

Welcome to Volunteering Handbook



Welcome to the team

Thank you so much for giving us some of your valuable time to volunteer with the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI). We are delighted to have you on board and I hope you will find your volunteering journey with us an enjoyable and rewarding one. Volunteers play an important role in helping the RTPI achieve its vision to advance the science and art of planning for the benefit of the public. We hope that you benefit from volunteering with us whether this is through fulfilling an interest, feeling that you have made a difference, or by expanding your horizons through gaining knowledge, skills or making new contacts.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide practical guidance and information to help you with your volunteering activities. We are committed to providing support and ensuring that everyone is equipped with the necessary tools to enable them to perform their role and contribute to achieving our important mission. Should you need anything else please get in touch with your key contact.

On behalf of all of us at the Royal Town Planning Institute, I would like to thank you for your contribution and look forward to working with you.

Best wishes,

Victoria Hills MRTPI FICE
Chief Executive

Welcome to volunteering with the RTPI, whether you are old friends or whether this is your first foray. There are numerous ways to volunteer, so you can shape your volunteering experience to suit you, your time, your interests and what you want to achieve from it. I started volunteering with the RTPI many years ago and can safely say that own experience has been hugely rewarding, it has provided me with all sorts of valuable experience and insight and best of all I have met some amazing people along the way. I hope you enjoy your volunteering experience as much as I have, and continue to do, and above all I hope you have fun!

Meeta Kaur
Chair of the Board of Trustees, 2023

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95% of RTPI
volunteers would
recommend
volunteering to
others.

About the RTPI

Our Vision and Mission

Vision - To be the world's leading professional planning body. Our ambition is to promote healthy, socially inclusive, economically, and environmentally sustainable places.

Mission - To advance the science and art of planning, working for the long-term common good and wellbeing of current and future generations.

The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) is

- a charity registered in England and Scotland, whose purpose is to advance the science and art of planning (including town and country and spatial planning) for the benefit of the public. The UK's leading body for spatial, sustainable, and inclusive planning.
- a membership organisation and a Chartered Institute, which is responsible for maintaining professional standards and accrediting world class planning courses nationally and internationally. It is the largest of the European and Commonwealth Institutes for the planning profession with 27,000 members in 80 countries worldwide.
- a learned society, we are a key influencer with national governments and stakeholders and fund a range of research to inform the profession and campaign for better planning.



It is a great way to be involved in Planning at a national level and create an influence, furthermore you get to meet people from many different professions, and it widens your horizons.

*2022 Volunteer Survey
Respondent*

The RTPI is a leading global professional body shaping a positive future for the common good:

We influence

Stand up for planning and promote good planning policy and practice

Through our policy and research, communications, marketing and our events, we employ the RTPI's unique position as a learned society to promote good planning and lead on policy development and research globally to promote planning in the long term public interest.

We are here for our members

Represent, support and promote planners and the profession

We work for members to promote a diverse and inclusive profession and to positively influence stakeholders on our member priorities.

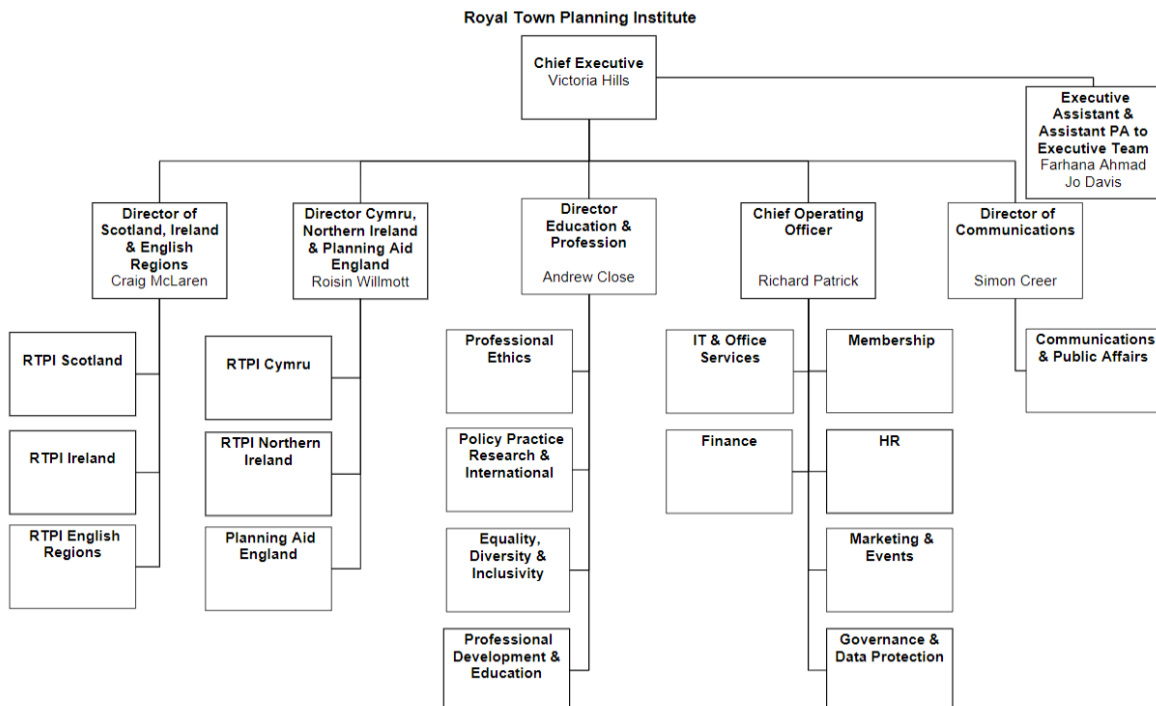
We effectively govern ourselves to be as effective as we can be within our limited resources.

