



Oifig an
Rialaitheora Pleanála
Office of the
Planning Regulator



Cumann Lucht Bainistióchta Contae agus Cathrach
County and City Management Association



LGMA

An Chníomhaireacht
Bainistióchta Rialtais Áitiúil
Local Government
Management Agency

Local Authority Planning Sector Learning and Development Strategy

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Acronym List

AA	Appropriate Assessment	NIR	Natura Impact Report
AIE	Access to Information on the Environment	NIS	Natura Impact Statement
AILG	Association of Irish Local Government	NPF	National Planning Framework
AO	Administrative Officer	NPWS	National Parks and Wildlife Service
CARO	Climate Action Regional Office	NTA	National Transport Authority
CCMA	County and City Management Association	OPR	Office of the Planning Regulator
CPD	Continuing Professional Development	OPW	Office of Public Works
DECC	Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications	PMDS	Performance Management and Development System
DHLGH	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage	PSC	Public Service Commission
DOS	Director of Service	PSTG	Planning Services Training Group
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment	RBMP	River Basin Management Plan
FOI	Freedom of Information	RFQ	Request for Quotations
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation	RFT	Request for Tenders
GIS	Geographic Information System	RPS	Record of Protected Structures
HBLU	Housing, Building and Land Use Sub-Committee of the CCMA	RRDF	Rural Regeneration and Development Fund
HEI	Higher Education Institution	RSES	Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy
ICT	Information and Communications Technology	RTPI	Royal Town Planning Institute
IPA	Institute of Public Administration	SDZ	Strategic Development Zone
IPI	Irish Planning Institute	SEA	Strategic Environment Assessment
KPI	Key Performance Indicator	SEO	Senior Executive Officer
LASNTG	Local Authority Services National Training Group	SFRA	Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
LECP	Local Economic and Community Plan	SPPR	Specific Planning Policy Requirement
LGMA	Local Government Management Agency	TVRS	Town and Village Renewal Scheme
NDP	National Development Plan	URDF	Urban Regeneration and Development Fund

1.0 Executive Summary

1.0.1 Background

The OPR with the Local Government Sector has, since mid-2021, been working on the development of a Learning and Development Strategy for all staff involved in delivering the planning functions of Local Authorities as well as for elected members. To this end a sub-group of the CCMA Housing, Building and Land Use Sub-Committee (the Learning and Development Group / the group) has met on several occasions during this time to scope, develop and progress this work.

This summary sets out the broad content of the strategy and training plan. The context, the work of the Learning and Development Group, the evidence base established, the needs identified, the training plan, the stakeholder engagement, the governance considerations, and the recommended delivery options / partners and an estimate of the multi-annual costs arising from implementation of the plan over the period 2023 - 2027 are set out in the main body of the report.

1.0.2 Key Recommendations

The evidence base gathered to inform the considerations of the Learning and Development Group, and in particular the findings of the Planning Service Survey¹ highlight that, of those who responded, around 20% were less than one year in their role, and that up to a further 40% were between one year and five years in their role.

The survey also found that of those who responded, there was a reliance on short inductions by more experienced staff, learning by doing, and mirroring the ways in which work was done in the past, as a preparation to do their work. It was also evident that the majority of respondents to the survey had not undertaken any formal courses / structured training in the previous five years.

Having regard to the above, the evolving complexity of planning requirements, the need for clear and reliable governance arrangements, and the requirement for Local Authorities to be able to demonstrate compliance with planning and related domestic and European Legislation, it is considered that in addition to ongoing OPR led training for elected members and the training provided by individual Local Authorities for their staff, additional standardised training for local authority planning staff across all grades should be provided under three broad headings as follows.

■ Immediate / Foundation training (to commence within 6 to 9 months)

This programme of training should be general in nature to include training normally covered in induction courses such as compliance with legislation, governance, overviews of development management, forward planning, and enforcement, documenting decision making, and practice and procedures generally in the planning system. This training should be available to the full cohort of planning staff with a priority afforded to those who are most recently in role.

This tranche of training could be delivered in larger groups (say 50 -70) using a blend of in-person and online delivery. The in-person element should be organised at a regional or sub regional level. To ensure a quick turnaround, the course materials for this training could be developed by current and / or recently retired staff proficient in the planning function, current systems and processes and should be delivered in five monthly sessions with the first and last of these being in person.

¹ A survey was sent to the approximately 1600 local authority planning staff and to the 949 elected members, in relation to their views on training provision to date and training issues into the future.

This 'Immediate / Foundation Training' should, after all existing staff in the planning area had the opportunity to participate, transition into a longer-term annual approach to provide Introductory or Foundation skills for newly recruited or promoted planning staff. This should include providing an understanding of the basic structural components, workings and procedures of the planning system, the various stages in pre-application consultation, processing planning applications, including environmental assessments and general documentation of decision-making required, enforcement, public consultation, document management and ICT based planning systems in place at the time.

■ **Intermediate training
(to commence within 18 to 24 months)**

This training should be more specific in nature in relation to detailed planning requirements, compliance with related and EU Legislation / Directives, the policy context, the qualitative dimension and exploring how the planning function underpins and supports sustainable development. This training should be developed in a collaboration between the OPR, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the Local Authorities. It should leverage the involvement of the Schools of Planning and / or a cohort of the wider third level institutions and professional bodies.

This training should be targeted at the professional, middle managerial and senior administrative staff associated with the planning function and it should be accredited. The possibility of this training being available in modular form - perhaps on a pick and mix basis should be explored such that it would be available on a rolling basis. This training is more suited to smaller group sizes (25 to 30) and could also be delivered using a blend of in person and online modes with the in-person element being at a regional level.

The course for this training could be developed with substantial input by a School of Planning and / or other selected third level involvement. It should cover managerial and leadership skills in relation to personnel, ICT, GIS, data analysis for middle to more senior grades across administrative and professional streams and where appropriate draw on generic or pre-existing training solutions but adapted as necessary for the operational context of planning.

■ **Leadership training
(to commence within 24 months)**

This training should have a focus on the skill sets and competencies necessary to prepare or consolidate participants readiness for roles in senior leadership in the public planning function. It should be at level 9 and delivered on a blended model over a period of no less than one year and with a strong emphasis on the strategic positioning of the planning function as a key enabler of sustainable development at local, regional and national level. It should provide in-depth learning and development solutions for subject matter experts including professional, technical and management grades.

This training should be developed in collaboration between the OPR, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, and the Local Authority Sector. The detailed preparation of a course syllabus and its delivery should be by a selected third level institution and be based on a scope set out by the collaborating parties. This level 9 course should be targeted at Senior Executive Planner and cognate grades, Senior Planner, Senior Executive Officer / Senior Administrators and Senior Engineer grades who are working in the planning function. The group size for this element of training should be no more than 20 and run on a biennial basis.

1.1 Section 1 - Introduction, Background and Context

1.1.0 Introduction

Since mid-2021, the OPR with the Local Government sector, has been developing a Learning and Development Strategy for Local Authority planning staff. This work has been progressed through a sub-group of the CCMA Housing, Building and Land Use Sub-Committee (the Learning and Development Group / the group).

The OPR, in light of the project having built a strong evidence base, tendered for an external resource to assist in drawing up a Learning and Development Strategy / training plan for the sector.

It was also intended that the Learning and Development Group work would integrate the consideration of ongoing training needs of elected members, who have been catered for since mid-2019 through a specific OPR-led training and briefing programme developed and delivered jointly with the Association of Irish Local Government. A summary of the programme for this training is set out at **Appendix 1**.

1.1.1 Background and Context

The planning process underpins delivery of many interrelated public policy, societal, economic and environmental objectives including housing, infrastructure delivery, climate action, place making and economic development. Planning policy development and legislative and regulatory evolution has become very fast-paced. New statutory guidelines, amendments to legislation and regulations are advised to Local Authorities on an almost monthly basis. This demands an effective and regular communications and training process to keep all staff and local elected members up to speed on what have become complex processes addressing complex issues.

As it has become more complex, the planning process has also become more litigious. This demands rigorous application of statutory processes that in turn demand a high degree of proficiency by planning officials.

The Planning and Development Act requires the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) to conduct training programmes for planning officials and elected members and to report annually to the Minister through the OPR Annual Report. An extract from the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2018 relevant to OPR Education, Training and Research Functions is included at **Appendix 2**.

The Planning and Development Act 2000 has been amended extensively and a new Planning Act is anticipated in 2023 as a result of the planning review being undertaken by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the Office of the Attorney General. Planning practice now is considerably more demanding, especially procedurally and the incidence of legal challenge has been increasing (See **Appendix 4**). One of the conclusions of the work of the Learning and Development Group is that while there are various professional (IPI / RTPI), administrative (IPA) and employer led (eg Local Authority PMDS) training activities, including in planning, no overall strategic national training programme exists for planning officials. In the UK, such programmes do exist including skills programmes delivered by the Planning Advisory Service of the Local Government Association. <https://www.local.gov.uk/pas/> The Scottish Government also operates a Skills Improvement Service. <https://www.improvementservice.org.uk/products-and-services/skills-and-development/planning-skills>

The Learning and Development Group as part of its work, met on several occasions in advance of procuring external assistance to compile this Learning and Development Strategy.

It has, through the auspices of the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA), gathered good data on local authority planning section staffing across the country.

This data provides a baseline of staff numbers, whether professional, technical, or administrative. In addition, the Learning and Development Group, aided by an external expert (Ciaran Lynch), conducted a survey which was sent to the approximately 1600 local authority planning staff and, via the AILG, to the 949 elected members, in relation to their views on training provision to date and training issues into the future.

The overarching message from the survey is that planning staff and members see a very strong need for training in a fast-evolving and complex area of work. Planning staff also believe that such training should be responsive to the training needs of the different staff cohorts in planning across a range of technical and administrative disciplines, that it should be capable of being engaged in without pressure from competing work commitments, and that staff should be able to participate in such training through a blended means.

1.1.2 Summary of Who was Consulted

The Learning and Development Group is made up of representatives from Local Government Management (DOS), Senior Planners, a representative of LASNTG, representatives of the OPR, and representatives from the LGMA. In addition to the direct consultation value provided by members of the Learning and Development Group, a survey was carried out offering all Local Authority planning personnel and Elected Members an opportunity to engage. In the event a total of 759 responses were received from Local Authority planning personnel and 144 responses from Elected Members.

Engagement also took place with the CCMA Executive, the CCMA Housing, Building and Land Use Sub-Committee, the LASNTG Chair, the Department of Housing, Local Government

and Heritage, the Irish Planning Institute, the Association of Irish Local Government, and a focus group comprising Senior Planners and Senior Executive Officers from the Local Authority Sector.

1.1.3 Some General Messages from the Planning Learning and Development Survey

Duration in Post / Council: A majority of planning staff have been in their current roles for five years or less. This breaks down across the roles as: 52% for senior administrative staff, 56% for administrative staff, 57% for planners and up to 66% for technical specialists. It was also found that 39% of members who responded to the survey had served on their Councils for five years or less.

Past Provision of Training: It would appear that, apart from professional planning grades, limited levels of training in planning have been provided for other grades in recent years. In the case of general administrative staff, 80% of respondents indicated that most of the training they received was in the form of a brief induction from experienced colleagues rather than more in-depth and structured training in systems and procedures.

However, a more significant level of elected members (72%) indicated attendance at planning training in recent years which is to be expected given the roll-out of a national training programme for elected members by the OPR (see **Appendix 1**).

Appetite for / Scope to Engage in Training: Respondents indicated a very strong appetite for training ranging from 68% for administrative staff, to 82% for planners and 88% for non-planning technical specialists. Furthermore, all grades indicated a strong willingness to devote personal time to training ranging from 62% of administrative staff to 80% for senior administrative staff. Many respondents however, questioned if or how, they could engage in training given very heavy work commitments.

Breadth/Scope of Planning Duties: For professional planning respondents, 37% indicated that they work in four or more areas of responsibility (development management, policy, enforcement etc) with 63% indicating that having

to cover many different areas of professional work placed additional demands from a knowledge and training perspective, which some degree of specialisation in their roles might make more straightforward.

Skills to Perform Planning Functions: Staff indicated generally good levels of confidence to deliver planning functions based on skills they had gained relevant to their particular roles. For example, 97% of senior administrative staff indicated that they were either fully or very well equipped to deal with general administrative functions. Planners expressed a high degree of confidence in their development management (operational) and forward planning (policy) roles.

However, staff also signalled areas where they either did not feel as well equipped to deal with work as they would like or were not equipped as follows:

- Senior administrative staff indicated that they would benefit from additional training in areas such as staff management, ICT development, tracking ongoing developments in the legal / environmental and planning policy issues.
- Many general administrative staff indicated that they were not as well equipped as they would like or not equipped to deal with advising the public and statutory bodies on planning procedures, preparing statutory notices and documents, compiling planning statistics, and preparing financial reports.
- Many planners indicated that they were not as well equipped as they would like or not equipped to deal with matters including urban design, public engagement including handling Council meetings, property economics, report writing, financial management, and conflict management.
- Technical experts both internal and external to planning sections indicated that additional basic training on planning and updates were required on planning and environmental law and guidelines.

- Elected members indicated that they were not as well equipped as they would like or not equipped to deal with the making of Development Contribution Schemes, Part 8 procedures, and making submissions to An Bord Pleanála in relation to planning matters dealt with directly by that planning authority.

Areas for Training: The combination of the output of the self-expressed learning and development needs from the survey, the consideration and perspective of the Learning and Development Group, engagement with the CCMA, and consideration of the evolving legislative and policy context points clearly to distinct and targeted training needs for both (a) all respondents and (b) specific cohorts.

In relation to (a), most respondents pointed to the need for an ongoing general or foundation-level training and awareness programmes to keep staff and members updated in real-time on the fast-paced nature of legislative and policy development, landmark legal cases, and technological and operational advances relevant to the planning function. In this regard, there would seem to also be a strong preference for online / blended delivery of such programmes on an ongoing basis by way of regular workshops and briefings rather than time-intensive courses.

In addition to the above and in relation to (b), the survey points to the merits of a carefully tailored and ongoing training support to address the expressed and working needs of the various cohorts of staff and elected members. For example, administrative staff in relation to the operation of statutory planning procedures and operations, planners in relation to urban design, communications, technical specialists in relation to the operation of the planning process and elected members in relation to understanding in a step-by-step manner, the functioning of planning and their role within that.

