RTPI has also developed a set of learning outcomes to inform course provision and is currently undertaking a review of professional planning education, curricula and required learning outcomes on behalf of the planning courses advisory group. It is anticipated that this report will feed into the wider research.

That being said, it was noted that the taught provision tends to be more reactive to changes within the planning system (for example the new Planning (Scotland) Act) and a couple of consultees highlighted the importance of having chartered members within the core teaching group within the planning schools (a requirement of the RTPI's effective Planning School criteria).

Areas where consultees felt there were gaps (within their organisation and across the sector more generally), included:

- principles of good design;
- development finance and viability of proposed developments; and
- how planning "fits" with other services (e.g. Community Planning, economic development) and particularly its role in place-making and contributing to wellbeing (e.g. health, quality of life).

One of the big challenges for local authorities specifically, is that due to budget reductions many can no longer afford to employ "specialists" in certain areas such as conservation or commercial development - planners therefore need to be flexible/adaptable with a broad range of skills and expertise. However, given the wide range of activities and duties covered by planning, it is not surprising to see that there are some skills gaps.

This leads to a broader issue across the profession that was noted by a number of consultees, and that was confidence in decision-making and the potential impact this was having on service delivery.

Whilst we cannot say with any certainty the reasons or drivers for this (of which there are likely to be many), nonetheless, it would be reasonable to suggest that this has in part been driven by skills challenges (i.e. reduced resources) and skills gaps (understanding and confidence in implementing decisions).

4.4.2 Employability Skills

The issues around soft or employability skills can more be likened to skills in planning professionals (more general skills), as opposed to planning skills (which are specific to the discipline/profession). The soft or business skills is a more interesting area and it was recognised by those consulted that planning is not a purely technical discipline and planners need a wide range of other "skills" to ensure they are well rounded, such as:

- project management;
- conflict resolution;
- team working;
- operating in a corporate/political environment; and
- critical, creative and strategic thinking.

Consultees noted that it is not clear at what level (if at all) these are "taught" in Higher Education or in employment (we would note that some of these skills are covered within the RTPI learning outcomes). These skills are generally gained through experience and within local authorities and private firms where that “middle tier” of planners is missing, the challenges appear more pronounced.

4.4.3 Future Skills Gaps and Training Support Needs

There were three main areas identified where all stakeholders will need to play a role in addressing skills needs/gaps.

Implementing the new Planning (Scotland) Act

The majority of consultees reported that the Planning (Scotland) Act does not necessarily introduce anything “new” in terms of the skills and experience required by planners. The biggest issue was simply requiring a greater level of resources to implement the duties of the Act.

Nonetheless, there was one area that was noted by numerous consultees where there is a potential gap or weakness and this was in relation to (community) consultation. The new Act places significant emphasis on engagement (including with seldom heard groups) and providing evidence as to the scale, depth and coverage of engagement.

It was acknowledged that (across Scotland) the level of engagement and community consultation has been variable in developing strategic plans or consulting on major applications. This is therefore an area where further support and training may be required, and it was noted that lessons can be learned from Community Planning Partners who are well versed in community consultation and engagement.

Climate Change

The Scottish Government has declared a climate emergency and (outwith the current COVID-19 pandemic) is the number one policy priority for the administration.

> All consultees acknowledged that planning has an important role to help deliver the objectives with regards to achieving net zero emissions through implementing climate adaptation and mitigation measures.

However, at this stage consultees are somewhat unclear as to what that role is. It was highlighted that the upcoming NPF4 should provide further clarity and detail on the specific role of planning and how the sector is expected to contribute.

Some areas which could be under the ownership of planning and be part of the solution to addressing climate change, include:

- renewables energy development and energy storage;
- hydrogen transport, heating and industrial processes;
- district heating networks;
- flooding and flood mitigation;
- active travel and green networks; and
- sustainable buildings and design.

Digital Transformation

As part of the programme to modernise and make planning more inclusive and efficient, the Scottish Government has/is introducing the eDevelopment.scot service and is exploring other avenues to introduce data and technology.

Again, this is a fast evolving landscape and the specific implications for the planning sector are not mapped out in any detail as yet[45].

That being said, one of the potential areas for development is utilising technology to support digital driven data services (real time data, crowd sourced data, big data and ‘internet of things’) to inform the planning system. This has potential to go beyond the Geographic Information Science (GIS) systems used within urban design which is focused solely on spatial dimensions and landscapes.

The potential training implications of these developments mean that not only will planners need access to the ICT infrastructure and software required to gather and code this data, but also the analytical skills to analyse, interpret and make sense of it.

4.5 Training and Addressing Skills Gaps

4.5.1 CPD Activity

All consultees reported that CPD continues to be an important facet of the profession and that generally there are sufficient available courses, events and other activities to allow individuals to fulfil their CPD requirements.

It was commented that there is a “lifelong learning” element to working within planning due to the evolving nature of the sector, with employers encouraging and supporting staff.

There was a mix of sources with some of the larger private sector organisations providing in-house CPD support, structured training and mentoring programmes, while others supported their staff to access external support.

