

# RTPI NEWS

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## Offering help to graduates is crucial for planning's long-term well-being

Bosses need to keep planning graduates employed despite the hardships caused by the recession and young planners who are seeking work can take steps to improve their chances of landing a job, *Martin Willey* advises

It's official. We are now in the worst post-war depression and it is affecting all of us. Although circumstances differ, many of us have lost a job at some point in our career — myself on three occasions — mainly for reasons beyond individual control.

In my case, the first was when the firm that employed me was taken over, the second when the arrival of regional development agencies moved resources from sub to regional level and the third when the physical exhaustion of travelling 6,000km a month in a car and the same distance on trains suggested that alternative arrangements might improve my quality of life.

I felt awful the first time and wondered whether I would ever work again. But I benefited greatly from advice that I would like to share. First, job loss in the current climate is not your fault. Secondly, and somewhat surprisingly, most jobs are not advertised. Some are down to headhunters but most positions are filled through personal networks and recommendations.

There is lots of advice about responding to job adverts. The covering letter that emphasises your skills — on top of your CV — is often the most important influence on shortlisters. Getting your name on headhunters' lists is a matter of trial and error. They are often specialised, discrete and have many hundred other names already, but it does no harm to telephone, talk and send a CV to an individual.

The network process is really interesting and the advice I received was borne out by personal experience. First, write a list of all the people you know who might offer you a job or introduce you to someone who might do so. This list should include not just the usual suspects but also family, friends and other



**Young planners: cutbacks have left graduates fighting for job offers**

contacts not normally associated with the planning world.

Secondly, create a database of contacts in order of priority and make a note to seek appointments to meet them. Thirdly, do not ask them for a job. Instead, construct a reason for your meeting that flatters them by seeking their advice on what career direction they think you should take.

I sought advice on whether to seek full-time or self-employment and on particular target areas. This places less pressure on your contact. Although they know why you are there, if they cannot offer you something then they might know someone else who can.

Keep a careful record of requests and results and persevere. Some people might want to reflect before and after meeting you. Always send a CV and ask whether they feel that it reflects your offer correctly. In 14

years of sole tradership, I have competed unsuccessfully for work but have been fully employed through personal networks alone and on a number of occasions on two to three-year contracts.

The RTPI recognises the challenging environment that planners and graduates of accredited courses are currently facing and we are providing advice through the recession support resources on our website.

The underlying shortage of planners still exists — it is just temporarily masked by the downturn. In the medium and long term, we will continue to have a skills shortage, hence continued investment in planners and future planners is critical.

During my presidential trips, professional planners' willingness to tackle problems and take a lead has impressed me. This month, I am asking everyone — whether sole trader or major employer — to consider offering expenses-only internships to our young planning school graduates. I am sure that many will seek temporary jobs or be faced with benefits in these difficult times.

Even if as an employer you have had to lay off staff, please do not lose sight of the future when the market returns and the essential need for good chartered planners resumes. Allowing graduates to secure APC-eligible experience will sustain their interest and allow them to expand networks.

Many of us are seeking to restate the case for planning, especially to accelerate and provide a foundation for economic recovery. Let's ensure that there are enough of us when times improve.

*Martin Willey is RTPI president. For more details of recession support, please visit [www.rtpi.org.uk/member\\_services](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/member_services)*

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# Authorities sharpen economic focus

An economic assessment duty coming into force in April next year will affect local development frameworks and funding, argues *Janice Morphet*

All UK planning systems now have an explicit economic focus and in England this has been translated into a practical approach. This is incorporated in an economic assessment duty that will come into force next April as part of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

The duty to carry out an assessment will be on unitary and county councils. But investment outcomes will be delivered through local development frameworks (LDFs), so all local authorities have an interest in this duty.

The final version of PPS4 will say more, but it is clear from draft statutory guidance that the implementation of the assessments will also have a wider role in coalescing partnerships at the local level and taking forward LDF infrastructure planning and delivery.

Approaches to the assessments set out in draft guidance include



CHARLOTTE MORPHET

**Development: local frameworks will need to consider economic growth**

having a shared evidence base for an area that will also inform the local, sub-regional and regional strategies. This adds to the narrative of place that is emerging through sustainable community strategies and LDFs and should be able to point to locations where interventions are needed.

Assessments are also expected to relate to functional areas, reflecting underlying economic geography rather than administrative areas. This will mean more co-operative approaches across all types of places, including rural and natural areas.

