



# Places, People and Planning

## A Planning Graduate Intern Programme for Scotland

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As part of taking forward the planning review and planning consultation paper *Places, People and Planning* Scottish Government have commissioned RTPI Scotland to undertake work exploring the implementation of a graduate intern programme. This paper discusses the options available and suggest some immediate actions.

### CONTEXT

1. The Independent Review of the Planning System published their report *Empowering Planning to Deliver Great Places*<sup>1</sup> in May 2016. It contained the following recommendation:  

***“42. A planning graduate intern programme should be established.***

*To help invest in the long-term future of the profession in Scotland, the Scottish Government, Heads of Planning Scotland and RTPI Scotland should establish an intern programme for planning graduates. Evidence suggests that there is a greater need for such a scheme to attract and retain staff in the public sector and to provide a broader resource of planning professionals with experience of both the public and private sectors.”*
2. The Scottish Government response to the review<sup>2</sup> said that it would “work with the RTPI, universities and the Improvement Service to address priority areas for further skills development”. (Recommendation 40) and to look at options for a graduate intern programme (Recommendation 42).

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0050/00500946.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Built-Environment/planning/Review-of-Planning/documents>

3. The subsequent Scottish Government consultation paper *Places, People and Planning*<sup>3</sup> said:

*“4.5 - Education is key to this and our proposals for involving children and young people will help to build greater awareness and involvement in place making. We also agree with the independent panel that planning graduates have a vital role to play. It is critical that we make future generations of planners resilient and adaptable to change, and give them the confidence to challenge and inspire others. An understanding of the different cultures and sectors will help with this. We have asked the RTPI Scotland to look into opportunities for a graduate intern scheme.*

*4.6 - The capacity and resilience of the planning profession in Scotland as a whole needs to be considered in view of the recommendations set out here. The independent panel recommended further work on skills development and shared services.”*

4. Scottish Government then commissioned RTPI Scotland to identify proposals for a graduate intern scheme. This paper explores the issues and options available.

## BACKGROUND

5. The most recent background paper on employability trends and advice<sup>4</sup> was published by the RTPI in May 2016. It said that in 2015 the planning industry showed clear signs of a return to growth. Between May 2015 and May 2016 there were a total of 1821 vacancies advertised on the online RTPI Planner Jobs Board with an average of over 100 live opportunities per week.

The area with the highest number of advertised jobs was in London (500) but there were a good number of jobs advertised in the South East (217), North West (161), East of England (217) West Midlands (165) and South West (176). Approximately 650 jobs were in the public sector and 230 across the private sector with the remainder spread across other sectors including Government agencies, other agencies and charities. Elsewhere across the UK vacancy numbers appeared steady in comparison to previous years

Key sector trends included interdisciplinary working and cross fertilisation. Planning is becoming increasingly interconnected, with the shift towards the creation of communities. Planning authorities are increasingly integrating place making with regeneration and economic development. Public and private sectors are increasingly looking beyond their own borders to source talent for project implementation. Consultancies often value the detailed knowledge and stakeholder management skills demonstrated by local planning officials, and planning authorities can gain from negotiation and property skills of the private sector.

6. The RTPI survey of RTPI Learning Partners 2016 showed that:

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<sup>3</sup> <https://consult.scotland.gov.uk/planning-architecture/a-consultation-on-the-future-of-planning/>

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/1833795/rtpi\\_employability\\_trends\\_2016.pdf](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/1833795/rtpi_employability_trends_2016.pdf)