Particular mention was made of the RTPI and its provision of events and courses as being of major importance, as was the in-house training and webinars provided by the Improvement Service. The latter in particular was noted as being very popular as the web-based provision is considered accessible and responsive to the needs of the local authorities (who make enquiries and requests for support).

It was noted that the ways in which training is delivered is changing. Training budgets have reduced, and there are less day release options (which are generally more expensive) and more ad-hoc internal training (e.g. over lunch) or web-based (such as the Improvement Service webinars).

The planning schools do not appear to engage in or provide CPD to any great extent (if at all).

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[45] Digital Strategy for Planning was due to be launched in June 2020, see here.

4.6 Future Demand and Opportunities

Although challenging to quantify, the view was that there will be an increase in demand for planners in the longer term. The key drivers for this will be the need for professional planners to support key political, economic and social drivers, including:

- UK and Scottish Government commitment to funding new infrastructure;
- commitment to provide 50,000 additional affordable homes in Scotland;
- delivery of the recent and to be announced Growth Deals;
- addressing the climate emergency and other policy priorities;
- implementing the Planning (Scotland) Act; and
- supporting the post-COVID-19 crisis.

Consultees highlighted that there is a role and opportunity for the planning schools to help meet this demand i.e. more interest in undergraduate/postgraduate courses and Chartered membership if there are emerging employment opportunities. While the capacity of the planning schools may have decreased in recent years, they believe that they would have the ability to respond to future demand on the basis of full funding.

However, much of this will depend on resource availability, for example while there may be demand for more planners in Local Government, if the financial resources are not made available then this is not “effective demand”.

Consultees highlighted there were some “green shoots” starting to appear that had cause for some optimism: with place and place-making higher on the national policy agenda with the development of a number of place centric initiatives such as: the Place Principle[46], Scotland’s Centre for Regional Inclusive Growth (SCRIG)[47], and Planning for Place[48].

In addition, NPF4 is highlighted within the Programme for Government[49] as a key enabler of sustainable development and achieving net zero emissions.

This is likely to be different in the commercial sector where new contract opportunities will be the main driver of demand, and in the short term at least the pipeline of new opportunities is buoyant.

4.6.1 Replacement Demand

Finally, it is also the case that there will be replacement demand as the current workforce retires or leaves the profession.

The consultations confirm the analysis presented in **Chapter 3**, namely that the planning sector faces some significant demographic challenges with an ageing workforce and a restricted throughput of new and younger talent coming through.

While consultees recognised and acknowledged these demographic challenges, to date there appears to be little in the way of succession planning as priorities tend to focus on the day to day and statutory function of planning. This led some consultees to note that it

[46] Place Principle, see here
[47] SCRIG, see here
[48] Planning for Place, see here
[49] Protecting Scotland's Future: the Government's Programme for Scotland 2019-2020, see here

appears many local authorities and other organisations with a planning function are walking into this “blind” with no future planning or allocation of resources.

5. Conclusions and Strategic Action Framework

5.1 Conclusions

Overall, there are some clear and consistent messages emerging from the desk research and consultations that by-in-large support the wider views held by the sector with regards to the current and future skills gaps and challenges.

Below we summarise the main challenges, looking at both perspectives - education, training and skills (supply) and workforce (demand).

5.1.1 Education, Skills and Training Provision (Supply Side) Challenges

The research has shown that challenges exist at every stage along the supply pipeline: from the image/brand of planning; awareness and understanding of the potential career opportunities (particularly among young people); the availability of university level teaching provision and throughput of indigenous students; and increased competition for talent and diversification of graduate destinations and career choices.

The universal feedback is that the planning sector is having somewhat of an “identity crisis” with regards to its role within the wider built environment and contribution to place-making – planning to some extent has been lost or crowded out of the conversation. It is unclear (to those outside of the sector) on what planning is, what planners do, and the wider important role of planning and planners in place-making.

It is, however, worth noting that this “identify crisis” specifically relates to those outside or on the fringes of the profession, rather than those operating inside. In fact, consultees had a good understanding and were enthusiastic and passionate as to the wider role and importance of the sector.

It is the view of the sector that this (in part) originates within the taught curriculum and careers information, advice and guidance services where there is a narrow perception of what planning is and therefore career opportunities are not being represented or promoted effectively.

There is a static talent pool of indigenous graduates coming through the traditional planning school route. Partially, this reflects an ongoing need among Scottish universities to increase fee income (e.g. from international students) and ensure that courses are financially sustainable and viable. However, a lack of demand for places from the Scottish/indigenous student base may also be driving this shift.

The knock-on effect is a declining pool of new entrants to the sector (the data shows a year-on-year decline in those aged under 30 which would strongly suggest a lack of new graduate/entrants into the sector).

Planning graduates retain a high rate of employment, however over the past 10 or so years there have been changes within the dynamics of the labour market with the public sector no longer the only/primary route into the sector.

While the data does not provide sufficient granular detail to identify any obvious trends, feedback through the consultations suggest that there is now greater competition from the private sector, aligned built environment sectors, and other sectors where planning skills can be applied such as building standards and project management.