We lead learning

Educate, train and maintain advanced professional standards

We deliver and accredit professional, world-class education, training and research. We promote an ethos of life-long learning and continuing professional development. We ensure that the planning profession is exemplary, upholding the highest ethics and professional standards. We provide professional practice guidance.

Our Staffing Structure



In England, a Regional Coordinator works with each of the Regions and all regional activities are overseen by the Head of English Regions.

In the Nations, our Director of Scotland and Ireland and our Director of Wales and Northern Ireland oversee the activities of volunteer groups, in their respective areas.

London Office	Edinburgh Office	Cardiff Office
41 Botolph Lane, London EC3R 8DL	18 Atholl Crescent, Edinburgh EH3 8HQ	Studio 107 Creative Quarter, Morgan Arcade, Cardiff CF10 1AF
Tel: 020 7929 9494	Tel: 0131 229 9628	Tel: 020 7929 8181

“

69% of respondents to the Volunteer Survey reported that their contribution helps achieve the objects of a work area of the RTPI.

“

62% of respondents to the Volunteer Survey reported that their contribution positively impacts the wider planning profession.

Volunteering at the RTPI

The RTPI has over 1000 volunteers across the Institute in a variety of roles. Our [Volunteering Charter](#) shows that the RTPI is committed to volunteering being a positive and enriching experience for all those who chose to get involved. Volunteering is a worthwhile opportunity that is open to everyone, and the Institute firmly believes that every member has something to offer. Our volunteers make a significant contribution to the work we do.

Almost half of all the volunteer roles at the RTPI are in governance roles.

The RTPI Board of Trustees

[The Board of Trustees](#) is our governing body and is responsible for the strategic direction of the RTPI and promoting its objectives. The Board of Trustees is composed of the Honorary Officers of the RTPI, eight members elected by the General Assembly and one member elected from the Regions and Nations representatives on the General Assembly. Board members are also the charity trustees of the RTPI, which is a registered charity (with the exception of the Chief Executive, who is a member of the board but not a trustee). Trustees have overall control of a charity and are responsible for making sure it's doing what it was set up to do. Trustees have specific responsibilities in addition to other volunteer roles and these are outlined on the [Charity Commission's website](#).



I have found volunteering to be hugely rewarding in allowing me to build understanding of and experience in areas related to my normal working world and to explore things way beyond this. Along the way it has helped me to build personal and professional networks and many genuine and long-lasting friendships.

Committee Chair and Board Member

General Assembly

[General Assembly](#) provides a forum for debate about planning policy and practice. It consists of trustees and elected members representing a broad range of membership groups and locations. General Assembly is the electoral college of the six corporate members who sit on the Board of Trustees.