Some Caveats. While this was an extensive survey with a very high response rate and while the overall thrust of responses can be considered reliable, it should be noted that the respondents to the survey were self-selecting.

There is no way of knowing, therefore, whether the survey is skewed or not to any extent by that factor. In addition, some Local Authorities were very highly represented in responses, while others were less so. This might mean that the practices in some authorities are more heavily represented in the findings. Finally, it should be noted that this was a self-assessment exercise. While the research evidence is somewhat variable, in general self-assessment biases tend to lead individuals to over-estimate their skills and capacity.

These caveats are identified here for the purposes of accuracy, but none are considered to have a significant impact on the conclusions reached or the steps proposed.

1.1.4 Organisational / Sectoral Context and Alignment

The Respective Training Roles: While the OPR has a statutory obligation to provide training to local authority planning staff and elected members, this sits alongside the related responsibility of the 31 Local Authorities in the context of their human resource management and learning functions, to provide training for all local authority staff and their members.

To that end, the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) recently published a People Strategy with 6 objectives (See **Appendix 3**). Objective 3 is creating a culture of continuous learning and development, including a learning and development strategy addressing corporate knowledge and skills requirements.

While the pandemic and previous pressures on local authority budgets had a negative impact on investment in training, the Local Authority sector has, in the recent past, taken a shared service-based approach to successfully roll out training programmes that are centrally funded. One such example is the CCMA / DECC initiative to establish Climate Action Regional Offices (CARO). This initiative incorporated development and implementation of multi-

annual training on climate action awareness with €1.5m in government funding being provided.

The climate training and roll out above followed the establishment of the CAROs who were supported by a shared service secretariat located in Kildare County Council. The CAROs then moved to develop and deliver a training programme which has greatly raised awareness and understanding of climate issues in local authorities across all grades and in both the executive and elected member roles in Councils.

The CCMA / DECC initiative was and is a specific response to the urgency around rapid awareness and capacity building on climate action in the light of new and wide-ranging government policy.

Planning on the other hand, is an extensive and long-standing statutory function, and provision of a programme of planning training might be considered to be better suited to existing local authority training structures that have not been used for such purposes previously and as discussed below.

An Existing Approach: The Local Authority Services National Training Group (LASNTG), which for many years has provided a shared service approach to training for local authority staff, particularly in front-line services, has not to date been tasked to provide specific, structured, and ongoing training in planning.

What training in the planning function has been provided, except for OPR delivered training, has been progressed through the individual training responsibilities and activities of individual local authorities.

However, given the results of the survey¹, the increasing complexity and pace of change in the planning area and its importance to the delivery of wider public policy and programmes, there is an opportunity now to look afresh at the option of enabling LASNTG to assist in the delivery of a national training programme for local authority staff on planning.

¹ A survey was sent to the approximately 1600 local authority planning staff and to the 949 elected members, in relation to their views on training provision to date and training issues into the future.

1.1.5 Future Governance and Oversight

Exploring the LASNTG Option: It is an option that the LASNTG approach could be relied on to deliver those parts of the training plan for planning that are structurally similar to the LASNTG role in the Roads, Water, and Fire Services training. **Appendix 6** shows the makeup of the LASNTG governance and implementation structures and sets out how a Planning Services Training Group (PSTG) would integrate with same. LASNTG is well placed to manage the roll out of the immediate foundation training recommended in this Learning and Development Strategy. It is also well placed to procure the arrangements and achieve an accreditation for the intermediate training and to procure the arrangements for the delivery of the Developmental / Leadership training as also set out in this Learning and Development Strategy.

The LASNTG infrastructure could be relied on to capture and update to the Core² system the training records of all staff trained. It could, in such a circumstance, also fulfil the role as host of the shared service for planning training, be the entity through which the funding of same would be channelled on the basis that it would be guided in this work by a dedicated PSTG made up of representation from the OPR, the Local Government Sector and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

Such a sub-committee / group (PSTG) could bring together experienced local authority staff in both devising new curricula and / or harnessing existing training solutions into an overall portfolio of training initiatives designed to reach all parts of the local authority planning service and as part of operationalising the training in accordance with this Learning and Development Strategy.

This mechanism, through its interactions with the LGMA Change Management Committee would ensure an alignment, consistency and complementarity with the wider Local Authority training programmes, and the sector's Performance Management and Development System.

Setting up the Governance Arrangements:

There is potential to start the development of a planning LASNTG sub-group through a strengthened Learning and Development Group. It is however recommended that to ensure that this training is fully embedded in the LASNTG system, the formation / membership of such a sub-group would follow a similar makeup to the existing LASNTG sub-groups.

In that context, a new sub-group would therefore be populated by representatives of the OPR, the Local Authorities and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. It would be called the Planning Services Training Group (PSTG) and would, into the future, provide the collaborative oversight required to deliver on long-term Learning and Development Strategy implementation and review arrangements and as mandated by the collaboration of the OPR, the Local Authorities and the Department.

In such a scenario, and when the Learning and Development Strategy is developed and delivered, and subject to appropriate funding support, the current Learning and Development Group would be stood down and the work of implementing the Learning and Development Strategy would be transitioned to the PSTG such that it would be responsible for delivery over a multi-annual period. This would draw on the expertise of experienced local authority personnel, and a strengthened OPR planning staff training capacity, and would be informed by ongoing training surveys.

² The system used by Local Authorities to hold HR records.

The PSTG would also devise the necessary ongoing governance and reporting system to the OPR, CCMA and DHLGH with regular monitoring to measure progress towards the achievement of learning outcomes and confirmation that sufficient resources and time is being set aside to ensure training happens and is appropriately targeted.

1.1.6 Strategy Acceptance, Approval and Ownership

The oversight of the development, consideration and approval of the Learning and Development Strategy enabling its acceptance as an agreed way forward has rested with the Learning and Development Group.

Following its approval by the Learning and Development Group (and following the necessary engagements with the Housing, Building and Land Use Sub-Committee and Executive of the CCMA) the Learning and Development Strategy will be transitioned to a new subgroup (PSTG) of the LASNTG which will own and deliver on its implementation. While the Learning and Development Strategy and plan for implementation is scoped and costed to cover a five-year period (2023 -2027) arrangements should be put in place for an initial three year plan which should be formally reviewed on a three year cycle thereafter.



1.2 Legislative Requirements / Current Environment

The following section sets out an overview and defines the general scope of planning services provided for under the current legislative and policy framework that local authorities operate within. Subject to the planning review and new planning legislation anticipated in 2023, these inform the potential scope of learning and development activities.

1.2.0 Planning and development functions of local authorities

Planning and development functions of local authorities are defined under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the principal functions in that Act can be summarised as follows:

- **Forward Planning** in relation to:
 - preparation of development plans and local area plans, together with the associated environmental reports required under the SEA and Habitats Directives, including assessment by the OPR (Part II of the Act).
 - designation by Government of areas as Strategic Development Zones and where the government designates the local authority as development agency for the SDZ, the preparation of Planning Schemes for the regulation of development in the SDZ area (Part IX of the Act).
 - acquisition of land for development purposes (Part XIV).
 - compensation; (Part XII) and,
 - protection and enhancement of amenities including areas of special amenity, landscape conservation areas, tree preservation orders and public rights of way; (Part XIII).
- **Development Management**, the regulation of both private and local authority own development including local authority operation of, or participation within:
 - the planning application and appeal process.
 - development contribution schemes.
 - pre-application consultations; (Part XVIII of the Act).
 - enforcement activities in respect of any unauthorised development.
 - regulation of quarries (Part XVIII of the Act).
 - environmental impact and/or appropriate assessments; (Parts III, and X, XAB of the Act).
 - substitute consent processes operated by the Board; (Part XA of the Act)
 - local authority own development; (Part XI of the Act) and,
 - event licencing (Part XVI of the Act).
- **Architectural Heritage** relating to:
 - preparing and maintaining a record of protected structures; and
 - designating architectural conservation areas and areas of special planning control (Part IV of the Act).
- **Housing Supply (Part V)** relating to:
 - preparing Housing Strategies as an integral part of the development plan; and,
 - delivery of social and affordable housing.
- **Miscellaneous Functions** including fees payable to local authorities, calculation of appropriate periods and arrangements for the provision of electronic planning services.

1.2.1 The Parts of the Act and Sections of particular relevance for training

Appendix 5 shows the key requirements extracted from the various sections of the current Planning Act as above and that require various administrative, technical and or professional knowledge and experience to effectively discharge the requirement.

1.2.2 Barriers to participation and how these might be addressed

It is important to ensure that the maximum participation, from across all the cohorts to whom training is offered, is achieved. Participation rates will be influenced by many factors such as the quality / suitability of training on offer, the proportionality of time input required, opportunity cost (perceived or actual) to the participants, having the 'headroom' within the day job to ensure that time away at training doesn't lead to workload stress, organisational culture, line management attitude towards training, a clear linkage to PMDS, and how the training on offer supports career development.

It is interesting to note that a substantial minority (+ / - 25%) of respondents to the survey across all staff cohorts identified workloads as being a barrier to participating in training. This of itself is not surprising as the survey was taken without the communication of a context setting out how scheduling arrangements could be successfully accommodated. Indeed, it is reflective of how busy the planning offices are at present and the commitment of staff to the work arising. This matter can be addressed through the timing of training to be done and a corresponding work scheduling accommodation by the various Local Authorities. A communication to all Local Authorities from the HBLU / CCMA at the appropriate time would assist in the adoption of a common sustainable approach to this matter across the sector.

A substantial majority of respondents across all staff cohorts (+ / - 75%) indicated that the weekly / monthly time commitment required to participate in training was either important or very important to them which highlights the importance of getting the proportionality of training offering at an optimum pitch.

While it is positive to see such a high number of respondents indicating their willingness to participate in training in their 'own time' it is also important to ensure that the need for any such 'own time' input for attendance at courses / training particularly for the immediate foundation and intermediate training is minimised.

Another message of note from the survey in some cases is that it might be difficult to get staff who are not ambitious to participate in training. This needs careful attention in a scenario where it may be only staff who wish to progress in their careers through promotion who wish to participate in training.

Establishing and communicating the concept that being appropriately trained can have a very positive impact on job satisfaction is of paramount importance. A commitment to ensuring that the training being provided is being rolled out to all staff members over time is also an important part of demonstrating effectiveness in relation to the strengthened oversight of the planning process.

In an overall context it should be noted that a substantial majority of respondents to the survey welcomed the prospect of participating in training. While this is not surprising, it is nevertheless a strong base from which to commence the next phase of developing and rolling out a training programme. A collaborative effort by the organisations involved, working closely with all the stakeholders, can ensure that any barriers to training, perceived or otherwise, are overcome and that the focus is firmly placed on the enabling and positive aspects of a training programme.

2.0 Section 2: Identified Learning and Development Needs

2.1 Top CPD requirements identified

Contact was established with the Irish Planning Institute to identify the top CPD requirements for local authority planners, which were gathered from surveys in 2018 and 2020. Some of the findings of this exercise are set out below.

- 2.1.1** Competence in the procedural requirements of the latest environmental and planning legislation, particularly EU directives was top of the list, likely influenced by the level of litigation and case outcomes in this area.
- 2.1.2** Practical aspects in relation to the delivery of the compact growth policies of the National Planning Framework ranked next, encompassing understanding viability of development, how to encourage activation of brownfield lands through measures such as the vacant site levy, urban design aspects and community engagement in securing high quality development.
- 2.1.3** A significant flow of funding to local authorities in relation to the implementation of the National Development Plan (NDP) Urban and Rural Regeneration and Development Funds (URDF / RRDF) has created both opportunities and demands on the local government sector. The programme and project management aspects of these funds were also highlighted by planners as a skills development area given that many of the initial tranche of such funding applications and approvals are managed by planning teams.
- 2.1.4** Planning enforcement practices and procedures were also highlighted, particularly as litigation outcomes often turn on very careful attention to legal procedural aspects and documentation.
- 2.1.5** Planning for an ageing population was also highlighted given the activities of initiatives of the local government sector such as the Age Friendly Programme.
- 2.1.6** A better understanding of the practices and procedures that demonstrate effectiveness in tackling climate action were also highlighted, in both development planning and development management work.
- 2.1.7** Additionally, the area of sustainable mobility was highlighted, in relation to building capacity within planning departments to undertake both baseline assessments of modal split and developing actionable programmes of measures to increase active and sustainable travel that can be linked to measurable targets within development plans.

2.2 Results of Training Needs Assessment Survey

While the summary above at 2.1.1 to 2.1.7 captures the main CPD training requirements from the professional cadre within planning, the administrative and technical grades also play a critical role in the delivery of planning services and functions and have more specific training needs not captured in the above. The recent survey of the planning staff is instructive in this context and a summary of training needs arising from same is set out below.

- 2.2.1** Of the cohort of DOS, SEO and AOs who responded to the survey 78% indicated that they were either interested or very interested in training to do with Planning Policy Development as did some 94% of planners who responded.
- 2.2.2** Of the cohort of DOS, SEO and AOs who responded to the survey 67% indicated that they were either interested or very interested in training to do with responding to legal challenges / FOI and Access to Information on the Environment. Some 87% of administrative staff who responded indicated being either interested or very interested in training to do with planning law.
- 2.2.3** Of the cohort of DOS, SEO and AOs who responded to the survey around 47% indicated that they were either interested or very interested in training relating to report writing. Some 85% of administrative staff who responded also indicated being either interested or very interested in similar training.
- 2.2.4** Of the cohort of DOS, SEO and AOs who responded to the survey 39% indicated that they were either interested or very interested in training to do with preparing procurement / tendering documentation.
- 2.2.5** Of the cohort of DOS, SEO and AOs who responded to the survey 59% indicated that they were either interested or very interested in training relating to public engagement in large-scale settings including council meetings as did 83% of planners who responded.
- Some 73% of administrative staff who responded indicated being either interested or very interested in training relating to managing public consultation events and processes. Of this group 74% of respondents were also interested or very interested in training relating to social media and web maintenance.
- 2.2.6** Of the cohort of DOS, SEO and AOs who responded to the survey 27% indicated that they were either interested or very interested in training to do with writing submissions for An Bord Pleanála.
- 2.2.7** Of the cohort of DOS, SEO and AOs who responded to the survey 59% indicated that they were either interested or very interested in training relating to financial management and financial policy as did 71% of the administrative staff who responded.
- 2.2.8** Of the cohort of administrative staff who responded 92% indicated that they were either interested or very interested in training to do with the overall administration of the planning system.
- 2.2.9** Of the cohort of planners who responded 91% indicated that they were either interested or very interested in training relating to the development of large-scale planning schemes, 91% indicated that they were either interested or very interested in training relating to responding to legal challenges, 73% indicated that they were either interested or very interested in training relating to the writing of planning reports, recommendations and conditions of decisions, 72% indicated that they were either interested or very interested in training relating to the writing of consultant briefs, 67% indicated that they were either interested or very interested in training relating to the writing of submissions for An Bord Pleanála, 81% indicated that they were either interested or very interested in training relating to conflict management and 87% indicated that they were either interested or very interested in training relating to project management.