- The majority of learning partners were planning to recruit in 2016 with a median figure of around 6 graduate opportunities per organisation.
  - Interest in work based learning is growing with 70% of consultancies considering apprenticeships
  - Overall, Learning Partners felt that the quality of planning graduates was good
7. The report also says that an increasing number of employers (particularly local authority planning departments) cannot fill all their graduate vacancies. At the same time, some graduates had not secured employment despite attending many interviews. Despite this, the report states that the calibre of planning graduates is very strong. The majority of graduates will have acquired at least some work experience as part of their degree and employability skills are embedded into a range of modules. The 2016 RTPI Education Policy Review<sup>5</sup> confirmed the importance of a clear practice focus for accredited planning degrees with practical planning skills embedded and tested throughout courses.
8. Employer needs vary so the report sets out a number of areas where an employer can support a new graduate, including
- Design a well-structured and clear orientation and ongoing training programme that is linked to the RTPI Assessment of Professional Competence (APC)<sup>6</sup>.
  - If the organisation is of sufficient size and has the opportunity to do so, then rotating a graduate through a range of functions (policy, management or enforcement) or departments
  - Allocate a mentor to the new employee that is distinct from their supervisor.
9. The RTPI has put in place a number of supports for students and graduates on career development including:
- The Future Planners Bursary<sup>7</sup> that helps fund places on accredited university planning Master's courses. It is open to students from any discipline, including law, politics, geography or architecture, who decide to choose planning as a career.
  - RTPI advice on international exchanges and careers
  - Guidance to those looking to start their career in planning or who are already in employment but are thinking of their next career move.
  - Legal advice on through the RTPI's employment law helpline
  - Careers talks to students studying accredited courses with speakers from the RTPI and public and private sectors. Flyers promoting graduate opportunities at Learning Partners are distributed at these events.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.rtpi.org.uk/education-and-careers/rtpi-response-to-education-policy-review-consultation/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.rtpi.org.uk/membership/assessment-of-professional-competence/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.rtpi.org.uk/education-and-careers/become-a-planner/future-planners-bursary/>

- RTPI Learning Partner scheme<sup>8</sup>, recognising employers who support the learning and development of their planning staff including support for the APC (where appropriate)

## A NEED FOR CLARITY

10. In looking to generate thinking on the development of a planning graduate intern programme, we have discussed the challenges and opportunities with a number of stakeholders, primarily through the Scottish Planning Skills Forum<sup>9</sup> and the group established by Scottish Government to support the planning review's aspirations on leaderships, skills and resources.
11. Our discussions have told us that there are many different understandings of what a graduate intern programme is and that there are a number of options to support planners at different stages of their career. Given this, we believe that there is need to be clear from the start about the aims and objectives of the proposed graduate intern programme as this will have implications for the shape of the programme.
12. We have set out a number of questions below to help frame discussion on this and to agree key principles of a future programme. The questions follow.

### What is the intended outcome?

13. Is the scheme aimed at:
  - Creating employment opportunities for graduates?
  - Promoting the value of working in the public sector to graduates?
  - Providing additional resources to planning authorities to undertake general work?
  - Supporting graduates to get experience in a range of settings in planning authorities?
  - Supporting the delivery of specific projects in local authorities?
  - Are there others?
14. The answer to the question may be one, some, or all of the answers outlined above. Key to the success of any future programme however will be the need to clear on the intended outcomes.
15. A monitoring and evaluation framework will be required to assess the impacts of the programme, taking into consideration the experiences of interns, employing organisations and any broader impacts on the planning service.

### What are the intended outputs?

16. There is a need to be clear on the proposed scale of any programme asking what the target number of interns and employing organisations are. This may set out short, medium and longer-term objectives. Outputs will also need to be linked to outcomes.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.rtpi.org.uk/education-and-careers/rtpi-learning-partners/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.rtpi.org.uk/the-rtpi-near-you/rtpi-scotland/networks-and-forums/scottish-planning-skills-forum/>

## What is the intended audience?

17. Our discussions highlighted that there are many different interpretations of what an intern programme can and should be. It was also felt that there was a need to better define and acknowledge the range of interventions that can be used at different stages of a person's career to help them develop. These are summarised very broadly below for information.

<b>Initial/ Post Graduate training</b>
<b>Sandwich course</b> - Sandwich courses are degree programmes offered by universities that include a sandwich placement or industrial placement - a set period working in a related industry or studying abroad.
<b>Placement</b> - A placement is a set period working in industry. A placement lasts for at least two weeks and is usually longer and may be credit bearing and count towards a student's degree.
<b>Work experience</b> - Work experience can range from 1 day to 2 weeks and is a great opportunity for students to get exposure to organisations. It will help in future applications.
<b>Mentoring</b> - Mentoring is a personal development and empowerment tool that helps people to progress in their careers. It is a partnership between two people (mentor and mentee) normally working in a similar field or sharing similar experiences. It is a helpful relationship based upon mutual trust and respect. A mentor is a guide who can help the mentee to find the right direction and who can help them to develop solutions to career issues. Mentors rely upon having had similar experiences to gain an empathy with the mentee and an understanding of their issues. Mentoring provides the mentee with an opportunity to think about career options and progress
<b>Graduate</b>
<b>Internship</b> - An internship is a period of work experience, offered by an organisation, usually lasting for a fixed, limited period. They are typically undertaken by students and graduates looking to gain relevant skills and experience in a particular field.
<b>Structured graduate training programme</b> - A structured programme that combines working and training, targeted to recent graduates. Offered mainly by large employers and can last for a period of 3 months to 3 years. Successful completion normally leads to a permanent position and often a professional qualification
<b>Mentoring</b> – see above
<b>Coaching</b> - Coaching is a form of development in which a person called a coach supports a learner or client in achieving a specific personal or professional goal by providing training, advice and guidance.
<b>Planner</b>