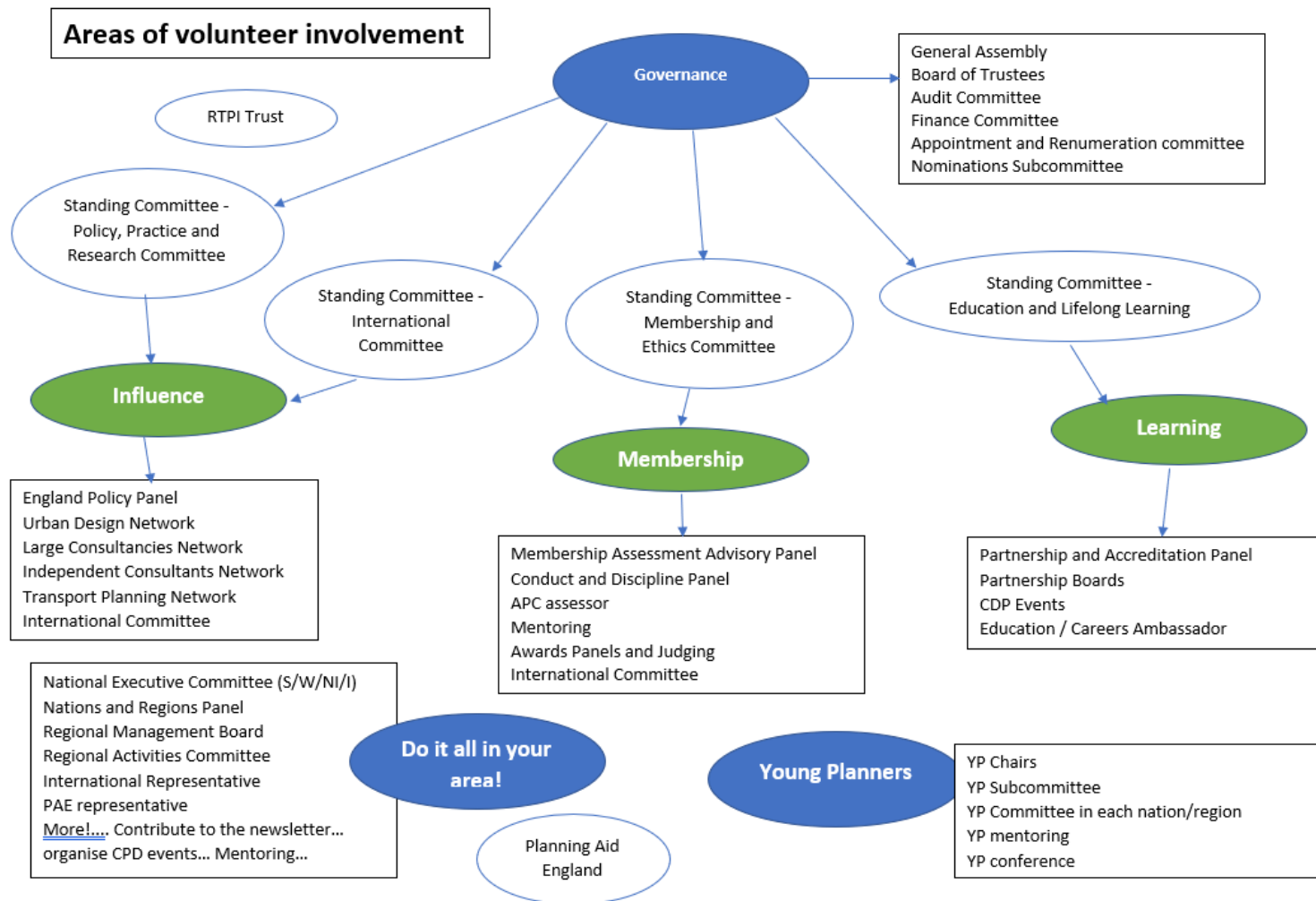
Committees

The RTPI has a number of standing [committees](#), some of which have delegated authority from the Board of Trustees, dealing with planning policy, membership, ethics, education and lifelong learning, and international affairs. Each English region has its own Regional Management Board, elected by local members. Scotland, Northern Ireland and Ireland all have their own Executive Committees, which have extensive delegated authority; Wales has a Management Board with similar delegated powers.