2.3 Priorities for a Framework for Learning and Development

The OPR has indicated that, much of the feedback from the Irish Planning Institute in relation to the identified top CPD requirements for local authority planners and the findings of the staff survey, is confirmed from its review of the outputs of local authority planning processes. This in turn points to a range of strategic Learning and Development needs including those below.

2.3.1 Strategic environmental assessment, environmental impact assessment and habitats (appropriate) assessment meeting the requirements of the EU Directives that are increasingly the subject of litigation and challenge in the courts and where absolute competence around processes are key safeguards in robust decision-making.

2.3.2 Quantitative techniques in the housing and planning areas including housing needs demand assessment and integration of housing and core strategies to implement the National Planning Framework, mindful of the implementation of brownfield development targets.

2.3.3 Project and programme management across the full range of public sector financial management, procurement and engagement and co-ordination aspects relating to implementation of the National Development Plan and specifically funding mechanisms for infrastructure, regeneration, and place-making.

2.3.4 Climate action, to ensure next generation planning policies and decisions demonstrate compliance with national and international climate policy in relation to both adaptation and mitigation aspects.

2.3.5 Active travel, where national policy makers are increasingly looking to the local authority sector to lead in retrofitting existing communities with the infrastructure essential to boost active and sustainable travel over the use of the car.

2.3.6 Digital planning and engagement, where technological innovation in areas such as big-data, analytics, geospatial modelling, 3D visualisation and online and social media offer new and cost-effective ways to communicate the increasing complexity of planning activities and outcomes and better involve the public in policymaking and decision-taking.

2.3.7 Practical skills, essential but technically intricate in areas like validation of planning applications, undertaking enforcement activities are also areas where local authority officials can benefit from both structured and on-the-job training.

2.3.8 In relation to the points above, matters covered in the OPR Annual Report and ongoing research activities are potentially a useful pointer to certain training needs that have arisen across the various 31 local authorities. For example, variances in systems used by local authorities in the initial processing of planning applications leading to varying levels of invalidations was flagged in the 2020 Annual Report and examined as part of a recent case study report.

See also <https://publications.opr.ie/view-file/93>

2.4 Mapping Competency Requirements to Staff Groupings

Not all staff constituency groupings require proficiency in the same competencies or competency groupings or to the same level. Almost all the services delivered in the planning system require the seamless involvement and interactions of the full range of staffing deployed across the system. This arises particularly in the development management function and in the processing of applications for planning permission and other consents. This range of involvement includes the receipt of files, the referral of these to prescribed bodies, considering the proposals, making the decisions, and where required engaging with the planning appeals system and An Bord Pleanála. While the involvement of the different staff cohorts in the various elements of the service differs across different authorities the tables in section 2.5 in the following pages provide a matrix that maps the importance of the various competencies for the respective staff and elected member cohorts.

This matrix was developed by the external adviser, the OPR and the Learning and Development Group. It is based on a comprehensive set of skill needs developed by the American Institute of Certified Planners which took a broad view of the role of planners and addressed personal and ethical skills and perspectives as well as those related to purely technical functions. This matrix was adapted significantly for the Irish context. It does not claim to be absolute or not open to modification but it does provide a broad scoping of the skill sets associated with the different planning roles.

2.5 Matrix of competencies mapped to the various cohorts

Competency	Application	Various Cohorts					
		Planner	Other Tech Prof	Management	Administration	Clerical	Elected Member
1. Core Planning Knowledge and Techniques							
<p>a. Planning History and Theory. Planning as an overall way of thinking, including its historical evolution and basis. Key principles including the common good and sustainable development. Understanding of the broad functions, frameworks and structures available to enable sound planning outcomes.</p>	The capacity to build awareness of the importance of proper planning and sustainable development and understanding of planning practice in different audience settings.	✘	✘	✘	✘	✘	✘
<p>b. Evolution of Cities, Towns, Villages, Rural Communities. Understanding the processes of development of various settlements and places over time including the historical, physical, economic, cultural and political factors and the particular interactions between these factors that influence evolution settlements.</p>	Informing the development of both policy for decision at Council level and the operation of development management functions so that planning functions are grounded in an effective understanding of long-term development patterns and factors.	✘					
<p>c. Planning Law. The statutory framework for planning and the bodies primarily responsible for its implementation including, inter alia, the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Understanding definitions of development and exempted development. ■ The nature and purpose of the Planning Register and the handling of planning applications from a validation and registration perspective. ■ The processes for preparing Development Plans, Local Area Plans, Planning Schemes for areas designated as Strategic Development Zones. ■ The processes for the control of development including the technical assessment of planning applications and interactions with planning appeals and processes involving local authority input to applications and cases determined directly by An Bord Pleanála. ■ Arrangements for the management of short-term lettings. ■ Understanding of the procedures for meeting the requirements of EU environmental directives relevant to development plan and development management processes including SEA, EIA, AA, SFRA, RBMP and Water, Waste, Air and Noise Directives. 	<p>Planning policy development including Development Plans, Local Area Plans, Planning Schemes and associated implementation.</p> <p>Development management within the legal framework to support decision-making that robustly will withstand any legal challenge and takes appropriate account of wider legislation, particularly at EU level in the environmental area.</p> <p>Enforcement of the planning legislation, the remedies available, evidentiary requirements and proportionate responses.</p>	✘	✘	✘	✘	✘	✘

2.5 Matrix of competencies mapped to the various cohorts continued

Competency	Application	Various Cohorts					
		Planner	Other Tech Prof	Management	Administration	Clerical	Elected Member
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Knowledge of the processes for substitute consents in relation to development management processes. ■ Understanding of the procedures relating to compensation and in particular the precision of language needed to avoid liability in appropriate situations. ■ Understanding of enforcement processes and the technical and administrative procedures required including the obligation to investigate complaints and the standards of evidence and proofs required. ■ Understanding of the role of the Planning Regulator and the procedures for engagement with the OPR in relation to assessments of plans and reviews of local authority systems and procedures for the delivery of planning services. 		✘	✘	✘	✘	✘	✘
<p>d. Urban and Rural Development Processes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Understanding of the relevant physical, environmental, community, policy and other considerations for effective assessment of development management related proposals for different uses of land and proposed structures and buildings, in both urban and rural settings. <p>The above will also include understanding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ enabling physical infrastructure and utilities specific categories of development (residential, commercial, employment, industrial, agricultural, natural resource, infrastructural, cultural etc) may require in terms of mobility, energy, water services and water resource protection, communications and other services. 	<p>The development of appropriate planning policies and the application of those policies in the development management function in a coherent and outcome-focused way.</p> <p>The interaction with the design professions in the incorporation of built form thinking into policy and management decisions regarding the creation of place.</p> <p>Enabling effective co-ordination with wider local authority sections and external stakeholders in the comprehensive assessment of more complex proposals that require a variety of infrastructure and that may have multi-various implications for the receiving context and environment.</p>	✘	✘				

2.5 Matrix of competencies mapped to the various cohorts continued

Competency	Application	Various Cohorts					
		Planner	Other Tech Prof	Management	Administration	Clerical	Elected Member
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> how to assess proposed building form and any visual impacts including the role of building form and layout in an urban design and place-making context; and Both quantitative (relative to specific development standards) and qualitative assessment of specific types of urban development proposals in higher density contexts requiring careful analysis of factors including amenities provision and daylight and sunlight factors for both occupants and neighbouring properties. 		×	×				
<p>e. Urban Design: Community and site design considerations, including building form, height, scale and density, safety and walkability.</p>	Particularly applicable in the context of area and large-site master-planning and the development of appropriate briefs for this work so that planning considerations are properly balanced and the liveability of an area is a core consideration of a design approach.	×	×	×			×
<p>f. Assessment of Impacts: Systematically identifying and assessing specific impacts (environmental, transportation, social, etc.) of both policy approaches and development proposals.</p>	Includes Natura Impact Statements and Natura Impact Reports, Transport Assessment, Retail Impact Assessment, Visual amenity and landscape appraisal, SEA, EIA etc. It also importantly involves the capacity to draw together the conclusions of different assessments into a balanced judgement which is legally compliant and on which a well-founded recommendation can be based.	×	×				
<p>g. Investment Co-ordination: Understanding the context for the delivery of planning functions and achievement of planning objectives in relation to delivery of wider public capital investment programmes, including their delivery through planning and development activities eg public transport and active travel, water services, schools provision.</p>	Knowledge of the planning, appraisal, procurement and legal requirements regarding Local Authority development funded either internally or as part of wider (eg NDP, URDF/ RRDF etc) capital programmes.	×	×	×	×		×

2.5 Matrix of competencies mapped to the various cohorts continued

Competency	Application	Various Cohorts					
		Planner	Other Tech Prof	Management	Administration	Clerical	Elected Member
h. Economic Development, Property Economics and Regeneration: Understanding the economics of both area based and specific site development, including the factors enabling regeneration of derelict or underutilised structures or lands.	Ensuring the preparation of implementable planning policy objectives in development plans, local area plans and planning schemes for SDZ's that take account of economic factors and principles.	✗	✗	✗	✗		✗
i. Conservation: Knowledge of the provisions of Part IV of the Act in relation to Architectural Heritage including the preparation of the Record of Protected Structures (RPS), adding to or deleting entries on the RPS and the various legal and operational mechanisms contained in Part IV to conserve built heritage including declarations, architectural conservation areas and statutory notices in relation to structures at risk.	Ensuring effective policies for conservation of the built environment including the mechanisms and implications of designating Architectural Conservation Areas, the boundaries of what constitute exempted development and what is permissible in respect of the development of a protected structure.	✗	✗		✗		✗
j. Housing Supply and Land Activation: Knowledge of the provisions of Part V of the Act in relation to housing supply, including the preparation of Housing Strategies utilising Housing Needs Demand Assessment techniques, the implementation of social and affordable housing obligations in specific development proposals and monitoring of housing supply generally including the pursuit of land activation measures including the Vacant Site Levy.	Compliance with Part V of the Act and the relevant provisions of the Urban Regeneration Act 2015 in respect of the Vacant Site Levy.	✗		✗	✗		✗
k. Research Techniques: Knowledge in sourcing relevant data and information for planning policy and practice and the ability to analyse such information and data, including through spatial analysis (ie Geographical Information Systems) and interrogate results in a real-world sense. In addition, the ability to identify data and information gaps and as a result developing and implementing systems for the regular surveying and reporting of important policy-related land-use and environmental metrics including, inter alia, brownfield land, vacant site registers, derelict site registers, under-utilised land.	Production of practical, clear and robust evidence-based data and reports to underpin robust policy development that is both empirically grounded and practically directed.	✗					

2.5 Matrix of competencies mapped to the various cohorts continued

Competency	Application	Various Cohorts					
		Planner	Other Tech Prof	Management	Administration	Clerical	Elected Member
<p>I. Quantitative and Analytical Assessments: Using data collection, survey, analysis and modeling tools for forecasting, policy analysis and certain development management settings including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Analysing demographic, housing, retailing, economic, environmental and other data to discern broad trends in population, employment, housing and the environment relevant to planning policies and practice; ■ Preparation of Development Plan Core Strategies including application of National Planning Framework derived Housing Supply Targets at individual local authority level; ■ Preparation of or input to or co-ordination with relevant local authority sections in the development of the Housing Strategy, including Housing Needs Demand Assessment; ■ Preparation of Retail Strategies required under statutory guidelines of the Minister; ■ Implementation of Flood Risk Assessments as required under Statutory guidelines of the Minister. 	Ability to properly use appropriate research tools in building the data for research reports. This includes the capacity to recognise and report on the caveats and limitations of data and the extent to which data can be relied on in coming to conclusions.	✘					
<p>m. Inter-Disciplinary Working: The implementation of relevant processes above in the context of inter-disciplinary working with related professions and high-level understanding of approaches in relation to engineering, architecture, ecology, law, real estate, finance.</p>	Capacity to engage in a meaningful way with other relevant professions and to seek approaches which will achieve desired planning outcomes while incorporating the inputs and meeting the technical requirements of other professions.	✘					

2.5 Matrix of competencies mapped to the various cohorts continued

Competency	Application	Various Cohorts					
		Planner	Other Tech Prof	Management	Administration	Clerical	Elected Member
<p>n. Digital Planning Services for the Public: Understanding information technologies and how evolving technology benefits planning policy and practice and should be used to enhance the delivery of planning services to the citizen and their understanding of planning processes and considerations.</p>	<p>Enhancing digital planning services in line with wider local authority sector ICT policies including seeking customer feedback on such services as the online planning register, online planning application viewers and other on-line service platforms.</p> <p>Developing additional online tools that the public can use to understand the meaning of development plan policies such as three dimensional viewers for the modelling of building location, form and height.</p>	×	×	×	×	×	×
2. Communication and Engagement							
<p>a. Report and Submission Preparation: Providing timely, adequate, clear, and accurate written information on planning matters in both policy and decision making contexts.</p>	<p>Preparation of clear, legal and evidence-based policies and strategies and reports and recommendations on development proposals which meet the same criteria. Proofing reports, recommendations, conditions and reasons for refusal for ambiguity or lack of clarity.</p> <p>Effectively use graphic representations to accurately represent relevant considerations.</p>	×	×	×		×	
<p>b. Presentation: Effectively conveying information through oral and visual presentations and interactions. Ability to explain complex issues and convey technical points accurately, impartially and sensitively and in lay terms.</p>	<p>Able to communicate verbally and persuasively in a variety of settings including at Council meetings, at oral hearings, as an expert witness, at public meetings, and in one-to-one situations such as pre-application consultations.</p> <p>Capacity to be both technically competent and able to communicate honestly with lay audiences.</p>	×	×	×	×		×

