

SPF VOICE

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SPF Chair

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Getting more young people and junior professionals involved in the work of the SPF and supporting their professional development are key priorities for my tenure as Chair. I was therefore delighted to announce the expansion of BPF Futures into Scotland earlier this week.

Established in 2017 and with over 1,300 members, BPF Futures is an active junior professionals' network open to members with less than 10 years' experience in the industry. Its expansion now opens doors for Scotland to access a wealth of opportunities including networking events, site visits, hackathons and more.

Members will also have access to the brand-new BPF Futures LAUNCHPAD platform, which will include a mentoring programme aimed at facilitating long-lasting relationships between senior figures and the industry's leaders of tomorrow. A pilot of this scheme is now open and will run from August this year with mentors pulled from the SPF and BPF's senior membership. If you are interested or have a colleague that would be able to take advantage of this scheme, more information is available on [page 5](#).

The BPF Futures offer will also see junior professionals invited to join in the work of our committees. Not only will this give the opportunity to collaborate with senior members to set the SPF's direction on a range of key Scottish Government policies, but it will also enable junior professionals to be at the forefront of our engagement with senior public sector officials.

Over the past few years, I have watched BPF Futures go from strength-to-strength, and I look forward to seeing the community of young-in-career property professionals grow here, too. Please do spread the word and encourage your junior talent to get involved.

Before I sign off, I'd like to take the opportunity to thank members for their incredible support and insight over these past few busy months. I wish you and your family a good summer, and I look forward to writing to you again in my next column at the end of August.

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POLICY INSIGHTS

INDUSTRY INVOLVEMENT AT COP26

A coalition of almost 100 partner organisations - including the BPF - has launched an international 'Open Call' for projects and creative idea submissions to form part of the global COP26 Built Environment Virtual Pavilion, which will be delivered as part of COP26 in Glasgow. The Virtual Pavilion will explore key sustainability themes through a virtual reality exhibition of global projects and places with a focus on practical solutions for change.

The Open Call is looking for entries to two elements of the Virtual Pavilion – exemplary projects for the exhibition and a sustainability focussed installation that will act as a centrepiece within the exhibition. You can find out more about the submission criteria and get involved [here](#).

The coalition also hopes to have a physical presence at COP26. Delegates will be able to experience the exhibition via Virtual Reality headsets or tablets, depending on COVID-19 restrictions.

REGULATORY AND OTHER BARRIERS TO INVESTMENT

The SPF Chair met with the Scottish Government's Global Capital Investment Team. In addition to the key themes and policies highlighted in our Action Plan, and the Scottish Government's Global Capital Investment Plan, the discussion focused on how the public and private sectors could work more closely together to encourage investment and deliver key infrastructure to drive growth.

We have long called for a National Infrastructure Agency to be established, reflecting a key recommendation following the review of the Scottish Planning System in 2016. There is also the 'cluttered landscape' of public sector organisations and funds designed to support investment in Scotland, which also needs to be considered. An accountable, fair, and transparent structure for the full co-ordination of diverse funding sources is critical.

We agreed to consider the key regulatory and other barriers to investment and how these could be overcome. We are currently preparing a paper exploring this further and if you have any views please get in touch.

A STEP CLOSER TO OFFICES REOPENING

With almost all Scottish coronavirus restrictions due to end in August, the Scottish Government has been setting out its plans for the phased reopening of offices in the coming weeks.

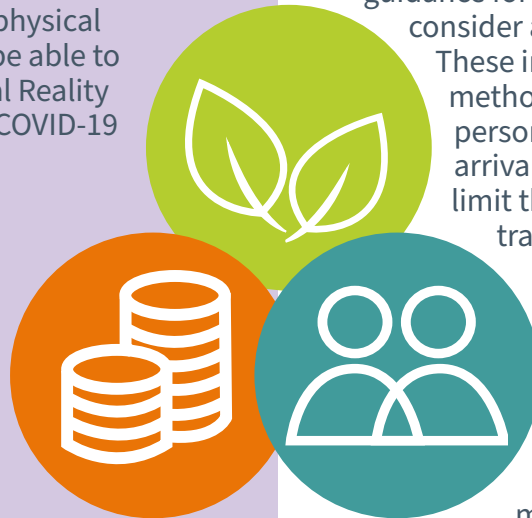
Currently, guidance states that only 'essential' offices should be open; however, once Scotland moves to Level Zero, remaining offices can re-open taking account of physical distancing maximum capacity identified in their COVID-19 workplace risk assessment. This step is expected to happen on 19 July 2021 and at the same time physical distancing indoors is due to be halved to 1 metre.

While allowing a more general reopening, the guidance for Level Zero still asks employers to consider a number of mitigation measures. These include hosting meetings using virtual methods to limit the requirement for in-person meetings and adopting staggered arrival and departure/shift patterns to limit the number of people using public transport during the rush-hour period.

The next key change is due on 9 August when almost all COVID restrictions will be removed as set out in the Scottish Government's Strategic Framework. This step will see physical distancing reduced to 0 metres indoors and create the closest thing to pre-COVID normality in offices since the start of the first lockdown.

That said, the Scottish Government will still be 'strongly' encouraging businesses to allow some level of working from home, based on the needs of each organisation and their employees. Some baseline measures will also continue to be maintained, potentially including the wearing of masks in certain areas, although the exact details are yet to be confirmed.

