



Oifig an  
Rialaitheora Pleanála  
Office of the  
Planning Regulator

## OPR Paper

# Development Plan Monitoring

# Measuring What Matters

November 2024



### **The role of the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR)**

The Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) was established in April 2019 on foot of recommendations made by the Tribunal of Inquiry into Certain Planning Matters and Payments (the Mahon Tribunal).

Our role is to ensure that local authorities and An Bord Pleanála support and implement Government planning policy.

We also implement planning research, training and public awareness in order to promote the public's engagement in the planning process and to enhance knowledge and public information about planning in Ireland.

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## Purpose of this OPR Paper

This OPR Paper builds on existing research on measuring and monitoring planning outcomes. It identifies the key findings from a workshop held by the OPR on 'Development Plan Monitoring' in June 2024, and highlights subsequent action areas and the steps that are required to support the sector.

For context, this workshop was designed using the findings of **Measuring What Matters: Planning Outcomes Research (2020)**, a report commissioned by the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) and co-funded by the OPR and governments of Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, England.

The OPR facilitated this workshop with key stakeholders to listen to their requirements, share experiences and discuss approaches adopted to date. It also provided an opportunity to identify key resources and data required to implement effective monitoring of development plans in Ireland.

While every care has been taken in the preparation of this Paper, the findings included may not be indicative of wider trends and opinions.

This paper is intended to act as a support and guide on emerging and identified issues, in particular from the workshop and should be viewed in that context.

We invite comments, feedback and suggestions on this paper, which can be sent to [research@opr.ie](mailto:research@opr.ie).



# Foreword



This OPR Paper follows up on the first area of our planning research in 2021. That research paper, titled 'Measuring What Matters: Planning Outcomes' was co-funded by the OPR, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) and governments of Scotland and Wales, in conjunction with the RTPI.

The idea for the research was spurred by a growing recognition across many jurisdictions that spatial plans need to better communicate their aims and impact to their target audience – the public and interested stakeholders. Specifically, that such plans better demonstrate their effects in improving the quality of life of citizens, our environment and communities.

More complex statutory and regulatory contexts for plan making here in Ireland and other administrations are resulting in larger and longer documents that are arguably too complex for members of the public to discern their essential objectives and how the plan is working for them or not.

As pointed out by the Courts<sup>1</sup>, a development plan is in effect an 'environmental contract' between local elected members and their electorate, which is aimed at securing long-term and strategic interests of communities in the interests of the common good over private or individual interests.

For any contract to perform effectively, it must be clear to the relevant parties what the contract is expected to deliver. With reform of planning legislation underway in Ireland, proposing a refreshed structure of national, regional and local development plans and urban development zones, it is timely to examine how to best communicate the essential aims of plans in terms of relevant outcomes, and progress – or otherwise – in relation to implementation.

To further develop the initial research findings, this paper incorporates feedback from a workshop in June 2024 which showcased new and highly innovative methods of communicating the essence of plans into measurable key objectives.

Supported by experts in planning authorities, government departments and state agencies alongside our planning institutes, our aim is to bring forward further practical approaches to enhancing the legibility and transparency of today's generation of spatial plans so that the planning process can always demonstrate its impact to the citizen.

**Niall Cussen, Planning Regulator**

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<sup>1</sup> Attorney General (McGarry) v Sligo County Council [1991]

# Acronym List



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**DHLGH** – Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

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**DP** – Development Plan

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**EPA** – Environmental Protection Agency

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**IPI** – Irish Planning Institute

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**KPI** – Key Performance Indicator

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**MWM** – Measuring What Matters

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**NOAC** – National Oversight and Audit Committee

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**NDP** – National Development Plan

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**NIFTI** – National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland

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**NPF** – National Planning Framework

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**NSO** – National Strategic Objective

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**NTA** – National Transport Authority

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**OPR** – Office of the Planning Regulator

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**RED III** – Renewable Energy Directive III

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**RRDF** – Rural and Regeneration Development Fund

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**RSES** – Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

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**RTPI** – Royal Town Planning Institute

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**SEA** – Strategic Environmental Assessment

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**SPC** – Strategic Policy Committee

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**TII** – Transport Infrastructure Ireland

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**UDZ** – Urban Development Zone

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**UÉ** – Uisce Éireann

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**URDF** – Urban Regeneration and Development Fund

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# 1 Introduction



## 1.1 Development Plan Monitoring: The Strategic and Statutory Policy Context

The foundations for plan-making and monitoring can be traced back to the parent planning act in 1963 when the concept of the development plan was first established. At that time, now over six decades ago, there was also a fundamental recognition of the planning authority's role in securing the objectives of their plan<sup>2</sup>.

This general duty further evolved with the Planning and Development Act, 2000 which includes the express requirement for the chief executive to report to the members of the planning authority on the progress achieved in securing the objectives of the development plan<sup>3</sup>.

Since 2001 Ireland's increasing environmental obligations under the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (SEA), has further enhanced the requirement to not only monitor indicators, but to identify adverse effects and undertake appropriate remedial action in relation to the effects of implementation of the development plan<sup>4</sup>.

The requirements of planning legislation was further supported by a suite of Ministerial guidelines<sup>5</sup> that provided planning authorities with practical approaches to undertaking monitoring and set out the priorities for monitoring. The first development plan guidelines (2007) placed focus on the development management data, planning permission take-up and had, understandably, a strong emphasis on housing given the housing strategy requirements for biennial reporting<sup>6</sup>.

The SEA guidelines (2004) provided practical advice on environmental monitoring and suitable indicators.

Over the decade beginning 2010 the role of the development plan further evolved in the context of wider strategic policy changes, against a particular economic background. The concept of core strategies became embedded in development plans to manage sustainable patterns of growth. In 2014, the local government system was reformed, Regional

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<sup>2</sup> Section 20 and Section 22 of the Local Government (Planning and Development) Act, 1963.

<sup>3</sup> Section 15 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended).

<sup>4</sup> Article 13J of the Planning and Development Regulations (2001), (as amended).

<sup>5</sup> Section 28, of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended).

<sup>6</sup> Section 95(3) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended).

Assemblies and the National Oversight Audit Commission (NOAC) were established<sup>7</sup> – each with roles in monitoring and oversight of outcomes at a strategic level.

Moving to the present day context the current generation of development plans are more outcome focussed. This is due to the influence of factors including Project Ireland: 2040, the establishment of URDF and RRDF, policy landscape of the NPF and RSES alongside the oversight role of the OPR.

The requirement for consistency between regional and national level policies<sup>8</sup> was supported by the updated Ministerial guidance on both development plans and SEA<sup>9</sup>.

The latest cycle of plan-making, has seen an improved evidence-based approach and analysis of data in the policy formulation stages. There are also indications that this policy approach is increasingly linked with investment and identifies where intervention is required. Monitoring, measuring and selection of indicators, is therefore integral to the policy development and plan-making process at the outset.



Photograph from the 'Measuring What Matters Workshop' held in June, 2024



<sup>7</sup> Local Government Reform Act, 2014 (as amended).