<b>Job Shadowing</b> - Job shadowing is where an individual from one area of the organisation has the opportunity to work alongside and gain experience of the role of another individual, and gain an insight into that particular work area.
<b>Job swap</b> - A job swap is an arrangement identified by two parent departments/teams, who each agree to host a short-term placement for an individual and loan one of their own staff members in exchange. It can be for a very short period of time (e.g. one day), but will usually be no longer than three months and will not require a change to either individual's employment contract as their salary, and terms and conditions should remain unchanged during the swap.
<b>Secondment</b> - a period of time when an employee is sent to work somewhere else temporarily, either to increase the number of workers there, to replace a worker, or to exchange experiences and skills
<b>Coaching</b> – see above

18. Scottish Government may wish to consider how these fit with any proposal for taking forward a graduate intern scheme as well as support required to maintain the pipeline of planning graduates.

### What is the 'shape' of internship?

19. It is our understanding that Scottish Government is seeking a scheme that works with planning graduates to ensure that they are given a grounding in public sector planning at the start of their career. .
20. There are different interpretations of what a graduate intern programme is and should be. For example, RTPi Scotland has an intern programme where existing students or recent graduates are employed on a part time basis (generally 21 hours a week) for 6-month period to primarily undertake a specific project. These projects have included a specific piece of research, or support for an initiative such as the planning review member engagement programme. Interns are paid the Living Wage.
21. Historic Environment Scotland (HES) has a different approach. The HES Graduate post is recruited below their standard professional officer entry level. Recruitment is undertaken through university recruitment sites or university contacts. The full time post is for a year and it is not possible to retain staff after they have completed this and the intern would have to apply for any permanent opportunities via external advert.
22. The intern is moved around to different teams. This tends to be 3-month stints in teams where they are essentially given "the day job" to do managed within that team structure as any member of staff but with more support. A single mentor or buddy is provided to give continuity and personal support over the course of the year
23. The graduate post is part of the permanent complement but with a new person in place every 12 months. HES have been running this for 5 years and so far all of graduate staff have gone on to other posts within other bodies once they have left, although this isn't guaranteed.

24. Some local authorities and private sector employers have similar programmes, though it is clear that there scale is an issue. There are also a number of generic graduate programmes in Government and local authorities. Planning functions can benefit from these in terms of gaining a resource, however, by their nature, they are generic and not aimed specifically at planning graduates.

25. Based on this key questions to be asked are:

- How long should the internship last? Is it for a number of days or weeks; or looking to providing short term (6 months – a year) experience for graduates (and in some cases existing students); or last longer as with the HES approach?
- Does it aim to deliver a specific project or to support day-to-day work?
- Will it aim to give a range of experiences in a number of different settings over the internship period?
- Is the status of the intern a member of staff or something else?
- Is it to be paid? If so, by whom? At what level?
- Is it full or part time?
- Will it allow existing students to become interns and enable them to continue with their studies?
- What, if any, support will be provided to the intern?
- Should/ could the internship involve working with a number of organisations?

26. There is a need to agree if ground rules need to be established to shape the programme, and if so, what these are, based upon the question set out above.

## **OPERATIONAL ISSUES**

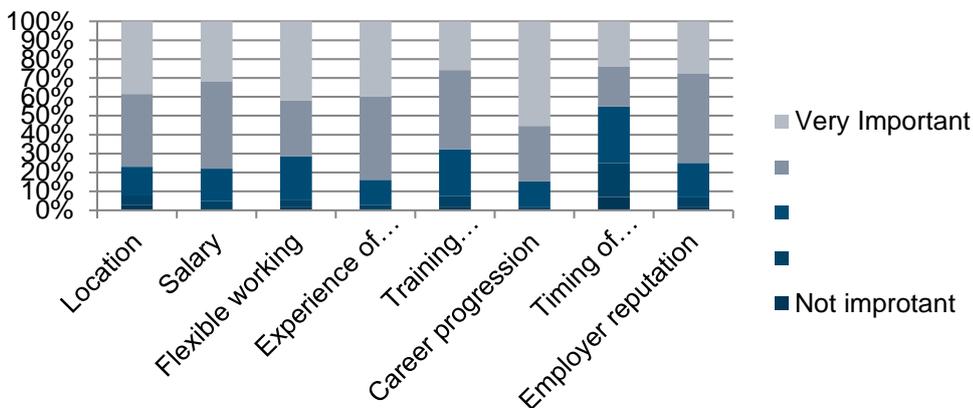
27. Once the outcomes and outputs of the programme have been agreed, there is a need to explore the operational aspects. There are set out below.