2.5 Matrix of competencies mapped to the various cohorts continued

Competency	Application	Various Cohorts					
		Planner	Other Tech Prof	Management	Administration	Clerical	Elected Member
c. Comprehension and Listening: Accurately comprehending, receiving and interpreting verbal messages. Paying attention to what is said, how it is said and what is emphasised.	Capacity to listen and understand in a highly effective manner and in a variety of contexts understanding concerns and how these can be mitigated in a variety of contexts.	×	×	×	×	×	×
d. Interpersonal Relations and Effective Customer Service: Working effectively with various public and private sector officials, staff, citizens and other customers.	Applicable both internally and externally and involves attitudes and values as much as technical competencies.	×	×	×	×	×	×
e. Mediation and Facilitation: Acting as a mediator or facilitator when interests conflict.	Applicable in participatory planning and policy-making contexts and in policy development situations, with more limited scope for such engagement in development management such as finding solutions to mitigate concerns that have arisen.	×		×	×		×
f. Communication and Notification: Using notification and communication resources, including social media. Identifying the best methods for communicating with any particular audience.	Important in the general and policy-making contexts, with less scope in development management.	×		×		×	×
g. Political Awareness: Being sensitive to and managing sensitive or potentially adversarial political situations.	Engaging constructively with elected members, recognising and respecting both the advisers and their role, while at the same time advising them of the boundaries within which they must operate in a respectful and effective manner.	×		×	×	×	×

2.5 Matrix of competencies mapped to the various cohorts continued

Competency	Application	Various Cohorts					
		Planner	Other Tech Prof	Management	Administration	Clerical	Elected Member
h. Diversity: Understanding how socio-economic, ethnic, cultural, racial, generational, disability and gender-based perspectives can influence communities and their expectations of planning and seeking to respond to the needs of diverse groups.	<p>Developing broadly based views on what constitutes a high-quality place, taking account of social, cultural values as well as perspectives of gender and ethnicity.</p> <p>Ensuring that in policy and plan-making, there is avoidance of any unconscious bias and holding of assumptions of dominant cultures and classes to the exclusion of other parts of society.</p>	×		×	×	×	×
i. Public Participation and Relations: Working with the public and articulating planning boundaries and issues to a wide variety of audiences, fostering public empowerment and participation.	Knowledge of participatory techniques. Knowing how to respond to the outcomes of participatory processes and incorporate the outcomes in the plan-making process in particular.	×	×	×	×		×
3. Plan Preparation and Implementation							
a. Process and Programme Management: Putting in place required procedures and resources for the preparation of plans within the requirements of the statutory framework taking account of the time-frame necessary for each phase and as set out in the statutory guidelines for development plan preparation published by the Minister.	Timely putting in place of a well-developed and documented process for development plan preparation including essential scene-setting or preparatory steps such as initiation of housing needs demand assessments, retail strategies, flood risk assessments and other analyses.	×	×	×	×	×	×
b. Strategic Context Setting: Knowledge of the policy, evidential and quantitative aspects of ensuring an appropriate strategic context for a planning authority's statutory plan preparation process.	Understanding the relationships between City and County Plans, National Plans, Regional Strategies, Local Area Plans and relevant Government policies. Awareness of the need and ability to consider EU directives and regulations and ensure compliance.	×	×	×	×		×

2.5 Matrix of competencies mapped to the various cohorts continued

Competency	Application	Various Cohorts					
		Planner	Other Tech Prof	Management	Administration	Clerical	Elected Member
c. Visioning and Goal Setting: Using visioning techniques. Establishing viable and sustainable planning goals and objectives.	Developing clear goals in policy development that will be effectively linked to more specific policies and programmes. Effectively reflecting other strategies such as Housing, Climate Adaptation and Retail Strategies in the plan-making process.	✗		✗			✗
d. Planning Engagement: Ensuring effective stakeholder involvement and community engagement, working with diverse communities and seeking to ensure relevant stakeholders have a clear view of what the development plan will support and/or deliver over its lifetime.	Knowledge of the skills and techniques to facilitate effective stakeholder engagement within the statutory framework and development of personal capacity to engage in these techniques.	✗		✗	✗		✗
e. Problem Solving: Drawing on skills including technical understanding, engagement and communication, as well as creativity and pragmatism to solve particular difficulties that may have arisen with a given policy issue or decision on a development proposal.	Awareness that planning often addresses complex matters that involve trade-offs rather than black or white approaches. Understanding of the need to mitigate the impacts on those whose interests are compromised by a policy or project decision.	✗	✗				
f. Engagement with Prescribed Bodies: Active engagement with the various statutory bodies prescribed by the legislation and the Minister for the purposes of plan-making.	Ensuring effective interactions with the LECP, the Regional Assemblies, the OPR, DHLGH, OPW, NTA, Dept Education, Irish Water, NPWS ensuring their views make meaningful contributions to the drafting and preparation process.	✗	✗	✗	✗		
g. Co-ordination with Development Management Processes: Monitoring how consideration of development proposals is supporting progress in securing (or otherwise) the objectives of the development plan including experience with the practical implementation of specific objectives and/or technical standards and whether any updating of same may be required.	Creating a formal link between the forward planning and development management teams monitoring practical aspects of development management related aspects of plan implementation, including awareness of An Bord Pleanála decisions.	✗	✗	✗	✗		

2.5 Matrix of competencies mapped to the various cohorts continued

Competency	Application	Various Cohorts					
		Planner	Other Tech Prof	Management	Administration	Clerical	Elected Member
h. Plan Evaluation: Assessment of the effectiveness of implementation of the development plan, including identification of areas for revised, updated or new policies taking account of practical experience in the implementation of the development plan and the evolving regulatory and policy context and situations on the ground.	Preparation of the 2 year post plan adoption monitoring report required under Section 15 of the Act and inputs to the review process (eg issues papers) when the time comes to prepare the next development plan.	×	×	×	×		×
4. Leadership							
a. Influencing Decision Making in the Public Interest: Providing vision, input, direction and guidance to those with decision-making authority to make decisions in the best interest of the public. Facilitating discussion on the outcomes which are being sought for a particular planning process, the legal and policy boundaries within which those outcomes must be sought and the nature of the actions which are acceptable in order to achieve those outcomes.	Facilitating discussion on the outcomes which are being sought for a particular planning process, the legal and policy boundaries within which those outcomes must be sought and the nature of the actions which are acceptable in order to achieve those outcomes.	×		×	×		×
b. Innovation and Excellence: Leadership in creating and maintaining consensus and support for a planning activity that leads to community improvements.	This is provided in many contexts by implementing many of the recognised skills in an integrated and outcomes driven context. It is important to recognise that consensus is a combination of support, acquiescence and opposition in varying proportions and consensus does not mean unanimity.	×		×	×		×
5. Management in Delivering Results							
a. Decision Making and Evaluation: Policy analysis and programme evaluation skills. Negotiating skills.	Important in plan-making involving consideration of alternative courses of action and associated implications, determining a robust course of action based on good evidence and both theoretical and practical understanding. Important for policy analysis to operate within a clear framework of values. Has strong connections with the PSC.	×		×	×		

2.5 Matrix of competencies mapped to the various cohorts continued

Competency	Application	Various Cohorts					
		Planner	Other Tech Prof	Management	Administration	Clerical	Elected Member
b. Staff Management: Actively planning for (through the PMDS and personal development plan processes) and ensuring continuous learning and development of staff.	Knowledge of principles of personnel management, including supervision, team building, training and performance evaluation.	×		×	×	×	
c. Mentoring: Commitment to providing ongoing planning learning at all levels including opportunities for work placement for emerging professionals and job rotation and opportunities for learning through temporary placement with other organisations.	As above. Particularly being willing to take student placements and to engage with those providing their education.	×		×	×	×	
d. Project Management: Skills generally associated with being in charge of a plan or project, including resource allocation, monitoring, etc.	Project management can apply in any part of the planning system as it can be used to manage a process as well as a project. The skills required in this context are primarily applied but capacity to use project management software should be considered.	×		×		×	
e. Monitoring and Evaluation: Ensuring that monitoring systems for a range of planning activities are in place and effective and efficient.	Use of technology where possible to automate monitoring and evaluation. The development and implementation of a calendar of reporting on ongoing or specific planning metrics and of a system of responding to the learning which the metrics are providing, including useful proxy measures of progress.	×		×	×		×
f. Budgeting and Financing: Interpreting financial information to assess the short-term and long-term financial circumstances, appraising the cost-effectiveness of programmes, and comparing alternative strategies.	Making the case for budgets for planning functions at budgeting time, identifying and requesting necessary resources and prioritising expenditure within the allocated budget to ensure there are no cost overruns.	×	×	×	×		

2.5 Matrix of competencies mapped to the various cohorts continued

Competency	Application	Various Cohorts					
		Planner	Other Tech Prof	Management	Administration	Clerical	Elected Member
<p>g. Media Relations: Skills addressing the needs and perspectives of the media and working with them to accomplish planning objectives.</p>	<p>Media engagement in a positive, honest and transparent manner whether seeking public involvement in plan-making or where there is controversy over a particular issue. Understanding the differences between engaging with print, broadcast and social media and the different mechanisms of same.</p>	✘		✘	✘		✘
<p>h. Strategic Planning: Application of strategic planning principles to accomplish longer range planning objectives.</p>	<p>This is strategic planning in a business sense and relates to having a long-term vision for the role and function of the planning service in a Local Authority and how that service needs to be delivered. Includes issues around objectives, KPIs, resource needs, training and education, monitoring and resource management.</p>	✘		✘	✘		
<p>i. Office Operations: Skills in office operational systems such as operation of case management systems for development management and enforcement.</p>	<p>This is the more operational part of the process and links to the strategic approach and thinking mentioned in the previous section.</p>	✘	✘	✘		✘	
<p>j. Managing the Availability of Information: Including transparency, freedom of information (FOI)/access to information on the environment (AIE), confidentiality and privacy.</p>	<p>Compliance with legal requirements for information publication under the planning legislation as well as GDPR, FOI legislation and responses all within the context of maximizing transparency as far as possible.</p>	✘		✘	✘	✘	✘
<p>k. Management of External Advisers and Consultants: Skills relating to working with consultants including RFT and RFQ development, selection, contracts, budgeting, contract management and communication.</p>	<p>Ensuring a clear brief and engaging positively in an ongoing way to maximise a positive outcome for all parties.</p>	✘	✘	✘	✘		

2.5 Matrix of competencies mapped to the various cohorts continued

Competency	Application	Various Cohorts					
		Planner	Other Tech Prof	Management	Administration	Clerical	Elected Member
6. Values, Ethics, Transparency and Continuous Learning							
<p>a. Professional, Administrative and Political Ethics: Appreciation of key issues of planning ethics and the ethics of public decision-making, research, and client representation as outlined in the IPI and RTPPI Codes of Ethics and Professional Conduct and Local Government Codes of Practice.</p>	Applies right across the spectrum of planning activity and requires both the avoidance of conflict of interest or loyalty but any possibility of the appearance of such conflict. Consciousness and awareness of the challenges and pitfalls which can exist and the mechanisms for addressing such conflicts when they arise.	✘					
<p>b. Accountability and Transparency: Knowledge and skills to assure plan and programme accountability and transparency.</p>	These are fundamental requirements of good governance today though their actual application in a complex environment is by no means straightforward. It is important to recognise that in complex organisational environments decisions are rarely solely made by an individual even if the final act of decision-making is. The decision-taking process which leads to that is highly complex.	✘		✘	✘	✘	✘
<p>c. Advocacy: Support for policies, programmes, or ideals that influence public decision-making and best serve the public interest through democratic engagement.</p>	This is an important aspect that needs to be addressed with care in a public service context. Ultimately, professionals in such a context are advisers and need to be conscious of the limitations of that role. While advocating for planning as an approach may be acceptable, advocating publicly for any particular stance outside of the organisation's decision-making process may be problematic. Advocacy can be pursued in this context through support for and working with representative organisations.						✘

2.5 Matrix of competencies mapped to the various cohorts continued

Competency	Application	Various Cohorts					
		Planner	Other Tech Prof	Management	Administration	Clerical	Elected Member
d. Social Justice: Expanding choices and opportunities for all persons, under-represented groups and diverse communities.	Understanding of the ethical principles underlying such an approach.	x	x	x	x	x	x
e. Professional Development and Continuous Learning: Commitment to professional development and continuous learning.	Engagement in CPD and continuous learning across all grades and roles and including the elected members to keep abreast of policy, theory, law and techniques for example implications of the Marine Area and Foreshore Activities Bill, decisions of an Bord Pleanála and the Courts, climate action, age-friendly design, livable communities, new urbanism and both urban and rural regeneration.	x	x	x	x	x	x

3.0 Section 3: Towards a Planning Learning and Development Strategy

3.1 The benefit of a learning and development strategy lies in outlining a systematic approach to the development of staff capabilities, skills, and competencies to meet statutory and organisational objectives.

3.2 There is much merit in creating a learning and development strategy and skills development centre for the planning area in local government. This would address the changed context for planning in the past 10 years, the implications of structural skills gaps remaining, particularly in relation to environmental litigation, develop a stronger more effective workforce and a progressive and learning centred environment.

3.3 The comprehensive baseline survey and analysis of a representative sample of local authority planning officials as carried out, serves as a strong starting point for a strategy as it helps to gauge:

- Staff views on learning and development,
- Current skills levels versus skill needs, and to an extent,
- Options for future activities.

3.4 The development of this strategy has examined, in addition to identified skills needs, the structure of such a programme of training to include the following:

- **Targeting:** The baseline analysis has identified both strengths and weaknesses in the skills and knowledge possessed by planning officials such that tailored programmes can be put in place to bring skills levels to agreed levels and with the active participation of all staff, not just those who elect to attend conferences and events of their choosing.

