Oifig an
Rialaitheora Pleanála

Office of the
Planning Regulator

Annual Report 2025







Declaration

This Annual Report for the year ended 31st December 2025 is made to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage ('the Minister') and to the Houses of the Oireachtas in accordance with Section 565 of the Planning and Development Act 2024), which commenced on 31st December 2025, replacing Section 31AH of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.



Claddagh, County Galway

Notes

Throughout this document:

'The Planning and Development Act 2024' is referred to as 'the Act'.

'The Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended', is referred to as 'the Act of 2000'.

Part 17, Section 495(3) of the Planning and Development Act 2024 provides that references in any enactment, legal proceedings or document to An Bord Pleanála shall, on and after the commencement of this section, be construed as references to An Coimisiún Pleanála. This is reflected within this Annual Report.

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At a Glance 2025

Submissions on Preparation of Statutory Plans

54 **local authority statutory plan submissions prepared, of which:**

94 recommendations and **41** observations issued to submissions on statutory consultations, of which:

66 recommendations made to variations to city/county development plans (CDPs) and/or local area plans (LAPs)

28 recommendations made to CDPs and/or CDPs

Assessment of Adopted Plans

30 **assessments of adopted statutory plans, out of which:**

41 recommendations for proposed draft Directions were made to the Minister

5 recommendations for proposed final Directions were made to the Minister

Local Authority Reviews

1 **review processes concluded** (Roscommon County Council)

2 **review process initiated** (Galway County Council and Longford County Council)

Case Handling

252 **cases opened**

33 **preliminary examinations conducted**

5 **complaints upheld**

Research, Training and Public Awareness Activity

640 **elected members registered for training in 2025**

826 **local authority and regional assembly staff registered for training in 2025**

4 **editions of 'Learning from Litigation' legal bulletin published**

3 **research reports were published**

These were a Case Study Paper on Quarries and the Local Authority Development Plan, and two reports on Legal Costs in Planning and Environmental Judicial Reviews



Niall Cussen, Planning Regulator

Introduction from the Planning Regulator

The work of the Office of the Planning Regulator is set out in the Planning and Development Act 2024. Our work is vital to the continuous improvement and streamlining of Ireland's planning system, which, is key to actions on housing supply, infrastructure coordination, investment, and climate.

Overseeing Local Authority Development Plans

Our independent assessments of local authority plans act as a key safeguard, ensuring that planning policy at the local level broadly supports the strategic aims of Government planning policy, so that the overall system operates coherently.

We prepared 54 submissions on extensive documentation relating to the reviews of 41 different local authority plans. We took on board a wide range of Government policy documents, including the first revision of the National Planning Framework and associated Housing Growth requirement guidelines of the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

As a result of our assessments, we made 94 recommendations, most of which were addressed. Recommendations to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage in the use of statutory directions to local authorities to make their plans more consistent with the policies of the Government were made in relation to five plans.

Overseeing the Performance of Planning Functions

Our watching brief over the systems and procedures operated by planning authorities resulted in 33 preliminary examinations with five complaints upheld. We also concluded a review of the planning functions of Roscommon County Council and, as part of our national programme of reviews, we initiated reviews of the planning functions of Galway County Council and Longford County Council.

Implementation of Planning and Development Act 2024

Implementation of the 2024 Planning Act began in earnest during 2025 resulting in an unprecedented programme of in-person training for local authority and regional assembly staff in the operation of the new and revised systems. The OPR took a lead role in organising and delivering the training working in partnership with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the County and City Management Association.

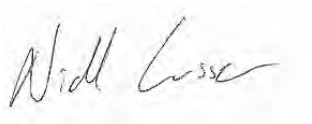
Research, Training and Public Awareness

We ran nine 2024 Planning Act in-person training events with over 800 registered attendees. We continued our popular programme of local elected member training events, which were delivered in conjunction with the Association of Irish Local Government and with 640 registered attendees.

Throughout the year we progressed work under our programme of planning research and dealt with topical matters such as analysis of legal costs in planning litigation in Ireland compared to other EU states; and quarries and the local authority development plan. We continued to publish important documents such as the "learning from litigation" series which keeps planning practitioners and other stakeholders up to speed on the fast-paced area of planning case-law.

The OPR's work would not have been possible without the support of Minister James Browne T.D. and Minister of State John Cummins T.D., and the officials of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

The Ministers kindly took the time to meet with OPR staff at our offices in Park House to launch last year's Annual Report and discuss ongoing efforts in planning reform and streamlining to boost plan-led housing output and infrastructure delivery. These are also major priorities for the OPR to assist Government in achieving into 2026.



Niall Cussen
Planning Regulator

1

What We Do

- **Our Statutory Responsibilities**
- **Our Structure**
- **Our Strategy**



Limerick City, County Limerick

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

The appointment of an independent Planning Regulator, empowered to oversee the planning system in Ireland, was one of the key recommendations of the Mahon Tribunal.

While not a policy-making body, the OPR's role is to ensure that local authorities and An Coimisiún Pleanála (ACP) support government policy and statutory requirements when implementing planning policy and statutory requirements.

The OPR's role also encompasses the development and implementation of comprehensive programmes of planning research, training and public awareness to promote the public's engagement in the planning process and enhance the public's knowledge of planning in Ireland.

1.1 Our Statutory Responsibilities

The Planning and Development Act 2024 as amended ('the Act') gives the OPR a statutory basis to carry out three main functions since it commenced on the 31st of December 2025.

It must be noted that during the time referred to within this Annual Report, the OPR operated under the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended ('the Act of 2000') unless stated otherwise, and which was in place until the 31st December 2025 when it was replaced by the Act.

The majority of references to our statutory responsibilities within this report refer to the Act of 2000, unless stated otherwise, as this was the legislation in place during the operation of the period of 2024:

i. Evaluation of Statutory Plans

In accordance with Sections 31AM and 31AO of the Act of 2000, which was in place during 2024, the OPR had responsibility for independently assessing all statutory forward planning with a view to ensuring that the plan provides for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area concerned.

This included evaluating City and County Development Plans (CDPs), Local Area Plans (LAPs) and Variation/ Amendments of these plans.

Under the Act of 2000, firstly, the OPR provided the relevant local authority with observations and/or recommendations regarding how a plan should address legislative and policy matters.

Once the OPR provided statutory inputs to the plan-making process, the relevant local authority outlined how such inputs would be addressed, taking account of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

If an adopted plan was subsequently not consistent with any statutory recommendations, the OPR may issue a notice to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage recommending that powers of Direction, specified under Section 31 of the Act of 2000, be utilised to compel the planning authority to address the matter.

ii. Planning Reviews and Examinations

In accordance with Sections 31AS and 31AT of the Act of 2000, the OPR may review the systems and procedures used by local authorities and ACP in the performance of their planning functions with a view to making independent, evidence-based recommendations, including to the Minister if necessary.

Under Section 31AU of the Act of 2000, the OPR may also receive and examine complaints from the public, or where requested by the Minister, about a local authority where the complaint relates to the overall organisation of the local authority and of the systems and procedures used by it in relation to the performance of its functions under the Act.[1]

iii. Education, Training and Research

In accordance with Section 31Q of the Act of 2000, the OPR is responsible for driving national research, education and training to highlight the role and benefit of good planning. We deliver education and training programmes to both elected members and staff of local authorities and regional assemblies.

The education, training and research function helps to maximise knowledge transfer between the 31 local authorities, the three regional assemblies, ACP and wider stakeholders such as professional bodies and interest groups thereby maximising efficiency, effectiveness and consistency across the planning system.

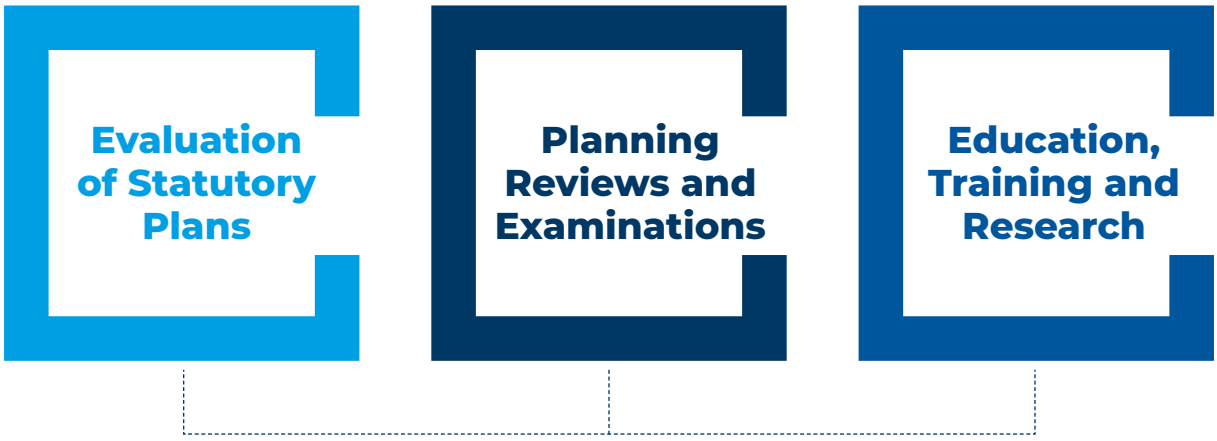


Figure 1 | OPR's Three Core Functions

[1] To note that, following commencement of the Act, the OPR may also examine complaints regarding ACP and the regional assemblies, however this was not the case for the time-period covered by this Annual Report.

1.2 Our Structure

The OPR is structured into four teams, mirroring the three statutory functions and including the corporate spine.

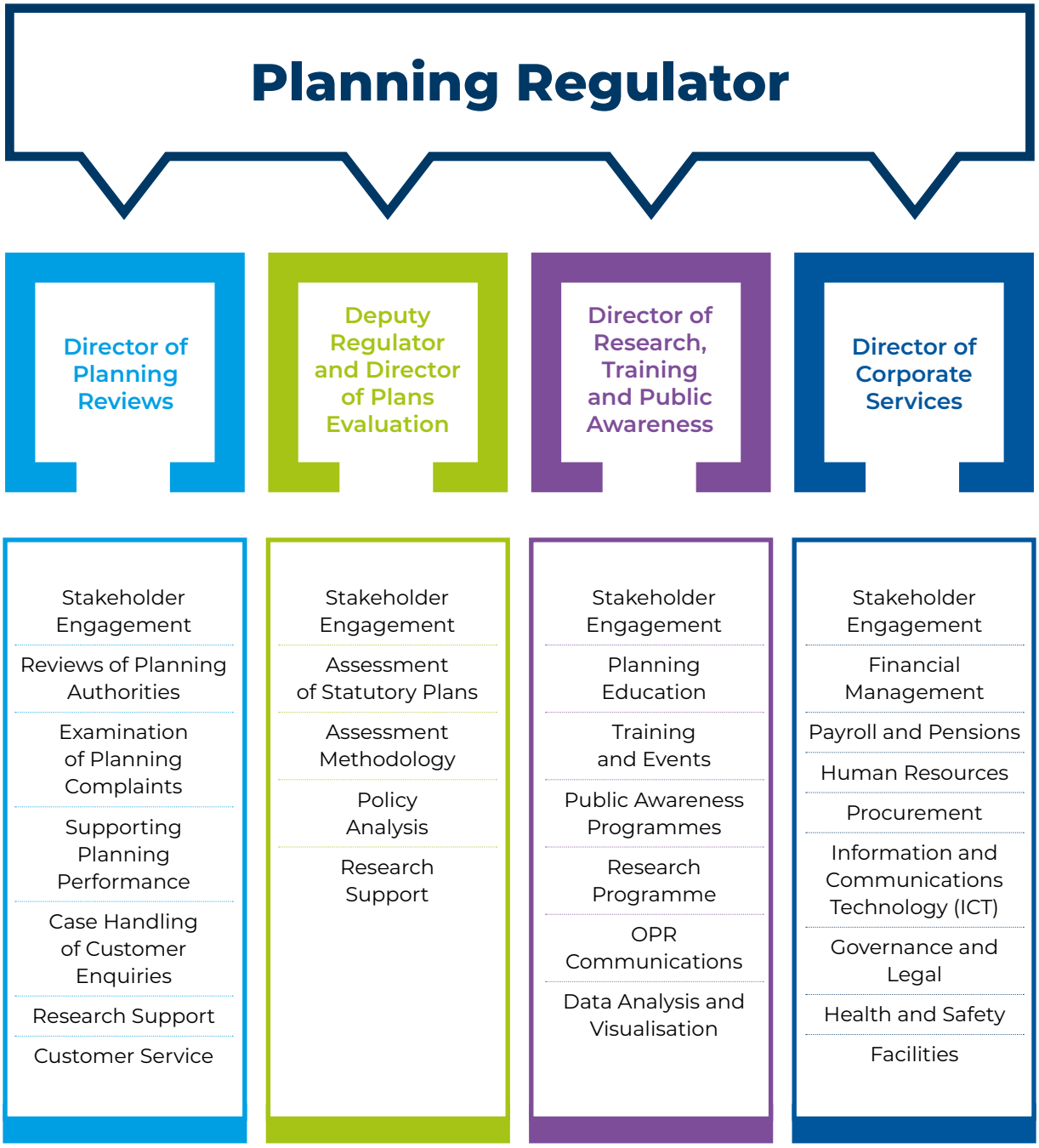


Figure 2 | OPR Corporate Structure and Functions Map

1.3 Our Strategy

The OPR strategy statement covering the period 2019-2024 was extended pending the commencement of the 2024 Act. A new strategy statement will be prepared to reflect our expanded role under the provisions of the Act.

Vision

The OPR's vision is to ensure that by the end of the Strategy Statement period,* the OPR will be in a position to conclude that:

"Ireland benefits from a well-coordinated planning hierarchy and that a wide ranging, effective and well received programme of education, training and research on planning matters has been put into effect and that a culture of continuous improvement will be created in planning authorities driven by regular reviews of their performance."

Our Values

- **Independence**
- **Professionalism**
- **Transparency**
- **Engagement**
- **Customer Focus**

* The OPR Strategy Statement was extended, pending the commencement of the Planning and Development Act 2024.

Figure 3 | OPR Vision and Values

Key Stakeholders

Engagement with key stakeholders is a core value and essential to achieving the OPR's vision. The OPR ensures that the inputs of many stakeholders in the planning process are taken into consideration, reflecting the interests of:

- The public;
- The Minister;
- Local authorities, ACP, regional assemblies, and the County and City Management Association (CCMA);
- Related regulatory and oversight bodies with a mandate in the planning area;
- The Oireachtas;
- The elected members of local authorities;
- State agencies and other consultees with a statutory remit in the planning process;
- Commercial and State-sponsored bodies involved in the delivery of strategic infrastructure;
- Professional bodies and interest groups;
- The Higher Education Institute sector; and
- Expert commentators and the media.

Goals

The strategy also identified five key goals and corresponding delivery actions for the OPR over the Strategy Statement period.

Goal 1: Building a reputation as a clear, fair and independent voice on the effectiveness of Ireland's planning process.

Goal 2: Driving innovation and learning for all those who are stakeholders in the planning process.

Goal 3: Focusing on the needs of customers and those with whom the OPR engages.

Goal 4: Creating a high-performing and efficient organisation that supports and enhances Ireland's planning process.

Goal 5: Building a resilient and agile organisation with a commitment to continuous learning.

2 Evaluation and Assessment of Statutory Plans

- **Evaluation and Assessment of Statutory Plans**
- **OPR Submissions**
- **OPR Assessment of Adopted Plans**



Cork City, County Cork

In accordance with Sections 31AM and 31AO of the Act of 2000, during the period referred to within this Annual Report, the OPR was responsible for independently assessing all statutory plans with a view to ensuring that the plan provides for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

2.1 Evaluation and Assessment of Statutory Plans

These assessments ensure that relevant government policies are being implemented and that issues such as urban regeneration, land zoning, transport, housing, employment, climate change and town centre sustainability are reflected in plans. This means that our cities, towns and villages can develop in a sustainable way and be vibrant places to live and work.

