



Oifig an
Rialaitheora Pleanála
Office of the
Planning Regulator

Office of the Planning Regulator

Activity Report

Quarter 2 of 2026



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Introduction

This quarterly activity report (QAR) relates to activities conducted by the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) during Quarter 2, 2026.

The Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) publishes quarterly reports that provide an overview of the nature and extent of its functions across its statutory mandate.

These are:

- I. Evaluation of the statutory plans of the local government system;
- II. Reviews and examinations of local authority systems and procedures used in the delivery of planning services to the public; and
- III. Undertaking programmes relating to training, education, research and public awareness in relation to the benefits of planning.

The Planning and Development Act 2024 was signed into law on 17 October 2024. The Act is being commenced on a phased basis to facilitate a smooth transition from the existing legislation to the new legislation. It is important to note that transitional arrangements are in place. This means that certain elements of the work reflected in this report were undertaken under the previous legislation (2000 Act) and some elements were undertaken under the current legislation (2024 Act).

Information on the commencement of the Planning and Development Act 2024 is available on the [Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage website](#).

Evaluation of Statutory Plans

The OPR is responsible for independently assessing city/county development plans (CDPs) and local area plans (LAPs) at three key stages: issues paper, draft plan and material alterations. The OPR also considers any proposed variations to existing CDPs or amendments to LAPs. OPR submissions may include recommendations, observations or advice¹.

In Q2 2026, 22 consultations on statutory plans opened for public consultation, related to:

- 15 draft variations to existing CDPs;
- six material alterations to a draft variation to existing CDPs; and
- one draft Urban Area Plan.

OPR Submissions on Statutory Plans

In Q2 2026, the OPR made 26 submissions to local authorities and three to regional assemblies. Table 1 sets out a breakdown by plan type.

In Q2 the majority of submissions related to variations to existing CDPs at draft stage. The majority of these were in response to the publication of the NPF Implementation: Housing Growth Requirements Guidelines (Housing Growth Guidelines) in July 2025. This requires local authorities to review their development plans and vary them as needed to reflect the updated housing targets set out in the Housing Growth Guidelines.

The OPR assessed the issues papers for the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) prepared by each of the three Regional Assemblies under the Act of 2024:

- Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA);
- Southern Regional Assembly (SRA); and
- Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA)

¹ Chapter 5 of Part 3 of the Planning and Development Act 2024, which relates to the preparation of development plans and variations by planning authorities and the assessment by the Office, was commenced on 31st December 2025. However, section 69(2) provides that the variation of a development plan under section 13 of the Act of 2000 shall continue under that Act after the repeal of section 13 of the Act of 2000. Therefore, the OPR undertook evaluations and assessments of statutory plans in Q2 2026 under the Act of 2000 and the Act of 2024.

Submissions on Statutory Plans	
Variations to City/County Development Plans	20
Material Alterations to Variations to City/County Development Plans	6
Issue Papers/Pre-Draft for Regional Assemblies	3
Total:	29

Table 1 | Submissions on Statutory Plans

OPR Submissions by Regional Area

Local authorities are divided into three regional areas, represented by three regional assemblies: EMRA, NWRA and SRA.

OPR submissions on local authority and regional assembly plans during Q2 2026 related to all regional assembly areas. Figure 1 below shows the number of submissions made on consultations within each regional assembly area.

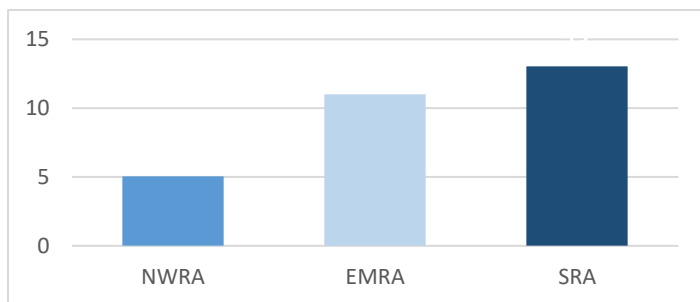


Figure 1 | OPR Submissions by Regional Assembly Area

OPR Recommendations and Observations

The OPR may make recommendations or observations in its submissions at the draft and/or material alterations stage. Due to the high-level nature of issues papers, the OPR does not make observations or recommendations at this stage.