Specifically the research considered the interest and possible demand for a planning Apprenticeship or similar work based/vocational training programme.

> There was widespread support for a planning Apprenticeship or similar work based/vocational training programme as an approach to increasing the routes into the sector while maintaining the professional standards and competencies set by the RTPI.

Not only could this open up the sector to a broader demographic of the population, it could also help improve the branding/image of the profession.

Planning is a discipline that lends itself well to the Apprenticeship vocational training model that comprises blended learning. Data from the first year's cohort in England shows strong demand.

As considered below, although Scotland and England have a notably different Apprenticeship model, there will be lessons that can be learned from the design and early implementation of the planning Apprenticeship model down south.

5.1.2 Workforce (Demand Side) Challenges

While changes to the supply side are undoubtedly having an impact we must also take cognisance of the challenges within the workforce and demand side. The public sector remains the largest employer of planners in Scotland and is an integral part of the sector.

> Wider challenges within the public sector in relation to decreasing budgets and implementing efficiency saving measures within frontline services is having a profound impact on the planning sector.

Specifically this includes: significant reductions in the workforce (-22% since 2013/14), narrowing the scope and role of planning/planners - moving away from the more strategic elements to focus on the statutory duties such as processing applications, increasing workload (through mothballing and amalgamating of positions/roles) and limited career progression opportunities.

In addition, the sector faces some notable demographic challenges related to an ageing workforce. The proportion of planning professionals aged 50+ ranges from 40% to 50% (depending on the sourced of data – APS, PPF, RTPI). As the biggest employer of planners, the local authorities' age profile data identifies that two in every five planners is aged 50+.

The obvious implications from this is the need to replace staff over the short to medium term (replacement demand for retired or those that have exited the sector), however, we also need to consider the experience and expertise that is/will be lost from the sector. Feedback identifies that across senior and team leader level positions specifically there have been challenges to fill vacancies.

In addition to meeting this replacement demand, the employment forecast data estimates there will be a corresponding need for "expansion demand". Across the town planners and technicians, this equates to an estimated 260 additional jobs by 2030 (c. 30 per annum).

As an important public service there is an ongoing need for training and skills development, and the planning sector (as a whole) needs to be proactively engaged in order to identify how the training and skills needs of the sector can be best met.

This includes encouraging and supporting greater levels of engagement and interaction between planning schools and employers to ensure the pipeline of graduate talent have the required skills and knowledge (technical and softer skills) and support retention within the sector.

5.1.3 Impacts and Implications of Inaction

The implications and potential impact of inaction that could arise as a result of failing to address these skills challenges and gaps need to be considered at both the micro and macroeconomic level.

At the micro level the impacts will be felt most acutely within the public sector over the short to medium term where challenges with recruitment and attracting new entrants into the sector could impact upon service delivery.

This is both in terms of failing to meet their statutory duties but also the impact of reduced resources/capacity on the quality of service provided (e.g. delays in processing applications, reduced income from planning fees and tax base and the potential costs of having to participate and respond to appeals, etc).

The longer term macro level effects of inaction are considerably harder to understand and qualify. That being said, given the important strategic role of planning (which may become more prominent to help support economic recovery and restructure in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic), failure to address skills challenges and gaps could negatively impact upon the sector's ability to support delivery of a range of national policy priorities, including achieving net zero emissions by 2045 and new housing targets (affordable and socially rented accommodation).

Adopting a wider perspective, if we consider the National Performance Framework[50], planning has both a direct and indirect role (to a greater or lesser extent) in supporting the delivery of all 11 National Outcomes, and would note specifically its contribution towards:

- communities - communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe;
- economy - we have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive and sustainable economy;
- environment - we value, enjoy, protect and enhance our environment;
- health - we are healthy and active; and
- poverty - we tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally.

[50] National Performance Framework, see here.

In this broadest sense having a strong, resilient and sustainable planning sector and system is important.

5.2 Strategic Action Framework

The aim of this Strategic Action Framework is to support PiP (as the lead body) co-ordinate an effective response amongst key partners and stakeholders to help address current (and future) skills gaps and challenges.

Our research has identified two core challenges/issues that require collective and collaborative action.

The Challenges

1. Meeting demand for replacement and new entrants into the sector

Evidence identifies that over the next 10 - 15 years the planning sector will have demand for an additional 680 - 730 entrants into the sector (comprised of 550 - 600 replacement demand and 130 expansion demand).

The research has shown that challenges exist at every stage along the supply pipeline: from the image/brand of planning; awareness and understanding of the potential career opportunities (particularly among young people); the availability of university level teaching provision and throughput of indigenous students; and increased competition for talent and diversification of graduate destinations and career choices.

This has led to increased competition for graduates, decreasing graduate retention rates (non-indigenous students leaving Scotland upon completion of their studies), difficulties recruiting for vacant posts (across all grades/levels and specifically within local government) and demographic challenges within the workforce (an ageing workforce due to a lack of new talent entering the sector).