There are two plan-types that the OPR assesses:

- **City/County Development Plans (CDPs):** Which set out the overall core strategy and specific objectives for the proper planning and sustainable development of the city or county; and
- **Local Area Plans (LAPs):** Which provide a more detailed, locally focused planning policy framework.

Additionally, the OPR must also consider any proposed variations to existing CDPs and amendments to LAPs.

During the review and preparation of the plan, the OPR reviews and evaluates the plan material. The OPR also assesses the final adopted plan. In terms of OPR input, there are four key stages of the plan making process:

- **Issues Paper Stage (IP):** Occurs prior to the drafting of the plan, and helps to inform the preparation of the draft CDP or LAP. There is a public consultation at this stage, during which the OPR reviews the Issues Paper and prepares high-level comments. This stage is only a requirement for CDPs, but may also occur for LAPs.
- **Draft Plan Stage (DP):** The Draft Plan for the relevant city/county or local area is prepared for public consultation. The OPR reviews the Draft Plan and may make recommendations or observations on any aspect of the Draft Plan. This stage is required for all plan-types.
- **Material Alterations Stage (MA):** Occurs when elected members opt to alter the draft plan. There is a public consultation on the proposed Material Alterations, and the OPR may make recommendations or observations on any material changes made. This stage is not required for all plans.
- **Adopted Plan (AD):** At the end of the process the elected members of the relevant local authority make the plan. The OPR assesses the Adopted Plan and considers whether the recommendations made by the OPR have been satisfactorily addressed in the Adopted Plan. This stage is covered further in section 2.3.

OPR Assessment of CDPs

There are 31 CDPs in total, which represent the areas for the 31 local authorities. Prior to 2025, 30 of the 31 CDPs were adopted. The material alterations stage and the adoption occurred for the Monaghan County Development Plan 2025-2031 in 2025.

In addition, Louth County Council and Meath County Council began the review process for their new development plans, completing consultations on the Issues Papers for their new county development plans.

OPR Assessment of Variations to CDPs

The OPR made 36 submissions across 32 proposed Variation to the following existing CDPs:

- Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028
- Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028
- Donegal County Development Plan 2024-2030
- Dublin City Development 2022-2028
- Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029
- Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028
- Kerry County Development Plan 2022-2028
- Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029
- Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021-2027
- Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027
- Mayo County Development Plan 2022-2028
- Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027
- Monaghan County Development Plan 2025-2031
- South Dublin County Development Plan 2022-2028
- Waterford City and County Development Plan 2022-2028
- Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027
- Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028

Variation regarding housing growth requirements

The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) published the NPF Implementation: Housing Growth Requirements Guidelines for Local Authorities in July 2025.

These guidelines were prepared by the Minister following the approval of the Revised National Planning Framework (NPF) in April 2025, which sets out a need to plan for the delivery of approximately 50,000 additional homes per annum to 2040.

The guidelines replace previous approaches by introducing updated ESRI-based housing demand projections for each local authority, ensuring that planning decisions are grounded in accurate, current expectations for population growth and structural housing needs.

They also permit an “additional provision” of residential-zoned land, up to 50% above baseline requirements, where justified. This provides the flexibility needed to speed up housing delivery and maintain an adequate supply of serviced land.

The resulting variations to development plans support the system to be responsive, enabling faster adjustments, improved availability of serviced land, better alignment of supporting infrastructure, and more sustainable, compact growth. Collectively, these changes reinforce Ireland’s planning framework and support the accelerated delivery of housing to meet national demand.

Following publication of these guidelines, local authorities were required to consider what changes are required to their existing city and county development plans to reflect the revised figures. As a first step, the Chief Executive of each local authority may prepare a report for the elected members outlining the proposed approach to addressing the updated housing growth requirements. The local authorities then undertake a process to vary their development plan to ensure that the updated housing growth is provided for.

Local authorities adopted different approaches to addressing these guidelines, choosing to address the guidelines through either a single or multiple variations.

In 2025, 19 local authorities submitted their Chief Executive Reports to the OPR. Of the 32 proposed variations in 2025, twelve consultations on variations proposed in response to these guidelines opened in 2025. Variation No. 1 to the Mayo County Development Plan 2022-2028 and the Waterford City and County Development Plan 2022-2028 were satisfactorily adopted in December 2025.

OPR Assessment of LAPs

LAPs set out objectives for the proper planning and sustainable development of specific areas. LAPs must be consistent with the corresponding CDP. Where the area lies within the combined functional area of more than one local authority, the authorities concerned may work together in the review and/or preparation of a joint LAP.

During 2025, the OPR made 14 submissions on LAPs at Issues Paper, Draft Plan, and/or Material Alteration stages.

OPR Engagement with Stakeholders to Support Assessment of Plans

The OPR engages with local authorities throughout the plan-making process. This allows the OPR to discuss key matters regarding a proposed plan, and to provide additional information, such as policy updates, which may support the work of the local authority during the plan-making process. In 2025, the OPR met with 25 local authorities regarding the review and preparation of statutory plans.

The OPR also engages with the three regional assemblies regarding statutory plans: the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA), the Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA) and the Southern Regional Assembly (SRA). Regional assemblies are responsible for supporting strategic planning and sustainable development, with each of the three regional assemblies representing the local authorities in their regional area. During 2025, the OPR met with all the regional assemblies.

The Plans Evaluation Forum (PEF) supports ongoing engagement between the OPR and prescribed bodies in relation to the plan-making process. The forum facilitates discussion and information exchange in the consideration of statutory plans by the OPR and encourages greater policy alignment among stakeholders. Members of the forum include: the DHLGH, the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment (DCEE), the Department of Education and Youth, the three regional assemblies, Uisce Éireann, the National Transport Authority (NTA), the Office of Public Works (OPW), and Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII). The OPR held three meetings of the PEF in 2025.

54

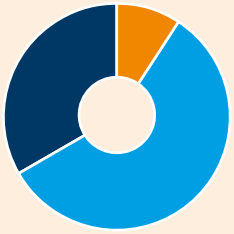
total number of submissions made by OPR in 2025

% submissions by Variation: 69%

5% CDPs

26% LAPs

Number of submissions made by stage



5 Issues Papers

31 Draft Submissions

18 Material Alterations Stage

OPR completed assessment of 30 adopted plans: 1 CDPs, 18 variations, 11 LAPs

52% Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA)

26% Southern Regional Assembly (SRA)

22% Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA)

% of submissions per regional assembly area

Stakeholder engagement: local authorities/Plans Evaluation Forum meetings

39 local authorities

3 Plans Evaluation Forum

Figure 4 | 2025 Plans Evaluation

2.2 OPR Submissions

OPR submissions on statutory plans are based on the consideration of a range of legislative and policy matters. During the period outlined, for all statutory plans, these include:

- Legislative provisions for statutory plans as provided for under the Act of 2000;
- Legislative provisions in relation to actions addressing climate change.
- The NPF;
- Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES);
- The NTA Transport Strategy (if in the Greater Dublin Area);
- Section 28 Ministerial guidelines, which relate to a range of matters concerning proper planning and sustainable development, such as development plans, housing supply, flood risk management, national and regional roads, retail, urban development, LAPs, rural housing and wind energy;
- Policy directives issued by the Minister under Section 29 of the Act of 2000.

OPR submissions to local authorities may include recommendations and/or observations at the Draft Plan and/or Material Alterations stage. Due to the high-level nature of Issues Papers, the OPR does not make formal observations or recommendations. Strategic advice on an Issues Paper and/or guidance is provided instead.

Recommendations made by the OPR relate to clear breaches of:

- relevant legislative provisions;
- national or regional policy framework;
- and/or government policy, as set out in the Ministerial guidelines issued under Section 28 of the Act of 2000.

These should be implemented or addressed by the local authority to ensure consistency with the relevant policy and legislative provisions. Failure to comply with a recommendation may lead to the issuing of a Ministerial Direction under Section 31 of the Act of 2000.

Observations made by the OPR are requests for further information, justification on a particular matter, or clarification regarding particular provisions of a plan on issues that are required to ensure alignment with policy and legislative provisions. The planning authority is requested by the OPR to action an observation.

A submission may also include advice on matters that the OPR considers would contribute positively to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. The OPR requests or advises that local authorities fully consider any advice contained in a submission.

In 2025, the OPR made a total of 94 recommendations and 41 observations to submissions on statutory consultations. The recommendations contained in the OPR's submissions are reviewed by legislative category in Table 1 and the observations are reviewed by legislative category in Table 2.

As recommendations and observations can cover more than one legislative provision, the numbers presented differ from the total numbers of recommendations and observations.

Legislative Category	Number of Recommendations
NPF	62
RSES	67
DP	38
s28	55
Act of 2000	8
Other Legislation	17
Climate Action Plan	12
Other	26

Table 1 | OPR Recommendations by Legislative Category

Legislative Category	Number of Observations
NPF	7
RSES	10
DP	11
s28	12
Act of 2000	1
Other Legislation	1
Climate Action Plan	2
Other	7

Table 2 | OPR Observations by Legislative Category

Most submissions made in 2025 related to variations and accordingly, most recommendations were made in submissions on variations. A total of 66 recommendations were made to variations, with 28 recommendations made to CDPs and/or LAPs. Recommendations relate to a range of planning matters.

These include core and settlement strategies; compact growth; regeneration; economic development and employment; sustainable transport; and flood risk management. Some of these key planning matters are explored further here:

Recommendations

Planning Matter	Numbers
Sustainable Transport and Accessibility	25
Flood Risk Management	18
Compact Growth and Regeneration	16
Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy	15
Environment Heritage and Amenities	11
Economic Development and Employment	9
Standards and Guidelines	5
Implementation and Monitoring	3

Table 3 | Recommendations by Planning Matter

Observations

Theme	Numbers
Sustainable Transport and Accessibility	9
Implementation and Monitoring	8
Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy	7
Environment Heritage and Amenities	5
Flood Risk Management	4
Compact Growth and Regeneration	4
Economic Development and Employment	3
Standards and Guidelines	1
Housing Policies	1

Table 4 | Observations by Planning Matter

1. Sustainable Transport and Mobility

Ireland has committed to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050, a goal that places increased importance on promoting more sustainable modes of transport. Against this backdrop, the OPR notes that, in general, local authorities have adopted a sound and proactive approach in their CDPs in particular, with a clear commitment to encouraging a shift towards active and sustainable travel while reducing reliance on private car use.

Local Transport Plans (LTP) are an important tool in aligning land use with transport, in order to reduce traffic congestion while also improving local connectivity. The OPR has issued a number of recommendations in relation to LTPs and a number of positive results have been noted. Variation No. 4 to the Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021-2027 has committed to preparing a LTP for Kilkenny City and implementing the recommendations of the LTP once adopted, while Variation No. 6 to the Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021-2027 proposes to include a specific objective to monitor and report on the delivery of the Ferrybank/ Belview LTP.

On foot of an OPR recommendation, Wicklow County Council has committed, through Variation No. 3 to the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028, to prepare a LTP for Blessington with the support of the relevant transport agencies, and importantly to integrate the provisions of the LTP into the plan. There is a similar commitment in variation No. 4 to the Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 with respect to Greystones-Delgany and Kilcoole.

Enhancing active travel by integrating it within current and future improvements for development areas has also been encouraged by the OPR through a number of recommendations. In this regard, and on foot of an OPR recommendation, Kerry County Council, through Variation No. 1 to the Kerry County Development Plan 2022-2028, has included an objective that recognises the importance and benefits of connecting residential and employment lands through walking and cycling infrastructure.

Certainty around the delivery of active travel measures is also important and to this end Variation No. 6 to the Kilkenny County Development Plan 2021-2027 with respect to Ferrybank/ Belview includes an implementation timeline for such measures over the short, medium and longer terms. This is supplemented by the proposed addition of a number of targeted objectives for the Ferrybank/ Belview area.

2. Flood Risk Management

Development on land susceptible to flooding can have significant consequences for local people and communities. It can also heighten flood risk in surrounding areas by reducing the natural capacity of floodplains to store excess water. With climate change driving more intense and frequent rainfall, this challenge is becoming increasingly urgent. It is vital that flood risk management plays a central role in land use zoning decisions, preventing inappropriate development in areas vulnerable to flooding.

In 2025, the OPR made 18 recommendations on CDPs and LAPs relating to flooding. As a direct result of these recommendations a number of plans have now been adopted that locate vulnerable land uses outside of flood zones, including the Dundalk Local Area Plan 2024-2030, the Carrick-on-Shannon Joint Local Area Plan 2025-2031 and the Portarlington Joint Local Area Plan 2025-2031.

There are also a number of plans currently being prepared where the OPR has made similar recommendations relating to flood risk, including proposed Variation No. 3 to the Kerry County Development Plan 2022-2028 and proposed Variation No. 1 to the Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027, both of which are expected to be adopted later in 2026.

In the case of the Wicklow Town-Rathnew Local Area Plan 2025, the members of the planning authority did not accept the OPR recommendation to locate vulnerable land uses outside of flood zones. A final direction was subsequently issued (discussed further below).

3. Compact Growth

Compact growth is a strong ambition and one of the key shared goals within the Framework of National Strategic Outcomes of the NPF. This approach aims to carefully manage the sustainable growth of compact cities, towns and villages throughout Ireland.

Many urban settlements contain vacant, derelict, and underused brownfield development areas that are centrally located and suitable for re-use for housing and other mixed uses. However, this requires a streamlined and coordinated approach, and densities that support cost-effective enabling infrastructure. As such, compact growth contributes towards the lowering of carbon emissions and supports attractive, high-quality urban places with integrated infrastructure within central areas which are more accessible by walking, cycling and public transport.

In 2025, compact growth emerged as a leading theme for the OPR, with 16 recommendations on CDPs and LAPs relating to this. In order to promote fewer peripheral sites and more centrally located and sustainable development, which is more readily serviceable, the OPR made a number of recommendations to plans, which many local authorities responded positively.

These included Monaghan County Development Plan 2025-2031, Variation No.1 (NPF) to the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028, Variation No.2 Kildare County Development Plan 2023-209 (Newbridge Settlement Plan), Variation No.1 of the Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027 (Mullingar Settlement Plan) and Variation No.2 of Kerry County Development Plan 2022-2028.

In particular, a sub theme relating to density also emerged in support of the principle of compact growth, to ensure the implementation of appropriate densities in higher-tier settlements and central consolidation/ regeneration sites aligned with the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2024). The OPR made a number of recommendations, which were responded to in a positive manner. Both higher density ranges were uplifted were appropriate and associated policy objectives strengthened to a number of plans including, Carrick-on-Shannon Local Area Plan 2025-2031, Variation No.2 to the Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028 and Variation No.6 to the Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021-2027 (Castlecomer).

In terms of regeneration, specifically relating to the promotion of developing vacant brownfield land and potential Key Development Areas and Opportunity sites, the OPR made a number of recommendations seeking the prioritisation of land activation measures, of which local authorities for Variation No.1 Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027 and Carrick-on-Shannon Joint LAP 2025-2027 responded positively.

4. Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy

The provision of a core strategy and settlement strategy is a key requirement when carrying out the making of a development plan or subsequent variations. The main purpose of the core strategy is to articulate medium and longer term of quantifiable data of various development types which should be consistent with National and Regional Development Objectives.

Whether zoning objectives are outlined in the relevant development plan or a subsidiary local area plan, the Core Strategy of the development plan must be sufficiently specific and up to date in setting population targets and housing requirements across the overall area of the planning authority. It should act as a clear framework for amendments to existing or new zonings for subsequent variations and be transparent and easily accessible in the public interest.