To ensure that economic assessments work together across regions, key common themes must be tackled. These include housing and infrastructure and achieving a low-carbon economy through sustainability. Further issues include skills and the labour market.

The Leeds city-region pilot offers some indication of how the duty could be turned into a delivery plan in its multi-area agreement, incorporating other partners' delivery.

At the local level, the LDF will need to take the assessment into

account in its preparation. The draft guidance indicates that evidence collected for the LDF on economic conditions is likely to be enough for the wider county economic assessment in two-tier areas. Identifying land for economic development will be one of the ways in which economic needs can be tackled.

Other infrastructure projects that support the local economy will also need to be included in the infrastructure delivery plan that accompanies core strategies or area action plans. Once identified, the required infrastructure investment and other supporting projects can then be put forward for the regional implementation plan that is due to emerge next year.

Although a regional approach will imply some strategic priorities, the role of sub-regional and local needs is now being seen as more important. If LDFs fail to identify what is required in their areas to support economic stability and growth, they have less chance of being funded through the regional implementation plan or the Homes and Communities Agency's single conversation.

*Janice Morphet is a director of RMJM Consulting and visiting professor at University College London's Bartlett School of Planning.*

# Global call for partnership and participation

World Town Planning Day will give a global platform to the profession's crucial role in tackling rapid urbanisation issues, reports *Judith Eversley*

Population growth, migration to cities, climate change and risk of natural disaster all pose challenges to governments in all countries. The 2009 UN-Habitat report *Planning Sustainable Cities* illustrates this, with a mass of detail on human settlements around the world.

This is a significant event in the planning sector, with far-reaching implications for the RTPI. The document reviews the international dimension of the institute's work in policy, education and research and it is prominently credited.

The report puts planning at the heart of meeting the challenge of rapid urbanisation. After years of



UN-HABITAT

**Settlements: planning lead vital**

work by professional planners in many countries, UN-Habitat now affirms the role of planning. The world needs planners to create sustainable settlements in rural areas, small or medium-sized cities that are home to most of the world's urban dwellers and mega-cities.

US president Barack Obama's message, at the report's US launch, was that only through partnership can cities manage and reduce climate disruption, economic crisis and urban poverty. UN-Habitat director Anna Tibaijuka elaborates: "We must either plan with and for people or perish from the pressures of population, climate change, migration, consumption, irresponsible individualism and unaccountable corporatism."

The Commonwealth Association of Planners adds that without planning, cities "destroy farmland and forests, drink dry the reservoirs, pollute the waterways and impose unacceptable costs in energy use and emissions". Urbanisation is not an evil to be resisted but a challenge that needs to be met by planning — preventative urban medicine.

Good planning lifts people out of poverty, allows access to infrastructure, creates opportunities, gives rural areas a market and provides shelter for people. In developed

countries, different aspects of the same skills are needed to put right past damage, provide for ageing populations, identify sites for reuse and contain sprawl.

Yet many communities lack the plans and planners to guide growth towards sustainable development. More planners are needed with the right skills to make a difference. For that, we look to the planning schools of the world, including those accredited and advised by the RTPI.

The institute is marking World Town Planning Day with a report briefing and reception with RTPI London next Tuesday. It is also setting up an online conference with other planning institutes worldwide on the theme "Resilience in a changing climate", on 12–14 November.

*Judith Eversley is RTPI international affairs officer. For more information on World Town Planning Day events, please visit [www.rtpi.org.uk/item/3008](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/item/3008). RTPI Scotland's feature on planning for climate change around the world is available at [www.rtpi.org.uk/rtpi\\_in\\_scotland](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/rtpi_in_scotland). For details of the online conference, visit [www.planningtheworld.net](http://www.planningtheworld.net)*

# Membership panel vacancies offer chance to get involved

Planners from right across the country are invited to volunteer for key roles alongside fellow professionals

As with any professional institute, the key to the RTPI's success is its strong membership base. Members can play a major role in developing this base by volunteering to sit on the membership panel.

From 2006 — 2005 for graduates of one-year masters programmes — the assessment of professional competence (APC) is the route to RTPI corporate membership. From next June, all graduates with an RTPI-accredited degree will follow the APC route, including those who graduated before 2005.

This requires candidates to be registered as a licentiate member for at least a year before submitting an application. Other components include a written logbook of work carried out and skills developed, a professional development plan and a written submission reflecting the licentiate's experience and skills.