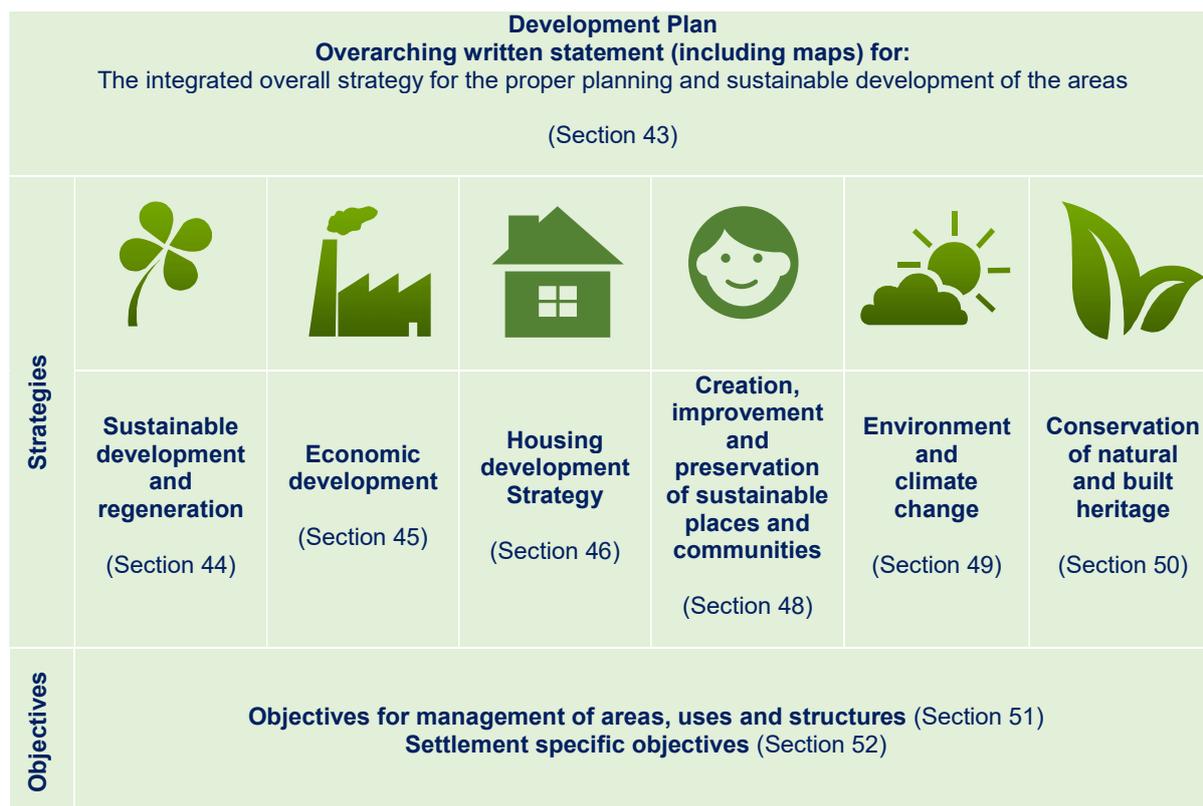
<sup>8</sup> Section 9(6) and 10 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended).

<sup>9</sup> Government of Ireland: Development Plans- Guidelines for Planning Authorities, June 2022 (DHLGH) and Strategic Environmental Assessment- Guidelines for Regional Assemblies and Planning Authorities, March 2022 (DHLGH).

## 1.2 Looking Ahead

In the last year the new Planning and Development Act was passed through Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann; and the first Draft Revision of the NPF was published for public consultation<sup>10</sup>.

The new planning act sets out that future development plans will have an extended lifespan of ten years, be strategic in nature, structured on six strategies<sup>11</sup> and include statements of objectives on development management and settlements, as illustrated below in Figure 1.



**Figure 1** | Next generation development plans

Future development plans will also be subject to an interim report on the implementation of the development plan<sup>12</sup>. The requirements of the interim implementation report are set out in detail in the Act. Unlike current requirements for S15 reports, the new regime will require a detailed statement of the progress made in implementing each of the key strategies and the objectives of the plan. The emphasis is firmly upon implementation. Where progress is not achieved, recommendations for variation to the development plan should be brought forward. The new interim implementation report, is in itself an active process that can evoke action and a development plan variation, rather than a mere statement of fact. There is also enhanced accountability through the requirements for resolution by members of the planning

<sup>10</sup> Bill initiated/presented to the House 22 Nov 2023.

<sup>11</sup> As required under Sections 44-51; including Sustainable development and regeneration(S44), Economic Development (S45), Housing (S46), Creation, improvement and preservation of sustainable places and communities, environment and climate change(S48), Environment and Climate Change (S49), Conservation of Natural and Built Heritage(S50).

<sup>12</sup> Section 56, Planning and Development Act, 2024.

authority and the requirement to engage with the Minister and the OPR where there is discord between the recommendation of the chief executive and the members.

The Act will also bring wider changes to policies and guidance which will influence the content of future development plans. The introduction of National Planning Statements, approved by government, will provide clearer and consistent policy framework throughout all tiers of planning. Other new positive measures for the activation of lands and implementation of development plans include the introduction of Urban Development Zones (UDZ). This will empower local authorities to designate areas of significant potential and enable a focus for investment.

The Draft Revision of the NPF focuses on the need to update the framework to appropriately reflect changes to government policy since 2018, such as climate transition, regional development, demographics, digitalisation and investment and prioritisation. There are also specific objectives<sup>13</sup> that highlight the need for new approaches to measuring and monitoring compact growth, in particular, aligned with to increased digitalisation of the planning system.

Likewise, forthcoming changes in wider policy agendas will inevitably influence the shape and form of future development plan strategies and objectives, and these, in turn, will be subject to their own performance measurement and monitoring. This presents further opportunities for joined-up thinking on policies and the sharing of data, in the preparation and implementation of future development plans. Some of policy areas where there are obvious connections with spatial planning and where opportunities exist for alignment with development plan policies and indicators, are summarised in Table 1<sup>14</sup>.

<b>Transport</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ National Investment Framework Transport Ireland (NIIFTI)</li> <li>▪ National Demand Management Strategy</li> <li>▪ Metropolitan Area Transport Strategies</li> <li>▪ Transport Orientated Development Studies for Metropolitan Areas</li> </ul>
<b>Environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Climate Action Plan 2024</li> <li>▪ National Biodiversity Action Plan</li> <li>▪ Land Use Review Phase 2</li> <li>▪ Marine Spatial Planning</li> <li>▪ Whole of Government Circular Economy Strategy (2022 – 2023) and A Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy Ireland’s National Waste Policy (2020-2025)</li> <li>▪ Water Action Plan 2024</li> </ul>
<b>EU Directives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Implementation of ‘RED III’ Renewable Energy Directive III through Regional Renewable Energy Plans.</li> <li>▪ Nature Restoration Law</li> <li>▪ Water Framework Directive</li> <li>▪ Soils Directive</li> <li>▪ Corporate Environmental Social Governance Directive</li> </ul>

**Table 1** | Policy areas where opportunity exist for alignment with development plan indicators

<sup>13</sup> NPO101, proposed amendments, and NPO 102, proposed new NPO, as per the Draft First Revision to the National Planning Framework (2024).

<sup>14</sup> It should be acknowledged that this list is non-exhaustive.

## 1.3 Research Context

### Measuring What Matters (2020)

In late 2019, not long after the establishment of the OPR, through engagement with the RTPI and other nation states, there was broad consensus that the philosophy and practice of planning has become more complex in the last few decades, not only in Ireland.

With this in mind, the institute commissioned research to seek better mechanisms to track future performance against the changed background and looking beyond measurement of processing speed and simple outputs.

The focus of the research, was to help provide practical ways to gauge how planning delivers on the explicit aspirations of planners and elected representatives, in terms of place-making and social, economic and environmental value. A key component of the research was to design a practical toolkit that could be used to begin the process of measuring the impact of planning.



Through the consultative stages of that research, it became clear that a sudden 'switch' to measuring the outcomes and impacts of planning poses operational, resource and data challenges. A key element of the research brief was the development of a pathway with a measurement tool to enable a staged transition towards future more ambitious approaches.

As such, the research saw the development of a practical 'toolkit' for each nation partner in the project. The Irish toolkit was specifically contextualised using the ten National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) in the NPF, which are in turn the Irish expression of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The research also included a pilot exercise in the summer of 2020. The Irish pilot projects selected reflect the hierarchical system of policy formulation and administration in Ireland and both urban and rural contexts.

The toolkit identified eight outcome themes (Figure 2) and sought to enable the integration of multiple areas of change and influence of the planning system within a single format. The focus of the tool is on the use of data that is already available rather than the generation of new measures.

For full details of the original body of research see [here](#)<sup>15</sup>.