In 2025, the OPR made 15 recommendations focused on the Core Strategy and settlement strategy, some involve minor adjustments, Gort Local Area Plan 2025 – 2031; others more significant with positive outcomes, as in the case of the Variation No.2 for Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028.

Also to note in this period, the OPR made a number of recommendations relating to Core Strategy for the NPF implementation, Housing Growth Requirements 2025, which planning authorities have responded positively such is the case with the Variation No.1 Waterford City and County Development Plan 2022-2028 and Variation No.1 Mayo County Development Plan 2022-2028. Other relevant plans are still in various stages of the process.

2.3 OPR Assessment of Adopted Plans

Following the Draft Plan and/or Material Alterations consultation stages, the elected members of the local authority may vote to adopt a proposed plan. Once the elected members adopt a plan, the OPR has four weeks to assess it.

For CDPs, the OPR considers if the plan is consistent with its recommendations and sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

For LAPs, the OPR considers if the plan is consistent with its recommendations and/or with the development plan of the area concerned.

CDPs and LAPs come into effect six weeks after they are adopted, whereas Variation are adopted with immediate effect. If the OPR is satisfied with the plan, it will issue an acknowledgement welcoming the plan. However, if it is inconsistent with recommendations made by the OPR, the OPR may advise the Minister to issue a Direction.

In 2025, there were a total of 30 plan adoptions. One new CDP was adopted, 18 Variations were made to existing CDPs and 11 new LAPs were adopted.

Following assessment of the adopted Variation and Amendments to existing plans, the OPR determined that recommendations made were satisfactorily addressed and no further action was required.

Of the adopted plans, the OPR determined that 17[2] of the Variation and 10 of the LAPs satisfactorily addressed its recommendations, and no further action was required. These are listed in Table 5.

[2] Variation No. 1 to Mayo County Development Plan 2022-2028 was adopted in December 2025. The OPR completed its assessment in early January 2026 but no further action was warranted.

Local Authority	Plan	Adoption Date	No. of Recommendations Issued
Cork City County Council	Variation No. 2 Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028	14/07/2025	1
Carlow County Council	Variation No.1 Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028	10/03/2025	0
	Variation No. 2 to the Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028	12/11/2025	5
Dublin City Council	Variation No. 6 Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028	01/12/2025	0
	Variation No. 7 Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028	01/12/2025	0
	Variation No. 8 Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028	01/12/2025	0
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council	Kiltiernan-Glenamuck Local Area Plan 2025-2031	05/06/2025	0
	Old Connaught Local Area Plan 2025-2031	28/10/2025	0
Galway County Council	Gort Local Area Plan 2025-2031	29/07/2025	5
Kerry County Council	Variation No. 1 Kerry CDP 2022-2028 (Tralee)	21/07/2025	7
Kildare County Council	Variation No. 1 Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 (Kilcullen Settlement Plan)	31/03/2025	4
Kildare County Council and Meath County Council	Maynooth and Environs Joint Local Area Plan 2025-2031	17/02/2025 (Kildare County Council) 19/02/2025 (Meath County Council)	11

Local Authority	Plan	Adoption Date	No. of Recommendations Issued
Kilkenny County Council	Variation No. 3 Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021- 2027	17/02/2025	0
	Variation No. 4 Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021-2027	24/03/2025	3
Laois County Council and Offaly County Council	Portarlington Joint Local Area Plan 2025-2031	16/06/2025 (Offaly County Council) 30/06/2025 (Laois County Council)	7
Leitrim County Council and Roscommon County Council	Carrick-on-Shannon Joint Local Area Plan 2025-2031	07/04/2025	8
Longford County Council	Longford Town Local Area Plan 2025-2031	22/04/2025	9
Louth County Council	Dundalk Local Area Plan 2025-2031	06/03/2025	10
	Variation No. 3 Louth CDP 2021-2027	20/10/2025	1
Mayo County Council	Variation No. 1 to Mayo County Development Plan 2022-2028	08/12/2025	3
Meath County Council	Variation No. 3 Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027	27/01/2025	2
	Variation No. 4 Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027	07/07/2025	0
Monaghan County Council	Variation No.1 to Monaghan CDP 2025-2031	06/10/2025	1
Tipperary County Council	Carrick-on-Suir Local Area Plan 2025-2031	12/05/2025	10
Waterford County Council	Variation No. 1 to Waterford County Development Plan 2022-2028	13/11/2025	2

Local Authority	Plan	Adoption Date	No. of Recommendations Issued
Wicklow County Council	Blessington Local Area Plan 2025-2031	16/06/2025	7
	Variation No. 3 Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028	16/06/2025	6

Table 5 | Adopted LAPs: No further action required

Draft Directions

In line with Section 31AM and 31AO of the Act of 2000, the OPR may make a recommendation to the Minister to instruct a local authority to address inconsistencies with statutory requirements in its plan.

Where the OPR considers this is necessary, it will issue a notice letter to the Minister outlining its reason for reaching the decision. This notice letter will explain how the plan is inconsistent with the OPR's recommendations and how the plan fails to set out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. The OPR also prepares a proposed draft Direction for the Minister.

Following consideration, the Minister may decide to issue a draft Direction to the relevant local authority.

Once the Minister issues a draft Direction, the parts of the plan which the draft Direction relates to do not come into effect in the Adopted Plan.

If the Minister disagrees with all or any of the proposed draft Direction, the Minister prepares a statement outlining the reasons for not agreeing with the OPR. This statement is laid before each House of the Oireachtas.

In 2025, one adopted CDP, one adopted variation to an existing CDP, and one adopted LAP included provisions that did not satisfactorily address all the recommendations that the OPR had made at either the Draft Plan or Material Alterations stage. These plans are listed in Table 6.

Local Authority	Plan	Adoption Date	No. of Recommendations Issued
Monaghan County Council	Monaghan County Development Plan 2025-2031	26/05/2025	18
Wicklow County Council	Variation No.2 Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028	12/05/2025	11
Wicklow County Council	Wicklow Town - Rathnew Local Area Plan 2025-2031	12/05/2025	12

Table 6 | Proposed Draft Directions Issued by the OPR

The OPR recommended that the Minister issue a draft Direction on flood risk management in all three of the statutory plans on the basis that lands zoned for residential and employment uses were included within flood risk zones.

The reasons for the directed changes remained consistent across all plans, with the requirement to ensure that inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding is avoided in accordance with the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009), which is supported by the respective Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies for each regional authority and the National Planning Framework.

In both Wicklow draft Directions, the OPR also recommended to the Minister that lands zoned for employment uses be omitted on the basis of impact and proximity to Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA). The reasons listed were to protect and conserve environmentally sensitive areas and to ensure alignment between core objectives of the EU Birds and Habitats Directive and local authority development plans.

The OPR further recommended to the Minister that a footnote included in the Monaghan County Development Plan zoning matrix, permitting Retail Convenience and Retail Comparison within Monaghan Retail Park, be omitted. The reasons listed related to the impact on sustainable settlement and transportation strategies, to ensure that town centres are regenerated and rejuvenated and to support sustainable mobility and transition to a low carbon society.

All the reasons listed by the OPR were upheld by the Minister in issuing the draft Directions.

Final Directions

There are prescribed steps that a local authority must take when they receive a draft Direction from the Minister. They must conduct a public consultation on the draft Direction, and the Chief Executive must prepare a report on the submissions received by the local authority during the consultation period.

The OPR then considers the Chief Executive's report and any submissions that the OPR receives directly from elected members of the local authority concerned. Following this assessment, the OPR can make a recommendation to the Minister to issue a final Direction, with or without minor amendments. Alternatively, the OPR can appoint an Inspector if it considers that further investigation is required.

Following consideration of the OPR's final recommendation, the Minister may decide to issue a Direction to the relevant local authority. If the Minister disagrees with all or any of the proposed Direction, the Minister prepares a statement outlining the reasons for not agreeing with the OPR. This statement is laid before each House of the Oireachtas. When a Minister issues a final Direction, its terms replace the relevant aspects of the plan with immediate effect.

In 2025, the OPR issued recommendations to the Minister for a final Direction in respect of the following plans:

- Monaghan County Development Plan 2025-2031
- Sligo County Development Plan 2024-2030
- Variation No.2 Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028
- Wicklow Town - Rathnew Local Area Plan 2025-2031
- Ballina Local Area Plan 2024-2030

In the case of Donegal County Development Plan 2024-2030 (a final Direction recommendation was issued by the OPR in 2024) and Sligo County Development Plan 2024-2030, the Minister is in the process of determining whether a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) or an Appropriate Assessment (AA) is required.

The Direction process for the remaining plans was concluded in 2025. Cumulatively, the OPR recommended that the Minister issue a Direction requiring eight changes to the plans to resolve the issues previously raised by the OPR. In all but one case, the directed changes related to land-use zoning which are broken down as follows:

Employment – 3

Residential – 4

In relation to the recommended Directions on zoning objectives, the reasons given by the OPR related to flood risk management, where land was zoned for vulnerable development in areas at risk of flooding, environmental and biodiversity sensitivities, including land within the riparian buffer of a watercourse and adjacent to an SPA and an SAC.

Ministerial Reasons

Where the Minister does not agree with the recommendation of the OPR regarding either the draft Direction or the final Direction, the Minister must prepare a statement in writing of their reasons for not agreeing. This is referred to as the Statement of Reasons. It can apply to the Direction as a whole or, more commonly, to part of the Direction. The Statement of Reasons must then be laid before each House of the Oireachtas and made available on the website of the DHLGH.

In 2025, the Minister did not agree with the OPR in respect of one individual recommended directed change to the Ballina Local Area Plan 2024-2030 that was the subject of the final Direction recommendation by the OPR.

The OPR recommended that the additional residential zoning included as part of the Material Alterations be retained as part of the adopted plan following the consultation on the draft direction. The Minister's reasons for not agreeing with the OPR included reference that the material alterations, including the subject site:

- provides significantly more zoned lands than stated in the core strategy;
- is located in peripheral, non-sequential locations outside the Central Statistics Office (CSO) settlement boundary and without adequate infrastructure and do not support sustainable travel patterns;
- is located within flood risk zones; and
- is inconsistent with Objective INP 14 of the Mayo County development Plan

On this basis, the Minister considered that the subject Material Alteration for residential zoning is not consistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and should be included in the final Direction for omission from the adopted plan.

2.4 Judicial Reviews

As an administrative body under the remit of the Act, the decisions of the OPR are open to judicial review, in which the court will primarily consider the lawfulness of the decision-making process. In reaching its decision, the court may assess if the OPR has the authority to make a decision, if the manner in which the decision was made is fair, and if the OPR complied with all legal requirements governing its decision. Judicial reviews may relate to the recommendation of the OPR or the decision of the Minister.

The plans which were subject to judicial review during 2025 are listed in Table 7.

Plan Name	Number of Judicial Reviews	Status
Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029	1	Case dismissed
Dundalk Local Area Plan 2024-2030	1	Ongoing
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Development Plan 2022-2028	1	Case upheld
Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029	3	1 Dismissed 1 Withdrawn 1 Conceded
Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029	1	Conceded
Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029	1	Ongoing
Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028	1	Case dismissed, appeal ongoing
South Dublin County Development Plan 2022-2028	1	Ongoing
Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028	2	Ongoing
Sligo County Development Plan 2024-2030	1	Ongoing
Letterkenny Plan and Local Transport Plan 2023-2029	1	Ongoing

Table 7 | Plans Subject to Judicial Reviews



3 Planning Reviews and Examinations

- Local Authority Reviews Programme
- An Coimisiún Pleanála Review
- Planning Enforcement and Peat Extraction
- Case Handling and Trends
- Examination of Complaints
- Case Study Examples



Skellig Michael island, County Kerry

Under planning legislation one of the OPR's key statutory functions is to review and/or examine the systems and procedures used by local authorities and An Coimisiún Pleanála (formerly An Bord Pleanála) to perform their statutory planning functions.

Under the legislative provisions, the OPR may conduct comprehensive planning reviews on its own discretion or at the Minister's instigation, while examinations are carried out in relation to specific matters raised by members of the public. In essence, these functions empower the OPR to monitor and evaluate the performance of the national planning system and to identify areas for improvement across the 31 local authorities and An Coimisiún Pleanála.

Through reviews and examinations, the OPR places an emphasis on the identification of good practice and opportunities for shared learning between organisations, as well as highlighting any areas for enhancement. The overall focus is to embed a culture of continuous improvement in the Irish planning sector.

For example, in 2025, insights from the OPR's reviews and examinations' work informed the implementation of the Ministerial Action Plan on Planning Resources, through the identification of opportunities for innovation and efficiency that could enhance the planning system for local authority staff and the public. This is discussed in more detail later in this section.

3.1 Local Authority Reviews Programme

The OPR has been delivering a programme of local authority reviews, with each review sequenced with a view to ensuring an ongoing representative sample of national planning contexts, in relation to local characteristics, scale and regional spread. The overall purpose is to act as a resource for the planning system, supporting the delivery of quality planning services that meet people's needs.

Our reviews consider the systems and procedures used in local authority planning departments, including:

- Development management, incorporating procedures for environmental assessment, local authorities' own development and the taking in charge of residential developments;
- Planning enforcement;
- Protecting architectural heritage;
- Preparing development plans and the related public engagement;
- Environmental assessment and protection of amenities measures; and
- Actively promoting the development of land and delivering projects.

The OPR analyses performance across these areas and makes recommendations on how procedures should be improved or how current standards can be maintained.

Each review involves a comprehensive process of information gathering, analysis and engagement with local authority officials, to fully appraise the systems and procedures used to deliver planning functions. We also conduct fieldwork, visiting the local authority offices and engaging with planning department staff through workshops. More information can be found on our reviews programme webpage.

Generally, in each of our statutory reviews, any ratings and recommendations that are provided are intended to encourage the ongoing improvement of robust procedures in relation to statutory functions and collectively evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the delivery of the local authorities planning services.

Of note is our statutory review of Roscommon County Council which was published during 2025. The key findings of the review are outlined below. In addition, reviews of Galway County Council and Longford County Council were initiated during 2025, reflecting the OPR's continued commitment to ensuring a balance of regional locations and planning contexts.



Figure 5 | Reviews for 2025


Cloosh Valley, County Galway

Roscommon County Council Review

The OPR's review of Roscommon County Council's planning functions was published in March 2025, providing the first comprehensive overview of the service delivery of this local authority's planning functions, including its systems, procedures and organisational capacity.

The review found that Roscommon County Council's planning department was operating with significant resource capacity issues. However the level of commitment and professionalism of planning staff was acknowledged. As was the level of proactive engagement and co-operation of the local authority throughout the review process including consultation, workshops and the provision of necessary material and information.

In the case of Roscommon County Council, 14 recommendations were made, two of which were assigned a critical rating. These aimed at supporting staff working within in the planning department to achieve job satisfaction while strengthening and sustaining levels of resilience already on display, including:

- **Resourcing and capacity:** The need to ensure that capacity is increased in the planning department to support staff in the delivery of its various functions. The limited resources and capacity of the planning department was identified as an operational risk given increasing complexity and an increase in respective workloads and responsibilities within such a critical local authority function as planning. As such, the OPR recommended an increase in staffing and improved workforce planning to offset operational inefficiencies that could be directly linked to insufficient staffing levels.



Boyle Abbey, Co Roscommon

Roscommon County Council Review continued

- **Procedural and workflow Improvement:** The OPR also recommended improvements to internal processes, procedures and the provision of clearer guidance to improve responsiveness; its efficiency in decision-making; and to reduce administrative burden. This was evidenced by identified issues relating to a high level of invalid applications, increasing requests for further information and challenges in meeting statutory timelines. Combined with an increase in staffing and improved workforce and workflow planning, these improvements will ensure that Roscommon County Council's planning department is best positioned to ensure it can continue delivering on its statutory functions.
- **Strategic role of planning:** The review also found that the planning department had an opportunity to take a more prominent role in driving land activation initiatives within existing Council structures.