Recommendations arise where the OPR identifies clear inconsistencies with legislative provisions or policy frameworks and are intended to be addressed to ensure compliance. Observations highlight areas where further clarification, justification, or refinement would strengthen the plan. The submission may also include advice to support the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Table 2 below sets out the number of observations and recommendations made by the OPR in Q2 2026.²

Recommendations and Observations Made by the OPR			
	Submissions (number):	Recommendations (number):	Observations (number):
Draft Variations to CDPs	20	54	24
Material Alterations to Variations to CDPs	6	6	3
Total:	26	60	27

Table 2 | Recommendations and Observations made by the OPR

² As the OPR does not issue recommendations or observations at issues paper stage these figures do not relate to submissions made at issues paper stage.

OPR Recommendations and Observations

The OPR evaluates and assesses statutory plans to ensure consistency with legislative requirements and national and regional planning policy, including:

- the National Planning Framework (NPF);
- the National Marine Planning Framework;
- the relevant Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES);
- the relevant Development Plan (DP);
- National Planning Statements;
- relevant guidelines for planning authorities made under Section 28 of the 2000 Act;
- relevant transport strategy of the National Transport Authority;
- legislative provisions for statutory plans as provided for under the Planning and Development Acts; and
- legislative provisions in relation to Climate Action.

A breakdown of the recommendations and observations made in Q2 by legislative category is contained in Tables 3 and 4. As recommendations can cover more than one legislative provision, the numbers presented in these tables (Table 3 and 4) differ from the total number of recommendations listed above in Table 2.

OPR Recommendations	Number
Consistency with NPF	54
Consistency with RSES	46
Consistency with DP	9
Policy Matters regarding Section 28 Guidelines	47
Consistency with Legislative Provisions	10
Other	14
Total:	180

Table 3 | OPR Recommendations

OPR Observations	Number
Consistency with NPF	16
Consistency with RSES	12
Consistency with DP	3
Consistency with NTA	1
Policy Matters regarding Section 28 Guidelines	14
Consistency with Legislative Provisions regarding Climate Change	2
Other	2
Total:	50

Table 4 | OPR Observations

Adopted Plans: Outcome of OPR Submissions

Once a plan is adopted, the OPR assesses it to determine whether it aligns with national and regional policy and has satisfactorily addressed the recommendations made by the OPR.

In Q2 2026, a total of 17 variations were adopted by local authorities, the OPR's assessment was ongoing at the end of Q2.

In addition, the OPR completed the assessment of five variations which were adopted before Q2 with no further action required.

Assessment of Development Plans

Under section 63(2)(b) of the Act of 2024, the Minister may request the OPR to undertake an assessment of a Development Plan for stated reasons. The Minister made a request to the OPR on 27th March 2026 to carry out an assessment on specific provisions within the Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021-2027, specifically lands zoned for development within Flood Zones A and B in Castlecomer. The OPR wrote to Kilkenny County Council on 22nd April 2026 to suspend specific provisions pending the completion of its assessment. The OPR's assessment was ongoing at the end of Q2.

Draft Directions

Further to Section 31AM of the Act, where the OPR is of the opinion that a plan has been made in a way that is not consistent with any recommendations made by the OPR and that the plan has been made in a manner which fails to set out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area concerned, the OPR may deem that it is merited for the Minister to issue a direction.

In Q2 2026, the OPR did not issue any recommendations to the Minister of draft directions.

Final Directions

The OPR did not make a recommendation to the Minister of a final direction in Q2.

Note: *The OPR's submissions and recommendations to the Minister can be found on the [OPR's website](#). Please note that final Directions are only published once the Direction process has been completed.*

Stakeholder Engagement

Engagement with Local Authorities

During Q2 2026, the OPR continued to engage with local authorities, meeting with:

- Clare County Council
- Cork County Council
- Galway County Council
- Limerick County Council
- Louth County Council
- Offaly County Council

This engagement allows the OPR to answer queries or discuss key matters regarding proposed plans, and to provide additional information, such as policy updates, which may support the work of the local authority during the plan-making process.

Plans Evaluation Forum

The OPR hosted one meeting of the Plans Evaluation Forum, in May 2026, which enabled discussions between all organisations on statutory plans and other matters related to plans evaluation work.