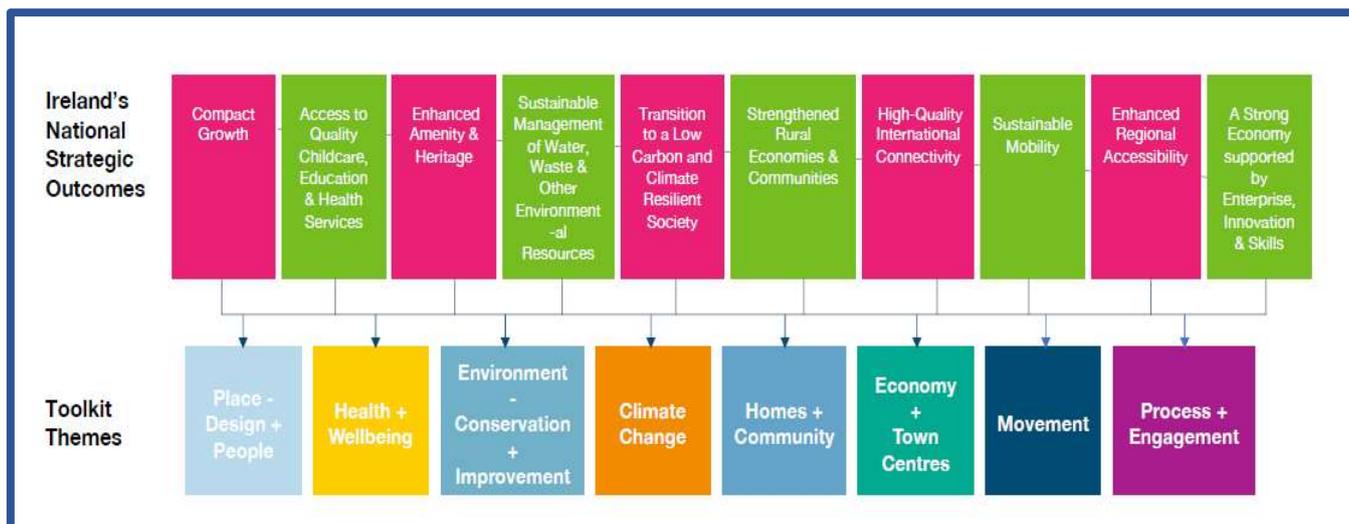


Figure 2 | Ireland's National Strategic Outcomes and toolkit Themes

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/research-rtpi/2020/november/measuring-what-matters-planning-outcomes-research/>

# 2 Workshop



## 2.1 Workshop Methodology

Sectoral representatives were invited to participate in the workshop to ensure a broad representation of interested parties, this included local authorities, regional assemblies, government departments and infrastructural agencies.

The workshop was designed to ensure that practitioners were aware of and building on existing research as well as bringing recent experience and insights to specific areas. The format took account of lessons learnt from engagement and feedback from pilot projects and previous workshops. It was structured to integrate key elements: case examples and collaborative problem solving / suggestions for improvement and innovation.

By adopting a participatory approach, the workshop created opportunities for meaningful debate and discussion on a range of thematic areas identified in the previous research. This involved assigning attendees to groups according to their area of expertise and also to ensure national, regional, and local organisations were spread throughout the groups.

### Structure and format

The workshop followed a blended format that combined presentations, group discussions and structured questions.

It began with short presentations to provide participants with the theoretical and policy frameworks. These presentations covered essential topics such as the outcomes from the previous research and the current policy and legislative framework as it relates to monitoring and reporting on implementation.

### Case Study Analysis and Shared Learning

Practitioners were provided with case studies from four local authorities where the presenters highlighted how they had accessed and used data and developed reporting frameworks / dashboards for specific purposes. They discussed specific challenges as well as successes and areas for improvement.

Valuable insights were also provided on the regional perspective by the Climate Action Regional Office (CARO) and All-Island Research Observatory (AIRO).

## Workshop discussion

The workshop was designed around four rounds of structured questions:

<b>Round 1.</b>	<b>Monitoring - Ownership, Oversight and Governance - Whose job is it anyway?</b>  Should the Framework for Development Plan Monitoring be entirely a local level issue; i.e. designed and undertaken locally?  If not, who should be responsible for the design of monitoring frameworks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Should Development Plan monitoring reports be reviewed/monitored externally?</li><li>• What means of external review should be undertaken?</li><li>• Who should be arbitrator?</li></ul>
<b>Round 2.</b>	<b>What do we need to monitor in our development plans?</b>  In this round the themes identified in the original Irish toolkit were considered by the groups. Copies of the original themes were made available to aid discussion. Each group was required to evaluate the relevance of themes in current policy context in Ireland and determine whether the theme was either; <i>'essential', 'useful', 'nice to have' or 'not relevant to development plans'</i>
<b>Round 3.</b>	<b>Where do we get the information to monitor development plans?</b>  This round was also based on material in the Irish toolkit. Due to the volume of material, each group was assigned one theme to consider. The Indicators, Data Sources and Relationship to Planning identified for each group's respective theme in the toolkit was considered for relevance. With an opportunity for the group to identify other, or more appropriate data sources.
<b>Round 4.</b>	<b>When and what next?</b>  This round looked at the appropriate frequency of monitoring and identified key actions that need to be taken from the workshop to advance meaningful monitoring in Development Plans

## Facilitation

The workshop was facilitated by the lead author of the previous research. At each table, there was a designated facilitator and note-taker. The facilitator supported the discussion through a structured questionnaire and ensured all participants were actively engaging and contributing. Each session sought to balance knowledge sharing and discussion with time available to ask questions and seek clarification.

At the end of the round table workshop, each group facilitator reported on their groups' key findings from the four rounds. The lead facilitator and the Planning Regulator provided an overall round-up and reflection on the learnings from the day.

## Follow-up and post workshop evaluation

To support learning and further engagement for practitioners, participants were provided with the workshop materials including slide decks and the toolkits from the previous research.

Following the event, participants were asked to complete an online questionnaire to assess the overall effectiveness of the day and gather information on what worked well and identify areas for future improvement.

This approach ensured that the workshop was informative, practical and some of the learnings were actionable for participants.



Photograph from the 'Measuring What Matters Workshop' held in June, 2024

## 2.2 Summary of the Key Findings from the Four Rounds of the Workshop

### Round 1. Monitoring - Ownership, Oversight and Governance - Whose job is it anyway?

In this opening round, we took a step back to explore the groups' wider conceptual view on ownership of the task of monitoring and whether there was a need for oversight or governance of the monitoring reporting system.

There was strong consensus that Development Plan monitoring did not truly belong to one group in planning authorities (e.g. planners, management, elected members) or one tier of government, local/regional/national.

It was recognised that, on the face of it, the statutory requirements to publish and report on development plan implementation, technically rests with the local planning authority<sup>16</sup>. Nonetheless, it was highlighted that national and regional level policies and supports play equally important, and perhaps less visible roles, that are integral to the planning authority work in monitoring. For example, the requirements of higher level policies, access to data, technical support and guidance.

On the design of monitoring frameworks, the workshop participants reflected that the design of any framework, associated templates or guidance may benefit from a multi-layer co-design approach.

There was a strong appetite for a core framework that includes a suite of standard Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which could be complemented and/or adapted and refined at local level to take into account the wealth of local-level data and knowledge. It was highlighted that the elected members' role and engagement in identifying indicators, particularly at a local level, was imperative to an effective and meaningful monitoring process.

The workshop also considered the need to oversee, or review, the actual monitoring process of Development Plans and monitoring reports produced in line with statutory requirements. In this regard it was highlighted that in some local authorities there are already systems and procedures where the Section 15 monitoring report is reviewed/scrutinised through the corporate governance and Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs). Therefore, some participants noted that scrutiny, or review, of the monitoring report is, to a degree, already happening.

Although there were considerable deliberations across the groups as to the need for external monitoring or an independent arbitrator in the first instance, there was ultimately strong support for some form of formal external review or oversight. In relation to the method of such an external review, suggestions made at the workshop indicated that this could be conducted by either a 'central body' or the OPR/Regional Assembly. Likewise, other suggestions indicated that oversight or review could be an 'intermittent audit' or non-statutory peer review. It was also put forward that with a standardised format, in

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<sup>16</sup> Section 15 Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) and Article 13J of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended).

standardised templates, the monitoring outputs could be simply uploaded and/or communicated externally.

One group signalled the importance of having a communications strategy for the monitoring report in the interests of accountability and transparency. To a degree it was highlighted that the monitoring report can, or should, be seen as a stakeholder engagement tool for the local government sector to demonstrate their progress, effectiveness and wider role in place-making and delivering for their communities.

As a follow up to discussion on the need for external review of the Development Plan monitoring reports, the workshop considered 'who should be arbitrator' or judge the quality and standard of such reports. Following deliberations, all of the groups considered that this role should be external to the local authority, with the majority of the workshop groups identifying that this role should rest with the DHLGH and/or the OPR. Others signalled that there was the need for a specific national and/or regional coordinator.

Interestingly, one group drew attention to the potential role of the planning courts, and highlighted that their role and decisions are a form of test for the monitoring of policies.

## **Round 2. What do we need to monitor in our development plans?**

Round two of the workshop looked back to the 2020 toolkit from the Measuring What Matters Research. The purpose of this round was to explore the core themes that a development plan monitoring system should focus upon in an Irish context in 2024 and beyond.

As recognised at the outset, there has been significant policy changes since 2020 and we are on the cusp of further changes to the strategic and statutory policy context for development plans in Ireland. Therefore, in order to build on the toolkit it was important to explore, through the workshop, if the broad themes remain relevant.