Additionally, the review highlighted the importance of public engagement and the need for strong communication between planners and applicants to ensure a more efficient delivery of planning services and, crucially, better planning outcomes.

The OPR has now moved into its two-year monitoring phase where it will continue to support Roscommon County Council in implementing recommendations by providing clear guidance, advising on implementation and providing assistance where appropriate. While responsibility for implementation rests with Roscommon County Council, the OPR will continue its engagement to ensure improvements derived as a result of the implementation of the recommendations align with legislative and national policy requirements.

Progress Monitoring

The OPR monitors progress following all reviews to ensure recommendations are effectively implemented. Monitoring is essential to ensure the integrity of the process.

Oversight and monitoring help ensure that the inputs, activities, outputs and ultimately, outcomes, are aligned to achieve the desired goals of national, regional and local policy.

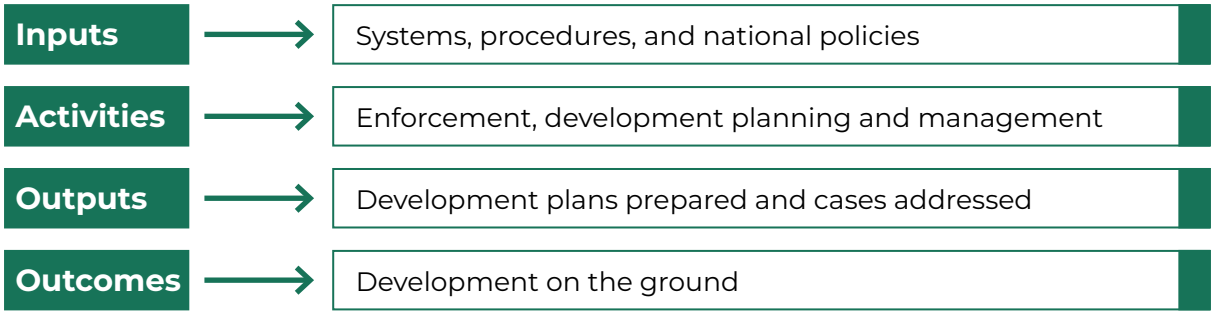


Figure 6 | Statutory Review Progress Monitoring

Monitoring is carried out using a staged approach. The OPR engages with a local authority at six-monthly intervals after the publication of a review.

Throughout 2025, we engaged with the following local authorities to monitor implementation of recommendations:

- **Waterford City and County Council**
- **Offaly County Council**
- **Meath County Council**
- **South Dublin County Council**
- **Roscommon County Council**

In general, the OPR's monitoring indicates that the review recommendations are being implemented or progressed across the various local authorities. Achievements in 2025 include:

- Progress on systems to support monitoring and evaluating the delivery of development plan objectives.
- Development of procedures to support the ongoing delivery of quality planning services to the public. This includes procedures for forward planning, architectural heritage and management of derelict sites.
- Enhancement of information management systems, which will support analysis, reporting and policy development. As well as improving the accessibility of information for the public.
- Progress on strategic workforce planning and development of work programmes to support the ongoing effective organisation within planning departments.
- Progress on the development of a conflict-of-interest procedure. This will support planning departments to consider any matters that could influence their impartiality or independence (or the perception thereof) in respect of the duties they perform.

The monitoring process also indicates that the impact of resourcing challenges continues to be felt across local authorities nationwide.

3.2 Implementation of the 2022 An Coimisiún Pleanála review

The OPR conducted a comprehensive review process in relation to the functioning of what was then An Bord Pleanála during 2022. The process produced two separate reports with the assistance of experienced, external experts. The emphasis of the review was on examining the robustness and effectiveness of decision-making practices, the organisation of work, governance arrangements, casefile handling and wider relevant structural issues.

The OPR has closely engaged with An Coimisiún Pleanála and the DHLGH throughout the intervening period to ensure that the recommendations arising from the review process were implemented. The implementation phase was finalised in 2025. This cumulated in the formal reconstitution of the organisation with a governing board, an executive and separate grouping of planning commissioners, focussed solely on planning decisions, in line with the recommendations of the OPR review. To coincide with the reorganisation An Bord Pleanála was renamed An Coimisiún Pleanála, from June 2025.

Other key achievements arising from the OPR's review include:

- the recruitment of significant additional personnel to meet the organisation's business needs;
- strengthened structures at board-level;
- the establishment of new governance arrangements (including a new Compliance and Ethics Unit and a revised Code of Conduct);

- enhanced legal support;
- improved case management and decision making processes; and
- a renewed focus on engagement with internal and external stakeholders.

Crucially, the improvements to systems and procedures arising out of implementation of the review recommendations have allowed An Coimisiún Pleanála to significantly reduce its backlog of planning files. The impact of this will be positively felt throughout the planning system and the stakeholders it serves.

The OPR will continue to engage with An Coimisiún Pleanála in relation to the continuous improvement of the country's planning system, including new requirements of the Act with regard to mandatory timelines for An Coimisiún Pleanála decisions and the extension of the OPR's remit towards the examination of planning complaints about the organisation.

3.3 Thematic Review – Planning Enforcement and Peat Extraction

While the OPR conducts reviews of individual local authority planning departments on a programmed basis, it is also open to the OPR to conduct focused (or thematic) reviews in relation to specific issues, which may present across a number of authorities, where the OPR 'considers it necessary or appropriate'.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) published a report in June 2025 in relation to 'Large Scale Illegal Peat Extraction'. This report identified 38 large sites across the functional areas of seven local authorities where industrial-level peat extraction operations have been taking place in the absence of planning consent.

The report also identified the need for planning permission and enforcement action under the Planning and Development Acts (Act of 2000 and the Act). In publishing its report, the EPA noted that planning enforcement action had been inadequate and signalled the need for authorities to be more proactive in the regulation of these activities.

In light of the issues raised by the EPA report, the OPR initiated a thematic review to consider the robustness of statutory procedures and processes available to local authorities in relation to addressing unauthorised largescale peat extraction. The OPR review will analyse the challenges local authorities have encountered in addressing unauthorised development and establish the key blockages, whether these are issues such as resources, expertise, legal complexities, or statutory limitations.

This will include considering the regulatory / legal framework, including the intended provisions of the Act. The ultimate purpose of the review process is to point towards potential actions that could be taken by Government and the local authority sector. In this regard, it is intended that the OPR would make formal recommendations to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage in 2026 based on the review findings.

3.4 Innovation and Efficiency Working Group

Following the publication of the Ministerial Action Plan on Planning Resources in October 2024, several working groups were established to progress the identified actions. One Working Group, co-chaired by the OPR's Director of Planning Reviews and comprising representatives from the local authority sector and other key stakeholders, was tasked with exploring opportunities for innovation and efficiency within local authority planning departments.

The working group's focus was on exploring innovations, including digital tools, data utilisation, and collaborative approaches, that could enhance the planning system for both local authority staff and the public. Further, the group considered how standard administrative tasks and responsibilities could be rationalised and modernised to create greater capacity in planning departments.

While the working group considered a wide-ranging number of topics, this group's draft report, which was submitted to the DHLGH in 2025, focused on 12 clear recommendations that could be delivered to the greatest effect in the short term with a realistic level of input.

Collectively, the recommendations seek to enhance procedures, leverage digital tools and data, support shared and standardised approaches, and create additional capacity within planning departments, while acknowledging ongoing resourcing and funding challenges.

Selected recommendations included:

	Recommendations
The National Digital Planning System (NDPS)	Continued support for the rollout of the NDPS, with consideration of lessons learned from process mapping, digitisation and emerging technologies (artificial Intelligence), and the application of international best practice in an Irish context.
Compliance Submissions Management	Consideration of a nationally recognised system, potentially through the NDPS, to improve how compliance submissions are managed and administered across local authorities.
Advertisement of Planning Applications	Examination of current regulatory requirements for print newspaper advertisements, including whether alternative or more centralised approaches to planning notices could be introduced.
Planning Fees	Implementation of the findings of the 2024 Planning Fees Review Report to address the costs associated with planning service delivery and future system requirements.

Table 8 | Selected recommendations



3.5 Case Handling

While the legislative provisions specifically empower the OPR to examine complaints about local authorities, we place an emphasis on assisting the public in relation to all planning matters raised with us.

It is the OPR's objective to be an independent voice at the heart of the planning system, representing the public interest. We recognise that opportunities for communities to voice concerns and play a role in decisions that affect their lives are important drivers of sustainable development.

By facilitating and encouraging public engagement in the planning process, our case-handling work aims to promote transparency, accountability and trust in the planning system. In this regard, we are committed to providing first-class customer service to everyone who corresponds with us by delivering fair, effective, courteous and timely services to all our customers. These commitments to quality customer service are outlined in our Customer Charter.

People engage with our case-handling team in relation to a diverse range of planning related issues. These include, but are not limited to:

- Queries or general information requests, which typically seek clarification about how a specific aspect of the planning system operates.
- Submissions on the operation of the planning process, providing observations relating to national planning policy or statutory provisions, often illustrated with case studies or other evidence; and
- Complaints, which are generally more complex, are addressed in further detail below.

In doing so, the OPR carefully considers all correspondence received to pinpoint recurring themes, gaining insight into public concerns about planning. This information informs our reporting to the Minister on the effectiveness of Ireland's planning process. It also contributes to our programme of reviews of local authorities and helps shape our education, training and research initiatives.

During 2025, the OPR opened 252 new cases in relation to a wide range of planning matters.

While a variety of matters are raised by members of the public, many of these relate to matters outside the scope of the OPR's remit. These included cases before local authorities and/or ACP for determination or cases already referred to other appropriately mandated public bodies. In such cases, we signpost customers to relevant authorities, agencies or bodies that may be best positioned to address the issues or queries raised.



Figure 7 | OPR Cases 2025

Case Handling Trends

Customer Type

The vast majority of customers submitting cases to the OPR in 2025 were members of the public. In addition, commercial interests, local authorities, elected representatives, non-government organisations and interest groups all sought assistance from the OPR during 2025. The breakdown of customers by type is outlined here.

Case Handling Trend	Number
Member of the public	179
Commercial	37
Local authority	9
Government organisation	6
Non-governmental organisation(NGO)/ Interest group	8
Political	12
Media	1
Total	**252**

Table 9 | Breakdown of Customers by Type 2025

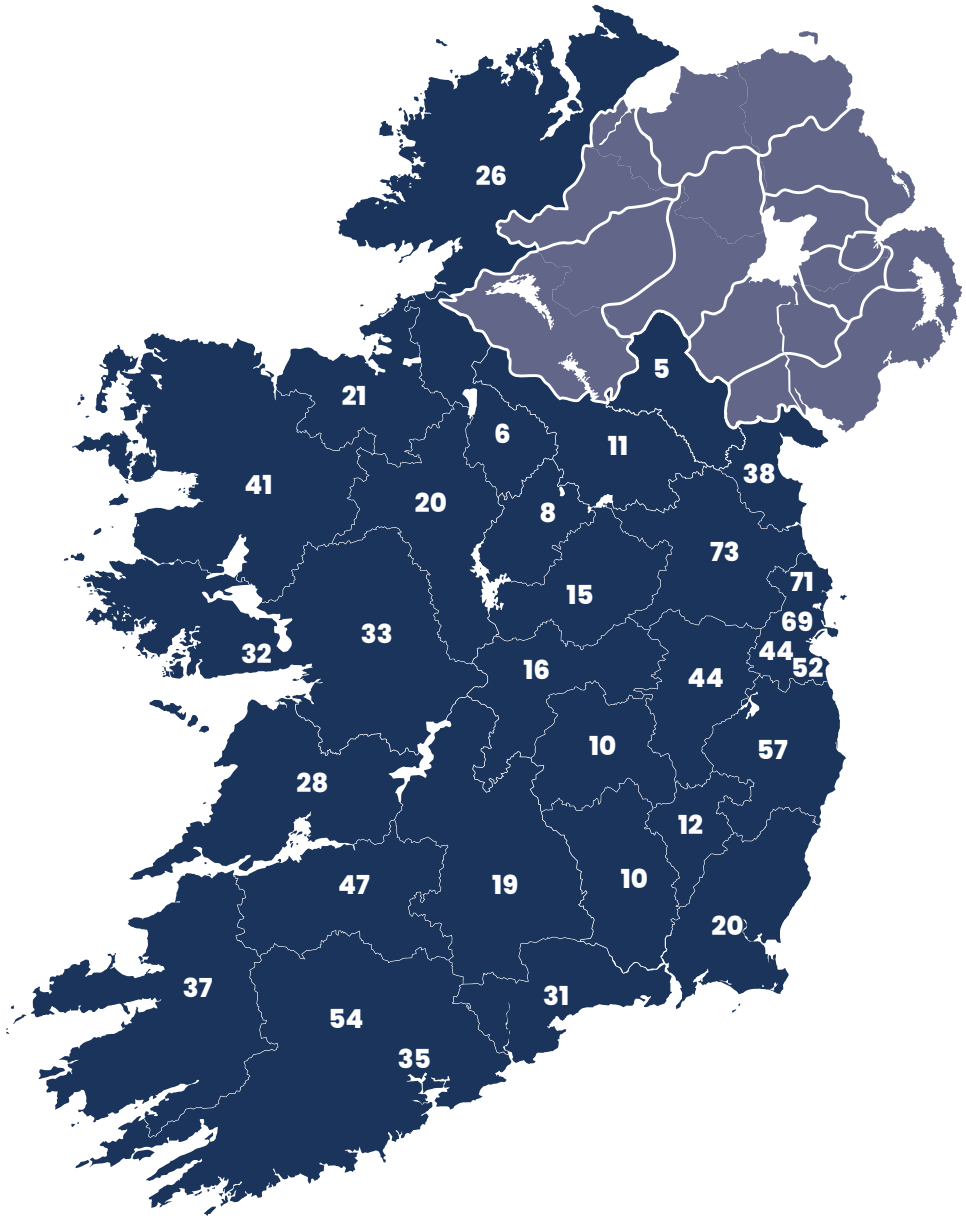

Dunmore East, County Waterford

Geographic Breakdown by Local Authority

Not all cases dealt with by the OPR relate to a specific local authority or area. Many relate to the planning system generally whereas a particular issue may generate a number of cases, such as submissions on a particular development plan which is subject to review/public consultation.

For example, we received a number of submissions in relation to the Gort Local Area Plan 2024-2030.

Naturally, local authorities with larger populations tend to generate a higher number of cases. Between 2020-2025, the highest number of correspondences related to Dublin City Council and South Dublin, Dun Laoghaire - Rathdown, Fingal, Meath, Wicklow and Cork County Councils.



County	Total
Carlow	12
Cavan	11
Clare	28
Cork City	35
Cork County	54
Dublin City	69
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown	52
Donegal	26
Fingal	71
Galway City	32
Galway County	33
Kerry	37
Kildare	44
Kilkenny	10
Laois	10
Leitrim	6
Limerick	47
Longford	8
Louth	38
Mayo	41
Meath	73
Monaghan	5
Offaly	16
Roscommon	20
Sligo	21
South Dublin	44
Tipperary	19
Waterford	31
Westmeath	15
Wexford	20
Wicklow	57

Figure 8 | Geographical Breakdown of Cases including Complaints, Queries and Submissions 2020-2025

Cases by Theme

The most commonly recurring themes tend to be issues where the OPR can assist customers by clarifying the functioning of the planning system and by advising of the appropriate avenues through which to engage with it. Matters that lead to formal examination by the OPR are generally not commonly recurring issues.