Reviews and Examinations

Planning Reviews

Under planning legislation, the OPR is empowered to conduct reviews of the organisation and management of, and the systems and procedures used by local authorities, regional assemblies and An Coimisiún Pleanála to deliver planning functions. In this regard, the OPR fulfils an important oversight and monitoring role in relation to the overall delivery of planning services to the public.

Each statutory review is a comprehensive process, involving significant information gathering, analysis and engagement between the OPR and planning officials to fully appraise the systems and procedures used to deliver planning functions.

While authorities reviewed benefits individually (in terms of operational insights and recommendations to strengthen practice and procedure), collectively this has allowed the OPR to build a substantial knowledge base of good practice, innovation, and operational efficiencies that could be applied more widely. As such, this work provides a valuable foundation for driving consistency, improving performance and promoting best practice across the planning sector. At an overall level, the programme intends to embed a culture of continuous improvement in the Irish planning sector.

This has provided the opportunity for the Reviews & Examinations Team (RET) to commence its transition in the latter part of quarter 2, focusing on providing practical support, upskilling and peer learning for the wider planning sector. As such, its transition to 'Planning Performance' will take place during the entirety of quarter 3 2026.

Longford County Council

The OPR continued its review of Longford County Council, with significant analysis and report-writing work progressing, moving towards an intended publication of the final report in early Q3 2026.

Local Authority Monitoring

Following the completion of each review, the OPR continues to engage with the relevant authority for a period of at least two years to monitor and support the successful implementation of the review recommendations. To that end, in Q2 of 2026, the OPR engaged with the following local authorities in relation to:

County Council	Timeline
Roscommon County Council	12-month progress update
Meath County Council	Third progress update
South Dublin County Council	Third progress update
Waterford City and County Council	Third progress update
Offaly County Council	Third progress update

Table 5 | Local Authority Monitoring

The OPR's monitoring work highlights the challenges local authorities face in implementing improvements amid resource constraints, recruitment and retention challenges and evolving and emerging legislative demands.

Thematic Review: Planning Enforcement and Peat Extraction

The OPR continued to progress its thematic review of the robustness of statutory procedures available to local authorities to address unauthorised large-scale peat extraction. During Q2, the OPR continued its analysis of local authority information, the statutory provisions, the operational landscape and relevant legal casework, progressing the creation of a report on the issue.

Examinations (Case Handling)

Case activity

The OPR provides a service to the public for a variety of planning-related case types, including queries or general information requests, submissions regarding aspects of the planning process and complaints about the delivery of planning services.

During Q2, a total of 84 cases were received, and 84 cases were closed by the OPR in the same period. These are detailed by month in Figure 2.