To that end, there was strong consensus across the workshop attendees that the eight themes outlined in the toolkit accurately reflect the core or essential themes for development plans.

It is noteworthy that there were deliberations on the relevance of the 'health and well-being' theme, one group considered that this area was a 'useful' theme for the development plan monitoring (rather than essential) and also recognised the key role of the [Healthy Ireland Strategic Plan 2021-2025](#).

Another group acknowledged that indicators and measures for the 'health and well-being' theme was complex, as there are issues of scale and many non-spatial planning factors, such as personal lifestyle choices, that more directly influence health and which development plan policy has a limited impact upon.

Therefore, the 'health and well-being theme', whilst overall considered to be an essential theme for development plans, needs to monitor relevant indicators and be fully cognisant of the causal relationships between such indicators and development plan policy.

In the discussions at the workshop on the relevance of the eight themes, there was additional noteworthy feedback and insights, discussed as follows:

**Climate Change Theme** – Workshop deliberations were reflective of the broader climate policy agenda and recognised the transformational change that is required to meet Ireland's commitments. In this regard, some groups indicated that climate should be

considered not only 'essential' but that it was the single-most important, or principal, theme in the monitoring of development plans for the future. It was also identified that perhaps the term 'climate change' for this theme would be better described as '*climate resilience*' to reflect the wider narrative.

Overall, the significance and/or importance of the climate agenda and the key role of spatial planning and the development plan was a strong feature of the workshop discussions, i.e. the development plan is a key vehicle for the delivery of transformation changes and the achievement of national commitments.

Given the significance placed on the climate theme and in acknowledgment that climate change policies are multi-faceted (e.g. flooding, water, transport, biodiversity, growth patterns etc.) the workshop attendees expressed apprehension that themes could be viewed in silos. In reality many elements are interlinked. However, the relationship or overlap between the 'climate change' and 'environment' themes, was considered to be especially strong and may warrant being merged together.

**Theme on Environment – Conservation and Improvement** – Related to the observations on climate change, the workshop attendees highlighted the enormity of the environment – conservation and improvement theme. This was highlighted given the current and emerging policy backdrop, which has shifted significantly since 2020. Areas where significant policy change was signalled to have occurred, or is underway, include the topics of: biodiversity, green/blue infrastructure, circular economy, nature restoration law and also in the areas of water and soil protection/management. It was felt that the terminology '*environment- conservation and improvement*' was more traditional and perhaps did not fully capture the breadth and depth of the topic or policy agendas.

**Linkages to SEA** – One group highlighted the role of the SEA process and environmental report, together with the obligations to monitor that process. It was put forward that it would be logical and prudent to ensure that the indicators, and themes, in both the Development Plan and SEA process are in alignment.

**Theme on Process and Engagement** – The outputs associated with the theme of '*process and engagement*' are less obvious or physical in terms of the spatial environment when compared to other themes. Nonetheless, it is important to highlight that all workshop attendees considered this an essential theme for monitoring the effectiveness of development plans. It was considered that such monitoring would be a means to reflect on the plan-making process, to examine the level of community '*trust and engagement*' and should highlight the importance of 'meaningful, targeted and deliberate consultation' on the plan.

**Additional Themes** – It was identified that additional themes were required to reflect the significance of certain topics/areas in the development plan. An additional theme identified was 'Infrastructure' and it was suggested this could reflect the services that support development, e.g. energy and water supply. Another group suggested a potential additional theme on 'Land-Use' as they regard the management of the use of land as the core function of the development plan.

### Round 3. Where do we get the information to monitor development plans?

In this round, each group was invited to review the data sources and indicators identified in the original research toolkit. The purpose was to identify if the indicators and data sources remain a valid resource and/or highlight new or more appropriate measures and indicators that have become available in the interim.

Due to the volume of material for review in the original toolkit, it was not feasible for each workshop group to comment on every element. Instead, each group was assigned one theme. It should be acknowledged that attendees were assigned to groups according to their area of expertise and to ensure national, regional, or local organisations were spread throughout the groups.

There was a high level of awareness across the participants of the datasets listed in the research toolkit. Workshop attendees also had experience of using the datasets and provided valuable feedback for future research. Across seven themes discussed during the workshop, there were only a few indicators that were not familiar to some of the attendees (under the themes Health and Wellbeing; Place, Design and People; and Economy and Town Centres).

On the usefulness of the datasets, the consensus was the same, in each theme certain datasets were seen as both useful and not useful. The primary reasons were due to outdated data and data providing limited information. The other reasons datasets were found not useful include incomplete data (e.g. Movement) and data that was not fully ready-to-use data (e.g. Place, Design and People). In the Economy and Town Centres theme, there were strong views that the centralised data sources were unusable for the purpose of the monitoring process, which led local authorities to rely on their internal sources.

In general, EPA Water and Air Quality datasets and CSO Health Status data were found useful, whereas datasets such as Awards from Agencies, Litter Levels or National Patient Experience Survey were thought not useful by attendees for the purposes of the Local Authority monitoring process or to inform the monitoring process.

Attendees also noted in their experience there were a number of datasets not up to date which limited their use. The Annual Forest Statistics Ireland and Building Energy Rating (BER) data were examples shared by the participants as limited data sources.

Other aspects of data management, data governance, and data analysis were also raised during the discussions. As part of the detailed review of indicators and data sources identified in the original toolkit, several recurring issues were highlighted during the workshop and in the feedback. Some of the main issues are highlighted in Table 2.



<b>Data Collection</b>	This is a separate task that needs to be managed constantly and efficiently. Consistency within the collected data is another topic to consider.
<b>Data Source</b>	This should be taken into account as inconsistent sources of information would result in other problems. Private data sources are another topic to consider in terms of reliability for data input.
<b>Data Usability and Availability</b>	A general issue. Also sometimes data is available but not at the right geographical scale, which can be problematic. Some datasets need pre-processing before using the data. However, the conversion sometimes could be complicated and even impossible.
<b>Open and Accessible Data</b>	Some useful datasets are not open and therefore are not being used by every local authority. Another area raised was that some datasets are more easily accessible by Regional Assemblies but not by local authorities.
<b>Resourcing and Skills in Data Handling</b>	Workshop attendees acknowledged lack of resources and staffing as a potential issue for data processing and analysis. Also important is the skills needed to interpret data on a specialised topic and the need for a specialised resource.
<b>Data Quality</b>	Trustworthy and audited data, as well as regularly updated data was highlighted. High-level quality data is needed to maintain high standards of monitoring the plans, their outputs, and outcomes.
<b>Data Analysis and Interpretation</b>	This is an important part of the data ecosystem since deeper knowledge and valuable insights could be gained after the application of these steps. As well as data, it is also about how to read and translate data spatially and temporally.
<b>Data Visualisation</b>	The communication of data with the relevant audience(s) was another important aspect raised. When it comes to sharing the monitoring outputs, a key question raised was whether it should be through static reports or dynamic, live platforms.

**Table 2** | Issues highlighted at the workshop in relation to data

There were some other thoughts expressed by the workshop attendees that are important in guiding any future actions:

- A core **methodology** for interpretation (including the development of guidance, templates, and the roll-out of, associated upskilling/training) whilst also enabling a level of adaptability to factor in local data
- Simple, concise, and targeted **indicators**
- An overarching imperative need for **consistency** and establishing universal indicators
- **Uniformity** on specific measures, terms, definitions, and applications
- The need for **useful, relevant, and accurate data**, that is up-to-date, time-sensitive, and at the appropriate geographical scale
- **Interim data solutions** should be considered for the data that is scheduled on census periods

- The **absence of a centralised or generalised data sources**, each local authority relies on internal sources, develop their own solutions, surveys, maps, or even online platforms
- The fact that some strategies are **optional** rather than mandatory (e.g. green infrastructure) plays a role in the lack of consistency across the authorities
- **Structural organisation** within local authorities in terms of data communication and management is another point raised by the workshop attendees. Alternatives to this system were suggested such as a central point for data collection to ensure a timely and efficient approach potentially being applied across the system
- The **qualitative** aspect of data was another topic discussed with the views that the focus should not necessarily only be on quantitative data. There are some indicators that require qualitative input

Some forthcoming projects and work of different agencies and authorities shared by the attendees during the workshop will provide valuable input for choosing indicators and deciding on potential datasets. Participants' contributions to alternative datasets created a discussion on evaluating the availability of data sources and indicators. This was particularly relevant to the climate theme as it was felt that the research toolkit was more limited in this area.