Given these factors, the evidence and data suggests that the sector may struggle in the future to attract and retain a sustainable workforce.

2. Ensuring that the workforce has the skills and experience required to deliver policy priorities

The data shows that many experienced planners will exit the sector over the medium term, and it is important to note that this is not just people leaving the sector but a significant amount of experience and understanding of the wider role, relevance and importance of planning as a professional discipline.

In addition to delivering essential statutory services, planners and the planning sector have an increasingly important role to play in supporting Scottish Government and partners deliver a wide range of evolving place, economic development and sustainable development policy priorities.

Partners need to be proactive in ensuring that those operating in the sector and the next generation of planners have access to appropriate levels of resources and training/development support to respond effectively to these emerging priorities.

It is therefore vital that partners commit resources and implement actions to ensure that the planning sector can support the development of a sustainable pipeline of talent to meet the demand of employers, and those operating in the sector have the skills and experience to deliver a sustainable planning service and respond to Scottish Government policy prioritises.

Figure 5.1 (over) sets out the Strategic Action Framework – outlining the main aims/objectives and strategic themes for intervention.

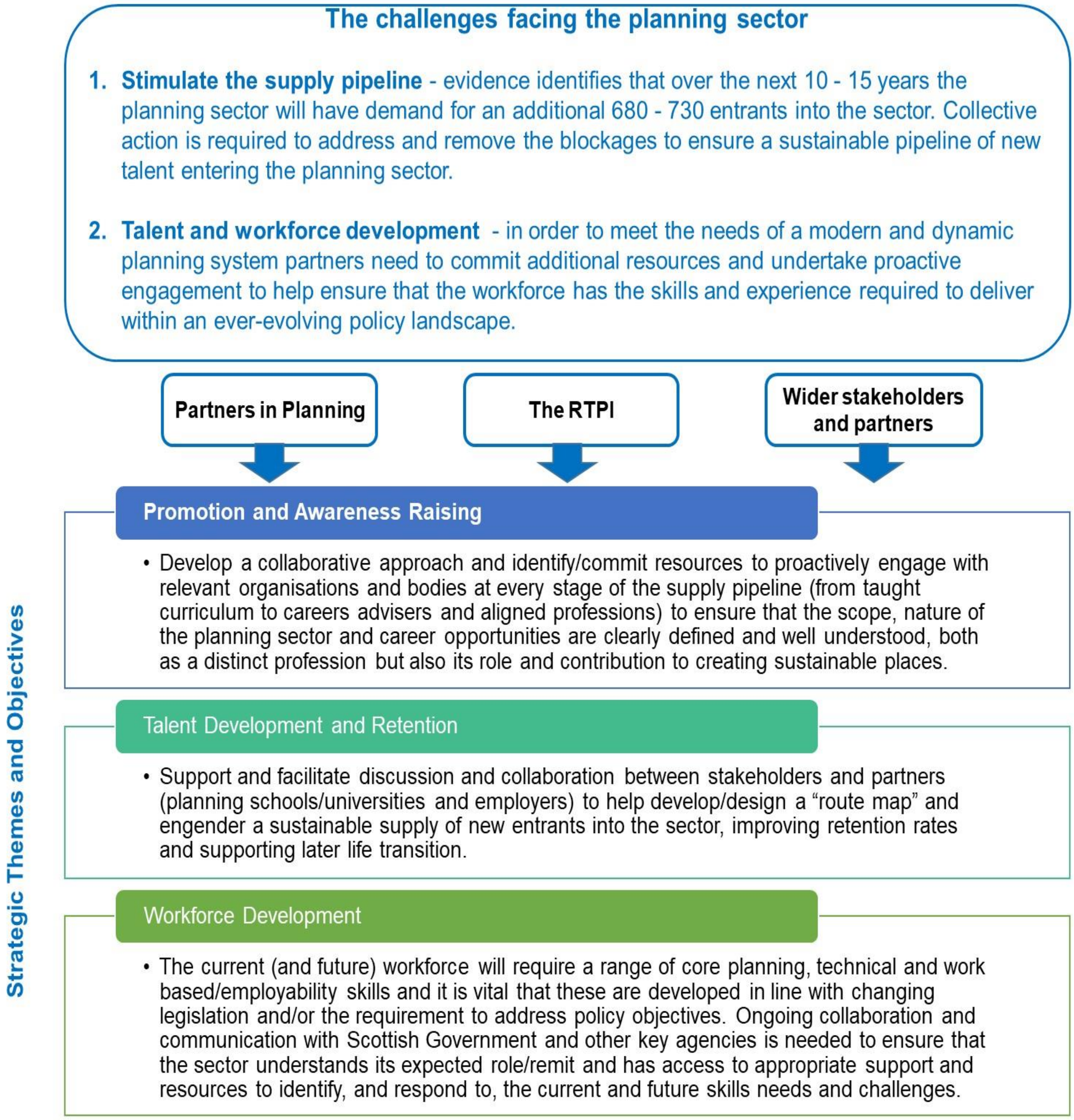

Figure 5.1: Strategic Action Framework

5.3 Key Actions

The key priority action areas have been presented under the three Strategic themes.