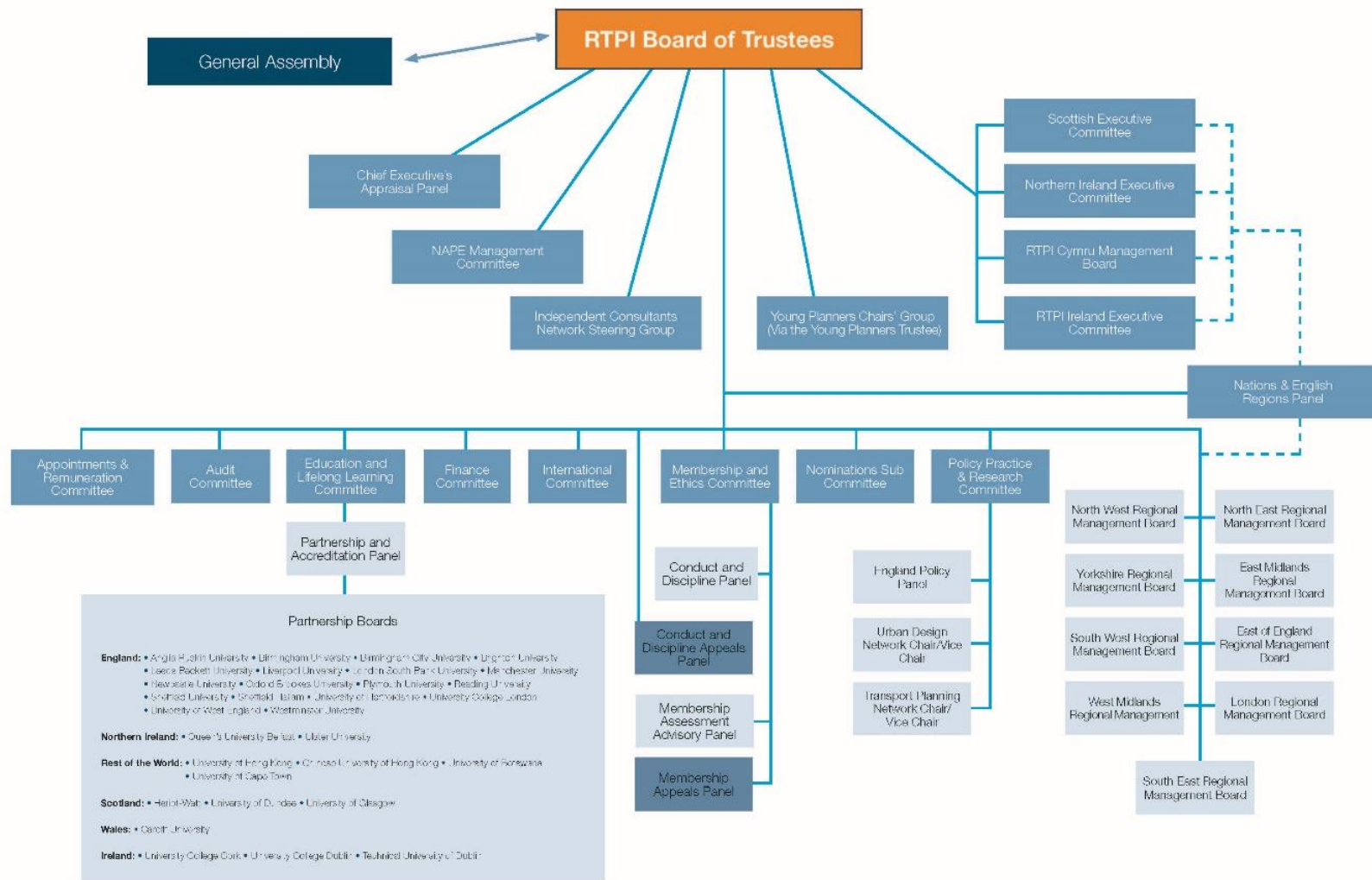
Of course, there are variety of other roles available including shorter term, more flexible opportunities. The Regional Activities Committee have several working groups that are always looking for extra help and you don't have to be on the committee. Or you could just help a local event run smoothly on the day, become a school ambassador, or write a blog for the RTPI. The ['get involved'](#) and ['what's right for me'](#) page of the website are the best place to see the full variety of opportunities available to suit your interests and career stage.



Incoming Chairs, Regions and Nations, 2023



This diagram shows you how areas of volunteer involvement relate to the 3 strategic priority areas (see page 5).



RTPI © May 2021

Organogram giving more detail of RTPI Governance and related areas of involvement.

Your Volunteering

Getting Started

Induction and Training

Your **key contact** will arrange a **role specific induction** for you and is there to provide support to you in your voluntary role. If there is anything that you need further guidance on, please do not hesitate to get in touch with your Key contact.