As outlined above, discussions went beyond where the information was sourced and covered what the data was and how it is used in in the monitoring process. Since data could be an enabler or a disabler for monitoring development plans, there is scope for all stakeholders to approach the subject collaboratively and sensitively. Deciding on the right indicators and how to use them in the monitoring process can be progressed through an agreed co-design methodology and KPIs. This was raised in Round 4 - 'What next' and would benefit from further attention in a collaborative setting with all stakeholders.



## Round 4. When and what next?

The final round of the workshop looked to the future. Participants were given an opportunity to express their vision of an effective development plan monitoring regime.

The first question posed in this round related to the matter of timing and frequency for development plan monitoring i.e. 'When and how often should we monitor?'

In the first instance, there was an acknowledgement and support for the existing two-year monitoring report system (S15), whilst also recognising that currently there is no consistent approach to this across the sector. It was further observed that this is likely to change to a five-year mid-term review of the forthcoming ten-year development plans.

However, there was a strong view that monitoring should be annual given the culture of annual reporting currently embedded in the corporate governance of local authorities.

A number of the groups indicated that there was also potential to 'update continuously' using live data and intelligent systems. Such an approach had been presented at the morning session of the workshop. One group considered that with a continuous monitoring and tracking system, a monthly report could be generated and published/communicated, as in Limerick. Both these approaches are outlined in the Case Studies section of this paper.

At the other end of the scale, it was also highlighted by one group that the EPA produces the 'State of Environment Report' at four-yearly intervals, this could be both a resource of information and a model for the Development Plan reporting. It was also further recognised that Natura designations are reviewed at five-yearly intervals, therefore a wider timeframe may be more appropriate for certain variables.

Finally, one group considered that the monitoring timeframe must be informed by data availability as not all data is produced and available simultaneously or on the same cycle. It was considered essential that the validation of data should be factored into the timeline i.e. only fully verified data should be relied upon.

In the final part of the workshop, the question was posed 'what next?'. Participants shared their ideas and aspirations for a future development plan monitoring system and the topics that emerged are:

### **Advocacy and Collaboration:**

There was a very positive response to the format of the event and the material shared in the morning session. The examples outlined during the morning session are available in the Case Studies section of this paper. All attendees considered that it was evident from the workshop event that significant work and ingenuity in development plan monitoring was ongoing across the country. However, it was observed that many such initiatives were locally-led and that there was limited coordination or collaboration outside, or between, the local authorities. The exception being the Regional Development Monitor, which is supported by all three regional assemblies, albeit a tool for the RSES monitoring.

The workshop attendees highlighted two key actions, firstly the need for a central advocate for reform in the development plan monitoring system. Then, secondly, the need for an inclusive and collaborative approach between all stakeholders to bring about the necessary changes.

A strong sentiment of the workshop was that more needed to be done to share information, actively work together in order to enable transformative change in development plan monitoring and in particular to make optimum use of data and IT systems.

Many attendees expressed a willingness to participate in future events and co-design resources that would assist planning authorities. It was recognised that a central coordinator, or advocate, invested with necessary cross-sectoral support is essential for efforts to have meaningful impact. Ensuring wider linkages with other digital agendas and utilising existing national and regional networks was also seen as both prudent and necessary. As a demonstration of support, many participants at the workshop expressed their willingness to undertake pilot exercises in their authorities to trial any resources or materials that may be developed.

### **Consistency:**

The need for consistency in the approach to development plan monitoring was a central focus point emerging from the event. Taking a step back from the development plan monitoring exercise, a number of attendees identified that there needs to be greater harmony in the structure, language and drafting of objectives and policies in development plans. The use of 'SMART' objectives, structured to enable measurability and monitoring at the very outset was considered essential in the first instance.

There was strong consensus at the workshop that there is a need for a central framework or standardised methodology, including practical tools such as templates, guidance notes and advice for practitioners.

There was also a strong consensus that core indicators and data sources should be standardised and that only valid, appropriate and relevant data and indicators should be used. Equally, there was an acknowledgment that local level bespoke data and qualitative data or analysis had a role to play to supplement, augment or validate analysis of performance. To this end, there was a further underlying sentiment to the workshop that the development of a monitoring regime should avoid a league table or 'planning by numbers' approach, as that in itself would be counterproductive.

### **Data Management Systems and Use:**

The workshop highlighted the complexities of managing data. There are issues of accessing data, and thereafter the interpretation of data. The selection of the most appropriate data sources to utilise is often fraught, especially where there is a desire to identify a causal relationship between an objective/policy and an indicator.

It was acknowledged that significant work is ongoing in the wider public sector on open data and creation of digital platforms. As evidenced at the workshop, there have been many initiatives undertaken at a local level on development plan monitoring. Equally, it was observed that there has been a wealth of resources and data analysis in the development of the RDM Hub this presents an immense opportunity that needs to be fully harnessed. The workshop participants saw significant scope to build synergies on these various parallel projects.

Overall in terms of data there was a strong desire to have a central 'national online monitoring system' that is verified, up-to-date and a resource that all could readily 'plug-into'.

### **Capacity Building:**

Finally, and perhaps the most vocalised issue at the workshop, and central to the delivery of any new development plan monitoring system regime, is the matter of capacity. There was an understanding and acceptance that work is ongoing to strengthen staff resources in the

planning system and that there will be a lead in time for benefits to be effects to borne. Nonetheless, there was also a recognition that creative ways need to be developed to maximise the effectiveness of existing [limited] resources through collaboration, a multi-disciplinary approach, smart technology and investment in people.

Advocacy and collaboration, the development of guidance and tools for a consistent approach and improvements to data; needs to be predicated and in tandem with investment in upskilling, training and education to build capacity across the planning sector.



Photograph from the 'Measuring What Matters Workshop' held in June, 2024

# 3 Case Studies



The following case studies were featured at the OPR's June 2024 workshop and provide a sample of the exemplary work in monitoring ongoing within the planning sector.

The OPR welcomes initiatives underway across the country to enhance monitoring. These case studies, and others across the sector may be of interest to people working in the sector.

During the event these specific five case studies were discussed, and they are included here for your information and we would encourage those reading the case studies to look at these in real time.

For example, the Regional Development Monitor (RDM) Hub, featured as Case Study 5 below, is available for use and provides a facility to generate some reports.



## Case Study 1



### Dublin City Council: Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028

The Dublin City Development Plan came into effect in December 2022 and is approaching its first two-year report stage. The adopted plan indicates every effort was made through the plan preparation to ensure its objectives follow the SMART approach (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound). It also acknowledges that not all policies and objectives can be measured by easily identified quantitative values and implementation may be subject to external factors, economic circumstances and availability of resources.

The plan vision will be implemented by a number of agencies at city, region and national level and the City Council is actively engaged with relevant agencies and undertaking an active land management role to progress and secure its implementation.

Monitoring mechanisms have been put in place by the Council to allow for transparency on the progress and implementation of the plan.

#### Dublin City Council's plan implementation commitments include:

**Leadership:** to protect and secure the development plan policies and objectives

**Collaboration:** engagement with citizens, stakeholders, sectoral interests, city partners and adjoining authorities.

Preparation of **Core Strategy Monitoring Report** (annually)

Publication of **Annual Report on the City Council Climate Action Plan**

**Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Monitoring and Review** (as per Article 10 of the SEA Directive)

Compilation of Residential Data for **Dublin Housing Supply Coordination Task Force**

Monitoring of **development patterns** and nature of new development delivered.

City Performance Indicators (see below) have been outlined in the plan, these indicators are broad-ranging, from planning statistics and environmental data, to transport and economic data. Sources of data from other organisations, which are readily available, are also used, where appropriate.