### **What do you make any scheme attractive to graduates?**

28. We have no hard evidence on demand for internships from students and graduates. However, a survey undertaken by Scottish Young Planners' Network and Heads of Planning Scotland in 2016 asked young planners about career progression. Diagram 1 shows responses to the question "How important are the following factors in job choice?"

29. It shows that the most important influence for young planners in deciding where to apply for jobs was the ability to have a supported and clear career path, flexible working and being able to experience different types of work.

**Diagram 1 - How important are the following factors in job choice?**



30. Anecdotal evidence from Scottish planning schools tells us that students and graduates would welcome an intern programme as part of the range of options that are available to them. Students are also keen that the internships provided a mix of opportunities such as short term experience that support project work over a period of days or weeks as well as medium and longer-term positions.

### How do you make the scheme work for planning authorities?

31. As far as we are aware there has not been any research undertaken to ask Scottish planning authorities their thoughts on an intern programme. It would be useful hear their thoughts on:

- If they see a use and demand for it
- how it should be organised
- what they see as the barriers and opportunities
- if they have the resources to employ interns
- what types of internship would work best for them
- are there opportunities for planning authorities to work together to provide different settings and experiences for interns

32. It is important to consider whether experience is of an appropriate length and level for graduates to be able to count it towards their APC.

### OPTIONS AND RESOURCES

33. Once a shape of the internship experience is agreed, and if there is seen to be a demand for it, there is a need to explore the model for any programme. Below we set out a number of options:

**Option 1: Continue with business as usual but enhance this through better coordination and sharing of programmes in place, opportunities and providing advice and tools to help employers create their own schemes**

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34. This is approach would work to support others to take the initiative to organise their own graduate intern schemes. A 'light touch' level of support could be provided through highlighting successful internship schemes and their outputs and by providing advice in the form of checklists, FAQs, case studies and regular communications.
  35. This could help to highlight the opportunities of graduate interns among employers and give them insights as to the challenges and opportunities they will face in setting up such a scheme.
  36. The disadvantages of this approach are centred around the fact that it is passive and so may not 'take off' without a stronger message and hands on support. It may also miss out in opportunities to facilitate employers working together to generate traction through scale to develop a programme that gives a range of experiences in different settings for the graduate.
  37. This option will be low cost though there will be a need to resource the production of advice, guidance and communications

### **Option 2: Piggyback onto an existing model such as Adopt an Intern**

38. Adopt an Intern<sup>10</sup> is a well-established initiative. It is a social enterprise committed to helping businesses to grow through access to a diverse range of graduate talent. Businesses (from all sectors) contact them a short-term need for staffing support or a permanent position that needs to be filled. Adopt An Intern advertise and facilitate these positions, offering support throughout the process and the length of the post, as necessary. It aims to ensure that the business benefits from graduate pipeline talent and that the graduate gains solid work experience which significantly supports their access to the labour market or other positive destinations.
39. It aims to offer an uncomplicated processes that is low cost. It charges a flat fee and profits go towards supporting the talented unemployed and underemployed.
40. Adopt An Intern reaches an extremely wide audience of graduates through social media sites, website, stakeholders, alumni and through with universities. They deal mainly with graduates and postgraduates but (dependent on employer needs) accept applications from students who are applying for a part-time post or who are due to graduate shortly. They work with both unemployed and underemployed graduates who have not yet found work to match their skills.
41. Adopt an Intern provides both full and part-time internships for a minimum of 240 hours. They also advertise permanent graduate positions. The internship can cover any degree background. Previous interns have worked in a huge variety of roles.
42. The advantage of this approach is that is building on an already successful and experienced organisation with a proven model. The disadvantage may be that it is generic in approach and not focussed on planning graduates. There would be a need to ensure that planning graduates 'signed up' to be on

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<sup>10</sup> [http://www.aai-talent.co.uk/about\\_us](http://www.aai-talent.co.uk/about_us)

their database and for it to be introduced to planning authorities as a means of attracting graduates.