5.3.1 Strategic Theme 1: Promotion and Awareness Raising

Objective

Develop a collaborative approach and identify/commit resources to proactively engage with relevant organisations and bodies at every stage of the supply pipeline (from taught curriculum to careers advisers and aligned professions) to ensure that the scope, nature of the planning sector and career opportunities are clearly defined and well understood, both as a distinct profession but also its role and contribution to creating sustainable places.

Inputs - Strategic Lead and Resources

The promotion and awareness raising actions should be led by the RTPI with support provided by PiP, HOPS and Scottish Government. The additional engagement and advocacy activity will require partners to leverage and/or commit additional resources to support these actions.

Activities and Actions

Priority Action S1 (1): One of the immediate/early key actions is to review and understand the external perception and image/brand of the wider planning sector amongst key stakeholders within the pipeline for example, young people, education providers, careers advisers and students within the planning schools/universities. This should be undertaken as part of the RTPI's *Understanding the Future Planner Pipeline* research programme and education review next year.

Once the specific challenges are better understood the sector should seek to develop a promotional campaign/intervention to publicise/advocate a stronger, more compelling and distinct message and narrative for the sector.

Action S1 (2): The planning sector should investigate opportunities to collaborate and work on targeted promotional campaigns with other sectors, groups and firms in aligned professions within the built environment/place (including professional bodies such as the RICS and Royal Institute of British Architects and wider stakeholders).

The activities within this are two-fold. First, there is a need to increase the total potential labour pool for the planning sector (i.e. increase the total number of people that may consider planning as a career).

One potential approach is to collaborate as part of a more expansive mechanism/vehicle and identity project champions (for each discipline/profession) to promote/rebrand the wider built environment sector. As an example, the Built Environment Forum Scotland (BEFS) is an umbrella body for organisations within the built environment sector and may be an appropriate starting point.

Given the current standing that 'place' has within the national policy environment (for example, development of a new Place Standard (2) and Town Centre toolkit, adoption of the 'place principle' and creation of a Scottish Government place portal) it is suggested that this could be an appropriate "hook" to promote the sectors.

Secondly, within this, it is important that any campaign or promotion (as noted in **Action 1**) ensures that the planning sector retains a clear and distinct identity/brand within 'place' and highlights the broad spectrum of career opportunities.

Action S1 (3): A specific action to stimulate the supply pipeline of new talent is to engage further with the curriculum (focus on secondary education) and careers advisers.

This requires a top-down approach that engages with strategic partners such as: SDS Careers Information, Advice and Guidance Service (for example more promotion within the My World of Work website), the Scottish Association of Geography Teachers, etc.

Where feasible and appropriate, partners should seek to utilise existing and established programmes such as the RTPI Future Planners' initiative to promote planning and the career opportunities it offers. The RTPI are already fairly active in this area (including, Ambassadors Programme, Agent Plan-It/Fun Kids Radio, Place Makers classroom resource; lesson plans). It is recommended that partners consider opportunities to leverage and commit additional resources (funding and staffing) to scale-up and support these activities to ensure they are appropriately targeted at young people through websites, social media strategies, and apps, etc.

We would however caution that in order for any campaign/intervention to be successful, there has to be (evidenced) demand from employers and job opportunities within the sector.

Action S1 (4): Continue to engage with Scottish Government through forums such as PiP and HOPS to ensure planning is part of the national discussion. Specifically, there is currently an opportunity to enhance the standing of the planning sector and build on the heightened recognition generated through the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, the upcoming publication of NPF4, and the role of planning in contributing to key policy priorities such as the climate emergency and inclusive growth.

Outcome

The "brand", image and reputation of the planning sector is enhanced/improved amongst a wide range of key actors (individuals, aligned professions, careers advisers and taught curriculum) which helps to stimulate interest in, and support a strong pipeline of new talent considering opportunities within the sector.

5.3.2 Strategic Theme 2: Talent Development and Retention

Objective

Support and facilitate discussion and collaboration between stakeholders and partners (planning schools/universities and employers) to help develop/design a "route map" and engender a sustainable supply of new entrants into the sector, improving retention rates and supporting later life transition. The actions under this theme have been designed to address the main drivers of skills shortages and blockages within the supply pipeline.

Inputs - Strategic Lead and Resources

The talent development and retention actions will be led by PiP and the RTPI to review the development of additional work based/vocational training opportunities. The RTPI is undertaking a review of its education policy in 2021 and it is recommended that these actions could/should be incorporated within this.

HOPS and the planning schools/universities will lead on developing approaches to establishing closer strategic linkages.

Activities and Actions

Priority Action S2 (1): As noted, the increase in the international students and stagnation within the Scottish student base could have longer term implications on the supply of talent into the sector over the medium to longer term.

