



By Email Only

6th May 2022

Message from Chief Planner

In this month's Newsletter we highlight updated advice from Natural England, including a brochure to help stakeholders prepare for forthcoming mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain. Meanwhile, DLUHC is calling for volunteers to take part in two programmes of user-research: on planning reform and environmental assessment; and has now commenced round 2 of the PropTech engagement fund. Finally, the DLUHC Planning Graduate Scheme is now recruiting for intake in Autumn 2022, providing a fantastic opportunity for recent graduate planners to join the Civil Service.

You may also find the results of the *Appealing Design* research report published by the Place Alliance encouraging. The report examines appeals data before and after July 2021, when the NPPF was revised and the National Model Design Code published, to shed some light on the impact that this new government policy is having on decisions around design.

The findings are hugely positive, with local authorities three times more likely to be successful at design-related appeal than before. The new design guidance has given inspectors the basis on which to consider design, giving it greater weight than previously. With this in mind, Local authorities should feel more confident to stand by strong design standards when making planning decisions. I encourage everyone to read the report which can be found [here](#) and also refer back to the [NPPF updates](#), [National Design Guide](#) and [National Model Design Code](#).

Kind regards

Joanna Averley
Chief Planner



DLUHC Planning Graduate Scheme

DLUHC established a Planning Graduate Programme in 2016 and have since recruited a cohort of graduates each year. We are now currently advertising for up to three graduate posts to start with us in September 2022.

Planning graduates will complete placements within DLUHC's planning policy divisions over a period of two years, supported by a dedicated mentor. The programme offers participants further development and training, along with dedicated support with Royal Town Planning Institute charterhip.

With the planning system a key enabler of the Government's wider mission to level-up the country and regenerate left-behind places, it is a particularly exciting time to be joining the Planning Directorate.

The posts are being advertised on the [Civil Service Jobs website](#) and will be open for graduates to apply until Sunday 29th May.

Updated Advice on Protected Species & Ancient Woodland, Ancient and Veteran Trees

Natural England updated its [standing advice on Protected Species](#) on GOV.UK on 14th January. This sets out core advice for local planning authorities and specific advice for individual protected species and groups of species. The advice has been streamlined and simplified, with a clearer distinction between planning and wildlife licensing requirements and updated links to other guidance.

Natural England and the Forestry Commission have also updated their [joint standing advice on Ancient Woodland, Ancient and Veteran Trees](#). The revised version includes further detail on the effects of development, mitigation and compensation measures, and buffer zones. An updated assessment guide to help planning authorities record their decisions has also been published.

The standing advice should be taken into account by planning authorities as a material consideration when making decisions on development proposals. Use of the standing advice enables planning authorities to make decisions that address impacts on protected species or ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees without the need for consultation in most cases. Natural England will focus its advice on designated site issues that require a bespoke response. The Forestry Commission can be contacted for advice on issues not covered by the ancient woodland standing advice.



Natural England publish brochure on Biodiversity Net Gain

Natural England have recently published a [brochure](#) on Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) to help stakeholders prepare for mandatory BNG. This concise and high-level brochure is intended to prompt thinking and support introductory conversations about BNG.

The brochure outlines key information on how the future mandatory approach to BNG is intended to operate, with a particular focus on leadership in local planning authorities, landowners and developers. It highlights the significant opportunities that BNG presents for nature, people, and the economy, as well as signposting to further sources of information, guidance, and advice that are currently available.

[Natural England's brochure](#) has been positively received to date and they are keen for this useful resource to reach a wide audience. Please do cascade the brochure to any interested, relevant parties, and encourage all stakeholders to kick-start their thinking and engagement in anticipation of mandatory BNG.

Call for Participation: User Research and Planning Reform

DLUHC is continuing to carry out user research to support the planning reform programme. The research is user-centred, which means we're speaking to those involved in the planning system, from all sectors, to hear about your experiences.

We're calling for anyone involved in planning to sign up to be part of our user research panel. You may have signed up to this opportunity already or taken part – if so, thank you! We're very keen to ensure we're hearing from a diverse range of planning perspectives, so we're particularly encouraging women to sign up as well as those from minority backgrounds.

Signing up to the panel means that when we're conducting research, you'll be offered the opportunity to take part. Each opportunity is on a voluntary basis, so you're not obligated to get involved, but you'll hear about it first.

If you would like to consider taking part in upcoming research on a confidential basis, sign up through [this form](#). More information about user research, how we anonymise your inputs, and how we store your data can be viewed through this [privacy notice](#).

Get Involved: Environmental Assessment Reform

Leaving the EU provides the opportunity to create a more streamlined and effective approach to environmental assessment, namely Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) - including Sustainability Appraisal and Appraisals of Sustainability, and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) at the project level. The Government has committed to reforming the current processes and we are



conducting user research to develop options for addressing the current challenges in the use of these processes. This information will inform proposals to target the areas of EIA and SEA most in need of improvement, which officials will progress this year.

We are keen to hear from individuals within the planning sector, particularly planning professionals located within local planning authorities, developers of any size, and infrastructure promoters, who have managed the Sustainability Appraisal or SEA process of their local plan or other plan; or who have recent experience of submitting or processing one or more EIA applications. We are looking for people to share their knowledge and experience with us to help us develop and test opportunities for reform. If this is something that you believe you can help with, please fill out the form [here](#) by the 13th May to sign up for one of our user research workshops or interviews. You can also view our privacy notice [here](#).

PropTech Engagement Fund – Announcement of Round 2 LPA Partners

Round 2 of the PropTech Engagement fund has been [announced by the Housing Minister](#) and the team at DLUHC have commenced working with 37 local authorities to accelerate the adoption of digital citizen engagement tools across the country.

Over £3.25 million from the PropTech Engagement Fund will be spent on 28 projects across England, trialling cutting-edge digital tools to make the planning system more open, engaging and accessible. This record level of investment into PropTech is a testament to the growing ambition from local authorities to help residents and businesses have their say on local planning and development across a range of projects including masterplanning, neighbourhood plans, estate regeneration, infrastructure and night-time strategies.

The pilots, which will run until September 2022, will inform the government's work to modernise the planning system and DLUHC is working closely with planning authorities across the country to establish best practice and identify where further digital guidance and innovations are needed.

Details of successful local authorities can [be found here](#) and for further information on programme updates and learnings please contact digitalplanningteam@levellingup.gov.uk.