The targeting mechanisms can also align to the sectors PMDS learning plans. This in fact must be an essential element of the strategy and of the programme of training that will flow from it.

- **Mentorship:** This will afford the opportunity to officials to benefit from applied learning from experienced staff when taking on new roles and new responsibilities and will formalise this valuable method of people development.
- **Leadership Development:** This will focus on supporting and developing more senior officials responsible for significant projects and programmes and preparing them for further leadership roles.
- **Graduate Placement:** Objective 2 of the LGMA People Strategy concerns promoting local authorities as employers of choice in an increasingly competitive jobs market where graduates have many career options.

3.5 The Learning and Development Group noted that beyond the 11 categories of graduate placement across the local government sector as currently being promoted, that there would be merit in examining how the wider local government sector graduate placement programme could include various graduate skill sets relevant to the planning area and including professional planners in the context of the parallel planning resourcing work.

This could assist in addressing situations such as where currently, planning graduates cannot avail of local authority posts until they have the two years post graduate work experience before being eligible for appointment to the entry grade of assistant planner. If graduates had access to a work experience or placement system in the sector, it would be better positioned to compete for skilled staff that otherwise go to other employers such as the private sector where they build their substantive careers.

There would be good merit in the workforce and resources workstream addressing this and the wider issue of student placements so that people going through the education system can see the attractions of working in the local government sector.

3.6 Learning and Development Virtuous Cycle.

Together, the initiatives above, applied in a targeted way and building on a thorough baseline analysis, have the potential to create a virtuous cycle. Starting with legislative and policy development and initiatives, learning from the implementation of such legislation and policy through practice (including litigation) should feed into training with feedback loops to policy and legislation. Thereby a circle of ever improving policy and practice could evolve.

Figure 1: Learning and Development Virtuous Cycle



3.7 Purpose of the Learning and Development Strategy

3.7.1 Establishing priorities and plans in the context of available resources

The costs and resources required to develop and roll out a significant national programme of training are very important elements in determining how to structure and progressively implement the programme over time.

In addition, and in the context of considering this investment as mentioned above, it is also vital to recognise the risks and costs (particularly in litigation and project time delays) of not providing necessary training.

Moreover, as the pace of legislative and policy development is likely to continue apace, the merits of continual feedback to processes such as the review of planning legislation currently ongoing and its implementation, cannot be overstated.

3.7.2 Identifying the resources required for enhanced provision of training

To identify the financial cost of a robust training programme the various elements that feed into the three categories of training envisaged need to be examined in detail as does the extent to which some elements of the programme will repeat while others transition as need is met.

- In relation to the immediate foundation training need it is assumed that the course materials would be largely 'fact' based concentrating on the practicalities of delivering the planning service, compliance with the law, strong governance and the practices / procedures deployed in the planning system. This training could be delivered to larger groups (50 – 70) across five half day events two of which would be face to face / in person. Therefore up to 70 sessions (70 participants x 5 days x 14 groupings) of training would be required to meet the needs of 1,000 staff.

It is expected that the course materials could be developed by a cohort drawn from the 8 to 10 trainers that would deliver the training. The cost of this element is likely to be in the region of €510 per person trained (€180 per person per day for the in-person element and €50 per person for each of the three online sessions). These costs would include course development and trainer / facilitator costs. If the numbers presenting for this immediate foundation training would be in the range of 1000 staff then the direct financial cost would likely be €510,000.

The need for this budget would likely arise in two instalments, €255,000 in 2023, and €255,000 in 2024. This category of training would transition beyond 2024 to form the basis of an annual planning induction for the staff who are new to their role or new to planning from 2025 onwards. The associated annual cost from 2025 onwards is likely to be in the range of €50,000.

- In relation to the Intermediate training need it is assumed that the course and course materials would be developed by / with assistance from an external resource from among the third level colleges / planning schools. This training could be delivered to groups (25 – 30) across five sessions over an eighteen-month period. Therefore up to 20 sessions (25 participants x 5 days x 4 groupings) of training would be required to meet the needs of 100 staff. A significant portion of this training would be online, with the first and last sessions being face to face / in person. The first session should have an emphasis of being an ‘away day’ in its makeup. The numbers to be trained in this category is likely to be around 100 initially and the direct cost per person is likely to be of the order of €2,000.

This means that the costs for the intermediate training is likely to be in the range of €200,000.

The need for this budget would arise in three instalments, €50,000 in 2024, €100,000 in 2025 and €50,000 in 2026. This category of training would transition to having an intake of around 25 every second year, beginning in 2027, and having an annual cost from 2027 of around €25,000.

- In relation to the Leadership training need, it is assumed that the course and course materials would be developed by an external resource from among the third level colleges / planning schools. This training could be delivered to smaller groups (circa 20) over a minimum period of one year. The cost per person for the full course is likely to be around €10,000 meaning that the annual cost, based on an intake of 20 every second year, would be €100,000.
- In addition to the training described above a need has also been identified for a dedicated resource to be deployed centrally and potentially hosted within the LASNTG Management / Secretariat. This resource would initially comprise a Senior Executive Planner and an Assistant Staff Officer. Their role would primarily be to drive the development of the course material in accordance with the views of the PSTG and its courseware group, and to manage the procurement and / or coordination of staff to deliver training. It is also considered that this resource could have some capacity to coordinate the dissemination of an information service for the sector highlighting new policies, new legislation, and information of relevance such as published court judgements.

These staff would sit within the LASNTG structure per **Appendix 6**. The gross annual cost of such a resource is in the region of €200,000.

3.7.3 *Providing co-ordination across a range of delivery mechanisms*

It is important that a mechanism is put in place to ensure that the scoping, scheduling, and delivery of training as envisaged in this strategy is co-ordinated so that it accommodates the ongoing service needs of the planning function during the delivery of the training. It is important that individual Local Authorities can schedule their staff to attend alternative training events to ensure that all their staff would not have to be away from their work assignments at the same time. This is particularly important for the Immediate / Foundation training. Any overlap of scheduling between the Immediate / Foundation training and the Intermediate training should also be minimised to facilitate sustainable rostering requirements.

3.7.4 *Setting priority areas for different staff cohorts*

The creation of a dedicated national planning services training group (PSTG), composed of representatives of the key organisations and staff groupings will enable a carefully interwoven strategy to meet learning and development needs to emerge and be implemented over time.

This group, focusing on evolving needs, could develop learning and development activities that meet any new requirements arising over time. At the current time, the approaching national roll-out of an online portal through which planning applications can be made will require upskilling of relevant administrative and other staff.

Similarly, administrative, professional, and technical staff will need learning and development supports in relation to the roll-out of the 'Residentially Zoned Land Tax', the interfaces between terrestrial and marine spatial planning, the introduction of Urban Development Zones, Land Value Sharing and various housing assessments (such as Housing Needs Demand Assessment).

3.8 **Key Principles**

3.8.1 *Basis for delivery, maximising shared resources and value for money*

It should be a key principle of the option selected for training delivery that shared resources and shared learning is maximised so that value for money is achieved in the short and long term. It is also important to ensure that the option selected would enable a resilience of knowledge and capacity to be built up and that the said knowledge and capacity should, where feasible and cost effective, be retained within / for the wider planning sector.

3.8.2 *Cyclical assessment of impacts / benefits*

It is desirable that an ongoing system of assessment of impacts and benefits arising should be put in place. This should include a regular survey of staff similar to the survey conducted on behalf of the Learning and Development Group. Such a survey should be conducted at least every second year. A survey of this nature would be a valuable resource to inform the evolution of future training programmes.

3.9 **The Audience - Whom the Strategy is aimed at**

3.9.1 *Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage*

The Department sets the regulatory and policy context for planning and provides significant support and operational assistance to local authorities in the delivery of their planning functions.

Given wider pressures on resources in the planning sector, a centrally funded approach to implementing the Learning and Development Strategy would be an essential element underpinning a new local government sector wide Planning Services Training Group and collaboration between the Sector, the Department and the OPR so that the planning sector can continue to deliver a quality and timely service.

3.9.2 *Local Government Sector*

The 31 Local Planning Authorities provide the backbone to the implementation of the planning system in terms of reach, spread and volume. The Local Government Sector in the delivery of wider functions leverages the capacity of its planning resource to service the needs of the evolving economy and the implementation of the National Development Plan.

The sector is committed to a training programme for its wider cohort of staffing as provided for through the individual local authority people strategies. It would welcome a centrally funded investment in a tailored programme of training for its planning staff to meet the needs arising now and into the future.

3.9.3 *Office of the Planning Regulator*

The OPR is a relatively new regulatory and oversight body established to ensure the overall cohesiveness of the planning system and its constituent parts and to cultivate a culture of continuous learning and development.

However, while recognising that the OPR is both a relatively small organisation but with a broad statutory mandate to see that training is put in place for both staff and elected members across the entirety of the local authorities and regional assemblies, its specific contribution is probably best focused around inputting to the design rather than the operation of the learning and development system.

In relation to the input above, this would not be a static involvement but a dynamic one reflecting insight gained through the OPR's scope of operations, such as reviews of statutory plans and of planning authorities. This could be captured in an annual stocktake of learning and development needs.

That said, the OPR has hit the ground running strongly in the area of training for elected members, which is appropriate given their specific statutory role in plan-making and the OPR's oversight of that process. This enables direct engagement between these tiers in a culture of mutual listening and learning and institutional relationship development.

4.0 Section 4: Meeting Learning and Development Needs

4.1 Overview of Existing Capacity

(a) OPR: At present, the entire training capacity of the OPR is represented by approximately 50% of the time of five staff members from Assistant Director (AP) to planner and HEO/EO grades.

This signals that without a very significant uplift in human resource capacity within the OPR, the Office would have limited capacity to shoulder a large national planning training programme and would be best to adopt a targeted approach aimed at:

- Influencing the design of the training programme with the DHLGH and LA Sector stakeholders from what the Office observes nationally in terms of delivery of planning functions.
- Delivering such targeted activities as wider stakeholders may require and which the Office would have capacity for; and
- Continuing to develop and deliver specific training for elected members, with the potential for crossover/synergies with aspects of the wider staff training.

(b) Local Authorities: At present the Local Authorities deliver training and people development needs through the lens of a new generation of individual local authority people strategies and having regard to the outputs from the Performance Management and Development System. It is likely that the early programmes of training that would derive from the new local authority people strategies will target training that is more general in nature and therefore more applicable across the full body of staff.

Existing capacity to enable local authority planning staff to avail of training is low due to exceptionally high demands on the planning function meaning pressure on release of staff for the requisite training time.

Wider strategic workforce planning is ongoing with the Department and a specific aspect of that work will address the resourcing of the service such that ongoing training is recognised as a core requirement that must have the necessary time made available.

A consideration in (a) and (b) above would be the setting aside of a specifically focused and modest team of administrative staff to work on the development and roll-out of planning training on an iterative and collaborative basis between the LASNTG and the OPR.

4.2 Delivery Options

The Learning and Development Group considered three main options for developing and implementing a learning and development strategy in planning for local authorities. These are set out below and the advantages and disadvantages of each option are also considered in more detail below.

■ Option 1

The OPR approach - The OPR would develop a strategy and oversee its implementation.

■ Option 2

The Local Government approach - The Local Authorities would develop a strategy and work with stakeholders like the OPR in implementing it.

■ Option 3

A Collaborative / Joint approach - A strategy would be developed and implemented collaboratively.

4.2.1 Option 1 – The OPR Approach: The main advantage of this option is that it would neatly act on the statutory mandate of the Office and enable training to address specific issues that arise in the conduct of statutory functions. However, given the scale of the numbers of local authorities, staff numbers and geographical spread compared to the modest scale of the OPR, it would be difficult to see how an overall programme could be advanced solely by the OPR. This option would also miss out on an opportunity to dovetail the requirements of the OPR mandate with the local authority training programme that will emerge from the sectors people strategy.

4.2.2 Option 2 - Local Government Approach:

The main advantage of this option is that it would capitalise on the scale of the sector and its capacity to co-ordinate a national programme, as is the case with other national training programmes such as that on climate action being co-ordinated through the Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs). However, a programme designed and developed internally within the local government sector would not have direct access to organisational and developmental needs that might be identified through the statutory functions of the OPR and ultimately generate inefficiencies as the OPR would move to deliver on its own training responsibility towards planning staff.

4.2.3 Option 3 – A Collaborative / Joint

Approach: Combining the strengths of options 1 and 2 above negates their disadvantages and would seem to be an effective option. A joint / collaborative approach would offer the facility to work within existing and proven structures in the local government sector such as the Change Management Committee of the CCMA and any subgroup tasked with delivering on sectoral HR and sectoral learning and development.

Such a collaborative approach must encompass the honing of specific learning and development needs jointly with the OPR on an ongoing basis. These would include the development of the various design and implementation options for the chosen training, any ongoing in-job training, the roll out of the programme of training on an ongoing basis, and the development of specific advanced courses in conjunction with the higher education sector and the Local Authority Services National Training Group (LASNTG).

4.3 The existing market offering for courses / programmes

In considering the three options set out above the Learning and Development Group considered the availability, range and reach of any specialised training suitable to the planning function as may be available from external sources. It is considered that there is no national source of specialised planning training available at the required scale, beyond that provided (mainly for planning professionals, senior managers, and related technical staff) through professional institutes and some private sector suppliers. It was also felt that the ability of such offerings (as may be available externally) to meet such a one off need to offer training for up to 1600 staff was very limited.

It is acknowledged that some of the Higher Education Institutes (such as Technological University Dublin) do offer scope to join modules of their planning and sustainable development courses, but capacity is limited and effectively presents as being whatever is spare over and above student enrolments compared to class size capacity. That said, the courseware developed for such programmes may well be of value in delivering a dedicated channel of training for local authority personnel.

4.4 The Preferred Option - A Collaborative / Joint Approach

It is evident that when the strengths of options 1 and 2 above are combined then this negates any disadvantages that might arise in a collaborative approach. In such a circumstance the collaborative approach would seem to offer an option that is capable of being effective and efficient. This joint / collaborative approach would offer the facility to work with / within existing and proven structures in the local government sector such as the LASNTG structures, the Change Management Committee of the LGMA and any subgroup tasked with delivering on sectoral HR and sectoral learning and development.