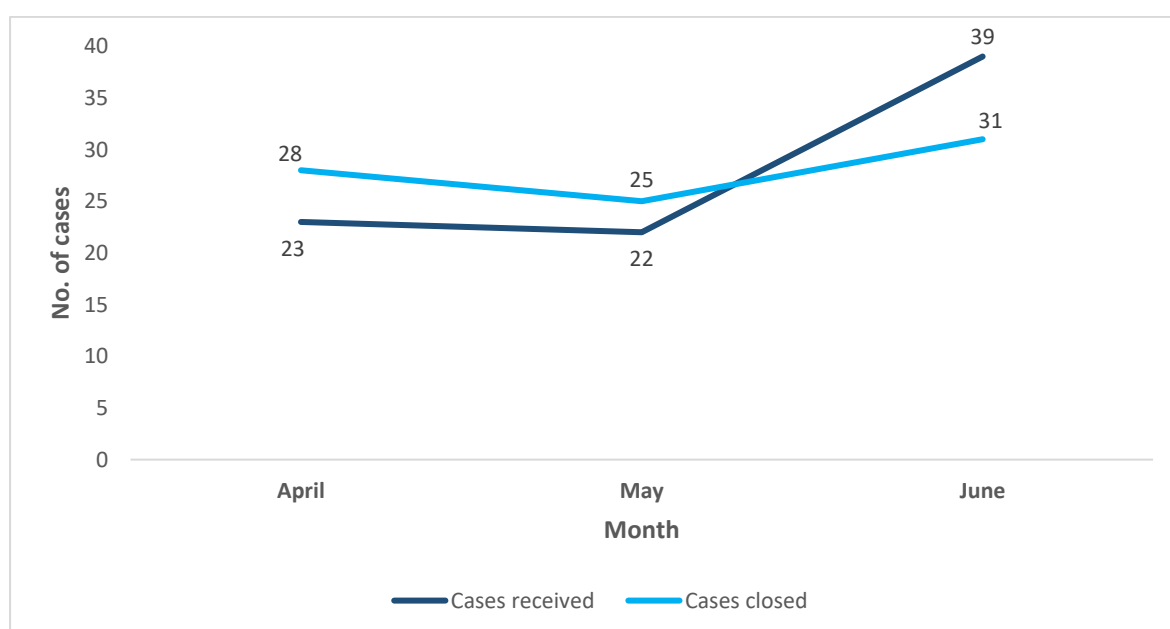


Figure 2 | Cases Received vs. Cases Closed Q2 2026

Of the 84 cases closed during Q2, the case types are categorised as follows:

- 42 complaints
- 27 queries
- 15 submissions

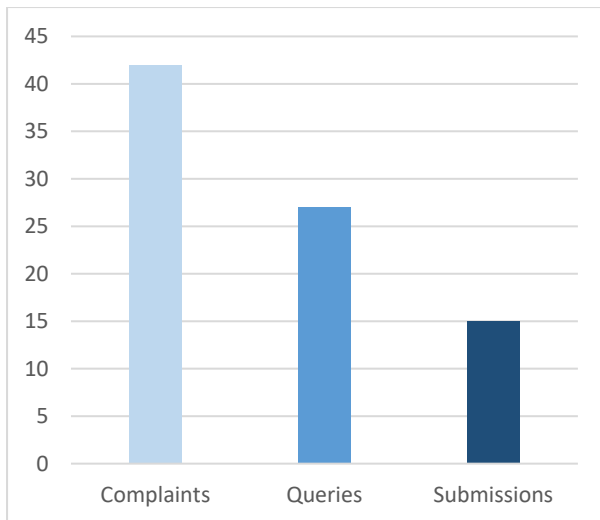


Figure 3 | Case Types

While some cases may be handled in a relatively straightforward manner, many will involve the consideration of voluminous and complex technical information. Often, especially regarding complaints, processing can be time-consuming, involving multiple rounds of correspondence with the complainant and/or the relevant local authority.

Themes

While a broad range of themes arose in the OPR's case handling during Q2, several dominant key themes prevailed. For the avoidance of doubt, it is also worth noting that cases may involve more than one theme and, as such, totals exceed the number of cases closed. As shown in Figure 4, the most common single theme was enforcement and unauthorised development; followed closely by third-party submissions and notifications. Individual planning case and OPR's role and function each were the next in the list.