The sector needs to adopt a more strategic approach to stimulate the supply of new talent, and this needs to happen at all stages of the pipeline. As the institutions responsible for delivering (RTPI accredited and non-accredited) planning courses, the planning schools/universities have an important role to play. There will be limited impact from developing promotional campaigns targeted at secondary school children if there are few opportunities for further study.

Part of the shake-out from the Covid-19 pandemic is likely to be a decline in international students coming to Scotland in the short term at least as students defer their studies (this also includes students from other parts of the UK with the number of English students studying at Scottish universities likely to be capped[51]).

As a result, the universities will likely look to Scottish students to fill these “gaps”. This could therefore be an opportunity for the planning schools/universities to develop a collaborate approach (with other institutions and secondary schools) to encourage and “recruit” students onto (accredited and non-accredited) planning courses.

Priority Action S2 (2): There is emerging support for the development of some form of vocational/work based learning programme or Apprenticeship scheme to support talent attraction and development within the planning sector.

We would note that the absolute numbers coming through new routes are likely to be relatively small given the size of the sector in Scotland. Therefore, over the short – medium term it may be more cost-effective and prudent to adapt and enhance existing provision (such as a vocational training or education programme), rather than develop a new tailored solution.

PiP and the RTPI have a leading role to play working with Higher and Further Education and other appropriate bodies in undertaking further research and appraisal to test the feasibility and appetite for developing a pre-degree or step-up course targeted at planners and technicians (research is already underway on this). This includes understanding the: level of interest and demand (both from students and employers), set-up costs, and potential education/training providers.

Action S2 (3): In order to ensure an ‘effective’ supply of talent into the planning sector there is a need to strengthen the linkages, relationships and lines of communication between the planning schools/universities (as the key suppliers of graduates) and local government (as the key employers of graduates).

From the employers’ side, they should be more engaged to ensure that the planning schools/universities are aware of the training/work experience, employment and career opportunities they can offer students/graduates.

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[51] Universities Scotland, see here

From the planning schools/universities perspective, they need to be aware of the changing skills needs/demand/challenges faced by the sector to ensure that course provision is tailored/aligned and that graduates have the relevant and appropriate skills to operate in local government and other sectors.

This action links with, and supports **Priority Action S3 (1)**, below.

Outcome

Developing new opportunities and opening up the pathways/routes for studying (such as work based learning) will help ensure that the education offering is fit for purpose to support a modern workforce, and through working collaboratively across partners, that there are clearly defined routes and opportunities into employment and training. This will help support the sector meet the replacement and expansion demand for new talent and address the identified skills shortages.

5.3.3 Strategic Theme 3: Workforce Development

Objective

The current (and future) workforce will require a range of core planning, technical and work based/employability skills and it is vital that these are developed in line with changing legislation and/or the requirement to address policy objectives.

Ongoing collaboration and communication with Scottish Government and other key agencies is needed to ensure that the sector understands its expected role/remit and has access to appropriate support and resources to identify, and respond to, the current and future skills needs and challenges.

The actions under this theme will target and address the current and emerging skills gaps within the workforce and help to better align the supply side (education/training providers) with the needs of the demand side (employers).

Inputs - Strategic Lead and Resources

Scottish Government has a key role to play in informing the future support/training needs, with actions taken forward by a wide range of partners (possibly through development of a new skills/training needs advisory group) and the support of advisory bodies (e.g. Zero Waste Scotland).

PiP are best placed to lead on this strategic objective, however, we would highlight that the organisation is comprised of members that participate on a voluntary basis, and delivery of this objective will likely require commitment of funding/resources to help support (sustained) ongoing engagement between partners and undertake the “horizon scanning” work.

The succession planning activity will be led by individual authorities and Regional Partnerships with support from HOPS.

Activities and Actions

Priority Action S3 (1): Across the sector there appears to be a solid foundation of ongoing formal and informal training with organisations such as the RTPI and the Improvement Service providing a leading role.

While there are no significant gaps in training provision we would note the need for organisations to remain flexible in how they deliver and undertake training. For example, making best use of digital resources such as webinars and video conferencing which have potential to reach a wider audience and can be delivered cost-effectively. This is particularly pertinent given the impact of Covid-19 with almost every sector having to adopt new digital methods/platforms for communication/working.

It is recommended that partners explore the appetite for establishing a Scotland-wide training and skills development advisory group[52]. The advisory group should focus on identifying the skills training needs of both those entering the sector (i.e. the pipeline supply of graduates/talent) and those currently operating in the sector.

The role of this forum could include:

- identifying the current and future training needs of employers (sector-wide), for example, skills gaps that have emerged as a result of new legislation or ongoing training support needs. This research has identified sector specific skills gaps such as design and development finance/feasibility, and more general skills gaps, including project management and critical, creative and strategic thinking;
- working alongside RTPI and the universities/planning schools to support and develop/inform the mainstream planning school/university curriculum to make sure graduates have the required core planning and employability skills and competencies - this could include informing the RTPI Learning Outcomes[53];
- developing a graduate internship and work-placement/experience programmes (e.g. summer schools);
- disseminating and sharing good practice; and
- encouraging discussion/debate amongst planners (from private, public, third and university sectors).