This **handbook for all volunteers** is intended to give further guidance and support, whatever role you are involved with at the RTPI. In addition, you will be invited along to an **induction to the RTPI** with other new volunteers. This session will introduce the organisation and what you can expect as a volunteer.

As part of your induction, you will receive a copy of your **role description**, which details the types of activities that you will be involved with. You will be introduced to other volunteers and RTPI staff whom you are likely to come into contact with in your role.

The Volunteer Hub

The volunteer hub provides information relevant to all volunteers and allows you access to group folders and files specifically for the volunteering you're involved in. Groups will get started on the Hub during 2023.



Volunteering on the General Assembly has been an enjoyable opportunity. Being able to gain first hand understanding of the many ways the RTPI support and engages its members and having an opportunity to guide the strategic direction of the organisation makes this a challenging and rewarding role.

Town Planner, large built environment consultancy

Day to Day

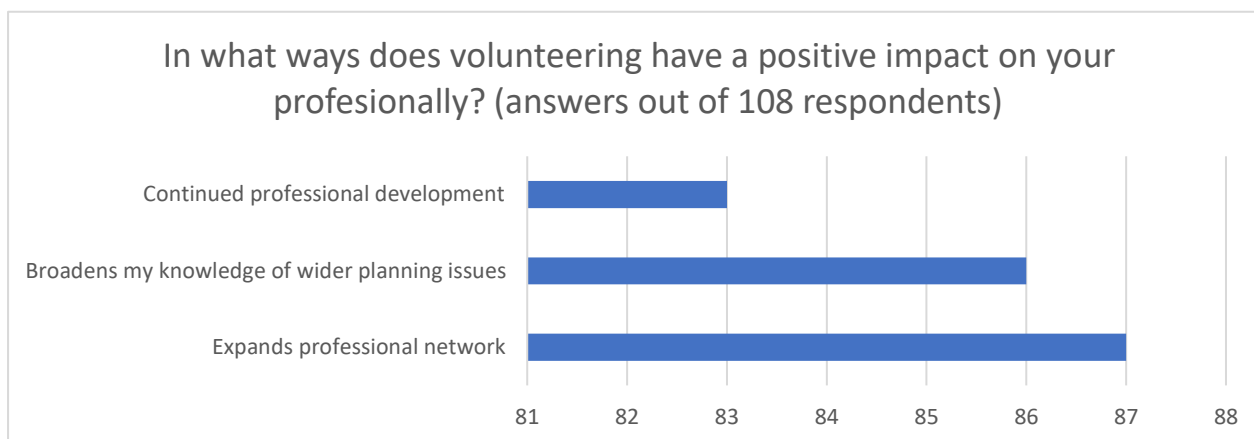
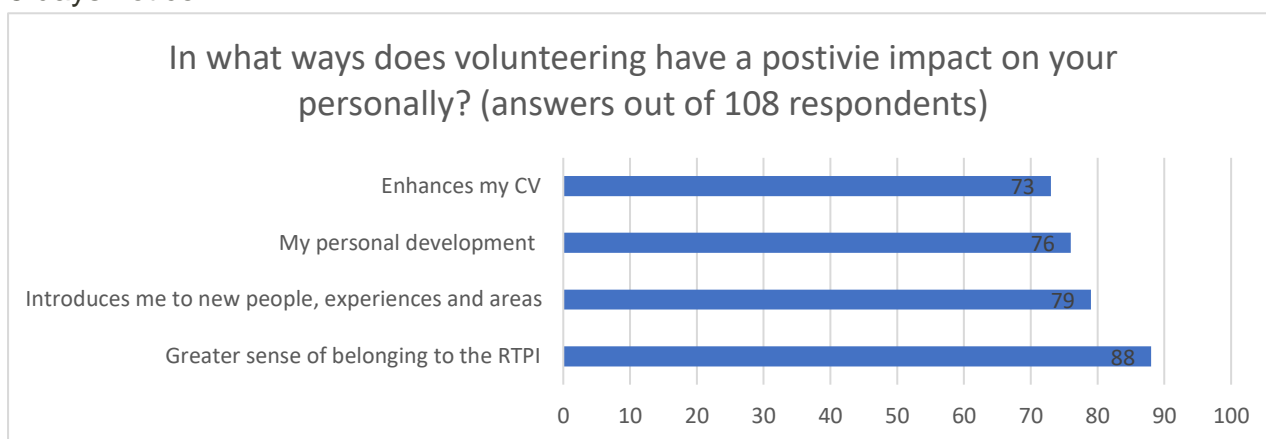
Support

We want your experience of volunteering to be a positive one. Your **key contact** is the RTPI staff member who will support you in your role, during your time volunteering.