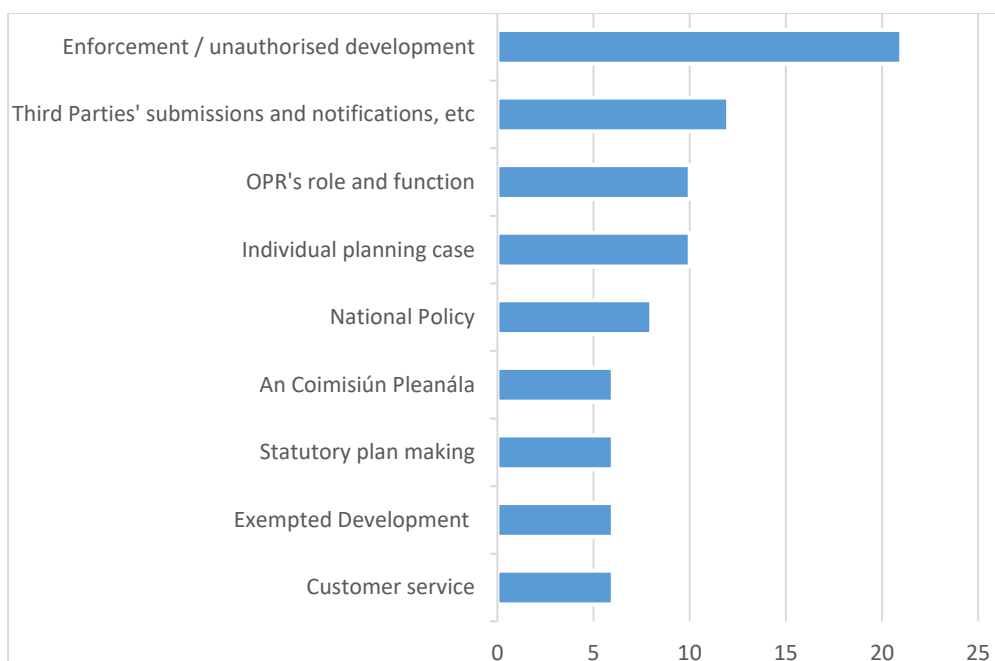


Figure 4 | Main Themes of Cases Closed

Complaints

The statutory provisions are precise regarding the types of complaints that fall within the OPR's remit to examine. For a complaint to be considered examinable by the OPR, it must relate to the organisation of the local authority, and the systems and procedures used by it in the performance of its planning functions.

Accordingly, of the 84 complaints closed during Q2, the OPR conducted a preliminary examination of five based on the procedural matters raised. Three of these complaints were upheld.

While each complaint arose in the context of a specific planning case, the OPR's examination focused on whether the relevant planning authority's procedures, systems and practices were sufficiently robust to ensure compliance with statutory requirements and the effective performance of planning functions.

Such matters examined concerned, amongst other things, the processing of exempted development declaration requests, the management and tracking of planning compliance submissions within statutory timeframes and the administration of Large-scale Residential Development (LRD) applications and procedures relating to Further Information requests.

Recommendations arising from examinations were directed towards strengthening procedural controls and oversight arrangements, improving the monitoring and tracking of statutory deadlines, enhancing staff guidance and capacity and updating documented procedures, templates and checklists to support consistent compliance with legislative requirements and reduce the risk of procedural errors or delays.

Importantly, a number of these recommendations remain subject to ongoing monitoring by the OPR to ensure that the identified corrective measures are implemented. Follow-up engagement is undertaken where necessary to assess progress and support continued compliance with statutory requirements.

Research, Education, Training and Public Awareness

Councillor Training

In Q2, the OPR continued to fulfil its statutory mandate to conduct education and training programmes for members of planning authorities on matters relating to proper planning and sustainable development.

In June, the OPR, in conjunction with the Association of Irish Local Government (AILG), held in-person training events for elected members in Waterford and Athlone.

The training entitled '*New Legislation and Planning in Practice*' provided information on:

- The Planning and Development Act 2024 and gave an overview of the legislation while also setting out details of the main implications for the planning-related functions of elected members; and
- Planning in practice including specific examples of how planning policy is being translated into delivery on the ground, where local authorities have adopted proactive approaches to regeneration, enhancing the public realm and tackling vacancy and dereliction.

Presentations were delivered by Deirdre Scully, former Dublin City Planning Officer, in Waterford by Aisling O'Sullivan, Senior Planner, Waterford City and County Council and Morris Conway, Senior Architect and in Athlone by Cathaldus Hartin, Senior Planner, Westmeath County Council.

A question-and-answer session followed the presentations. The speakers were joined by Niall Cussen, Planning Regulator and Anne Marie O'Connor, Deputy Planning Regulator, for the question-and-answer session. The recording of the Waterford event is available on the OPR's website.

The Athlone training event included an address by Minister of State, Kevin Boxer Moran and concluded with a walking tour of Athlone led by Cllr. Frankie Keena. The tour focused on recent developments in Athlone including flood defences along the Shannon, main drainage works, public realm improvements and town regeneration projects.

Local Authority and Regional Assembly Staff Training

During Q2, in line with the OPR's statutory mandate to conduct education and training programmes for staff of local authorities in respect of matters relating to proper planning and sustainable development, the OPR delivered a webinar entitled '*Infrastructure Planning and Delivery to Support New Development Areas*'. This webinar was delivered in May 2026.

The presentations dealt with:

- Infrastructure Planning and Delivery: A Local Authority Experience (Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council);
- Infrastructure Planning and Delivery to Support New Development Areas (Uisce Éireann); and
- Delivering Infrastructure to Support Housing (Housing Activation Office).

The presentations were delivered by Liam Walsh, Senior Planner, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, Catherine Kelly, Forward Planning Manager and Sam Wallace, Delivery Planning Manager with Uisce Éireann, Karen Kenny, Senior Advisor and Pádraig Maguire, Programme Manager with the Housing Activation Office.

The presentations were followed by a question-and-answer session. A recording of the webinar was uploaded to the OPR's website, along with the presentations, a useful links slide, and a question-and-answer sheet.