Action S3 (2): With the emergence of new policy priorities and legislation there is a need for the planning sector to engage proactively with national government to understand the role of planning in helping address these objectives.

There is an "ask" of Scottish Government to provide greater guidance and clarity on the expected/required role of the planning sector to support delivery of these priorities.

This will help those that operate in the sector to understand where there are skills gaps and inform their future training and skills development requirements.

Through consultation we have identified a potential requirement to design tailored support provision that covers four broad areas:

- **Action S3 (2a)**: The planning sector's role in addressing the climate emergency - land use, implementing technology, sustainable building and design, active travel and green networks, etc;

[52]For example, membership could include the input of key stakeholders such as local authorities on an annual rotation.

[53] The RTPI is currently conducting a review of professional planning education, curricula and its required learning outcomes for planning courses advisory group – due for publication in 2021. It is recommended that any advisory group and RTPI link up to ensure alignment.

- **Action S3 (2b)**: Digital transformation and improving service delivery. In addition to ensuring the sector has the skills to deliver the current digital planning framework (e.g. edevelopment.scot), the Scottish Government is developing a Digital Strategy for Planning and a Roadmap that will outline proposals for new digital services, systems and ICT infrastructure. At the very least this will require the planning sector to have the appropriate analytical skills to code, interpret and convert the data gathered into meaningful intelligence;
- **Action S3 (2c)**: The role of planning in supporting inclusion and wellbeing, for example through good design, access to public/civic spaces, affordable public transport developments that respond to a diversity of needs, etc; and
- **Action S3 (2d)**: Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 – ensuring that local authorities can perform their statutory duties to the required level of service. One area of training support that has already been identified to help local authorities improve their service, develop their LDPs and meet the requirements/duties outlined in the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 is how to undertake effective and inclusive community and service user consultation (including engaging with seldom heard groups);

Action S3 (3): Succession planning - the sector faces some significant demographic challenges over the short to medium term with an ageing workforce and a constricted pipeline supply of talent. The public sector in particular is likely to be most severely affected and it is anticipated that there will be some regional variances (e.g. more rural areas and those with no/limited connections to the planning schools are likely to face greater challenges).

As noted above in the sector review (**Chapter 3**), the scale of the public sector replacement demand alone is estimated at 500 planners over the next 10 - 15 years. Currently there is little in the way of succession planning, either across the sector or within individual authorities.

It is recommend that local authorities (working collaboratively if appropriate) start to develop workforce planning strategies and undertake internal reviews/audits that identify the scale of replacement (and expansion) demand, and the necessary competencies and employee development needs to ensure continuity of service. This brings about wider (structural) challenges facing the sector, in that, any additional demand for staffing will need to be financed/resourced.

In addition, succession planning should also help to identify "high-potential employees" who will be able to fill senior and management positions in the future; and

Action S3 (4): While already happening in some regions, planning authorities should consider collaborative approaches to addressing short term or specialist skills challenges and gaps. One potential approach is to develop and procure a pool of shared and/or specialist planning resources on a shared service model or other basis.

Outcome

The current and future planning workforce has the technical and thematic skills and experience to support the delivery of a wide range of place, economic development and sustainable development policy priorities and offer added value and deliver.

5.4 Next Steps

This report provides the evidence base and framework for PiP to begin addressing the skills gaps and challenges within the sector, both currently and anticipated in the future.

The next steps are therefore to:

1. Seek agreement on the recommendations and key actions.

2. Identify the key partners to help lead and deliver the key actions – the research paper provides some suggestions but these will need agreed.

3. Develop an “ask” of partners and secure their commitment to supporting delivery of the Framework.

4. Utilise the Framework as the starting point for strategic discussions with Scottish Government on the future role of the planning sector.

Appendix 1: Stakeholders in Planning

Public bodies and agencies

A wide range of other public bodies and agencies participate in the planning process and decision making. These organisations often have statutory responsibilities for specific topic areas, with implications for planning decisions.

They offer specialist advice to the planning authorities. Such bodies include:

- Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) – www.snh.org.uk
    - SNH is responsible for the conservation and enhancement of natural heritage - the wildlife, the habitats and the landscapes.
- Historic Environment Scotland – www.historic-scotland.gov.uk
    - Historic Environment Scotland safeguards the historic environment and promotes its understanding and enjoyment.
- Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) – www.sepa.org.uk
    - SEPA is Scotland's environmental regulator and adviser. In addition to its role in controlling pollution, it works with others to protect and improve our environment.
- Health and Safety Executive (HSE) – www.hse.gov.uk
    - HSE protects people's health and safety by ensuring that risks in the workplace are properly controlled and controls substances that are hazardous to health.
- Scottish Water – www.scottishwater.co.uk
    - Scottish Water provides water and waste water services throughout Scotland.
- Transport Scotland – www.transportscotland.gov.uk
    - Transport Scotland is responsible for delivering the Scottish Government's transport capital investment programme and overseeing the safe and efficient operation of trunk roads and rail networks.
- Architecture and Design Scotland (A+DS) – www.ads.org.uk
    - A+DS is a non-departmental public body, which acts as a national champion for good architecture, design and planning in the built environment.
- Regional Transport Partnerships - www.transport.gov.scot/our-approach/strategy/regional-transport-partnerships/
    - Regional Transport Partnerships bring together local authorities, elected members and other key regional stakeholders to take a strategic approach to the planning and delivery of regional transport so that it better serves the needs of people and businesses.
- City Region Deals - www.gov.scot/Topics/Built-Environment/Cities
    - City Region Deals offer the potential for new collaborative regional partnerships, focused on long-term strategic approaches to improving regional
- Scottish Cities Alliance - www.scottishcities.org.uk