When requesting assistance or information from your key contact, please be mindful that RTPI staff have various work commitments and may not always be able to respond immediately. All requests should be submitted with reasonable notice, explaining why the information is being requested and its intended purpose.

Similarly, staff are asked to respect that you are volunteering your time and will have other commitments elsewhere and therefore you also need notice to respond and act on any communication.

It is suggested that for communications, in either direction, they are sent with at least 5 days notice.



Confidentiality

You may be responsible for confidential RTPI information, and you need to protect and maintain confidentiality of the Institute, members and other stakeholders. You must not reveal any confidential information relating to the RTPI or RTPI Services Ltd or any other related body, except in cases where you are authorised or required by law.

Never pass personal details onto a third party. Only members of staff should send out emails and information to RTPI contacts unless other arrangements have been authorised in advance.

If you are in doubt as to whether information is confidential or not, please get in touch with your RTPI key contact.

Representing the RTPI

As a volunteer you have a key role to play in representing and promoting the RTPI's mission and support its work to champion planning as a profession through engaging and supporting others.

Due to this, we ask that you protect and uphold the RTPI brand, and if you're creating anything where you need to use the brand, your key contact will advise you regarding templates and brand guidelines.

As a volunteer you will be in the position of representing the RTPI to other members, RTPI staff and the public. As a result, you may be involved in supporting opinions or views when representing the RTPI that contrast with your own opinions or views. If this is the case, volunteers should make the RTPI aware of this and must continue to support the agreed RTPI view, stating that they are acting in the capacity of a volunteer. If a volunteer wishes to present a personal opinion and they are acting on behalf of the RTPI they need to clearly indicate that this is their own, and not the RTPI's opinion.

Volunteers are encouraged to debate RTPI policy and decisions; however, this must be done in appropriate forums, such as committee meetings. Decisions must be made that are in the best interests of the RTPI.

Any enquiries from the media should be referred to your Key Contact and the Marketing and Communications team.

Conflicts of interest

Volunteers are expected to always act in the best interest of the Institute and not for personal or third-party gain. The reputation of planning is based on public perceptions of fair and transparent conduct by planners who act with integrity, independence, and probity.

A conflict of interest is any situation in which a volunteer's personal interests or loyalties could, or could be seen to, prevent the volunteer from making a decision only in the best interests of the RTPI.

When encountering potential conflict of interest, volunteers should identify the conflict and report it to the Governance Manager and their RTPI key contact, who may ask them to remove themselves from all discussions and voting on the matter.

Volunteers should not accept gifts or any other item of value from any person or entity as a direct or indirect inducement to provide special treatment to such donor with respect to matters pertaining to the RTPI without fully disclosing such items to the Governance Manager in advance.

Examples of conflicts of interest may include:

- volunteering on a project where the volunteer is already employed or has a commercial interest in the venture, and this may or may not result in personal gain
- engaging in party political activity, supporting a specific campaign, influencing voters to vote for or against a particular party or particular election candidate
- a volunteer being involved in a selection process and a candidate is a friend or relative of the volunteer.

If you are in any doubt, please contact the Governance Manager.

Feedback

There will be key points in your volunteer journey where we seek your feedback. For example, after induction to a new role, when checking in with your key contact and on exit. We also run a biennial survey for all volunteers on your broader experience of volunteering.