Planning and Development Act 2024 Training

In Q2, the Planning and Development Act 2024 Training Oversight Committee held its final meeting. This Committee comprised representatives from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH), the County and City Management Association (CCMA) and the OPR. During the meeting, the OPR presented a Feedback Report that included feedback and reflections from the expert speakers who delivered presentations at the training events, the attendees who participated in the training, and the OPR Lead who managed the training's development and delivery.

The purpose of the report was to provide valuable learnings for organisers and speakers of future training events. The Chair of the Committee undertook to formally submit the Feedback Report to the DHLGH and to recommend using this training model for future in-person training events to be rolled out nationwide.

Publication of Educational Material for Local Authority and Regional Assembly Staff and Other Key Stakeholders

During Q2, the OPR hosted a meeting of the Planning Law Bulletin Steering Group and agreed on the case selection for the twelfth edition of the '*Learning from Litigation*' bulletin. Thereafter, the OPR engaged with legal practitioners to draft the case summaries. The cases included:

- Protect Kenilworth Square and Anor v Dublin City Council and Ors [2026] IEHC 93;
- Garryduff Properties Limited v An Coimisiún Pleanála and Laois County Council [2026] IEHC 78;
- Doyle & Ors V An Coimisiún Pleanála and Ors [2026] IEHC 156; and
- Oliver Joyce v An Coimisiún Pleanála and Galway County Council [2026] IEHC 85

The twelfth edition of the '*Learning from Litigation*' bulletin was published in Q2. This edition was shared with stakeholders and promoted extensively via the OPR and Fieldfisher LinkedIn accounts. Contact was also made with the Irish Environmental Law Association (IELA) and the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) and the bulletin was shared with their members to increase awareness of the bulletin across a wider range of relevant stakeholder groups.

Implementation of the Learning and Development Strategy for Local Authority Planning Staff

In Q2, work continued on the updates to the courseware for the Forward Planning and Enforcement Planning Fundamentals courses. These updates took account of amendments introduced in the Planning and Development Act 2024. The OPR contributed to this work and to the delivery of training courses at LASNTG's Regional Training Centres in Q2, with further courses due to be delivered in Q3. The courseware for the Planning Administration and Development Management Planning Fundamentals courses will be updated following the commencement of Part 4 of the Act.

At a meeting of the Planning Services Training Group (PSTG) held in early June, the subgroup, which was established to review the Learning and Development Strategy, the

Learning and Development Strategy Review Team (LDSRT), recommended that the OPR should take the lead on the review of the Strategy with support from the LDSRT and in accordance with the LDSRT's agreed Terms of Reference. This recommendation was approved by the PSTG. Thereafter, the OPR commenced the first stages of the review process, i.e. the Desktop Review and the Data Collection stages. Engagement is ongoing with the Local Authority Services National Training Group (LASNTG) to collate relevant available data.

An Coimisiún Pleanála Training

In Q2, the OPR engaged with Senior Management at An Coimisiún Pleanála (the Commission) regarding the OPR's new statutory function to conduct planning training for members and staff of the Commission. A meeting has been requested with the Commission to scope out the training needs of members and staff and to understand the scope of current internal learning and development programmes. Following on from this engagement a strategic training programme will be devised to address the policy agenda set by the DHLGH. It is anticipated that the first meeting with the Commission will take place in Q3.

Ministerial Action Plan on Planning Resources

The aim of the Ministerial Action Plan is to increase the pool of planning and related expertise and to bring forward new talent to meet present and future needs. During Q2, the OPR attended two meetings of the Ministerial Action Plan Steering Group in May and June. The OPR is responsible for chairing working group one on education and co-chairing working group four on innovation and efficiency.

During Q2, work was completed on the action from working group one to undertake research to inform the development of a campaign to promote and build awareness of planning as an education option and as a pathway to substantive and varied career choices. An action group has been established to oversee this work, and the first meeting was held in June.

Spatial Planning Apprenticeship

The OPR is represented on the Consortium Steering Group (CSG), which oversees the development of a new Spatial Planning Apprenticeship. The group comprises representatives from the DHLGH, the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS), the CCMA, the LGMA, An Coimisiún Pleanála, the OPR, the Irish Planning Institute and the private sector. A meeting of the Consortium Group was held in June, along with a briefing for prospective employers. Work continues on developing the new Spatial Planning Apprenticeship programme.