43. Discussion would need to take place with Adopt An Intern about the possibilities of organising multi-employer programmes if this was something that would want to be pursued.
44. Adopt and Intern charge employers for their service to cover costs.

**Option 3: Create a central or regional approach among local authorities, Scottish Government and key agencies pool resources and pull in interns as and when required.**

45. This could tie in with proposals for a new coordination hub to help deliver a skills development programme. However, it would need to be able to undertake a number of key functions for the intern scheme to be successful. The 'back office functions' required include the following.

**Eligibility**

46. There is a need to agree who would be eligible for the graduate scheme and how any agreed criteria would be applied.

**Marketing**

47. There is a need to establish and regularly update the list of graduates who are eligible and want to participate in the programme. This will involve marketing the scheme to existing and future graduates and communicating the successes of the scheme to make it attractive. It will involve liaison with Universities and their graduates each year.

**Identifying Employers**

48. There is a need to establish and regularly update the list of organisations who are keen to take on graduates as interns. This will involve marketing the scheme and discussing with them their particular needs and wants in looking for in an intern. It may also require the employer to agree the aims, objectives, outputs, milestones and outcomes of a specific project they wish to the intern to undertake.

**Matchmaking**

49. There is a need for someone to match the needs of the employer with the skills and ambitions of the graduate. This requires interrogating the database established with graduates and identifying the 'best fit' candidates. These are generally then forwarded to the employer for them to interview.
50. There may also be a matchmaking function aimed at encouraging a number of employers to work together and offer a range of linked opportunities for graduates.
51. Other issues that may be taken forward by either the intern coordinator or the employer are:
  - Arranging interviews
  - Interviewing
  - Providing feedback on interviews, especially given the career stage interns are at

- Contracting
- Exit interview to ascertain lessons learned and progress made by intern

52. There would be a need for a specific and dedicated resource to cover set up, management and running costs.

#### **Option 4: Establish a web based platform to support matchmaking and applications**

53. This model would involve establishing a use friendly web platform that allowed both graduates and employers to navigate their way through a series of questions that honed down their skills and interests if seeking an internship, or their needs if a prospective employer.

54. For those looking for an internship questions could be asked around:

- Where do you want to work?
- When can you work and for how long?
- How long do you want to work for?
- Full time/ part time?
- Do you want the position to be paid?
- What issue do you have experience in?
- What issues are you interested in?

55. For employers questions could be posed around:

- Where is the job located?
- When is the position to start and end?
- Is it a full time or part time position?
- Is it a paid position? If so, what is the salary?
- What tasks does the job entail?
- What are the skills required for the job?
- What support will be given to the intern?

56. This puts the onus on the potential intern and employer organisation and would 'shortcut' approaches to matchmaking and the need to establish databases.

57. Web platforms similar to this exist already. For example, The Planner Jobs website<sup>11</sup> is a specialist job site for the town planning, regeneration and conservation sectors. It allows people to search by sector, function, job title, salary or location. It allows people to upload their CV and to sign email job alerts. It also provides resources on careers in planning through its association with the Planner magazine and the RTPI.

58. Another example is myjobscotland<sup>12</sup> which describes itself as the national jobs-portal for all Scotland's 32 councils. Other public sector bodies, from Universities and Further Education Colleges to Charities and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service can use the site and it carries over 30,000

<sup>11</sup> <http://jobs.theplanner.co.uk/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.myjobscotland.gov.uk/>

vacancies and process some 250,000 applications every year. This would be a useful in terms of matchmaking and receiving applications, however it would not necessarily provide the support for employers to help them deal with internships. It would also need to be marketed to both potential interns and employers.

## Conclusions and Actions

59. This paper has looked at the challenges and opportunities of establishing a new planning graduate intern programme in Scotland. It has set out the pros and cons of a number of options. It does not attempt to provide all the answers, but rather inform Scottish Government on the choices it has and the factors it should take into consideration in taking any programme forward. We believe that there a number of actions required to take this forward:

- Clarify aims and objectives of future graduate intern programme, based on the questions outlined above
- Discuss options with HOPS
- Ascertain ability to recruit interns in planning authorities
- Ascertain demand for intern programme in planning authorities
- Ascertain demand for intern programmes from graduates

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