# Case Study 1 Continued



## City Performance Indicators:

City Performance Indicators	Sources of Data
1. Planning Statistics (Key Performance Indicators)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Total number of valid planning applications received.</li> <li>b) Number of applications received online (e-planning).</li> <li>c) Development contributions - total payments received</li> <li>d) Vacant land study update.</li> <li>e) Funding (URDF etc.) received.</li> </ul>
2. Housing-Related	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Planning permissions granted for residential development with: Breakdown of 1, 2, 3 and 4 bed units.</li> <li>b) Total new dwellings commenced and completed with breakdown of unit type (a KPI).</li> <li>c) Housing land availability (from Housing Land Availability Study).</li> <li>d) Residential rents (Private Residential Tenancies Board data).</li> <li>e) Residential property price index – Dublin (available from Central Statistics Office).</li> </ul>
3. SDRA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Total number of valid planning applications received.</li> <li>b) Planning permissions granted for:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) residential development</li> <li>(ii) office/retail/commercial development (sq. m.)</li> </ul> </li> <li>c) No. of residential units constructed.</li> <li>d) Office/retail/commercial development constructed (sq. m.).</li> <li>e) Enabling infrastructure delivery.</li> </ul>

City Performance Indicators	Sources of Data
4. Commercial / Employment-Related	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Office floorspace quantum.</li> <li>b) Retail floorspace quantum.</li> <li>c) Dublin city centre office rents.</li> <li>d) Dublin office vacancy rate.</li> <li>e) Unemployment rate (census).</li> </ul>
5. Movement and Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Canal cordon counts; cycle and pedestrian.</li> <li>b) City centre footfall figures (via Dublinked site).</li> <li>c) Shared Public Mobility Schemes; annual number of trips.</li> </ul>
6. Tourism and Visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Overseas visitors figures.</li> <li>b) Hotel room occupancy levels.</li> </ul>
7. Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Seaport cargo figures.</li> <li>b) KBC/ESRI Dublin overall consumer sentiment.</li> <li>c) MARKIT Dublin purchasing managers' index (PMI).</li> <li>d) Dublin's latest international rankings.</li> </ul>
8. Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Air quality data (Environmental Protection Authority).</li> <li>b) Environmental noise levels.</li> <li>c) Bathing water quality (measured at Dollymount, Sandymount, Merrion Strand and Shelley Banks).</li> <li>d) Carbon reduction.</li> <li>e) Energy performance.</li> </ul>

## Key messages and issues arising for monitoring in Dublin City Council:

- Identifying specific data sources
- Delayed availability of some statistics
- Resourcing of the function
- Data capture and technical support

## Case Study 2



### Limerick City and County Council: Planning Monitoring

Limerick City and County Development 2022-2028 was adopted June 2022. It comprises 13 chapters and over 440 policies and objectives. Chapter 13 is dedicated to implementation and monitoring where it is highlighted that the plan will be further implemented through the preparation of Local Area Plans and in performance of the planning authority's development management and enforcement functions. The plan includes a specific policy:

*'to cooperate with the Office of the Planning Regulator, Southern Regional Assembly and National Audit and Oversight Committee as part of the monitoring and review procedure.'*  
[Policy IM P2]

To manage the volume of policies and objectives for the monitoring report the team designed an excel spreadsheet and analysed each of the 440 policy and objective against **four key steps**:

#### 1. **Categorise**

In accordance with the RSES monitoring report, each policy/objective was categorised as:

- Active
- Supportive
- Instructive

#### 2. **Assign responsibility**

Each policy and objective was assigned to the Directorate responsible for its achievement

#### 3. **Identify indicators**

Indicators that could be utilised to determine progress in achievement were identified

#### 4. **Identify data**

The potential data collection point or individual database applicable to each policy and objective is to be identified (work is ongoing on step 4)

#### **Development of Digital Monitoring Dataset:**

The Limerick City and County Council team identified that the creation of a digital Monitoring Database is required, a system which automatically updates the status of planning applications and commencement notices. Their aspiration is to create a digital platform around planning applications to allow for the ease of data collection for Annual Core Strategy Monitoring and other processes, such as monthly and annual CSO Returns and the preparation of the Contribution Scheme.

At present, obtaining the information required in relation to planning permissions involves a lengthy and time-consuming manual exercise. Firstly, a monthly back office iPlan report of all planning applications is required. This is followed by an examination of every planning application's documents and location map to obtain the necessary information. This information is then entered manually into the Monitoring Excel spreadsheet. Where a planning application's status is "new", "further information", "decision made" or "appealed", the status must be reviewed on a monthly basis until such time as the application decision is finalised. Such finalisation may require an adjustment to the granted development description, number of units, number of bedrooms or services etc.

It is intended that through the development of Digital Monitoring Database such planning data will be automatically updated and will be collated in a Monitoring Database.

## Case Study 2 Continued



### Limerick City and County Council: Planning Monitoring

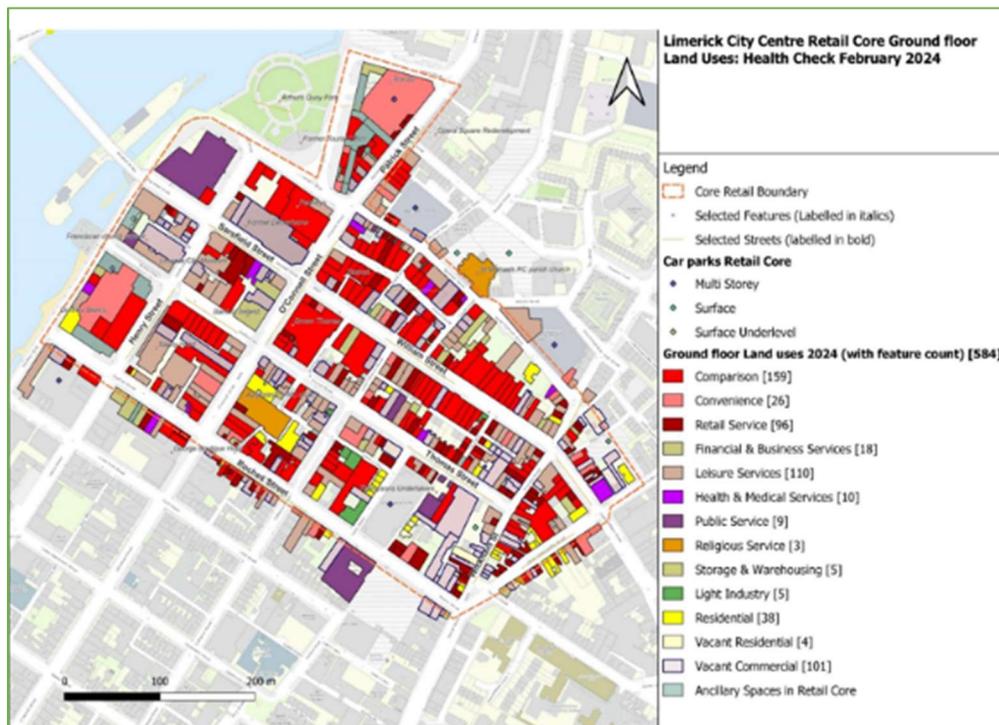
#### Resource Sharing:

The Limerick City and County Council team highlighted the need to capture other local authority data sources and utilise this information in plan-monitoring and reporting.

The city centre annual health check is carried out by the Forward Planning team (illustrated below) this is complemented by resources and data available from other directorates for example: Jobs and investment information from Economic Directorate, footfall from Digital Strategy Section, derelict sites information from Community Directorate.

A further valuable source of data for the forward planning team and plan monitoring is the monthly Director General (formally Chief Executive) report.

In Limerick City and County Council, every month the Director General and the Mayor publish a [report](#) with the latest updates and news from across the organisation.



## Case Study 2 Continued



### Limerick City and County Council: Planning Monitoring

#### Added Benefits for Plan Monitoring Data Systems

The Limerick City and County Council team highlighted the numerous other demands for planning data in local authorities, outside the plan-monitoring needs. Housing data, elected member queries, departmental and infrastructure providers' requests, together with press queries and internal reporting. The frequency of such requests and the need to ensure consistent, verified data together with efficient use of resources, was the teams' key objective when they designed their framework for their quarterly forward planning update. The quarterly updates include the key statistics, as outlined below, plans are underway to locate these reports within the council's website to enable open access.