Such a collaborative approach would also build a long-term training capacity through a honing of specific learning and development training knowledge and capability that could easily be updated in a timely manner as new legislative requirements and best practice evolves. It would also ensure that expert knowledge is retained within the wider public planning system such that the cost benefit of the initial investment would continue to improve over time. Indeed, the same training materials could in time offer the collaborative effort the option to provide guidance and training to the private sector providers involved in planning and related activities on the basis of a cost recovery model, should it so wish.

4.5 Sectoral support needed for the collaborative option

To support the effective implementation of the collaborative approach it is proposed that a Planning Services Training Group (PSTG) be established under the LASNTG umbrella. This group will sit under the existing LASNTG structures per **Appendix 6**. This group would oversee funding, be informed of policy and directive changes through its membership and circulars etc as issued by the Department and others as appropriate.

These members would include OPR, DHLGH and Local Authority representatives at senior grades, and would collectively act to steer the courseware development given its insight into emerging policy, new legislation and new directives coming into force. This group would be chaired by the chair of the most appropriate CCMA committee (in this case the Housing, Building and Land Use Sub-Committee) to ensure effective communication with the existing structures of the CCMA / LGMA. The chair of this group would also sit as a member of the LASNTG mirroring the practice for the other sectoral training groups presenting the added benefit of building synergies where possible with the other training groups and avoiding duplication of effort.

This training subgroup should also be supported by a courseware group, whose membership would be drawn primarily from the collaborating parties, who would assist in the developing / scoping of the courses needed to respond to the evolving needs of the sector and the updated policies and directives. The training group could, depending on the circumstances, either deliver directly using existing resources and staff etc, or more commonly tender out the delivery of the courses or indeed use a blend of the two delivery approaches.

The PSTG should be supported by a Senior Executive Planner and an Assistant Staff Officer to drive the development of the course material in accordance with the views of the training group and courseware group, to link in with the regional training centres on deployment of the training and to manage the procurement of the training and / or coordination of staff to deliver training. It is also considered that this resource would have some capacity to coordinate the dissemination of an information service for the sector highlighting new policies, new legislation, and information of relevance such as published court judgements. These staff would sit within the LASNTG structure per **Appendix 6**.

4.6 Table 1 - Training Budget Needs 2023 – 2027

Year	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Totals
Immediate/ Foundation Training	€255,000	€255,000	€50,000	€50,000	€50,000	€660,000
Intermediate Training		€50,000	€100,000	€50,000	€25,000	€225,000
Leadership Training		€100,000	€100,000	€100,000	€100,000	€400,000
Central Resource	€200,000	€200,000	€200,000	€200,000	€200,000	€1,000,000
Totals	€455,000	€605,000	€450,000	€400,000	€375,000	€2,285,000

5.0 Section 5: Other Implementation Considerations

5.1 Roles and Responsibilities

There are three principal stakeholders in the devising and delivering of this strategy:

- The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage;
- The OPR; and
- Local Authorities – including senior managers, the local authorities HR and Learning and Development unit, line managers, job holders and the elected members.

The broad roles and responsibilities they would be expected to play are set out below.

5.1.1 The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

The Department sets the regulatory and policy context for planning and provides significant funding support and operational assistance to local authorities in the delivery of their planning functions.

As mentioned above, planning operates in a complex environment and while the pace of policy development and regulatory and legislative change has stepped up, so does the need for national level involvement in ensuring the planning system is up to speed with such change.

Traditionally, the Department keeps local authorities up to date with new legislation or policy by way of circular letter and other coordinated communications. As much of the new policy is complex, it will only be as effectively implemented as it is effectively communicated and understood.

Therefore, building both awareness and competency would suggest a move onwards from the passive circular letter approach to a more active and applied involvement in learning and development.

Given wider pressures on resources in the planning sector, a centrally funded approach to implementing the Learning and Development Strategy would be an essential first step, underpinning the new local government sector wide Planning Services Training Group and collaboration between the Sector, the Department and the OPR in establishing what training is needed and then actively implementing the training through various structures.

From the estimate of foundation, intermediate and longer-term training needs explored earlier in this report, the provision of a budget of approximately €2.285m over a five-year period by the Department to centrally support core planning training development and implementation (like is done for other services such as water, transport, climate and other areas) would be an essential starting point.

A profile of the training budget required is set out earlier in this report at section 4.6 and includes a budget to support the cost of a Senior Executive Planner and an Assistant Staff Officer to drive and manage the programme.

The Department would also nominate a senior official(s) from its planning division, with a high degree of technical and operational knowledge of ongoing policy and regulatory development to steer the shape of the training plan.

It also needs to be said that for the Department, the opportunities, and benefits from feedback from the local government sector to Government as a result of learning and development, should not be underestimated.

5.1.2 The Office of the Planning Regulator

The OPR assesses day to day delivery of statutory planning functions through its statutory plans evaluation and local authority review functions in particular. It also has a very detailed operational and comparative picture of delivery of planning functions across the 31 local authorities.

As an oversight body, its key role in the Learning and Development Strategy would be to steer the training programme towards identified areas for development by inputting to the Planning Services Training Group, potentially through an annual Planning Training Priorities Statement.

Such a statement would be prepared on the back of analysis of the OPR's functions, drawing from its Annual Report and other sources of comparative analysis across the sector such as the Case Study Papers and the emerging Planning Performance Assessment Framework.

The OPR would also support specific training activities for staff as would be agreed in the collaborative approach. It would also have a specific and complementary role in continuing to develop, deepen and roll-out specific training for elected members in their planning functions in association with representative bodies for councillors such as the Association of Irish Local Government.

In this regard, there may be some opportunities for cross-over synergies with aspects of the staff training, for example in areas like leadership and mentoring.

5.1.3 Local Authorities

HR/Learning and Development Unit: The 31 individual local authority HR units' key roles in this strategy would be to co-ordinate and oversee the participation of their own authority's planning staff in the planning training programme, with a particular emphasis on ensuring that all staff that need to avail of training do so.

This will likely require system co-ordination between the Core HR, PMDS and Learning and Development system oversight arrangements so that the Department and the OPR can track the effectiveness of the roll-out of the programme. This is similar to the co-ordination of records performed by LASNTG for the other training delivered for the local authorities.

Line Managers: The key role of line managers is to supervise the roll-out of the training programme, ensuring staff have the appropriate time and space to apply themselves to it and to check for the degree to which staff have enhanced knowledge and skills in the delivery of planning functions.

Jobholders: The key roles of jobholders would be firstly to participate as required in the training programme, as part of their PMDS, personal development plan and as required professional development, but secondly to constantly feed-back on the effectiveness of the programme and help in identifying new areas of training that may be required to ensure that the planning training programme evolves and adapts to changing needs.

Elected Members: The elected members role would be to work with the OPR, through their representative bodies, in devising training suited to their needs and statutory functions and in participating in such training to ensure that all elected members have been appropriately informed and kept up to date in such functions.

5.2 Actions – Indicators – Roll-out

5.2.1 3-year programme

An indicative outline of the main elements of a three-year training programme is set out below which is subject to the caveat that this would need to be fleshed out in more detail by the oversight and management arrangements above and is also dependent on a sufficient budget being put in place.

Subject to the above, preparations for the roll-out of training along the lines under the following three headings would be possible.

Foundation Training

The primary purpose of this training would be to ensure all core staff grades (Clerical Officer-Administrative Officer, technicians, and Graduate-Assistant-Executive Planner and equivalents) in planning authorities are conversant in the key components of the planning system and its various processes, including development applications and enforcement.

The aim of this element of the programme would be to ensure that the grades above, potentially numbering approximately 1000 staff would have undergone the training best suited to their roles over a 12-18 month period.

In terms of timing, the aim would be to deliver the training over 5 half-day modules covering topics such as:

- The basic structure of the planning system and the key pieces of legislation and policy.
- The planning policy hierarchy at national, regional and local levels and the roles of statutory bodies relevant to planning.
- Administration of local authority planning functions, including pre-application consultation, planning application documentation and validation (including case law), the operation of online planning administration systems, the role of prescribed bodies and observations and comments from public consultation.
- The decision on a planning application, including relevant considerations processes and documentation, the role of, and broad approach to environmental assessments as well as taking on board submissions.
- Planning enforcement, including the definition of development and exempted development, enforcement mechanisms, bringing forward of enforcement action including the evidential trail, standard of proofs and documentation required for successful enforcement.

The aim would be to deliver the material above over a blend of in person and virtual sessions, potentially utilising the LASNTG network of regional training centres as a resource.

- Detailed courseware and materials (course notes, templates, and reference material (including further reading)) would be developed that staff would draw on as a learning resource.
- The above would suggest a requirement for up to 70 training sessions / events (1000/70 x 5) delivered over the 12-18 month period.
- Individual local authority HR and planning departments would structure the progressive engagement of their staff with the training on offer subject to overall steering by the PSTG, which would have responsibility for signing off that all relevant staff participated.

- The local authority sector, the LASNTG and OPR would be resourced to dedicate a core team of dedicated officers to oversee the development of the required courseware and plot out the series of events.
- The learning outcome at the end of the process would be that all core staff have been through the foundation training with equal access to courseware material.
- The programme would then pause for at least 12 months before recommencing targeting new entrants into the planning service as identified through local authority HR and planning departments to PSTG / LASNTG.

Intermediate Training

Once the foundation training process is underway, the aim would be to start preparations for the delivery of intermediate training, which would commence ideally once the last foundation training events are completed.

This training would be aimed at middle to senior management and more senior professional and technical staff and could comprise the following initial suggestions over five half-day sessions, taking on board the messages from the Learning and Development survey and any follow-up enquiries.

- Advanced techniques in public and political engagement.
- Managing conflict and adversity.
- Communications and Report Writing.
- Urban design and place-making.
- Housing and Planning Techniques (the implementation of Housing Supply Targets/Housing Needs Demand Assessment etc).

- Development economics for Planning Delivery.
- Financial management in planning; (Preparation of Development Contribution Schemes, Development Securities, National Funding Schemes).

Given the staff numbers at the relevant grades, an initial estimate of the level of events would be approximately 100, with the aim being to deliver the material above over a blend of in person and virtual sessions, potentially utilising the LASNTG network of regional training centres as a resource.

Detailed courseware and materials (course notes, templates, and reference material (including further reading)) would be developed and hosted such that staff would draw on them as a learning resource and ongoing reference guide.

Individual local authority HR and planning departments would structure the progressive engagement of relevant staff with the training on offer subject to overall steering by the PSTG, which would have responsibility for signing off that all relevant staff participated.

The local authority sector, the LASNTG and OPR would be resourced to set aside a core team of dedicated officers to oversee the development of the required courseware and plot out the series of events.

The learning outcome at the end of the process would be that all senior staff have been through the intermediate training with equal access to courseware material.

The programme would then pause for at least 12 months before recommencing targeting new entrants into the planning service as identified through local authority HR and planning departments to the PSTG / LASNTG.

Leadership/Mentoring

The aim of this programme would be to develop senior leaders in the planning and development space of the local government sector through the establishment of a Level 9 programme of at least one year duration.

The programme outline would be subject to detailed development by the PSTG in consultation with the wider local authority sector, HEI partners, the OPR and DHLGH and would be funded centrally and with a view to ensuring at least 20 places and running every alternate year.

Entry criteria to the programme would be developed by the PSTG and could be derived from a mixture of sectoral requirements, personal learning and development plan and specific requirements.

The aim would be to have this programme up and running for the 2024 academic year.

5.3 Concluding Remarks

The Learning and Development Group have found the exercise of examining the training needs of the staff and elected members in the area of planning to be an instructive and very worthwhile exercise. It provided an opportunity to collaboratively acknowledge the complexity and evolving nature of the service as the system strives to meet the requirements of the legislation in the context of the ongoing development needs and the practices of a modern and progressive economy. It also provided an opportunity to acknowledge how the planning staff and elected members have equipped themselves and stepped up to that complexity and workload.

Notwithstanding the progress made in building capacity, the Learning and Development Group consider that it is now timely to take a more strategic, standardised, and resourced approach to any latent and emerging training needs for the planning system for both the elected members and staff. This strategy document sets out how this can be efficiently and effectively done and is based on a balance of capacity building, knowledge retention, and value for money.

The timely implementation of the country's National Development Plan and the emerging needs of the private sector to embrace the opportunity that lies ahead is hugely dependant on a well-resourced, well trained, and competent public planning system. The Learning and Development Group believes that the adoption, resourcing, and implementation of this strategy in early course will best prepare the elected members and staff of the planning system to deliver on that expectation.