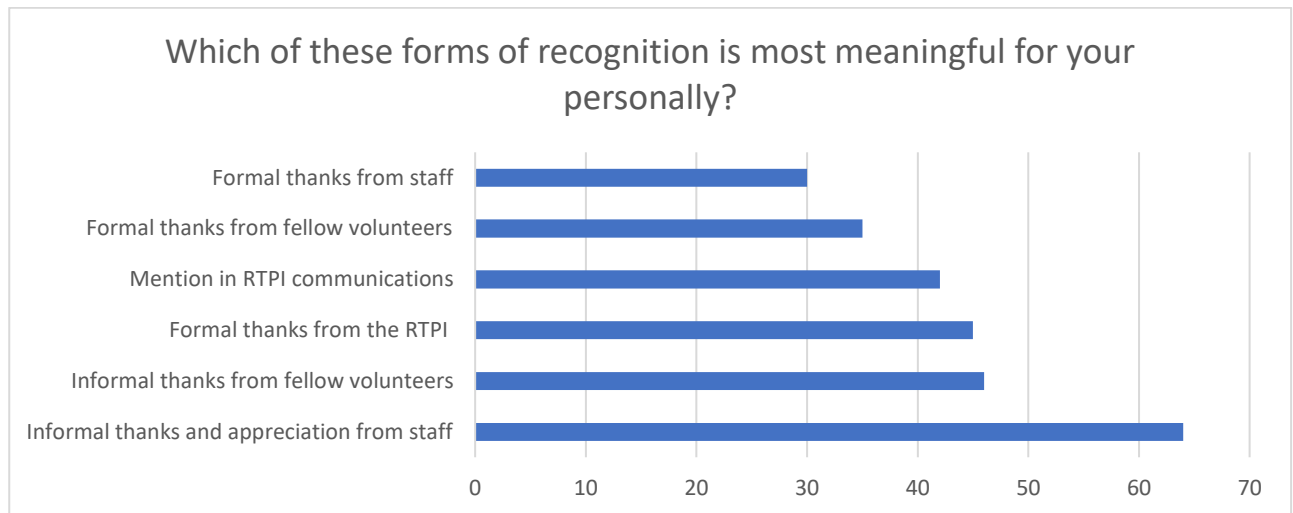
We believe as a volunteer you are well placed to know what we should do differently or better so your feedback is welcome. If you have any feedback regarding volunteering with the RTPI please let your key contact or the Volunteer Project Co-ordinator know.

If you have concerns about anything related to your volunteering and you do not feel that the issue has been resolved by raising it with your key contact, please refer to the Volunteer Problem Solving Procedure available on the Hub (see Policies and Procedures Section).

Recognising Volunteers

We appreciate the contribution that you make to the work of the RTPI and want you to feel that your time is valued. Volunteers are recognised in a variety of ways, the most meaningful of which is often the informal thanks that people receive from their fellow volunteers and local staff. (Volunteer Survey, 2022 findings)

During 2023 we will be putting in place guidance for staff on Thanking volunteers, so we are more consistent in our approach.



Tim Crawshaw, President 2022, recognising Geoff Walker's 40 years of volunteering.

Progression and Endings

Volunteering and CPD

Did you know you can record some volunteering as Continuing Professional Development (CPD)? Depending on what you've identified in your Personal Development Plan (PDP) volunteering offers you opportunities to develop both your skills and knowledge.

Find out more here: [core-cpd-principles.pdf \(rtpi.org.uk\)](#) In the 'recommended sources of CPD' table, almost everything mentioned in the CPD Role-model (right hand column) is a voluntary activity.

Log your CPD hours here: [RTPI | Profile](#). You need to demonstrate what you've learnt and how you've interacted with the learning, so it will be personal to you and your PDP.

Further Opportunities

There are so many opportunities available at the RTPI it can be hard to know what to do next. Hopefully the diagrams on pages 7 and 8 of the handbook help make this a little clearer. We've also got information on the [website](#) about what you can do depending on your career stage, for example, if you're chartered or looking to progress.

Have you considered progressing to the Vice Chair and Chair roles within the group, committee, or network that you're in? This is a great way to build on the experience you have in a familiar area. Speak to your key contact to find out more.

Stopping Volunteering

Many of the roles at the RTPI require a commitment of a term, which can be one, two or three years and this will be outlined in the role description. However, we understand that circumstances change, and you may no longer be able to carry out your volunteering role, so please let your key contact know as soon as possible.

If the RTPI wish you to stop acting on behalf of the RTPI at any time, then you will be notified by your RTPI key contact or the relevant Head of Service. Some of the reasons that may lead to this are:

- The role has come to an end e.g., RTPI decides not to continue with the activity you have been helping with.
- There is a conflict of interest with the activities that you are involved with outside of your volunteering role
- Conduct that is likely to bring the good name and reputation of RTPI into disrepute

Recognising Endings

As part of our commitment to thanking volunteers, we also want to recognise when roles come to a natural end. Many roles are based on 'terms' and hopefully you'll go on to get involved in other roles. We still want to make sure you are thanked at this point and it's part of our guidance on thanking volunteers.

Policies and procedures

Please support the RTPI's mission and values by taking the time to become familiar with policies and procedures that are in place relating to volunteering.