**[Note:** since their presentation at the workshop in June 2024, Limerick City and County Council have published their Two Year Development Plan Progress Report which can be found [here](#)]

#### Key Planning Statistics:

- CSO New Dwelling Completions
- Residential planning pipeline and construction status
- Retail core ground floor land use survey
- Limerick City Centre housing densities
- Enterprise and employment Lands study update

#### Key Economic Statistics:

- Population
- Labour market
- Jobs and investment
- Disposable income and Gross Value Added
- Tourism indicators
- House prices
- Residential rents
- City centre footfall



# Case Study 3



## Waterford City and County Council: Development Plan Monitoring Dashboard

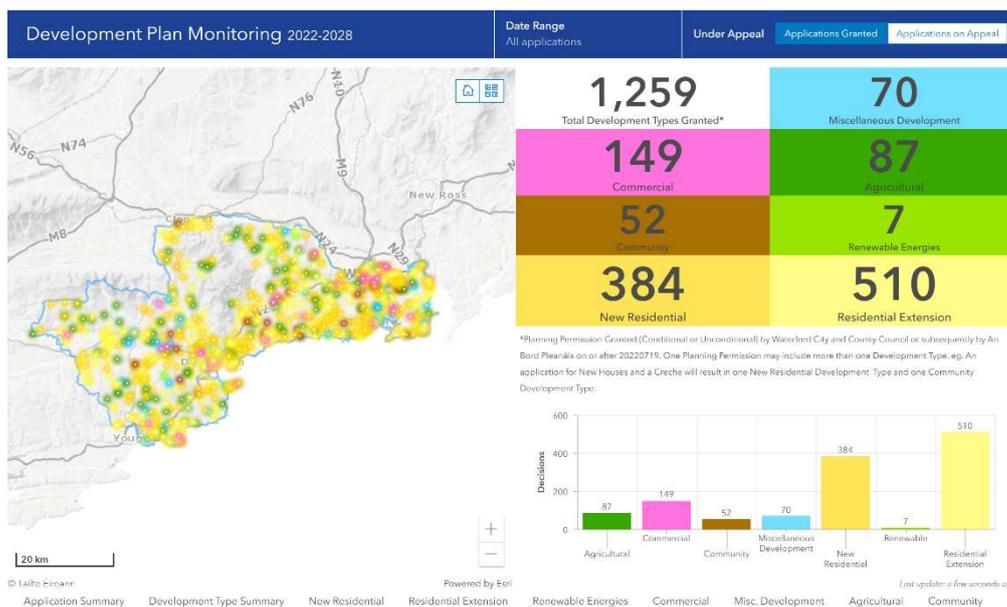
The Waterford City and County Development Plan, as adopted June 2022, is supported by an Action Program in appendix 16 which indicates how the plan objectives and goals will be realised. During the preparation of the plan in tandem with the GIS officer; a monitoring dashboard was designed and developed by the Waterford forward planning team. The system took circa 6-7months to build. Ongoing monitoring of the dashboard is maintained by Technical Planning Staff with support from GIS Department via a housekeeping report that runs every night to ensure all applications have been entered into the Contribution Database. It builds upon the local authority GIS and ESRI datasets; together with the data available through the Building Control Management System (BCMA) and the Development Contributions Calculator; which is a further tool developed locally by the Waterford team.

Queries can be run on the dashboard within specified:

- Date range
- Development Types (including commercial, community, residential, agriculture, renewable, residential extension)
- Geographical areas – the dashboard displays information on a map and includes a zoom feature to examine trends at smaller local scales
- Application status (e.g. lodged/live, decision to grant/refuse, under appeal, appeal decision)

Data is available in relevant units for example square metres of floorspace, multi-house development, single house development, number of units, house type (e.g. apartment/house). See the following images which illustrate the features of the dashboard.

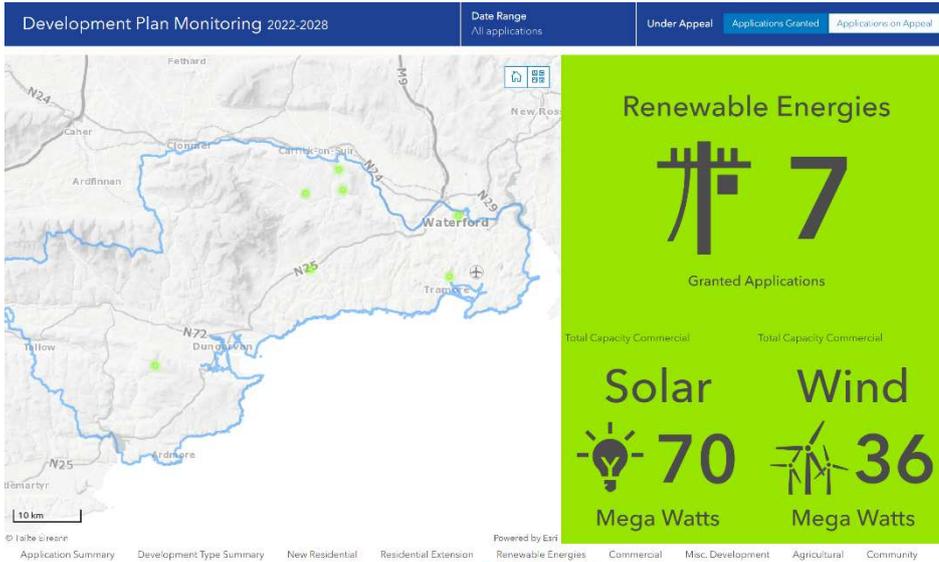
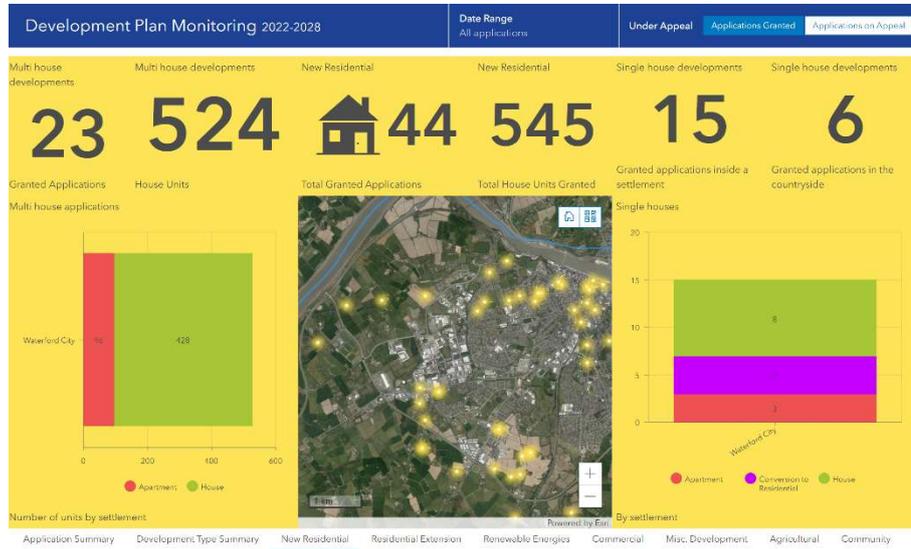
The dashboard is an internal tool to support the forward planning and other functions of the local authority.



# Case Study 3 Continued



## Development Plan Monitoring Dashboard



# Case Study 4



## Meath County Council:

### Two Year Progress Report on the Meath CDP 2021-2027

The Meath County Development Plan came into effect November 2021 and was one of the first development plans in the Eastern and Midland Region to be adopted following the NPF and RSES. The [Two-Year Progress Report](#) on the Meath County Development Plan was published in December 2023 and is also available in [storymap](#) format on the Council's website to promote public awareness.

In order to prepare the two-year report, the Forward Planning team developed a bespoke digital platform which draws on various datasets (internal and external e.g. CSO) and communicates this data through infographics, see examples of the monitoring data on a few of the development plan themes:



### Residential – Housing Type

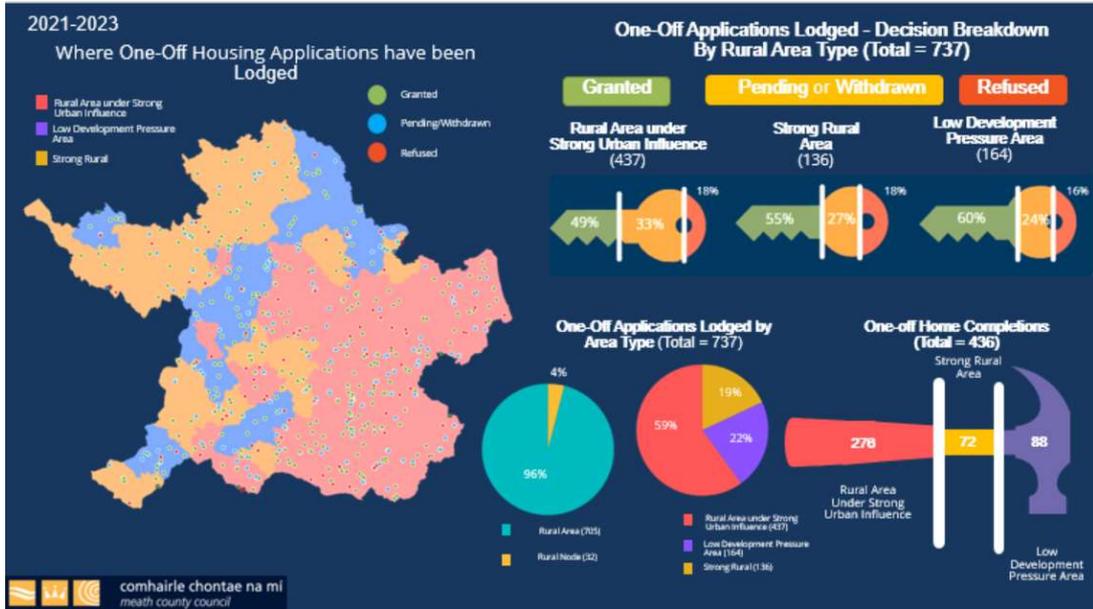


# Case Study 4 Continued



## Meath County Council – Monitoring Platform Outputs

### Settlement and Housing Strategy:



### Economy and employment:



# Case Study 5



## The Regional Development Monitor (RDM) Hub

The **Regional Development Monitor (RDM) Hub** is a collaborative project between the three Regional Assemblies, the All-Island Research Observatory (AIRO) at Maynooth University and Tailte Éireann (TÉ) as spatial infrastructure partners via the GeoHive platform.