Clear themes emerged from our case handling during 2025. The submission of comments on **individual planning applications** remained the key theme throughout 2025. While the OPR does not play a role in individual planning applications, we endeavour to ensure that customers are appropriately guided on the development management process and the relevant statutory avenues available to them.

Public concerns regarding **planning enforcement** also generated a significant volume of correspondence. A large proportion of cases raised concerned specific instances of unauthorised development. This meant they were not appropriate to the OPR's remit and were matters for the relevant local authorities. When considering cases involving enforcement matters, the focus of the OPR is to establish whether local authorities have the appropriate systems and procedures in place to deliver their overall enforcement function effectively.

National policy featured with increased prominence in 2025. While not a dominant theme in previous years, the frequency with which policy issues arose this year reflects the growing importance of ensuring clarity and consistency in the application of planning policy objectives.

The **statutory plan-making process** also featured strongly within correspondence from the public and other interested parties. In this regard, the OPR plays an independent role in evaluating draft development plans to ensure that they are consistent with national and regional planning policy and legislation. Accordingly, the OPR does not consider submissions that may be received from interested parties in relation to the making of individual plans but will provide clarity on the processes involved.

Legal and ownership issues emerged as a key theme in 2025. A significant proportion of correspondence related to public rights of way, access arrangements and boundary disputes. Such matters are usually legal in nature and are considered civil matters rather than planning considerations.

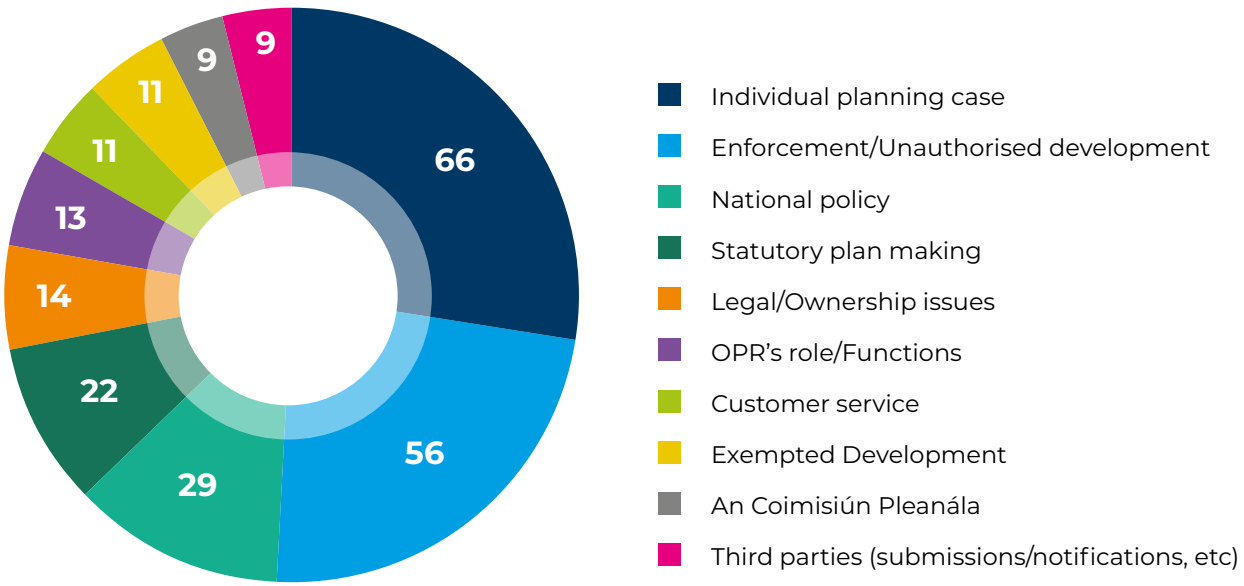


Figure 9 | Top Case Themes 2025

Modernising Case Management through CRM implementation

From the outset of 2025, the Reviews and Examinations team, in its efforts to apply the principles of continuous improvement and customer-focused services, transitioned from a predominantly manual case management process to an integrated case management system. This bespoke case management system (CMS) was built upon customer relationship management (CRM) structures. 2025 represents the first full year of this new CMS in operation. This marked a significant step in upgrading the OPR's operational infrastructure and embedding a more structured, technology-enabled approach to case handling.

This full year of using the CMS has already seen enhanced efficiency and oversight across case lifecycles, enabling more accurate reporting, stronger adherence to case response targets and more efficient tracking of correspondence, actions and case progression than previous administrative processes. The system has also improved information management, provided greater audit functionality and reduced administrative duplication and increasing supporting an oversight of activities. The CMS also provides for strategic insights and analysis of data, providing greater opportunities to identify and anticipate areas of concern or emerging trends and patterns.

Collectively, these improvements have augmented the OPR's capacity to deliver timely, transparent and responsive customer service, ensuring stakeholder engagements are managed in a more efficient manner.

3.6 Examination of Complaints

The OPR is committed to providing a fair and independent mechanism for examining complaints and we will engage with and assist, where possible, those who submit complaints to us. However, planning legislation sets a high threshold for a complaint to be formally examined by the OPR.

For a complaint to be considered valid, it must relate to the organisation of the relevant local authority and to the systems and procedures used in performing its functions under the Act. Customers should first try to resolve their complaint with the relevant local authority through formal review mechanisms or via its own internal complaints procedure prior to contacting the OPR. More information can be found on our website's complaints page.

Although some cases allow for a straightforward resolution, a considerable portion of our caseload involved extensive and intricate technical detail and required additional information to reach the best outcome. Sometimes, ongoing engagement with both the complainant and the relevant local authority was required. This comprehensive approach ensured a more thorough understanding of the complexities involved in the case and facilitated more effective resolutions.

It is important to note that the OPR's complaint-handling function is distinct from other complaint-handling mechanisms, such as those of the local authorities and the Office of the Ombudsman, in that the focus of the OPR is not on the individual circumstances or adverse effect but, rather, towards the procedural or systemic issues indicated or identified as underpinning such complaints.

For example, where a complaint is appropriate to our statutory remit, we will conduct a preliminary examination of the matters raised.

This involves detailed technical examination and the gathering of relevant information, including from the local authority concerned. Where a complaint is upheld, we may issue recommendations to the local authority to improve the way they deliver their planning services. Where complaints are not upheld, we may still provide advice or share good practice from other local authorities to foster shared learning and improvements.

Through our complaints function, we monitor the effectiveness of Ireland's planning systems, strive to make improvements, where possible, share insights and highlight practice improvements across local authorities.

Complaint Handling Activity

Of the 124 complaints received during 2025, the OPR conducted 33 formal examinations in accordance with the criteria set out in the statutory provisions. These examinations related to a variety of procedural matters associated with local authorities' administration of their planning functions. This included local authority own development ('Part 8'), compliance issues, notifications to third parties, screening procedures, online planning systems, architectural conservation, public consultation and/or validation processes.

Five of these complaints were upheld. Matters on which complaints were upheld related to procedural issues, such as the delivery of planning enforcement responsibilities, the management of planning compliance submissions and delays in the processing and publication of Section 5 declarations.

In cases where complaints were upheld, the OPR made specific recommendations to the relevant local authority which were designed to ensure procedural improvement.

After making recommendations, the OPR continues to engage with the relevant authority to ensure procedures are updated.

Local Authority Complaints Support Network

In 2025, the OPR continued to coordinate its 'Local Authority Complaints Support Network', including facilitating an in-person workshop for members as part of its ongoing programme.

This network supports local authorities in the effective handling of planning-related complaints, contributing to the delivery of high-quality planning services to the public. It also promotes enhanced communication, collaboration, and knowledge exchange between local authorities, the OPR and other relevant State agencies.

Through the network, members are provided with opportunities to share expertise, learn from best practice, and explore collaborative approaches in key areas such as complaint handling, examination processes, and stakeholder communications.

3.7 Case Studies: Complaints Examined by the OPR

The following case studies illustrate the OPR's formal examination of complaints and the role its case-handling function can play in local authority performance.

When a complaint is examined by the OPR, we work with the relevant local authority to understand the matter and to resolve any issues as soon as possible. While not all complaints subject to examination will be upheld, the OPR works with local authorities and other public sector bodies on an ongoing basis to seek to improve the levels of service provided to the public through the planning system.

Case Study 1 - Complaint upheld:



Delivery of planning enforcement responsibilities

Summary of Complaint

Following receipt of several complaints in relation to a local authority's handling and progression of various planning enforcement cases, the OPR conducted an examination of the systems and procedures in place to deliver on this important statutory function. The matters raised over the various complaints outlined instances of planning compliance and unauthorised development cases raised with the local authority but not being progressed or responded to for significant periods. Further, some complainants suggested that they had been advised that planning department resourcing was a factor in cases not being attended to.

Analysis and Findings

Taken together, the complaints documented ongoing instances of enforcement activity not proceeding in line with standard procedures and of the planning department not engaging with complainants in the manner and timeframe expected.

In addition to examining the issues raised by complainants, the OPR considered details from the National Audit and Oversight Commission's Local Authority Performance Indicator Reports, which showed almost 800 on-hand enforcement cases at year-end, with fewer than 35 cases closed in the preceding two years.

Further, based on direct engagement with the planning department, it was evident that the local authority was not deploying sufficient resources to make progress on its enforcement case backlog.

Decision

Planning legislation places a clear responsibility on local authorities to take action in relation to planning breaches, including specifying timelines for progressing matters. Further, Governmental guidelines underline that a proactive enforcement service is crucial for protecting the integrity of the planning system and the effectiveness of development policies.

While all local authorities have a significant caseload of enforcement cases, given the limited evidence of progress on reported planning breaches and the inadequate commitment of the resources necessary to tackle their enforcement responsibilities, the overall complaint was upheld.

In upholding the complaint, the OPR underlined to the authority the priority that must now be placed on resourcing its enforcement function, including monitoring and internal reporting. In addition, the planning department has been required to prepare an internal strategy, to prioritise the progression of its enforcement caseload.

Case Study 2 - Complaint upheld:



Timely processing of exempted development requests

Summary of Complaint

Planning legislation provides that a person may request a formal declaration from a local authority as to whether a proposed development is exempt from the requirement for planning permission (often referred to as a Section 5 declaration). A complaint was raised with the OPR regarding a local authority's delay in processing of such requests.

Analysis and Findings

The legislation expects that local authorities issue exempted development declarations within four weeks of receiving a request and that declarations be published online three days thereafter. In considering the case, the OPR noted an absence of declarations published to the relevant authority's website over the preceding months.

In responding to the matter, the local authority confirmed that a backlog in processing exempted development declaration requests had arisen over several months due to staffing shortages and the filling of vacancies within the planning department.

Following the OPR's raising of the matter, the local authority confirmed that the planning department had placed a focus on processing the backlogged requests, clearing many cases, with inspections completed and reports drafted for the majority of outstanding cases.

Decision

While the local authority had set about addressing the issues raised in the complaint, given that the expected statutory standards for the timely processing of requests had not been met for a number of months, the complaint was well-founded and upheld accordingly.

While planning departments may place an overall priority on the processing of standard planning applications, delays in the processing of exempted development requests can have an impact on the progression of intended developments, and it is important that such requests are treated with the priority expected by legislation. Following examination of the complaint, the OPR continues to monitor the local authority's performance in this regard.

Case Study 3 - Complaint not upheld:



Notification of interested parties in relation to local authority development

Summary of Complaint

Several interested parties made formal submissions in relation to an active travel scheme proposed for delivery through the statutory approval arrangements for local authority development (referred to as 'Part 8' schemes).

Under the relevant statutory provisions, parties who make submissions are to be notified of the final decision following the approval of schemes, or not, by the elected members of the relevant council. The complaint alleged that notifications had not issued in this case and was further concerned that amendments had been made to the scheme from what had been originally proposed.

In considering such a complaint, the OPR's focus is on the robustness of the systems and procedures in place rather than on the particular development that may have been proposed or approved. In this regard, the OPR's examination of the matter was in relation to the authority's overall adherence to procedural steps in the management of Part 8 proposals.

Analysis and Findings

A requirement to notify interested parties, who have made formal submissions, in relation to Part 8 development proposals is clearly set out in the Planning Regulations.

Through engagement with the local authority in this case, evidence was provided of notification letters issuing to the relevant interested parties. It was also noted that the relevant documentation was published online through the planning portal.

Additionally, it was observed that, while amendments were made to the original proposal for the scheme, these amendments were included in the resolution adopted by the elected members when approving the Part 8 proposal. In this regard, there is no statutory requirement for further public consultation where amendments are introduced through the elected members' approval of a proposal.

Decision

Overall, the OPR found that the local authority had appropriate internal procedures in place for the administration of Part 8 proposals, including clear guidance in relation to the steps required throughout the process, with a clear outline of the steps to be taken in notifying relevant parties of the final decision on a proposal. The OPR did not find evidence of any procedural shortcomings and the complaint was not upheld.

4 Education, Training, Research, Communications and Data Analysis

- **Education and Training**
- **Research**
- **Communications and Data Analysis**



Westport, County Mayo

Throughout 2025 the OPR conducted education and training programmes for elected members and staff of local authorities and regional assemblies in accordance with the provisions of Section 31Q(1) of the Act of 2000.

4.1 Education and Training

On 31 December 2025, Part 18 of the Act was commenced. In accordance with the provisions of Section 549(1) the OPR must conduct education and training programmes for members and staff of planning authorities, regional assemblies and ACP. This training will focus on the role of such authorities, assemblies and ACP under the Act and matters associated with the proper planning and sustainable development including matters which the OPR considers are relevant to its functions.

Training for Elected Members

The 2025 planning training programme for elected members of local authorities and regional assemblies was delivered in conjunction with the Association of Irish Local Government (AILG).

Elected members received high quality presentations from expert-speakers on the following topics:

- Learnings from Judicial Review Proceedings
- Community Benefit Funds and Renewables
- Dealing with Vacancy and Dereliction
- The Evolving Planning Context and the New Ministerial Guidelines under Section 28 of the Act of 2000

Learnings from Judicial Review Proceedings

The first training event entitled **Learnings from Judicial Review Proceedings** was delivered online in January in conjunction with Fieldfisher LLP. The presentations provided:

- An overview of relevant case law; and
- Highlighted key learnings for elected members in the context of their statutory plan-making function.

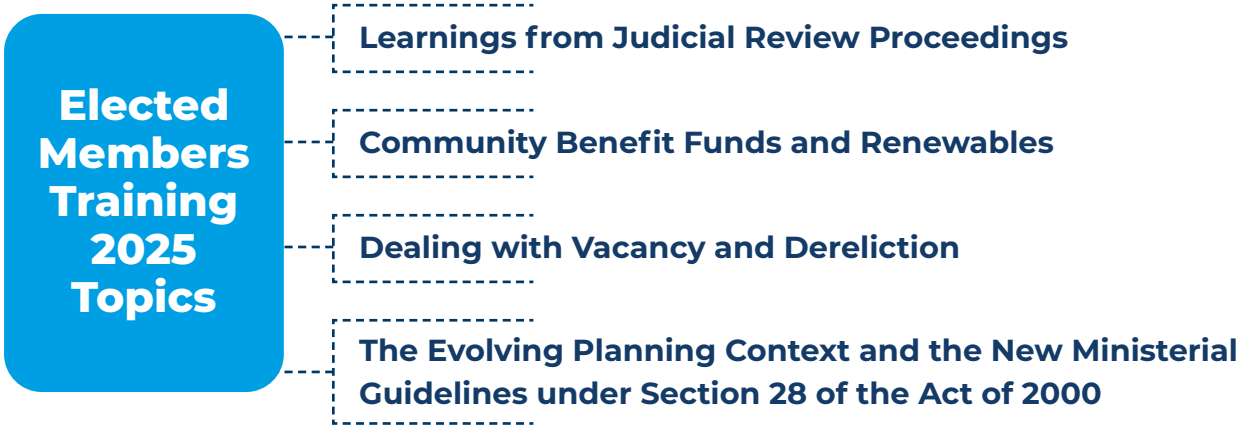


Figure 10 | Elected Members Training 2025 Topics

Community Benefit Funds and Renewables

The second training event which focused on **Community Benefit Funds and Renewables** was delivered online in March, in conjunction with the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment (DCEE) and the South and East Cork Area Development (SECAD) Partnership CLG. The training covered:

- Planning Ireland's Climate and Energy Transition: Community Benefits;
- Community Benefit Funds under the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme; and
- Community Benefit Fund Management.