All these documents can be found in full on the [Resources](#) section of the website.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

At the RTPI equality, diversity and inclusion is at the heart of our values and objectives. We are committed to creating and maintaining a diverse and inclusive environment and freedom from discrimination in our employment, volunteering, and the services we provide.

All of our members, volunteers and employees have a right to be treated with dignity and respect and the RTPI will not tolerate any behaviour that is contrary to this. We expect volunteers to respect national, regional, ethnic and cultural differences and comply with the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

Health and Safety

We are committed to maintaining a safe working environment for everyone. Staff and volunteers are expected to take reasonable care to ensure their own safety and that of other people who may be affected by their actions. A few key points to consider are:

- If you are visiting an RTPI office, please ensure you familiarise yourself with the emergency evacuation procedure for the office.
- All of our offices have qualified first aiders present. If you have an accident at one of our offices, please contact reception (at Botolph Lane) or the Office Manager (at RTPI Scotland/RTPI Cymru) for assistance and to complete an accident report.
- Volunteers should take reasonable care when travelling to and from volunteering duties, particularly if travelling in the early morning or late evening. Volunteers whose role involves aspects of "lone working" e.g., visiting sites to conduct surveys, should take reasonable care of their own personal safety, act in a professional manner at all times and ensure that site owners are given reasonable notice of their visit in advance.
- Some roles or tasks might have a risk assessment associated with it which your key contact will make you aware of. If you have concerns regarding your safety when volunteering, please speak with your key contact who will undertake a risk assessment and discuss with you any appropriate actions to mitigate or eliminate risks.

Data Protection

It is unlikely that you will be holding personal information in your volunteering role, but it is important that you are aware of what constitutes personal data and the legal requirements around this, should there be an occasion when you come into contact with handling personal data.

Personal data includes names, contact details, date of birth and any other information from which the individual can be identified, whether stored electronically or in paper-based filing systems.

Personal data must be processed in accordance with the seven key GDPR principles. It must be:

- Processed fairly, lawfully and transparently
- Processed only for specified particular purposes
- Adequate, relevant and not excessive
- Accurate and, kept up to date
- Kept for no longer than necessary
- Kept securely
- The RTPI is accountable for the data it holds and how it complies with all principles.

Insurance

Members are protected whilst actively volunteering for the RTPI, provided that they are acting as authorised by their RTPI key contact i.e. they are acting in accordance with their role description and the volunteer handbook. RTPI has 2 types of insurance:

- **Public Liability Insurance** provides cover to RTPI volunteers who are injured or involved in an accident whilst volunteering for the Institute. This insurance does not cover volunteer journeys from home to the volunteering venue or damage to the volunteer's own vehicle so volunteers should check to ensure they have their own adequate insurance cover for this.
- **Professional Indemnity Insurance** provides cover to RTPI volunteers for claims arising from loss or injury caused by services provided negligently or without reasonable care by its employees or registered volunteers e.g., such loss might arise from a volunteer giving misleading or inaccurate advice.

The RTPI indemnifies Chartered and Legal Members for the professional advice they give to clients. Only Chartered Members volunteering for the RTPI are covered to give professional planning advice to RTPI clients.

Volunteers must adhere to the guidelines set out in this document and report any matter to us that may affect the Institute's Professional Indemnity Insurance. Failure

to comply with guidelines or notify the Institute may render this insurance cover invalid.

Expenses

RTPI appreciates the time and talent spent on its activities by volunteers, members of the Institute, staff, and trustees. In supporting the activities, expenses will be incurred which the Institute is pleased to reimburse. Included in Our Climate Action Plan is a commitment to reduce emissions resulting from travel. To support this, please think carefully about travel and the alternatives to it to reduce the emissions it causes.

From 2023, all expense claims will be made online using ExpenseIn. Further details on the policy and how to claim can be found on the [volunteering resources](#) page of the website.

Problem Solving

The Institute does not tolerate bullying or harassment. Any issues or concerns will be taken seriously and dealt with under the Volunteer Problem Solving Procedure. Complaints regarding the professional conduct of a volunteer providing planning advice will be addressed, if appropriate, by the RTPI Complaints Procedure and the Code of Professional Conduct.



Thank you for volunteering with the
RTPI.

Providing this handbook for all
volunteers is part of our work to
increase consistency across the
Volunteer Journey at the RTPI.

Please get in touch if you have any
suggestions for volunteering.

*Zoe MacGregor, Volunteer Project
Co-ordinator*

zoe.macgreor@rtpi.org.uk