The aim of the **RDM Hub** is to collate and visualise a range of relevant socio-economic and environmental indicators to present the performance of each of the three regions in terms of achieving the objectives outlined in their respective Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES). The RDM provides a series of national mapping and visualisation infrastructures to assist Government Departments, Regional Assemblies, Local Authorities, Planners, Policy Makers, Researchers and members of the public in gaining a greater insight into social, economic and environmental trends to aid better decision making.

The current focus of the RDM is on indicators related to the **Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSOs)** of the RSESs along with their appropriate socio-economic and environmental variables and will be categorised into four key principles within which are themes and a series of indicators available through the website dashboard. See below a sample of how the information is presented on the RDM hub; the example shown is for Census 2022 Population Profile.

Find the below details of the themes and indicators used in the RDM hub for the principles, our people and places, our green and sustainable future, our region's economy.

Our People and Places	
Theme	Indicators
<b>Sustainable and Planned Urban and Rural Patterns</b>	Demographics, housing market completions, vacancy, commuting and congestion
<b>Compact Growth and Urban Regeneration</b>	Compact growth, urban and rural housing completions, residential stock
<b>Healthy People and Places</b>	Health infrastructures and services, Health facility maps, litter classifications
<b>Creative and Learning Places</b>	Artistic communities, cultural attractions, library
Our Green and Sustainable Future	
Theme	Indicators
<b>Sustainable Management of Water, Waste and other Environmental Resources</b>	Drinking water quality, Waste water treatment
<b>Low Carbon Future and Clean Energy</b>	Electric vehicles, Renewable energy, Household energy, Emissions
<b>Biodiversity and Natural Heritage</b>	Environmental quality of rivers, lakes, estuarine and coastal waters



# Case Study 5 Continued



## The Regional Development Monitor (RDM) Hub

Our Region's Economy	
Theme	Indicators
<b>A Strong, Innovative and Resilient Economy</b>	Labour market, Commercial activity, Incomes, State Assisted Employment, FDI
<b>Improve Education Skills, Human Capital and Social Inclusion</b>	Educational attainment, Life-long learning, Deprivation, Homelessness
<b>A Global and Export Oriented Region</b>	International connectivity, Passenger Numbers, Flights
<b>A Connected and Smart Region</b>	Accessibility, Internet and broadband access
<b>Collaboration Platform</b>	Infrastructure investment, National and EU funding

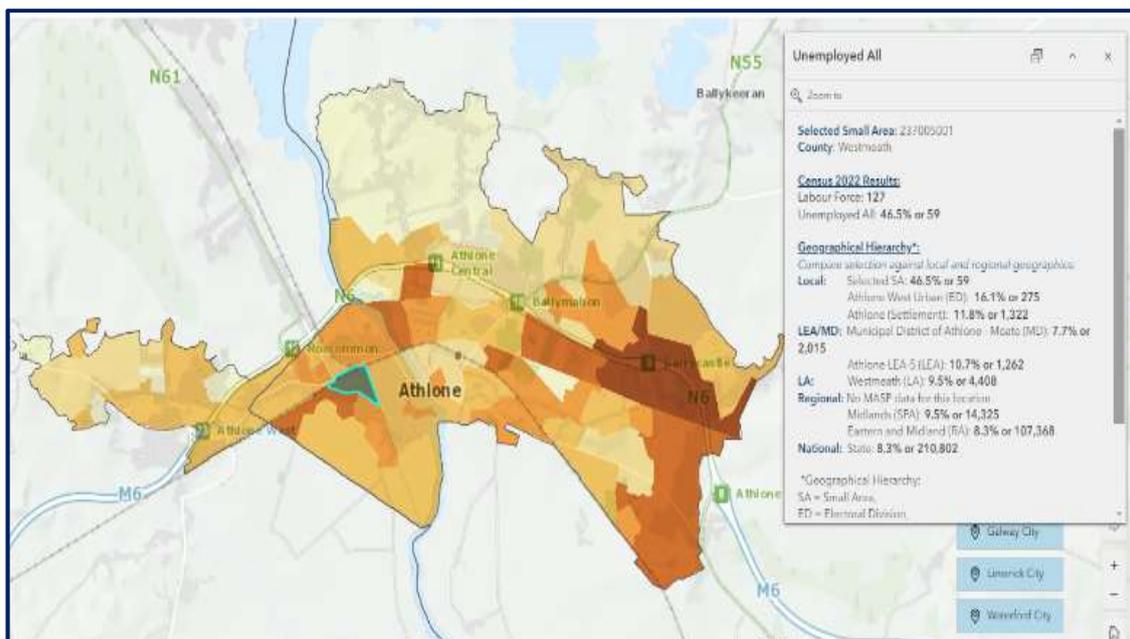
The mapping viewer will allow the user to view an individual indicator across the 18,000 Small Areas and enable an analysis of local level data relative to all geographical planning tiers – Small Areas, Electoral Divisions, Built Up Urban Areas, Local Electoral Areas, Municipal Districts, MASPs, Strategic Planning Areas (SPAs), Regional Assembly areas and the State.

A new tool within the Atlas will also enable the users to create specific user defined maps (local authority, settlement, etc.). As such, this mapping viewer will be of use to all 31 local authorities, the wider planning community and related stakeholders.

The map below details the mapping viewer configured with a filter to only show data for Athlone town. The information tool on the left details the unemployment rates for the selected Small Area in the town (highlighted) and how this relates to all parent geography rates (Athlone settlement, Athlone-Moate MD, Midlands SPA and Eastern and Midland RA).

### Forthcoming Expansions to the RDM Hub

In 2024/25, the RDM will be launching a new Census 2022 Atlas that will be integrated into the Hub. This mapping tool will contain over 250 mapped indicators across a range of themes such as Demographics, Housing, Transport, Commuting Flows and Education.



# 4 Next Steps



To further develop the initial research findings, this paper incorporates the experience and insights from the sector and innovative case examples of measuring and communicating the implementation of development plan objectives. It also identifies action areas and practical steps to move towards an outcomes based development plan monitoring system.

The actions set out below align with the education, training and oversight role of the OPR. Progressing these will require a programme of skills and system development alongside investment in necessary technical, human and other required resources.

## Theme 1. Co-learning and development

### Action:

- 1.1 The OPR will lead a co-design approach to development of new data-driven plan drafting and monitoring harnessing the learning from the case studies.
- 1.2 The OPR will prepare a Practice Note on data driven approaches to plan drafting and monitoring plan. This will take account of the strategies required in the next generation of development plans will be required to contain under the 2024 Planning and Development Act.

## Theme 2. Data quality, consistency and smarter data applications

### Action:

- 2.1 Effective monitoring and reporting relies on high quality accessible data. The OPR will examine the development of a digital and data hub to support the sector in accessing relevant data and digital tools.
- 2.2 Under its *Digital Planning and Analytics Strategy*, the OPR will host a digital data forum to explore the potential for standardised methodologies for incorporation into new technologies for plan-making and visualisation.
- 2.3 The OPR will engage with relevant agencies with experience and capability in Artificial Intelligence to explore opportunities for AI applications that will enhance efficiencies in the policy development area.

## Theme 3. Collaboration in delivery

### Action:

- 3.1 The *Local Authorities Planning Services Training Group* (PSTG) will be asked to consider appropriate timescales and approaches to developing applied training and resources on outcomes-based plan drafting and implementation.
- 3.2 Through the recently published Ministerial Action Plan on Planning Resources, emerging work-streams on innovation and efficiency will be tasked with highlighting development plan data systems to better support outcomes-centred approaches in drafting and implementation.



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