

Urgent funding needed to address planning recruitment crisis, warns built environment leaders

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Thirty-three leading organisations from across planning, housing, nature, and energy have signed a [joint letter](#) to Housing and Planning Minister Matthew Pennycook (pictured), calling for £6.8 million in urgent funding to support Planning Schools to continue to recruit and train apprentice planners.

The Department for Education (DfE) has announced that from January 2026, apprenticeship levy funding for Level 7 apprenticeships will be restricted to only individuals aged between 16 and 21. The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) warns this could result in 200 fewer planners entering the workforce each year.

The impact of DfE's decision is already being felt. One RTPI-accredited planning school has announced it will withdraw its Level 7 apprenticeship programme from 2026, while another has paused recruitment to its undergraduate-entry apprenticeship.

With around 70% of planning apprentices working and training in local government, the restrictions will intensify pressures on an already overstretched system.

The decision has prompted concern among built and natural environment bodies, who recognise the need for a well-resourced planning system. Bodies like the RSPB, Energy UK, the National Trust, and the Home Builders Federation have joined the RTPI in highlighting the risks to the Government's housing ambitions, net zero targets, economic growth, nature recovery, heritage, critical infrastructure, and local communities.

While ministers have pledged an additional 300 planning officers, recent research by unions and

professional bodies suggests that between 600 and 3,000 more planners will be needed to meet the Government's development ambitions. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's own 2023 survey found that nine in ten local authorities were struggling to recruit planners.

Dr Victoria Hills, Chief Executive, the Royal Town Planning Institute, said: "We're about to see measures taken by the Government that will choke off a vital pipeline of talent, just when local authorities need it most.

"Planning is at the heart of so many of the country's biggest challenges, from building the homes we need and revitalising town centres, to protecting nature and meeting net zero. Without enough planners, these ambitions simply cannot be delivered.

"This is why urgent investment in skills and training is essential, to ensure every community has the planners it needs to thrive, now and in the future."

Source:

<https://www.cic.org.uk/news/urgent-funding-needed-to-address-planning-recruitment-crisis-warns-built-environment-leaders>