Dealing with Vacancy and Dereliction

The third training event, titled **Dealing with Vacancy and Dereliction** was delivered in collaboration with the DHLGH, Waterford City and County Council and Limerick City and County Council. The presentations covered:

- Addressing Vacancy and Dereliction – Policy and Supports;
- Dealing with Vacancy and Dereliction and the Repair and Lease Scheme; and
- Activating Derelict and Vacant Property Using Compulsory Purchase Powers.

The Evolving Planning Context and the New Ministerial Guidelines under Section 28 of the Act of 2000

The fourth training event considered **The Evolving Planning Context and the New Ministerial Guidelines under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act.** This training was held in-person on two separate days in November. The presentations dealt with:

- Engagement with the policy objectives underpinning the Ministerial Guidelines on NPF Implementation: Housing Growth Requirements (published in July 2025); and
- The Housing Activation Office.

Training for Staff of Local Authorities and Regional Assemblies

In accordance with the provisions of Section 31Q(1)(b) of the Act of 2000, the OPR conducted education and training programmes for staff of local authorities and regional assemblies in relation to matters the OPR considered were of relevance to the functions of the local authorities and regional assemblies, particularly the functions relating to proper planning and sustainable development.

In 2025, the OPR delivered five online planning training events specifically tailored to meet the training needs of staff of local authorities and regional assemblies. Members and staff of ACP were also invited to attend in recognition of the expanding training role of the OPR as provided for in the Act.

Built Heritage and Town Regeneration

The first training event for local authority and regional assembly staff in 2025 was on the topic, **Built Heritage and Town Regeneration** and was delivered online in February in conjunction with the DHLGH and Mayo County Council. The presentations dealt with:

- Safeguarding and Enhancing our Historic Towns: An Integrated Approach to Regeneration; and
- Promoting Development within Historic Towns: The Westport Story.

Implementation of the Planning and Development Act 2024

The second training event entitled **Implementation of the Planning and Development Act 2024** was delivered online in April in conjunction with the DHLGH. The presentations dealt with:

- Overview of Planning Reform;
- Key Measures in the Planning and Development Act 2024; and
- The Implementation Plan and Commencement Schedule.

Brownfield Land Activation

The third training event focusing on **Brownfield Land Activation** was delivered online in May in conjunction with Mitchell McDermott, Construction Consultants, the Land Development Agency (LDA) and Galway City Council. The presentations dealt with:

- The OPR Research Series Report (RSR) RSR01 on Brownfield Land Activation;
- Activating Public Brownfield Land for New Homes; and
- Activating Brownfield Regeneration: Galway City Council's Approach.

Local Transport Plans and the Statutory Plan-making Process

The fourth training event considered **Local Transport Plans and the Statutory Plan-making Process** and was delivered online in June in conjunction with the NTA and Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII). The presentations dealt with:

- Local Transport Plans, Lessons Learnt and the Revision of the NTA's Area-Based Transport Assessment Methodology; and
- Experience of Local Transport Plan Preparation.

Athlone Public Realm Improvements

The fifth training event entitled **Athlone Public Realm Improvements** was delivered online in November in conjunction with Westmeath County Council. The presentations dealt with:

- Athlone Public Realm Improvements - Local Councillor's Perspective;
- Urban Regeneration and Enhancement, Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) background and intent; and
- Urban Design and Regeneration Framework: Building a Regional Growth Centre.

Planning and Development Act 2024 Training Strategy for the Local Authority Sector

In 2025, the OPR, working in conjunction with the DHLGH and the CCMA developed and agreed the 'Planning and Development Act 2024 Training Strategy for the Local Authority Sector' (the Strategy).

The aim of the Strategy was to ensure efficient and effective implementation of the Act by providing appropriate and targeted training for appropriate local authority staff.

In accordance with the Strategy the OPR was responsible for the rollout of in-person training which was to be delivered over two days at four regional locations nationwide with allowance for a sweeper day for staff who could not attend at their designated regional venue.

The first day of training was to comprise a formal briefing on the new legislation from the DHLGH followed by legal learnings from Fieldfisher LLP and concluding with practical advice from a suitably qualified planning professional from the local government sector on implementation of the Act. The second day was to be facilitated four weeks later and was to take the form of a workshop which was to be more interactive and allow for deeper analysis and engagement.

In Q4 2025 the OPR delivered nine in-person training events (i.e. the first Package of training) on Part 3 of the Act dealing with Plans, Policies and Related Matters. The training took place in Waterford, Cork, Galway and Portlaoise, with a final day (a sweeper day) in Malahide, Co. Dublin.

In Q4 the OPR also commenced preparations for the second Package of training on Part 4 of the Act dealing with Development Consents. Venues were booked and speakers were confirmed for the nine events which will be delivered early in Q1 2026.

Planning Training for An Coimisiún Pleanála Staff

In November the OPR delivered a half day training event on the theme of Transport Planning for the staff of ACP, as part of their Autumn Training Series. The topics covered included:

- Overview of Transport Planning – International and Irish Context;
- Transport Assessments – Preparation and Methodology and Local Authority Perspective;
- Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS) and Planning and Local Authority Perspective; and
- Key Transport Infrastructure Updates.

Sectoral Learning and Development Strategy

Throughout 2025 the OPR continued to work with the CCMA, the DHLGH and the Local Authority Services National Training Group (LASNTG) on the implementation of the Local Authority Planning Sector Learning and Development Strategy.

The work programme for the development and delivery of the training as part of the strategy is overseen by the Planning Services Training Group (PSTG). The PSTG comprises representatives from the CCMA, the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA), the DHLGH, the OPR and LASNTG.



826

local authority and regional assembly staff registered for **training in 2025**

640

elected members of local authorities registered for **training in 2025**

Figure 11 | Training Attendance 2025

The delivery of the Planning Fundamentals courses continued throughout 2025 with courses delivered across LASNTG's five regional training centres (Ballycoolin, Roscrea, Castlebar, Stranorlar and Ballincollig).

The Planning Fundamentals training deals with:

- Planning Administration;
- Development Management;
- Enforcement Planning; and
- Forward Planning.

In addition to offering support and feedback on the training courses, the OPR continued to participate in the delivery of the Forward Planning course at the five regional training centres.

Publication of 'Learning from Litigation' Legal Bulletin Series

The OPR continued to oversee the preparation, publication and dissemination of the 'Learning from Litigation' legal bulletin series.

These quarterly bulletins provide information on important precedents, court decisions, emerging trends and an overview of noteworthy cases from continually evolving planning and environmental case law.

A Planning Law Bulletin Steering Group assists in the selection of relevant cases for inclusion in each edition of the bulletin. This group consists of nominees from the Environmental and Planning Law Committee of the Law Society, the OPR legal services provider Fieldfisher, the OPR, ACP and the CCMA.

Four editions of the 'Learning from Litigation' bulletin were published in 2025. These editions were published in March, June, September and December and summarised the judgments and key findings of 17 cases.

The OPR and the Ministerial Action Plan on Planning Resources

The Ministerial Action Plan on Planning Resources was published in October 2024. The DHLGH established a Steering Group to coordinate and oversee the implementation of this plan and the OPR was invited to sit on this Group. The Ministerial Action Plan aims to increase the pool of planning and related expertise and to bring forward new talent to meet present and future needs.

In addition, the OPR chaired and provided Secretariat to Working Group One dealing with Education, co-chaired Working Group Five dealing with Innovation and Efficiency and had membership on the remaining three Working Groups.

Initial Consortium Steering Group on Planner Apprenticeship Project

One of the key actions identified in the Ministerial Action Plan on Planning Resources (Action 3) relates to the development of new education pathways towards professional planning careers that include opportunities to train to a level equivalent to universities over time e.g. through apprenticeships and micro-credential models.

In 2025, the OPR joined an Initial Consortium Steering Group (ICSG) for a proposed Planner Apprenticeship Project. The group comprises representatives from the DHLGH, the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS), the CCMA, the LGMA, ACP, the OPR, the Irish Planning Institute (IPI), and the private sector.

The aim of the ICSG is to develop and submit an initial proposal to the National Apprenticeship Office for the development of a planner apprenticeship in line with the Public Service Apprenticeship Plan.

The Initial Application for the development of a Level 8 Planning Apprenticeship was approved by the National Apprenticeship Alliance in June. Throughout the year the OPR continued to engage with key stakeholders to progress the apprenticeship programme.

The OPR's Work to Promote Planning as a Career of Choice

Becoming a Planner

Throughout 2025 the OPR continued its efforts to promote planning as a career of choice through social media campaigns, welcoming the inclusion of 'planner' on the critical skills list.

4.2 Research

National Planning Knowledge Group

Under Section 31Q(1) of the Act of 2000, one of the core functions of the OPR is to conduct education and training programmes for members of local authorities and regional assemblies and for staff of local authorities and regional assemblies.

Section 31Q(2) of the Act of 2000 provides that the OPR shall conduct research in relation to matters relevant to its functions as well as any other matters requested by the Minister.

To gain familiarity with existing research, and to ascertain the most pertinent knowledge, training and public awareness needs of the various stakeholders involved in the planning process, the OPR established the National Planning Knowledge Group (NPKG) in late 2019.

The NPKG acts as an advisory committee for the OPR on the current state of the knowledge base in relation to both pressing and strategic planning matters and gaps to be addressed in conjunction with stakeholders.

The NPKG includes representation from the higher education and research sector, governmental and non-governmental organisations, the business community, local government, the environmental sector and planning institutes representing professional planners engaged in both public and private sector work. The group met three times in 2025.

As the Chief Executive and Directors of the OPR are subject to the provisions of the Lobbying Act 2015, with effect from 01 January 2025, the Terms of Reference were updated to reflect the new requirement for the NPKG to have regard to the Transparency Code prepared by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. The updated Terms of Reference together with the agendas and minutes of the NPKG meetings held in 2025 are published on the OPR website.

OPR Research Output

In 2025, consistent with the OPR's Planning Research Framework and the Strategic Planning Research Programme (2023-2025), work began, or was advanced on several research projects under the following strands:

Strand One: Planning Issues

Strand Two: Planning Performance

Stand Three: Planning Practice



Strand One:

Planning Issues Projects

Under Strand One (Planning Issues) the following projects were advanced:

Understanding Rural Housing Dynamics

This research was jointly commissioned by the OPR and the DHLGH in 2023. A team of experts in UCD was appointed to undertake the research. In 2025 the UCD team updated the draft report to reflect the Census 2022 publications and changes to the wider policy context, such as the National Planning Framework. In December, the UCD team issued the final draft of the research report. It is intended that the output from this research will be available as a resource for the DHLGH. The timeline for publication of the research will be reviewed in early 2026 with the DHLGH.

Public Realm Developments

This aim of the Public Realm Developments research was to highlight and promote the work undertaken by local authorities to enhance the public realm in towns and cities.

The OPR, in conjunction with Westmeath County Council, created a promotional video to showcase the Athlone public realm improvements and to share the lessons learnt with the wider local authority sector. A new webpage was also created on the OPR website to highlight how the Council approached this work. To support this research work, the OPR delivered a webinar for local authority and regional assembly staff on the 'Athlone Public Realm Improvements'.

Other Strand One Research Projects

In the second half of 2024 the need for additional research topics was identified in consultation with the DHLGH. While the topics were not identified in the OPR's Research Programme the research projects identified fully align with the OPR's Research Framework goal and objectives, which underpin goal 2 of the strategy statement. Both projects were integrated into the OPR's 2025 research work programme.

Strand One: Planning Issues Projects continued

The Annex II Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Thresholds and Criteria in Ireland Research

The research commenced in August 2024 in partnership with the then EU and International Planning Regulation (EUIPR) Unit in the DHLGH. Fieldfisher LLP, was appointed in 2024 to undertake the research. It entailed a review of relevant European case law, legal precedents, a comparative analysis of relevant statutory provisions and associated practices and procedures on the implementation of Article 4(2) of the Directive in a number of jurisdictions. The research included both legal and environmental expert analysis. The report was finalised, in early 2025 and made available to the Climate and Environmental Policy Unit in the DHLGH for their use as part of consultation on new planning regulations.

Addendum to the 'Research Report on Legal Costs in Planning and Environmental Judicial Reviews'

In late 2024, the DHLGH requested the OPR to prepare an addendum to the 'Research Report on Legal Costs in Planning and Environmental Judicial Reviews'. The OPR engaged Fieldfisher LLP to conduct further analysis of the evidential base contained in the original report completed in 2023. This analysis was undertaken to support the work of the Inter-Departmental Group on Environmental Legal Costs. The addendum report was finalised and published alongside the original report in 2025.



Ballinacourty lighthouse, County Waterford

Strand Two:

Planning Performance Projects

Under Strand Two the following projects were advanced:

Case Study Paper (CSP) CSP07 - Quarries and the Local Authority Development Plan

In 2025 the OPR finalised and published CSP07 dealing with 'Quarries and the Local Authority Development Plan'. This case study paper reviewed how planning authorities have responded to existing guidelines and broader issues within the extractive industry. As the planning system undergoes further reform the case study paper identified several opportunities arising from current policy changes and highlighted the need for updated national guidance, improved data, and stronger governance structures.

EPA-Funded Research/Committees

In 2025 the OPR completed its role on the Steering Committees for two EPA-funded research projects. Both projects were signed off by their respective Steering Committees in Q3 and will be published in 2026 by the EPA. The projects included:

- **Pro-Health SEA: Toolkit for Proportionate and Consistent Consideration of Population and Human Health in Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)**

  This project included a review of international practice and in consultation with health and SEA experts led to the development of a Toolkit to inform the proportionate consideration of health in SEA. The research provides evidence to support capacity building and to guide and strengthen health considerations in SEA.

- **REMARC: Remediation of Faulty Septic Tanks: A Mixed Methods Approach to Environmental Risk Communication**

  This multidisciplinary research project identifies pathways towards higher rates of septic tank remediation to safeguard the environment and public health.

Case Study Paper CSP08, examining best practice on integrating green infrastructure, nature-based solutions and ecosystem services into land use plans

In the latter part of 2025, the OPR appointed MKO Planning and Environmental Consultants to draft CSP08. The initial phases of the project were completed by year end, including: a policy and literature review, identification of 'pathfinder' planning authorities and structured interviews with same. The drafting of the case study paper and peer review phase will be undertaken in early 2026, with publication thereafter.

Strand Three:

Planning Practice Projects

Under Strand Three the following projects were advanced:

Practice Note (PN) PN06 Development Plan Monitoring

Building on previous research and workshops on the theme of development plan monitoring, the OPR appointed MacCabe Durney Barnes, in April 2025, to prepare a practice note on this topic. A Steering Committee was established including representatives from the DHLGH, the All-Island Research Observatory (AIRO) and SEA experts. In June the OPR hosted a workshop attended by approximately 50 key stakeholders including representatives from local government, academia, government departments and agencies.