Appendix 1

OPR-AILG Elected Members Training Programme 2019-2022

Date of Event	Title of Event
October 2019	Introduction to the Planning System
February 2020	The Plan Making Process
July 2020	The Role of the Elected Member
September 2020	Guidance for Councillors on the Initial Stages of Preparing Development Plans and their Core Strategies
October 2020	Consideration and Finalisation of the Draft Development Plan
November 2020	Implementation of the Development Plan and the Development Management Process
January 2021	The Decision on the Planning Application and Appeal
February 2021	An Overview of Planning Enforcement Functions
April 2021	Housing Supply Targets and Core Strategies
May 2021	Rural Planning and Development Policy
July 2021	Delivery of High-Quality Housing Appropriate to its Setting
September 2021	On and Offshore Renewables
October 2021	How to Implement Renewable Energy Targets in Development Plans
November 2021	Sustainable Travel and Transport Planning and Local Authority Development Plans
February 2022	Local Authority Planning Functions and Water Services Investment: Ensuring a Coordinated Approach
June 2022	Finalising your Development Plan: Key Steps and Requirements from the Development Plan Guidelines
September 2022	Planning that Revitalises Ireland's Towns and Villages
November 2022	The Role of Planning in Protecting Ireland's Water Quality

Appendix 2

Extract from Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2018 relating to OPR Training and Research Functions

- 31Q. (1) *The Office shall conduct education and training programmes*
- (a) *for members of planning authorities and of regional assemblies in respect of*
 - (i) *the role of such authorities, assemblies and their members under the Planning and Development Acts 2000 to 2018, including ministerial guidelines and policy directives under Chapter IV of Part II,*
 - (ii) *such matters relating to proper planning and sustainable development as the Minister may request, and*
 - (iii) *such other matters as the Office considers are of relevance to its functions, in particular, the functions relating to proper planning and sustainable development,*
 - (b) *for members of the staff of local authorities or regional assemblies in respect of*
 - (i) *such matters relating to proper planning and sustainable development as the Minister may request, and*
 - (ii) *such other matters as the Office considers are of relevance to its functions, in particular, the functions relating to proper planning and sustainable development.*
- (2) *The Office shall conduct research in relation to matters relevant to its functions as well as such other matters as may be requested of the Office by the Minister.*
- (3) *The Office may enter into arrangements with any person or body that the Office considers to be suitably qualified, including any professional, educational or research organisation, to undertake the provision of such services that the Office sees fit to which paragraph (a) or (b) of subsection (1) or subsection (2) relates and that are relevant to its functions.*
- (4) *The Office shall include in its annual report to the Minister under section 31AH a report on —*
- (a) *education and training activities, and*
 - (b) *research activities,*
- undertaken by it in respect of the year to which that report relates.*

Appendix 3

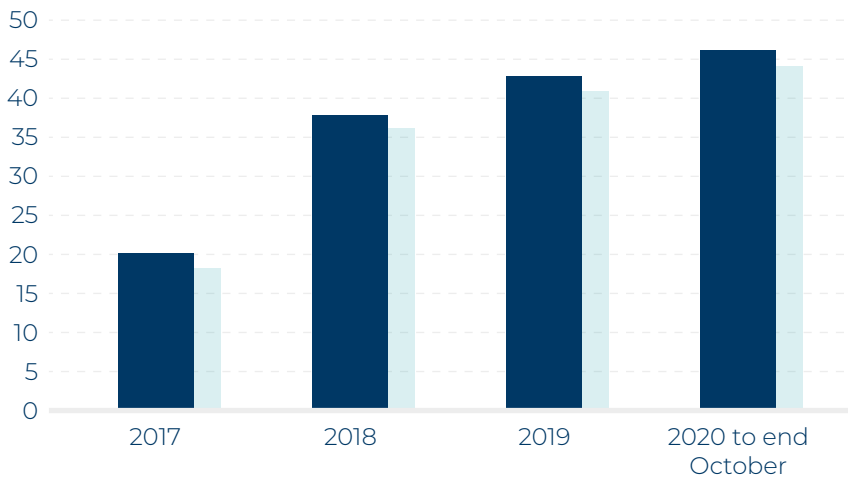
Extract from LGMA People Strategy

<p>Strategic Priority 1 Workforce of the future</p> <p>Strategic Priority 2 Capacity and Capability</p> <p>Strategic Priority 3 Effective Management</p>	<p>Objective 1 Plan and Deliver our Organisations Workforce Requirements</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify how greater public service expectations, emerging government priorities and alternative service delivery models impact on future workforce needs. 2. Ensure organisation design and structure is appropriate for the delivery of corporate strategic goals and objectives. 3. Integrate the workforce planning process with corporate planning to identify and align resources and capacity with business objectives. 4. Identify skills and competency requirements to deliver on existing and future service needs. 5. Research and develop HR analytics to support evidence-based planning and policy development.
	<p>Objective 2 Be an employer of choice</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Attract and recruit people with the appropriate knowledge, skills and behaviours. 2. Develop a local government communications campaign to raise awareness of the diverse, impactful and valuable work of the local government sector as part of the wider public service. 3. Promote the career opportunities and the potential for development and progression offered by working in local government. 4. Enhance recruitment and selection processes by utilising the full range of marketing and communication channels to promote recruitment campaigns while also ensuring ease of access through technology. 5. Build strategic alliances with other organisations to position the local authority as a key employer of choice.
	<p>Objective 3 Create culture of continuous learning and development</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Produce a learning and development strategy for the local government sector to address priority knowledge and skills requirements. 2. Create a learning and development plan in line with corporate priorities and career development. 3. Build a culture of management and leadership competencies to best meet the changing needs of an agile organisation. 4. Develop a structured framework to support appropriate succession planning.
	<p>Objective 4 Empower and enable our managers and supervisors</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Build line management capacity and competence to manage employees effectively. 2. Develop a framework of policy, procedures and practices that underpin and support effective people management. 3. Build organisational capacity in managing change. 4. Support newly appointed team leaders in people management. 5. Roll-out mentoring, support and induction of new employees and newly promoted staff.
	<p>Objective 5 Promote positive</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communicate and consult effectively with employees on key organisational activities and plans. 2. Recognise individual, team and organisation achievement.

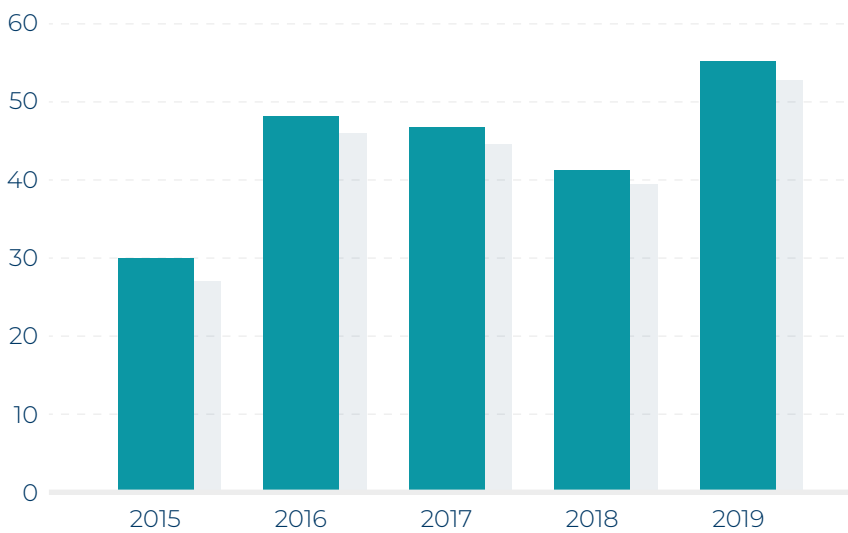
Appendix 4

Trends in Legal Challenges in Planning

CSSO Planning and Environment Case Load



Legal Cases - An Bord Pleanála



Appendix 5

Note: The current Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) is intended to be superseded by a new Planning Act currently in drafting as part of the Planning Review.

Part I: Preliminary and General

- Sections 3 and 5: The definition of development and exempted development, including declarations and referrals on development and exempted development, which require technical assessment with regard to the legislation, An Bord Pleanála (hereinafter referred to as the Board) referrals and case-law.
- Section 3A: Short term lettings: monitoring the extent to which certain residential properties in areas within rent pressure zones are subject to short-term lettings, which require professional, technical and administrative capabilities in relation to the application of requirements for planning permission and, where necessary, undertaking enforcement action.
- Section 7: The Planning register, which requires administrative and technical proficiency in the building of a publicly accessible and legible map and written record of around 30 separate areas of information for the public to be able to track and monitor relevant planning and development matters in their area.

Part II: Plans and Guidelines

- The decision-making process in relation to individual planning applications and appeals is fundamentally grounded in the policy context of the local authority development plan. Most planning functions of local authorities therefore either originate or are derived from the development plan process.
- The preparation of the development plan is therefore the most significant planning function of local authorities and is a complex task requiring research, analysis, wide-scale stakeholder engagement and communications and drafting of written and graphic material in a political decision-making context. This process has tandem obligations in terms of strategic environmental assessment and appropriate assessment screening, including the preparation of Natura Impact Reports (NIR) where necessary.
- Moreover, the wider context for plan-making has become considerably more complex in recent years and plans must be consistent with national policy objectives, including those set out in the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the relevant Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES). Plans must also demonstrate consistency with Section 28 guidelines and comply with SPPRs and prepare a statement to this effect.
- For the executive of local authorities, important tasks that need to be undertaken effectively, efficiently and robustly (with regard to adherence to legal procedures) include:
 - Preparations including an overall project plan, team and timetable with key milestones and the putting in place of the systems and procedures necessary to ensure statutory requirements are followed;
 - The extent to which the various procedures that comprise the six-year plan review and implementation cycle are formalised, documented and given appropriate prioritisation and ongoing (rather than cyclical) resourcing in business planning; and
 - Evidence that objectives in the authority's development plan relating to core national policy objectives, e.g. brownfield development and compact growth, are being monitored in terms of implementation.

- Specific tasks flowing from the legislation include the following:
 - Section 10: Content of Development Plans which requires professional and technical understanding of both the requirements for particular objectives and matters to be addressed in development plans as well as the mechanisms to address same such as the Housing Strategy and Core Strategy which implement national policies on housing and location of development.
 - Sections 11, 11A, 11B, 11C, 12 and 13: Preparation, Making and Variations of Development Plans which require both administrative and professional understanding of the key milestones, procedural steps and relevant functions of both the executive and the elected members in preparing and making the development plan, including statutory obligations in relation to EU and national law requirements and oversight by the OPR.
- Chapter II: Local Area Plans
 - Sections 18 and 19: Which require administrative and professional understanding of the requirement for local area plans and the processes by which they must be prepared.

The Table A below at a – d summarises key functions of local authorities in delivering effective forward planning functions.

Table A

a. Content of Plans

Procedures in place to ensure that mandatory objectives (section 10 of the Act) and associated environmental assessments, are addressed in the plan, including detailed research and policy analysis, elected member and stakeholder engagement.

b. Engagement

Meaningful and proactive engagement with the public, including efforts to engage with various sectors of the community.

Communication of the objectives of the plan review and the content of the draft plan in an accessible manner.

Use of a variety of communication methods e.g. production of videos, surveys, social media, webinars, etc. (consult the OPR Communications Toolkit for more information).

Early and regular liaison with key prescribed authorities, such as Irish Water, the Office of Public Works, the national transport authorities, etc.

Provision of information required by prescribed authorities to enable them to meaningfully input to the plan review (e.g. flood risk maps).

Meaningful engagement with adjoining local authorities in preparing plans.

c. Implementation and Monitoring

Ongoing monitoring of an adopted plan, including the chief executive's report and Strategic Environmental Assessment monitoring, regular internal meetings on implementation and liaison with key stakeholders (e.g. prescribed authorities) to ensure implementation.

Clear commitment to plan implementation in the planning department's business plan and the local authority's corporate plan.

d. Variations of development plans and local area plans

Robust reporting structure and procedures to deal with requests by elected members to vary the development plan.

Local area plans prepared for all towns and settlements over 5,000 population as per section 19(1)(b) of the Act.

Careful management of the resource implications of local area planning policy for settlements below 5,000 population maximising the scope for incorporation into the development plan as per section 19(1)(bb) of the Act.

Local area plans are up to date, and consistent with the objectives of the relevant development plan, regional and national policy.

- Chapters IIA and Chapter III: National Planning Framework and Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies:
 - Sections 20A to 31A: which require administrative and professional awareness and understanding of the processes for preparing and reviewing the NPF and RSES in so far as engagement with such processes from a consultation and technical engagement is concerned.

Part IIA: DTA and Land Use Provisions

- Sections 31B to 31J: Which require a professional understanding of the obligations on planning authorities in the discharge of their statutory plan making and planning application decision-making processes arising from the preparation of transport strategies within the meaning of the Dublin Transportation Authority Act.

Part IIB: Office of the Planning Regulator

- Chapter III and IV and sections 31AM to 31AS and AU: which require administrative and professional awareness and understanding of the functions of the OPR as they pertain to local authority functions including the assessments of statutory plans and reviews of statutory planning functions.

Part III Control of Development

The control of development, also referred to as development management, is one of the core planning functions of a local authority. Coherent systems and procedures are imperative to the efficient and effective delivery of this function as set out in Table B below.

Table B

a. Assessment and Reporting

Effective management structure for examining applications, undertaking comprehensive and balanced assessments, including the EIA and AA requirements of the Act and associated Regulations.

Robust system in place for timely internal engagement with other departments in the authority.

b. Decision-Making

Recommendations and decisions are well documented having regard to the provisions of the development plan as well as wider policy requirements, including EIA and AA and the requirement to specifically record certain decisions or determinations in respect of such assessments as part of the decision record.

Appropriate documentation of any decisions diverging from the recommendation in technical assessments.

c. Training

Evidence of learning and development in place for all staff.

- Specific tasks requiring effectiveness, proficiency and efficiency flowing from the legislation are as follows:
 - Section 33: which requires administrative and professional awareness and understanding in relation to the procedural requirements in relation to the consideration and assessment of planning applications.
 - Section 34: which requires administrative and professional awareness and understanding of all aspects of the assessment of planning applications including:
 - Matters to be considered in the determination of the application and the weightings of the various factors provided for under Section 34 (1), (1A), (2), (3) and (3A):
 - The scope of conditions that may be attached to any grant of permission; and
 - The operation of arrangements for the approval of development that may represent a material contravention of the development plan under S34(6).
 - Sections 34A, 34B and 34C: which require administrative and professional awareness and understanding of the particular arrangements for the consideration of applications for permission in relation to Dublin Airport.
 - Section 35: which requires administrative and professional awareness and understanding in relation to the application of the provisions under this section relating to the refusal of permission to particular applicants because of persistent failures in satisfactorily completing developments.
 - Section 36: which requires administrative and professional awareness and understanding of the consideration of applications for outline planning permission, including where a grant of same may or may not be appropriate.
 - Section 37: which requires a general awareness in relation to procedures operated by the Board in relation to appeals and certain applications made directly to the Board.

- Section 38: which requires administrative understanding and awareness of the requirements in relation to making certain documents relating to planning applications available to the public.
- Sections 40 to 42: which require administrative and professional awareness and understanding of the circumstances in which a planning authority may vary the appropriate period of validity of a particular permission.
- Sections 44 to 49: which require administrative and professional awareness and understanding in relation to the operation of certain ancillary functions relating to the control of development including revocation of permissions (S44), agreements regulating the use of land (S47) and development contributions, including the processes for and required content in relation to the preparation of development contribution schemes and the attaching of conditions to permissions requiring the payment of development contributions (S48 and 49).

Table C at a and b below highlights particular capabilities required in relation to enforcement functions.

Table C

a. Monitoring / Reporting:

Systematic monitoring, including inputs from other operational areas of the local authority, to ensure developments have the appropriate consent.

Utilisation of an ICT based case management system to process enforcement matters.

Regular reporting of performance in relation to the outcomes of enforcement activities.