Of course, the removal of restrictions has often been a movable feast, and the Scottish Government's guidance makes clear that dates are not set in stone. Ahead of both the 19 July and 9 August milestones, the Scottish Parliament will be recalled from its summer recess to hear from the First Minister on whether the Scottish Government will be proceeding with the plan. Pre-conditions already set by the Scottish Government include hospital admissions and that at least all over-40s will have had their second vaccine.



REGIONAL SPOTLIGHT



Dundee

In Dundee, members discussed the planning system and the opportunities and challenges to building back the city centre following the pandemic with local authority officials. A helpful insight into the Dundee University's experience of dealing with the pandemic and its future plans was also given.

Glasgow

A new plan to guide student accommodation in Glasgow has been approved by Glasgow City Council. The key changes made include a guiding principle 'that no one area has limitless capacity to absorb student accommodation' and that a mixed-tenure requirement is now expected in all sites with a floorspace of over 0.3 hectares out with the city centre and 0.2 hectares in the city centre.

Edinburgh

The City of Edinburgh Council has updated its Economic Strategy and produced a City Centre Recovery Plan in response to new pressures resulting from the pandemic. Both the Economic Strategy and the City Centre Recovery Plan will now go through a consultation period before the final documents are published in November this year.



BPF FUTURES LAUNCHPAD

Your path. Our future.

BPF Futures is a community of talented, young-in-career professionals who are passionate about our industry and want to shape its future while learning from each other and industry leaders. Join us today and your voice will help shape a more positive future for the property industry. Membership is open to anyone with fewer than 10 years' experience in the property industry – in England and Scotland.

As a BPF Futures member, you'll have access to the BPF Futures LAUNCHPAD – a new learning and development **platform** that provides members with unrivalled professional development opportunities, a strong voice and an active role in supporting the industry's engagement with the UK Government.

BPF Futures LAUNCHPAD provides the platform for you to network and share knowledge with both your peers and senior industry leaders – and to have your say. The platform is framed by four key pillars:

1

Influenceing

Giving you the chance to help shape the built environment of the future

2

Learning

Helping you to understand the key issues facing the industry

3

Mentoring

Connecting you with senior leaders across the industry

4

Networking

Enabling you to build relationships with your peers across the public and private sectors

From our new BPF Futures Policy Congress and **mentoring programme** to our comprehensive webinar series, site visits and access to the MySPF Portal and BPF Futures Forum – the property industry's future is in your hands.

Find out more about BPF Futures LAUNCHPAD and sign up to become a BPF Futures member [here!](#)

INDUSTRY INSIGHT



Twenty years and still going strong – an appreciation of the PSG

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Although property lawyers are particularly partial to a good style, over the years, the negotiation of regularly used transactional documents had become increasingly fraught, spending hours on every transaction, negotiating each firm's own preferred style of document.

The Property Standardisation Group was formed in 2001 to help address this, by producing balanced standardised forms of routinely used commercial property documents to save time, letting lawyers focus on their clients' deal-specific issues; delegate with confidence to more junior lawyers; and manage and reduce risk.

A unique collaboration

The creators of the PSG:

- Dundas & Wilson (now CMS),
- Maclay Murray & Spens (now Dentons),
- McGrigors (now Pinsent Masons) and
- Shepherd and Wedderburn

shared a vision: to work together to produce documents incorporating a standard position for non-contentious points. This collaborative drafting exercise soon expanded into streamlining, and innovating on style and process. The PSG rose to the challenge of significant legislative changes, spending many hours analysing and interpreting the new laws, and translating them into new workable drafting solutions, addressing feudal abolition; title conditions; SDLT, then LBTT; community rights to buy; major reform of land registration; and the move to digital registration.

Innovation

Over the next 20 years, the PSG produced more than 95 documents with corresponding guidance notes. Many of these documents cater for routine transactions like lease management documents enabling property lawyers to draft and agree final terms in minutes rather than hours.

The PSG has not been shy to challenge transactional norms. In 2003, the introduction of SDLT prompted the PSG to rethink procedural as well as drafting aspects of

the new tax, providing simple steps for parties to follow and incorporate into their documents.

Following seismic changes with feudal abolition and to title conditions, the PSG produced a suite of simple-format documents taking the guesswork out of this new legislation. Residential documents introduced in 2015 took this simplified format to a new level.

Tackling the time-consuming process of adjusting commercial property missives led to the producing of Offers to Sell: the seller drafts the contract from a position of knowledge, meaning a contract is concluded more swiftly and easily.

Originally, the prospect of a Scottish standardised commercial lease seemed remote, with the difficulties in balancing the needs of a well-advised tenant and an institutional investor. The introduction of the Model Commercial Lease, a client led collaboration in England, provided the PSG with the ideal opportunity to adapt these to Scottish equivalents, fit for purpose in the Scottish market.

The four core members and their supporters

Original founding members, Ann Stewart of S+W and Rachel Oliphant of Pinsent Masons currently work with Paul Haniford of Dentons and Kirsten Partridge of CMS Cameron McKenna Nabarro Olswang. Together they continue the voluntary work of the PSG whose output is freely available for all to use via the website www.psglegal.co.uk.

Robust peer review is essential to the project: the PSG has an active group of consultee members (details on the PSG website) who provide input on new documents.

The future

It is no exaggeration to say that the PSG has transformed, for the better, the way in which commercial property lawyers in Scotland work. It is a unique collaboration that has been of immeasurable benefit to property lawyers and their clients, and it shows no sign of tiring, with a healthy list of current projects, and anticipating changes in the future. The mission continues.