This was followed by a series of focused sessions to inform the development of an indicators database as part of the practice note. The first draft of the practice note was circulated to the steering committee for review. It is anticipated that further engagement will be undertaken in partnership with the steering committee in early 2026. Following updates and additional edits from the steering committee feedback in early 2026, it is anticipated that the practice note will proceed to peer review and publication by mid-2026. Given the commencement of the Act and wider policy context, the OPR is committed to reviewing and updating this practice note regularly and as necessary.

Other Strand Three Research Projects

During 2025 two new Strand Three research themes emerged, both align with the OPR's Research Framework goal and objectives and support Goal 2 of the strategy statement:

Active Amenity Space and Sports Policies in Development Plans.

In mid-2025, following stakeholder engagement, the OPR initiated research into how development plans address and plan for, active amenity space and sports facilities. The research entailed a review and analysis of 12 local authority development plans with a focus on Dublin and surrounding counties and the cities, where significant additional population growth is envisaged.

From the preliminary research a number of themes and patterns emerged. In October 2025 the OPR collaborated on a workshop with Sport Ireland which was attended by a broad range of national sporting bodies, officials from the Department of Culture, Communications and Sport (DCCS) and the DHLGH.

The OPR presented the findings of the preliminary research and Sport Ireland delivered a presentation and demonstration of their data hub. It is intended that a joint paper including the workshop findings and conclusions from respective research work will be finalised in early 2026.

Strand Three: Planning Practice Projects continued

This work will further inform the review of the OPR's Strategic Planning Research Programme and will also inform other relevant OPR work streams and stakeholder engagement.

Construct Innovate funded project 'TEACH' (Trade-off Evaluation and Assessment of Compact Housing Developments)

In the latter part of 2025, the OPR and The Housing Agency provided support to Trinity College Dublin in respect of their research bid to Construct Innovate, as funded by the DHLGH.

The project, entitled a 'Trade-off Evaluation and Assessment of Compact Housing Developments' (TEACH), was successful in its funding application.

The aim of TEACH is to develop a multi-faceted comparison tool to assess the impacts of housing development on greenfield versus brownfield sites. The OPR supported the project workshop in November and it is envisaged that the project will be finalised in 2026. It is anticipated that this research will support and inform research themes emerging in the review of the Strategic Planning Research Programme.



Dingle, County Kerry

4.3 Communications and Data Analysis

The Communications and Digital Analytics team continued its work supporting OPR colleagues in collating briefing materials, statistics, analysis and visualisation of planning-related information.

The team also worked closely with colleagues across the OPR to support many of the publications, web-based initiatives and events which occurred during 2025.

Throughout 2025 media and research related queries were responded to effectively, with regular news stories published on our website, www.opr.ie.

Geographic Information System (GIS) training and support was provided throughout 2025, with considerable attention given to ensuring that materials were effective for the needs of OPR colleagues.

The Communications and Digital Analytics team provided secretariat, data analysis and marketing advice to the Ministerial Action Plan on Planning Resources.

Some key activities from 2025 are highlighted below.

Parliamentary Affairs

The Planning Regulator was supported by the Communications Team in parliamentary affairs, providing a briefing to Oireachtas Members in March 2025, and materials for a Joint Oireachtas Committee Meeting in July 2025.

Annual Review of the Planning System

Work continues on the latest data informing the Annual Review of the Planning System, with the publication of 'Planning in Numbers' anticipated in 2026. This strategic review of planning trends and outputs in Ireland, provides an overview of key trends and figures.

Newsletters

Quarterly newsletters for stakeholders were published throughout 2025, with overall subscription numbers increasing.

Website review

A review of the OPR website was conducted in the second part of 2025, with further work on enhancing accessibility undertaken. This work will continue during 2026, with a view to redeveloping the online presence of the OPR. This will facilitate greater public awareness of planning and assist the OPR to meet accessibility requirements and improve user experience.



5 Corporate Affairs

- **Supporting the Organisation**
- **Governance**
- **Financial Information**



Sileve League Mountain, County Donegal

5.1 Continuing to Build the Organisation

Building our Team

The OPR has an approved complement of 47 full-time staff, including the Planning Regulator. During 2025, recruitment campaigns were carried out to continue to fill vacant positions. All staff worked together to create a welcoming environment for our new recruits during 2025. The OPR had 45 staff as of the 31 December 2025.

The OPR operates its recruitment under a license granted by the Commission for Public Service Appointments (CPSA), which was obtained in April 2019. Open panels via publicjobs and Civil Service mobility schemes are also utilised.

Staff of the OPR are civil servants of the State and are remunerated in line with government policy. The Planning Regulator is remunerated at the Civil Service grade of Assistant Secretary.

Our Premises

Our offices are based in Park House, within the TU Dublin campus in Grangegorman, which is part of the Government's Strategic Development Zone for the regeneration of the area.

Co-location of the OPR on the TU Dublin campus offers considerable synergies with a range of education, training and research capabilities through its School of Architecture, Building and the Environment. Synergies are also available in relation to easy and cost-effective access to meeting and training room facilities.

Policies and Procedures

Since our establishment, we have implemented a suite of policies and procedures that provide an important basis for the day-to-day functioning of the organisation. In addition to these, we have implemented the Civil Service policies and codes, including the Dignity at Work and the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour.

Throughout the year, to ensure the continuous strengthening of the governance and operational footing of the OPR, we continued to review and update existing policies and implement additional policies.

In 2025, we saw the development of the OPR's first Adoption and Responsible use of AI Policy.

This policy was developed in line with the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation (DPER) guidelines, published in May 2025. To support the policy, training was completed by all staff through the OPR's Learning Management System. The policy and training is designed to ensure the organisation's compliance with DPER guidelines and support our staff in using AI confidently, safely and ethically.

Health and Safety

In 2025 the OPR complied with the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 and the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act (General Applications) Regulations 2007. Our annual safety inspection was carried out, in conjunction with our external health and safety experts.

The OPR Safety Statement was updated to include the latest risk assessments. Continued health and safety training for staff was conducted throughout the year, including first aid and fire warden officer training to ensure adequate numbers of these dedicated roles were in place to facilitate blended working.

A number of our staff have been trained to carry out the role of in-house assessors for display screen equipment and visual display units continue to complete ergonomic workstation training with all staff, so that they can apply the principles of ergonomics in both their home and office work environment.

The organisation reported no accidents in 2025.

Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest

Procedures are in place to ensure that staff of the OPR comply with the provisions of the Ethics in Public Office Act 1995 and Standards in Public Office Act 2001, where applicable.

In addition, the OPR operates under a Code of Conduct for managing conflict of interest. Under the Code, all staff members of the OPR and the Chief Executive register their interests by way of a declaration.

Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty

Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 imposes a statutory obligation on public bodies in performing their functions to have regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination;
- Promote equality of opportunity and treatment for staff and persons to whom it provides services; and
- Protect the human rights of staff and service users.

The OPR recognises that the duty is underpinned by equality legislation that covers the nine grounds of:

1. Gender;
2. Civil status;
3. Family status;
4. Age;
5. Disability;
6. Sexual orientation;
7. Race;
8. Religion; and
9. Membership of the Traveller community.

All staff of the OPR are required to complete training on the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission eLearning module 'Equality and Human Rights in the Public Service'. This module is designed to support and enable staff within public bodies to understand and meet their obligations under the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty. All staff recruited during 2025 completed this training.

The OPR is an equal opportunities employer. All recruitment processes carried out during 2025 were in strict accordance with the CPSA Codes of Practice.

The OPR is committed to providing services in an accessible way. For example, by appointing an Access Officer to act as a point of contact for people with disabilities wishing to access our services, by providing an accessible website, by using plain English in our communications, and by using subtitles and/or sign language in our information videos.

The OPR is committed to protecting dignity and respect across the organisation and has implemented the Dignity at Work policy prepared by the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation (DPER)

The OPR'S Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) group meets regularly to promote and enhance EDI in our workplace.

Disability awareness training, provided by Employers for Change, was delivered to staff in November 2025. A reasonable accommodations passport scheme is in place and promoted to staff. The passport is a confidential live record of the barriers that staff face and the accommodations that have been agreed to prevent or reduce its impact on their workplace.

The OPR complied with its obligation to report on an annual basis on the number of staff with disabilities employed by the organisation. As of 31 December 2025, the OPR exceeded the minimum statutory target of 6%. The OPR has a Disability Liaison Officer (DLO) in place and participates in the Civil Service DLO network.

To promote an inclusive and supportive working environment the Civil Service Employee Assistance Service (CSEAS) is available to all OPR staff.

Irish Language

The OPR complied with Section 10A (Advertising by Public Bodies) of the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021, which requires that at least 20% of all public bodies' annual advertising content be published in Irish, and that 5% of their advertising budget is spent on Irish language media.

To adhere to the duties outlined in the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021, the OPR has contracted external translators to ensure that any relevant documentation, recruitment campaigns as well as some of the information on our website, is translated into Irish and published in a timely manner.

The OPR name, logo, stationery and email signatures are in a bilingual format and all relevant publications such as the Annual Report and Strategy Statement are also published bilingually.

The OPR also complies with its statutory responsibilities under the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021, in relation to the provision of services through the Irish language and a designated staff member has been assigned to deal with any oral queries received in Irish.

5.2 Governance

The OPR was established as a statutorily independent body. In exercising its functions, the OPR is wholly independent and is accountable to the Oireachtas and the Minister as a publicly funded organisation. The OPR's governance structure, as prescribed by the Act is that of an office holder rather than a non-executive board structure and its day-to-day functioning is administered by the organisation's executive.

Executive Management Team (EMT)

The EMT consists of the Planning Regulator and the four Directors, one of whom is the Deputy Planning Regulator, and meets regularly under a standing agenda. The meetings provide a forum for regular strategic and operational review of the functioning of the organisation, including risk assessment, financial management, approval of policies and management of resources.

Gender Balance in the EMT

On the 31 December 2025, the EMT had three (60%) female and two (40%) male members.

The EMT therefore, meets the Government target of a minimum of 40% representation of each gender in the membership of State Bodies' leadership.

The OPR is fostering a values-driven culture which will be key in maintaining and supporting gender balance on the EMT and promoting gender balance, diversity and inclusion in its operations.

Assistant Directors Group

The Assistant Directors Group consists of the six Assistant Directors who meet regularly under a standing agenda to progress ongoing issues, including business planning, risk assessment, policy implementation and budgeting resource allocation. The Assistant Directors Group provide an important governance and decision making layer within the OPR.

Attendance	Meeting Dates			
	12th February 2025	25th June 2025	14th October 2025	16th December 2025
Paula Nyland	✔	✔	✔	✔
Breda Coss	✔	✔	✔	✔
Karen Kehily	N/A	✔	✔	✔
Joanna McBride	✖	✔	✔	✔
Enda Torsney	✔	✔	✔	✔

Table 10 | Schedule of Meetings held by Finance, Audit and Risk Committee during 2025

Members of the Committee are:

External Members:

Paula Nyland
Chairperson

Breda Coss

Karen Kehily
(Appointed June 2025)

Executive Members:

Joanna McBride
Director of Corporate Services

Enda Torsney
Assistant Director, Corporate Services

Secretary to the Committee:

Áine Ryan

Finance, Audit and Risk Committee

The OPR's governance structure, pursuant to Section 538 of the Act, is that of a corporation sole/office holder.

While the OPR is not mandated to establish committees which standardly operate as committees to non-executive boards, in the interests of transparency and accountability and following best practice, the OPR operates a Finance, Audit and Risk Committee in line with guidance provided within the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.

The role of this Committee is to provide oversight and support to the Planning Regulator in relation to his responsibilities for issues of related controls, corporate governance and associated assurance. The Finance, Audit and Risk Committee met four times in 2025.

Performance Delivery Agreement and Oversight Agreement

One of the key requirements of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies 2016 is that Departments and bodies under their aegis should put in place an oversight agreement and a performance delivery agreement, which should form an integral part of the strategic and operational framework for the agency.

In that regard, an oversight agreement and a performance delivery agreement between the DHLGH and the OPR were in place in 2025. Both documents are reviewed and updated regularly.

To further strengthen the governance framework of the OPR, regular liaison meetings between senior management of the DHLGH and the OPR take place to monitor performance and governance matters, as well as to provide a forum for regular discussion on matters affecting the statutory functions of both organisations.

Periodic Critical Review

Under the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies in Ireland the DHLGH are required to conduct Periodic Critical Reviews of non-commercial State Bodies under its aegis. During 2025, a periodic critical review of the OPR has been underway.

Risk Management

Risk management is one of the key requirements to ensure good corporate governance and agile organisational responsiveness to risk.

The EMT, including the Chief Risk Officer and the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee has the overall responsibility for overseeing risk management within the organisation, determining the organisation's risk appetite, and the continuous review of the risk register throughout the year.

The OPR operates under a comprehensive risk management framework, including a Risk Appetite Statement, Risk Register and a Risk Management policy. As part of the continuous review of the risk management framework, the EMT carried out an assessment of the OPR's principal risks, including a description of these risks and associated mitigating measures. Divisional risk registers are reviewed on a quarterly basis. Risk management training for all staff was delivered during 2025 by the Chief Risk Officer.

Internal Audit

An internal audit function is in place with appropriately trained personnel which operates in accordance with a written charter. Its work is informed by the analysis of the financial risks to which the OPR is exposed, and its annual internal audit plans are based on this analysis. These plans aim to cover the key controls on a rolling basis. A number of internal audits were carried out by the internal auditors in the course of 2025, these comprised:

- System of internal control;
- IT systems, cybersecurity and IT Strategy;
- Payroll and HR management;
- Corporate governance and business planning; and
- A follow up review of the internal audit recommendations made during 2024.

System of Internal Control

The OPR ensures that an effective system of internal control is maintained and operated at all times. The OPR's monitoring and review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control is informed by the work of the internal and external auditors, and the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee which oversees their work.

Senior management within the OPR are responsible for the development and maintenance of the internal control framework. The OPR performed an annual review of the effectiveness of the internal controls for 2025.

Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies

The OPR has adopted the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies 2016 and has put procedures in place to ensure compliance with the Code.

The OPR complied with the Code for 2025, except for the Code's provisions in relation to role of the Board, the role of the Chairperson and the role of board members, as the OPR's governance structure, as prescribed by the Act, is that of an office holder rather than a non- executive board structure. Therefore, in addition to performing his duties as a Board, the Planning Regulator also performs executive functions.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Strategy and Systems

In line with Connecting Government 2030, the Government's Digital and ICT Strategy, the OPR has continued to avail of the Build-to-Share (BTS) Managed Desktop suite of services provided by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO). The BTS Managed Desktop suite provides essential ICT services which OPR staff depend on to complete their day-to-day work.

The OPR engaged with the OGCIO to deploy an upgrade to the Microsoft Office suite, moving to Microsoft 365 Apps for Enterprise The OPR's laptops were upgraded to Microsoft Windows 11 as the previous version of Windows was reaching end of life during 2025. This upgrade ensured the security and reliability of the Windows operating system going forward.

To increase vigilance and awareness of IT security, in 2025, the OPR provided training and support to staff.

Guidelines for the responsible use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the Public Service were published during 2025. The OPR developed a policy supportive of the guidelines and the embrace of innovation in doing our work. The OPR securely rolled out Microsoft Copilot and piloted use of Grammarly.

Freedom of Information (FOI) and Access to Information on the Environment (AIE)

The OPR is a public body for the purposes of the Freedom of Information Act 2014. In addition to the provisions of the FOI legislation, information on the environment may be sought from the OPR under the Access to Information on the Environment Regulations 2007-2018.

Details of activity in 2024 are provided below and are also available on the OPR website on the **FOI**[3] and the **AIE**[4] dedicated pages.

