**On World Town Planning Day 2021, Janet Askew, the new President of the ECTP-CEU was invited to speak at the WTPD conference on POST-COVID PLANNING, hosted by the Malta Chamber of Planners, the University of Malta and the ECTP-CEU. This is the text of her WTPD speech:**

On World Town Planning Day, I am proud to join with colleagues in Malta along with 100,000 planners across the world to celebrate our profession of town planning. As planners we seek always to act in the public interest to ensure the fair use of land, and to protect resources for the quality of life for future generations. We are working hard to apply the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals, and their main aim, of course, is to eliminate poverty.

We believe that planners are central to the world’s efforts to resolve two of the biggest issues of our time – climate change and post-COVID recovery. It is always remarkable to me that however much our countries differ, we are faced with similar problems. In the UK, the climate conference, COP26, is bringing home to the government and, I hope, to the public just what the climate crisis means. It has certainly had a lot of publicity. As planners we must keep up the pressure to reduce emissions to work towards net zero.

If the pandemic was expected, many countries were ill-prepared for it. As we struggle to free ourselves of it, we know that planners have a vital role to play in helping urban and rural areas to recover. It is heartening to read about initiatives and innovations which will enable citizens to lead healthier lives - more public open space, for example, fewer cars, reduction in air pollution, more active travel, and hopefully better housing. Poor housing and affordability are ubiquitous problems across the world, and the pandemic has left us much more aware of the threat to our health from unsustainable living.

The European Council of Spatial Planners has commissioned case studies of recovery efforts from our members. At our recent general assembly, we heard from many of our members about initiatives in their countries. We were doing what planners all over the globe are doing, and it is a privilege to be party to so many new ideas from which we can learn. By working together towards common goals, we exchange knowledge to assist and support each other - and try to influence our governments. This is a major challenge for town planners, although arguably, the bigger challenge of persuasion is to convince citizens and communities that planning is a progressive force to create more sustainable, resilient and socially just places.

In the ECTP, we aim to define the distinctive role of the professional spatial planner in Europe. We strongly believe that good planning requires qualified planners and that the absence of a legally recognised profession in many of our countries is detrimental to achieving good planning and to encouraging students to take up planning courses. I have already mentioned how planners are crucial for post-COVID recovery, and if we take this seriously, then the profession needs to be given the status it deserves to ensure that planning work is done by the right people who are qualified to do it. In the ECTP, our new executive is committed to the goals of achieving parity for planners across Europe.

We are delighted that Maltese planners join with planners across Europe to play an active role in the ECTP-CEU, and we welcome the contribution of planners everywhere to World Town Planning Day.

**Janet ASKEW**

President