However, there are still a number of potential members, including technical and legal associates, for whom the way to obtain membership is the traditional route of applying to and being considered by the panel.

The membership panel fulfils an important role. It meets four times a year and examines all applications for election to all classes of membership, other than those assessed through the APC route. As well as transfers between membership classes, the panel also considers applications for reinstatement and monitors criteria and procedures for elections to membership.

Current vacancies on the panel present an opportunity for you to become involved. As well as being rewarding, it provides an opportunity to meet and debate with fellow



**Volunteers: panel members sought**

professionals from across the country while also providing useful continuing professional development. Meetings are held in London and expenses are reimbursed.

The panel welcomes interest from any chartered town planners, including those practising in the private sector, the Planning Inspectorate or government offices. It is also anxious to have representation from across the nations and regions.

Any member wishing to be considered for appointment for a three-year term on the membership panel should send their CV to the RTPI's membership department, together with a covering letter detailing the skills and expertise that they would bring to the panel.

*For further information and to apply for panel membership, please email [panelvacancy@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:panelvacancy@rtpi.org.uk). For further guidance on the APC route to membership, please visit [www.rtpi.org.uk/join\\_the\\_rtpi/assessment\\_of\\_professional\\_competence](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/join_the_rtpi/assessment_of_professional_competence)*

# RTPI Bulletin Board

## Voting opens for institute representation

RTPI elections opened on 1 November and will close on 30 November. All corporate members can vote for the next junior vice-president. General assembly members can vote for three places on the executive board, while fellows and members can vote for 14 corporate member places on the assembly. You are advised to vote as soon as you receive your ballot papers — bearing in mind the current postal problems. For more details, please visit [www.rtpi.org.uk/item/2928/23/5/3](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/item/2928/23/5/3)

## Events

### Planning Law Update

13 November. RTPI East of England. Downing College, Regent Street, Cambridge. Last year's conference was oversubscribed, so book your place now to avoid disappointment. Cost: £130 + VAT. For further details and to book, please visit [www.rtpi.org.uk/rtpi\\_east\\_of\\_england](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/rtpi_east_of_england) or email [eastofengland@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:eastofengland@rtpi.org.uk) or contact Tina Jessup on 01359 233408.

### Planning for Open Space

16 November. RTPI. Botolph Lane, London. This afternoon seminar shares the experiences of the Land Restoration Trust demonstrating that spaces can be made multi-functional, can deliver community benefit and most importantly can be sustainably managed in a cost-effective way. Public space is rightly recognised as a vital asset. Besides the environmental enhancements and its crucial role in mitigating climate change, public space can positively affect the health, social cohesion and education of a community. Cost: Free. To book a place, please email [urban.design@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:urban.design@rtpi.org.uk) or call 0844 232 8083.

### Community Involvement in Planning

25 November. RTPI North East. International Centre for Life, Newcastle. This event will explore best practice in community involvement and ask how planners can move beyond community consultation to more meaningful community participation while still meeting government targets for a rapid planning system. Case studies will be discussed. Cost: £99. For more information or to book, please visit [www.rtpi.org.uk/ct/EVENT/685/11/events/685](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/ct/EVENT/685/11/events/685) or call 01661 871719.

### Mandatory Community Consultation — Opportunity for Better Design?

1 December. RTPI Scotland. Edinburgh. Community consultation became mandatory in August for all larger planning applications. This evening event will bring participants up to date with techniques, review case studies of where community participation has delivered more than a ticked box and debate ideas. Cost: Free. To book, please email [urban.design@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:urban.design@rtpi.org.uk) or call 0844 232 8083.

## The RTPI's Online Directory of Planning Consultants 2010

The Online Directory of Planning Consultants, is the official RTPI listing of over 500 firms providing the services of professionally qualified planners.

To book your firms listing for 2010, contact the Directory Manager on 020 7960 5663 or e-mail: [simon.owen@rtpiconsultants.co.uk](mailto:simon.owen@rtpiconsultants.co.uk)

### Benefits of an entry:

- Inclusion in the official RTPI Consultants Printed and Online Directory for 2010
- Online directory received over 60,000 direct users in the last year
- Greater capabilities for the distribution of company information to a UK and global audience
- Provides a web presence for firms without a dedicated website
- Inclusion in the printed directory and regional leaflets, distributed in bulk and free of charge to the UK & Eire planning industry



**RTPI**  
mediation of space - making of place

**NOW TAKING ENTRIES FOR 2010**



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