	FOI	AIE
Granted	0	1
Partially granted	5	0
Withdrawn	0	0
Transferred	1	0
Refused	5	3
Total	11	4

Table 11 | FOI/AIE Requests 2025

Data Protection and the General Data Protection Regulation

The OPR is committed to protecting the rights and privacy of individuals in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which came into effect in May 2018, and the Data Protection Acts 1988, 2003 and 2018.

As required by the regulation, the OPR has a dedicated Data Protection Officer. Data Protection policies and procedures are kept under regular review by the Data Protection Officer. Fostering staff awareness of best practice in data protection is key.

[3] https://www.opr.ie/freedom-of-information/

[4] https://www.opr.ie/access-to-information-on-the-environment/

Training in data protection and cyber security was provided during the year and are consistent elements of OPR training and development plans. In 2025, no personal data requests were received by the OPR and there were no instances of personal data breaches.

Protected Disclosures

The OPR has put in place procedures for making protected disclosures, under a Protected Disclosures policy, in line with the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 (as amended). These procedures set out in detail the process by which an employee of the OPR can make a protected disclosure, what will happen when a disclosure is made and what the OPR will do to protect the discloser.

The process supports the OPR's commitment to fostering a working environment where employees feel comfortable in raising concerns relating to potential wrongdoing within the OPR and to provide the necessary support for those that raise concerns.

This working environment reflects the OPR's core values, especially those of integrity, professionalism, openness and transparency.

An external reporting channel is in place for the making of protected disclosures to the Planning Regulator who has been prescribed as a recipient of protected disclosures in relation to the functions of the OPR.

Under Section 22 of the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 (as amended), the OPR is obliged to prepare and publish, no later than 31 March in each year, a report detailing the number of protected disclosures made during the preceding year and the action (if any) taken in response to those protected disclosures.

During 2025 no reports were received by the OPR through internal reporting channels or transmitted to the OPR by another prescribed person or by the Protected Disclosures Commissioner. Three reports were received through the OPR external reporting channel.



River Vartry, County Wicklow

Energy Usage 2025

The OPR reports annually to the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) regarding energy consumption and related data. The OPR is compliant with Circular 01/2020: Procedures for Offsetting the Emissions Associated with Official Air Travel (if any).

Sustainable development and climate action are at the core of our functions and the OPR is committed to reducing its environmental impact as far as possible.

The OPR has officially adopted the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate, Climate Action Plan 2025, which requires public sector bodies to show leadership in climate action, and an organisational climate action roadmap is prepared annually. The OPR reports annually to the SEAI on compliance with the climate action mandate.

Digitisation rather than paper-based processes is our default approach.

The OPR office is a bicycle friendly building for employees and visitors. The OPR holds the Smarter Travel Mark award which recognises and celebrates organisations that support active and sustainable travel and the OPR continues to support our staff and visitors in sustainable and active travel. Leap cards were available to facilitate the use of public transport for travel to official meetings.

The OPR participated in the Government's Reduce Your Use energy efficiency campaign during 2025 and relevant information was shared with staff. Resources from the national Stop Food Waste campaign were promoted and a staff workshop on recycling was facilitated by Repak. The workshop provided practical information on recycling and options for proper disposal. Information on the possibilities of sustainable shopping in charity shops was shared on our intranet.

During 2025 climate training was made available to new staff through the OPR learning and development strategy.

Oireachtas Members' Enquiries

The OPR provides a dedicated enquiries email address, oireachtas@opr.ie for members of the Oireachtas seeking information about the work of the OPR.

Two formal queries from the Oireachtas members were received in 2024.

5.3 Financial Information

The OPR's budget is allocated through the DHLGH Vote 34, subhead D.5. In 2025, the OPR's budget totalled €5,180,000.

The OPR's banking services are provided by Danske Bank.

In its operations, the OPR ensures value for money and sound financial management by complying with the Public Spending Code, including National and EU Public Procurement Procedures and financial management rules, as well as the provisions of the Act ensuring accountability and transparency.

Financial Statements

The Financial Statements of the OPR, including the Statement on Internal Control and the Governance Statement, are prepared in accordance with FRS102, the financial reporting standard applicable in the UK and Ireland issued by the Financial Reporting Council (FRC), as promulgated by Chartered Accountants Ireland.

The Financial Statements of the OPR are subject to audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General and the audit of 2025 accounts will take place in 2026. Once certified by the Comptroller and Auditor General, the financial statements will be laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas and will be published on the OPR website.

Tax Law

The OPR has complied with its obligations under tax law in 2025.

Procurement

The OPR is committed to achieving value for money and implementing the most effective procurement processes. The OPR has published and regularly updates its Corporate Procurement Plan.

As a public body, the OPR utilises central frameworks and contracts put in place by the Office of Government Procurement when procuring a range of commonly required goods and services. Where no central framework or contract is available, the OPR operates in accordance with EU Procurement Directives.

The OPR has a dedicated Procurement Officer who works with all staff to promote best practice in their procurement activity. A summary report of public contracts awarded by the OPR with a value greater than €25,000 is published quarterly on the OPR website.

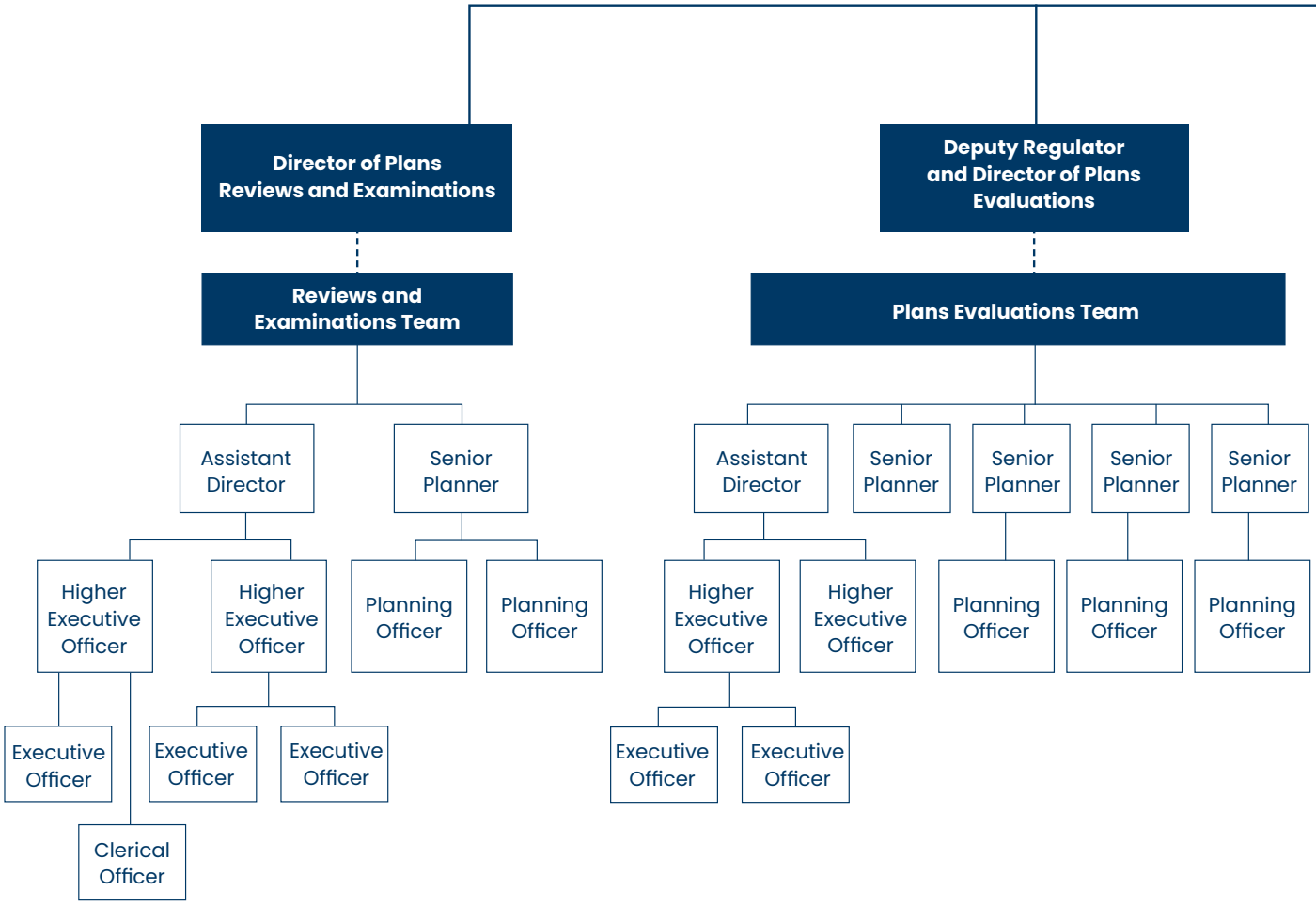
Prompt Payments of Accounts Act 1997

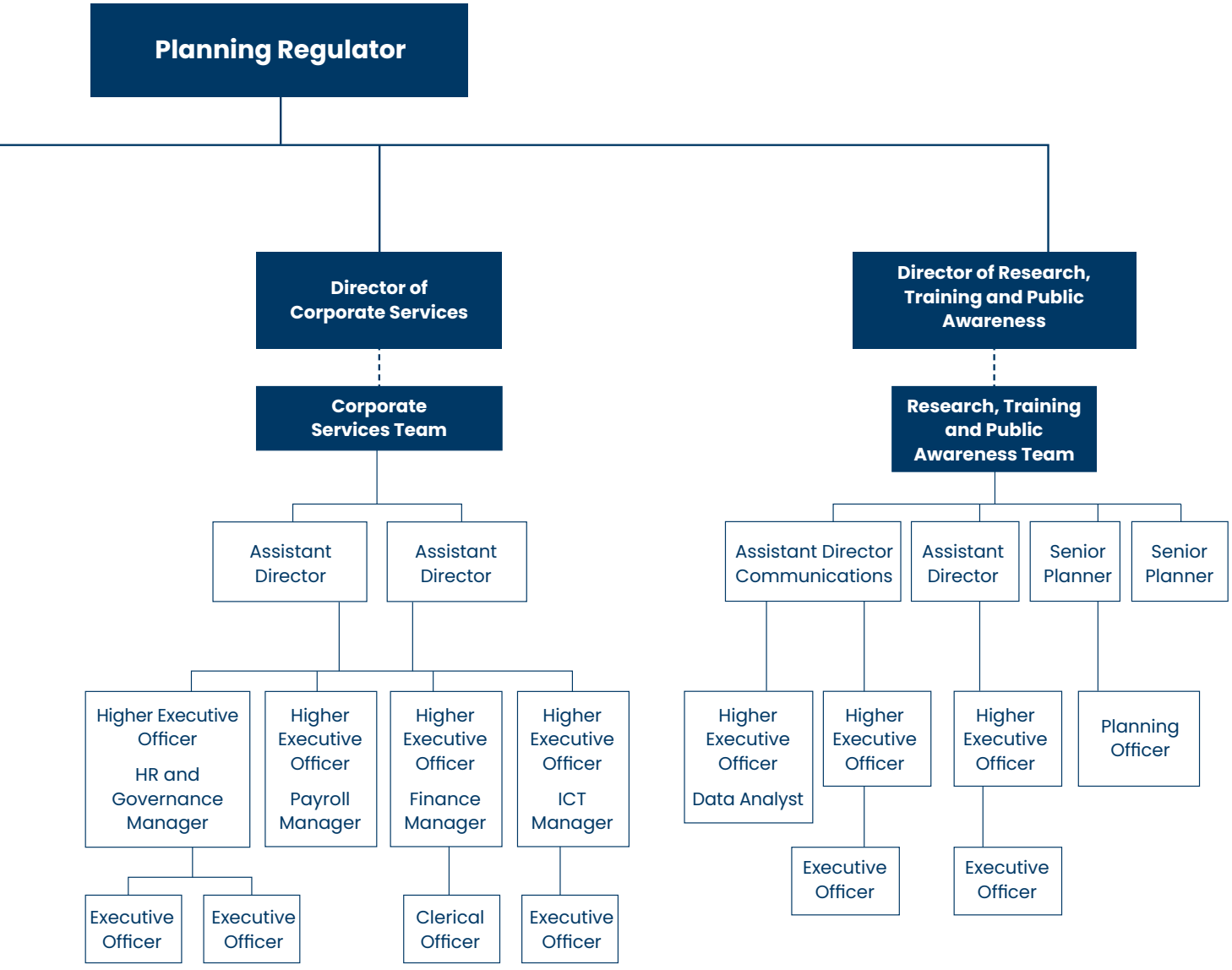
The OPR complies with the provisions of the Prompt Payments of Accounts Act 1997. The OPR has introduced procedures to ensure that invoices are paid within the statutory time limit. The OPR posts its quarterly prompt payment reports on its website.



Greencastle Harbor, County Donegal

Staff Information




Planning Regulator
Director of Corporate Services
Director of Research, Training and Public Awareness
Corporate Services Team
Research, Training and Public Awareness Team
Assistant Director
Assistant Director
Assistant Director Communications
Assistant Director
Senior Planner
Senior Planner
Higher Executive Officer
HR and Governance Manager
Higher Executive Officer
Payroll Manager
Higher Executive Officer
Finance Manager
Higher Executive Officer
ICT Manager
Higher Executive Officer
Data Analyst
Higher Executive Officer
Higher Executive Officer
Planning Officer
Executive Officer
Executive Officer
Clerical Officer
Executive Officer
Executive Officer
Executive Officer

List of Acronyms

ACP: An Coimisiún Pleanála.[5]

AIE: Access to Information on the Environment

AILG: Association of Irish Local Government

AIRO: All-Island Research Observatory

BTS: Build-to-Share

CCMA: County and City Management Association

CDP: City/County Development Plans

CPSA: Commission for Public Service Appointments

CSO: Central Statistics Office

CSP: Case Study Paper

DCCS: Department of Culture, Communications and Sport

DCEE: Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment

DFHERIS: Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science

DHLGH: Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

DPER: Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation

EIA: Environmental Impact Assessment

EMRA: Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly

EMT: Executive Management Team

EPA: Environmental Protection Agency

EUIPR: EU and International Planning Regulation

FOI: Freedom of Information

FRC: Financial Reporting Council

GIS: Geographic Information System

ICSG: Initial Consortium Steering Group

ICT: Information and Communication Technology

IPI: Irish Planning Institute

KPI: Key Performance Indicator

LAP: Local Area Plan

LASNTG: Local Authority Services National Training Group

LDA: Land Development Agency

LGMA: The Local Government Management Agency

NGO: Non-governmental organisation

NPF: National Planning Framework

NPKG: National Planning Knowledge Group

NTA: National Transport Authority

NWRA: Northern and Western Regional Assembly

OGCIO: Office of the Government Chief Information Officer

OPR: Office of the Planning Regulator

OPW: Office of Public Works

PEF: Planning Evaluation Forum

PN: Practice Note

[5] Please note: Part 17, Section 495(3) of the Planning and Development Act 2024 provides that references in any enactment, legal proceedings or document to An Bord Pleanála shall, on and after the commencement of this section, be construed as references to An Coimisiún Pleanála.

PSTG: Planning Services Training Group

RSES: Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

RSR: Research Series Report

RTPI: Royal Town Planning Institute

SEA: Strategic Environmental Assessment

SEAI: Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland

SECAD: South and East Cork Area Development

SRA: Southern Regional Assembly

TEACH: Trade-off Evaluation and Assessment of Compact Housing

The Act: The Planning and Development Act 2024

The Act of 2000: The Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended

The Climate Act: The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015

The Mahon Tribunal: Tribunal of Inquiry into Certain Planning Matters and Payments

The Minister: Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage

TII: Transport Infrastructure Ireland

URDF: Urban Regeneration and Development Fund



Oifig an
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