Stakeholder Engagement

National Planning Knowledge Group

The National Planning Knowledge Group (NPKG) held its second meeting of 2026 in May. During the course of the meeting, representatives from the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD) provided an overview of the RTPI-commissioned research report on *'Strategic Spatial Planning and the Framework for Cooperation: Strengthening Alignment on the Island of Ireland'*.

Thereafter, representatives from the DHLGH provided an update on:

- The progress achieved by local authorities in complying with the Section 28 guidelines on NPF Implementation: Housing Growth Requirements (July 2025);
- The status of the Planning and Development (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 2025 and the amendments contained therein; and
- The commencement of the review of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies by the Regional Assemblies.

The OPR delivered a comprehensive update on:

- The research projects that are being progressed under the Strategic Planning Research Programme 2023-2025,

- The research topics that are included in the OPR's new Strategic Planning Research Programme for 2026-2028, and
- The education, training and public awareness initiatives that were delivered over the period from February to May inclusive.

The next meeting of the NPKG is scheduled for October.

OPR Research Output

During Q2, the OPR advanced work on a number of research projects identified within the Strategic Planning Research Programme (2023-2025):

Strand Two (Planning Performance) Projects

During Q2, work was advanced on Case Study Paper CSP08, which examines best practice in integrating green infrastructure, nature-based solutions and ecosystem services into the preparation of land use plans. The OPR issued comments to the contractor (MKO) on the first draft of the report. Thereafter, the contractor and the OPR met with the Local Authority Ecologists Forum to gather further information to inform the report. A second draft of the report was issued by MKO at the latter end of Q2 and is currently being reviewed by the OPR.

Strand Three (Planning Practice) Projects

During Q2, work continued on Practice Note PN06 on Development Plan Monitoring. In early April, the second draft was issued for review by the steering group. Following receipt of feedback from the steering group and updates to the practice note and indicator library, the peer review stage was commenced at the end of Q2. It is envisaged that the peer-review feedback will extend over the summer months, after which the practice note is anticipated to be finalised and published in Q3.

In Q2, the OPR finalised and published the new [Strategic Planning Research Programme](#) (SPRP) for the period 2026 to 2028. Preliminary scoping and engagement with key stakeholders was undertaken on several project themes of the new programme. The first tranche of work under this programme was commissioned in Q2, when Fieldfisher LLP was appointed to review and update the legislative elements of Practice Note PN01, which deals with Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management. Provision was made

in the SPRP to review and update the practice note to take account of the legislative changes introduced under the Planning and Development Act 2024. It is anticipated that this work will be completed in Q3.

Also, in Q2, the OPR took up its steering committee role on two EPA-funded projects reflected in the OPR's new research programme in Strand Three;

- Theme 3.3, on the topic of 'Streamlining SEA Scoping and Improving Effectiveness', kicked off in May and is being conducted by UCD and led by Professor Ainhoa González. The project has a 16-month timeline.
- The second EPA-funded project reflected in the OPR's programme as project theme 3.4, on the topic of 'Landscape Sensitivity in Assessment of Strategic Plans and Programmes', referred to as 'LANDSENSE', this project kicked off in June, is led by Dr Karen Ray at UCC, and has an 18-month time horizon.

Communications and Data Analytics

In Q2, the Communications and Data Analytics team continued to support the OPR across media, social media, GIS and data analysis. Some highlights included:

- To support implementation of the Ministerial Action Plan on Planning Resources, the Communications team provided Secretariat to Working Group One Planning Education and membership and worked with in partnership with the DHLGH on market research.
- The Communications team responded to media queries regarding the OPR.
- The Communications team published a newsletter in May 2026.
- To support GIS skills in the team, a training programme was held.
- The OPR continued an engaging social media calendar promoting events and resources to support the planning system and promote planning as an educational and career pathway.
- Procurement and handover was completed for website maintenance.
- Supporting the OPR in consultation and drafting of its interim Statement of Strategy and Annual Report 2025, which it is anticipated will be published in Q3, 2026.
- There was an increase of 166 followers on LinkedIn to 4,866. This aligns with the OPR's prioritisation of LinkedIn as a platform.



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Office of the Planning Regulator

Park House,
191-193A North Circular Road,
Dublin 7,
D07 EWV4

opr.ie | info@opr.ie | 01 854 6700