- The Scottish Cities Alliance is a partnership of Scotland's seven cities and the Scottish Government, the purpose of which is to attract investment and jobs into cities.

A number of voluntary or private organisations, which are often national campaigning bodies, regularly interact with planning authorities. Examples of these include:

- The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) (www.rspb.org.uk)
- Friends of the Earth (www.foe.co.uk)
- The Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland (www.ahss.org.uk)
- Local branches of the Scottish Civic Trust (www.scottishcivictrust.org.uk)
- Homes for Scotland (www.homesforscotland.com)

Appendix 2: Consultees

EKOS would like to thank the following organisations for contributing to the research.

Table A2: Consultees

Local Authority
Dundee City Council
Stirling Council
Angus Council
Renfrewshire Council
National Government and Key Agencies
Scottish Government
Planning and Environmental Appeals Division (DPEA)
Homes for Scotland
Scottish Natural Heritage
Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)
Historic Environment Scotland
Improvement Service
Planning Schools/Universities
Heriot Watt University
Dundee University
Industry Body
the RTPI
Private sector
Barton Willmore
Savills
Kevin Murray Associates
Geddes consulting
Third Sector
Planning Aid Scotland

Appendix 3: Baseline Data Filtering

RTPI Membership Data

As noted in **Section 3**, a review of the APS data sets found numerous challenges related to suppression and accuracy of the data. We therefore utilised RTPI membership and survey data to inform the assessment.

In order to provide more robust estimates, the membership and survey data was filtered based on the class of membership to ensure (as far as is reasonably possible) that the data being presented relates to planners that are active in the sector.

The RTPI has numerous memberships classes; Honorary Member; Retired Member; Chartered Fellow; Legal Member; Chartered Member; Legal Associate Member; Affiliate Member; Licentiate Member; Technical Member; Associate Member; Student Member (paying) Free Student Member.

We have only analysed and presented data pertaining to those that have chartered, associate, or licentiate membership.

RTPI Members Surveys

In 2013 and 2017 the RTPI undertook a survey of their membership base. The survey was issued to all members

The surveys received the following number of responses from members based in Scotland:

- 2013 – 563 responses; and
- 2017 – 331 responses.

The Member Survey is reasonably representative of the membership as a whole, with similar proportions of membership classes, genders, regional and national spread, and ethnic diversity.

The survey data has been filtered using the same criteria as for the membership data, above (based on the following membership classes - chartered, associate, or licentiate membership).

Appendix 4: RTPI Learning Outcomes

Spatial Learning Outcomes

1. Explain and demonstrate how spatial planning operates within the context of institutional and legal frameworks.
2. Generate integrated and well substantiated responses to spatial planning challenges.
3. Reflect on the arguments for and against spatial planning and particular theoretical approaches, and assess what can be learnt from experience of spatial planning in different contexts and spatial scales.
4. Demonstrate how efficient resource management helps to deliver effective spatial planning.
5. Explain the political and ethical nature of spatial planning and reflect on how planners work effectively within democratic decision-making structures.
6. Explain the contribution that planning can make to the built and natural environment and in particular recognise the implications of climate change.
7. Debate the concept of rights and the legal and practical implications of representing these rights in planning decision making process.
8. Evaluate different development strategies and the practical application of development finance; assess the implications for generating added value for the community.
9. Explain the principles of equality and equality of opportunity in relation to spatial planning in order to positively promote the involvement of different communities, and evaluate the importance and effectiveness of community engagement in the planning process.
10. Evaluate the principles and processes of design for creating high quality places and enhancing the public realm for the benefit of all in society.
11. Demonstrate effective research, analytical, evaluative and appraisal skills and the ability to reach appropriate, evidence based decisions.
12. Recognise the role of communication skills in the planning process and the importance of working in an inter-disciplinary context, and be able to demonstrate negotiation, mediation, advocacy and leadership skills.
13. Distinguish the characteristics of a professional, including the importance of upholding the highest standards of ethical behaviour and a commitment to lifelong learning and critical reflection so as to maintain and develop professional competence.

Specialist Learning Outcomes

1. Engage in theoretical, practical and ethical debate at the forefront of the area of the specialism in the context of spatial planning.
2. Evaluate the social, economic, environmental and political context for the area of specialism.
3. Evaluate the distinctive contribution of the specialism to the making of place and the mediation of space.
4. Assess the contribution of the specialism to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change.