Monitoring of development bonds or other time-limited safeguards for the satisfactory completion of developments.

b. Engagement:

Effective customer engagement, keeping complainants updated in relation to reports of alleged unauthorised development.

Focus on proactively identifying breaches with wider community / environmental implications in areas including extractive industries, major housing developments, sites with a record of past breaches, etc.

Information sharing with adjoining local authorities in relation to development straddling boundaries (e.g. extractive industries).

Part IV: Architectural Heritage

- Sections 51 to 92 which require administrative and professional awareness and understanding of the operation of all of this part including:
 - the compilation of/and or additions and deletions to the record of protected structures; (S51, S54 and S55)
 - consideration of declarations in relation to works affecting the character of protected structures; (S57)
 - powers for the local authority to intervene in securing protected structures (S69, S70, S71, S72, S73, S74-S78); and

- the designation of Architectural Conservation Areas and operation of areas of special planning control arising (Chapter II).

Key functions in this regard are summarised at a – c in Table D below.

Table D

<p>a. Analysis</p> <p>Identification of structures suitable for inclusion in the Record of Protected Structures.</p> <p>Clear and proactive measures in place, including building condition surveys, to identify structures in danger or in need of restoration.</p> <p>b. Engagement</p> <p>Engagement with owners / occupiers where they are made aware of their obligations as well as initiatives available to assist in this regard.</p> <p>Engagement with prescribed bodies in relation to proposals to add to/or delete from the record.</p> <p>c. Monitoring</p> <p>Regular maintenance and update of the record.</p>

Part V: Housing Supply

- Section 94 and Section 95: which require administrative and professional awareness and understanding of the process for and inputs to the preparation of Housing Strategies and integration to the development plan (including core strategies) to ensure an effective supply of housing and an effective match of that supply to the characteristics of the communities in the area of the planning authority and counteracting any undue segregation in housing between people of different social backgrounds.
- Section 96: which requires administrative and professional awareness and understanding of the processes around Part V agreements.

Note: Some Local Authorities assign Part V work to their sections and in such cases it would be important that these staff have access to the training envisaged in this document.

Urban Renewal

- Though not directly covered in the Planning Act, the Urban Regeneration Act 2015 amends parts of the Planning Act in relation to development plans providing for regeneration areas and to support the delivery of additional housing supply in areas where housing needs are acute through a levy on any lands that could be coming forward for housing delivery, but which are not being currently delivered without good reason. Training relevant to the Town Centre First Policy and the master planning related to same might also be captured in this context.

The Table E below at a – c highlights functions flowing from the operation of overall development plan, housing supply and urban regeneration functions.

Table E

a. Analysis

Ongoing survey work relating to brownfield / vacant sites.

Proactive consultation with property owners / occupiers.

b. Delivery

Utilisation of various land activation measures (Vacant / Derelict Sites Registers, Compulsory Purchase Orders, Urban Regeneration & Development Fund) to promote urban development and regeneration.

Preparation of applications for funding – URDF/ RRDF/ TVRS.

Project management of sites including tendering, managing consultants , external stakeholders , reporting on progress, drawdown of funding.

Preparation of Vacant / Derelict Sites Registers.

c. Monitoring

Recording of priority sites for land activation using GIS platforms.

Reporting to the Various Departments on successful funding bids.

Part VII: Disclosure of Interests

- Sections 147 to 150: which require administrative awareness and understanding of the processes around declaration of interests and codes of conduct.

Part VIII: Enforcement

- Sections 151 to 164: which require administrative, technical and professional awareness and understanding of the processes in relation to the investigation of complaints from members of the public in relation to unauthorised development, the various enforcement mechanisms (warning notices, enforcement notices and injunctive proceedings) including the standards required for evidence and proofs and service of notices etc.

Part IX: Strategic Development Zones

- Sections 165 to 171: which require administrative and professional awareness and understanding in relation to the processes for preparing and making of planning schemes for strategic development zones designated by Government, the acquisition of land for the purposes of development pursuant to such schemes, consideration of development proposals in such schemes and amendments and or revocations of such schemes.

Part X: Environmental Impact Assessment

- Sections 172 to 176C: which require administrative, technical and professional awareness and understanding in relation to the conduct of EIA in relation to various developments including local authority development, including screening for EIA, reviews of screening determinations and the forming of reasoned conclusions in the context of assessments.

Part XA: Substitute Consent

- Sections 177B to 177I: which require administrative and professional awareness and understanding in relation to the local authority's role in the operation by the Board of the substitute consent process in relation to certain developments where defects may have been identified in respect of EIA.

Part XAB: Appropriate Assessment

- Sections 177R to 177AE: which require administrative and professional awareness and understanding in relation to the aspects of local authority plan-making and control of development functions that are subject to appropriate assessment in relation to potential impacts on the integrity of the EU NATURA network of habitats protected under the EU habitats directives. In particular.
- S177T relating to the requirements for Natura Impact Reports (NIR for plans) and Natura Impact Statements (NIS for projects).
- S177U relating to screening for AA.
- S177V in relation to AA; and
- S177AE in relation to AA of certain development carried out by or on behalf of local authorities.

Part XI: Development by Local and State Authorities

- Section 179: which requires administrative, technical and professional awareness and understanding in relation to the processes in relation to consultation with the public in relation to local authority own development.
- Section 180: which requires administrative, technical and professional awareness and understanding in relation to the processes relating to the taking in charge of estates.

Part XII: Compensation

- Sections 183 to 201: which require administrative and professional awareness and understanding of the arrangements in relation to the payment of compensation by local authorities in respect of certain decisions made by such authorities in relation to decisions under Part III and on various other functions, including in particular decisions and reasons for decisions that exclude liability in respect of compensation.

Part XIII: Amenities

- Sections 202 to 209: which require administrative and professional awareness and understanding in relation to the designation of areas of special amenity, landscape conservation areas, tree preservation orders, creation of public rights of way and repair and tidying of advertisements.

Part XIV: Acquisition of Land

- Sections 210 to 223: which require administrative, technical and professional awareness and understanding in relation to the processes operated by a local authority in relation to the acquisition and disposal of land for local authority purposes.

Part XV: Development on the Foreshore

- This part is subject to ongoing legislative reform however the interfaces between terrestrial and marine planning will require ongoing training in the administrative and professional awareness and understanding of the new provisions as they emerge from the Marine Area and the Foreshore Activities Bill.

Part XVI: Events and Funfairs

- Sections 229 to 241: which require administrative and professional awareness and understanding in relation to the operation of licencing arrangements for certain events and powers of inspection and control.

Part XVIII: Miscellaneous

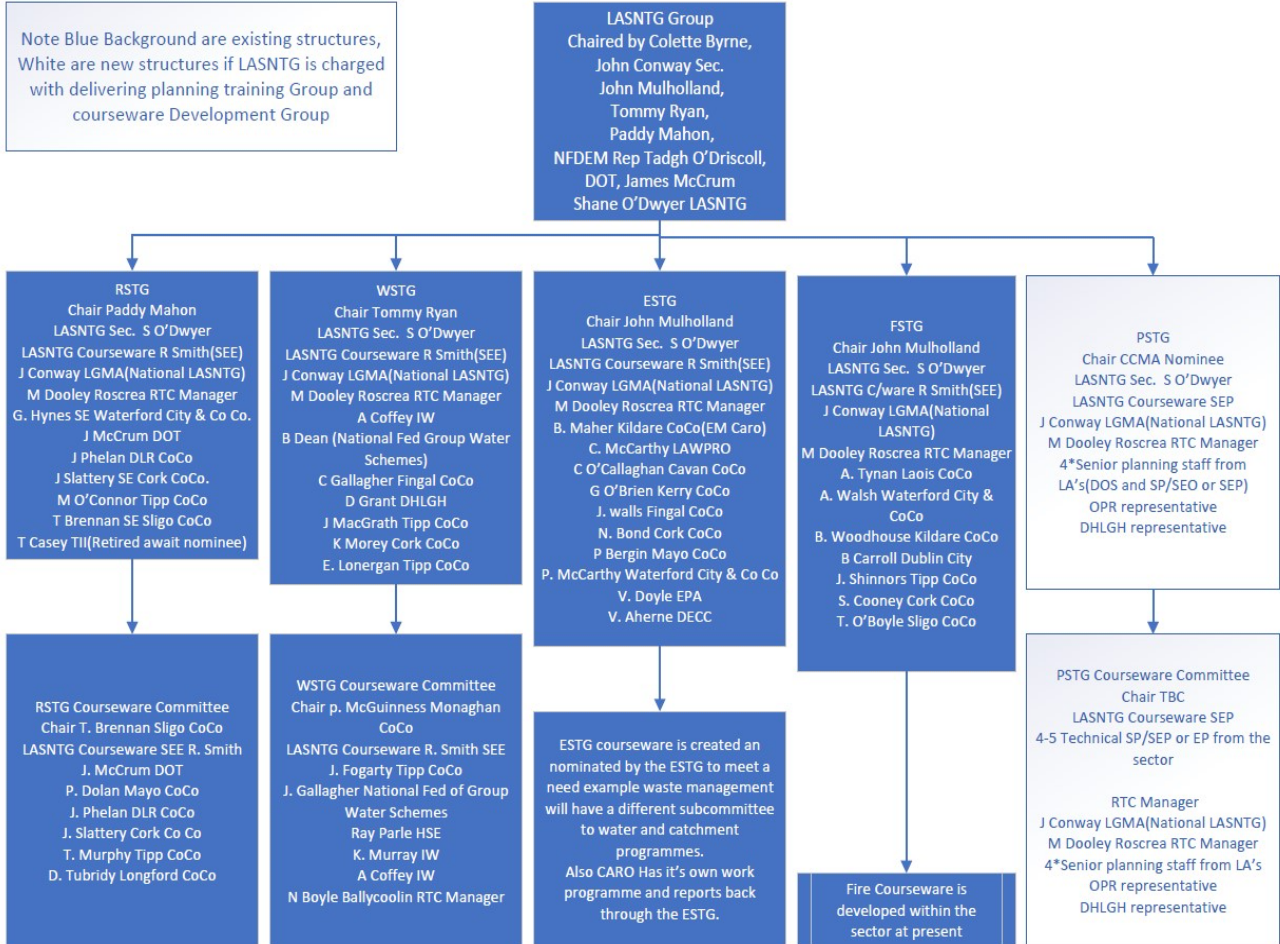
- Sections 247, 248, 254 and 261: which require administrative, technical and professional awareness and understanding in relation to the provisions regarding arrangements for pre-application consultations, electronic planning services, licencing of cables and appliances on public roads and control of quarries.
- Other Miscellaneous matters requiring a consistency of approach include:
 - Monitoring / Reporting: Systematic monitoring of all development, including inputs from other operational areas of the authority, to ensure developments have the appropriate consent.
Utilisation of an ICT based case management system to process enforcement matters.
Regular reporting of performance in relation to the outcomes of enforcement activities.
Monitoring of development bonds or other time-limited safeguards for the satisfactory completion of developments.
 - Engagement: Effective customer engagement, keeping complainants updated in relation to reports of alleged unauthorised development.
Focus on proactively identifying breaches with wider community / environmental implications in areas including extractive industries, major housing developments, sites with a record of past breaches, etc.
Information sharing with adjoining authorities in relation to development straddling boundaries (e.g. extractive industries).

Appendix 6

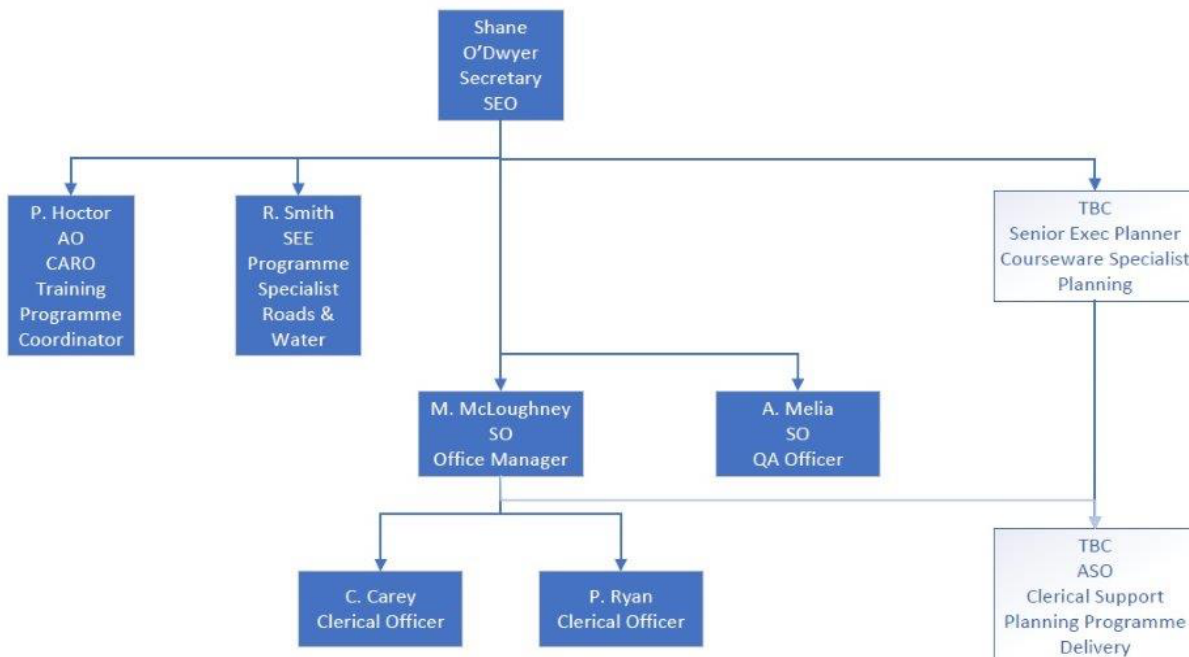
LASNTG structures

Governance

Note Blue Background are existing structures, White are new structures if LASNTG is charged with delivering planning training Group and courseware Development Group



Implementation / Delivery





Oifig an
Rialaitheora Pleanála
Office of the
Planning Regulator



Cumann Lucht Bainistíochta Contae agus Cathrach
County and City Management Association



LGMA

An Chníomhaireacht
Bainistíochta Rialtais Áitiúil
Local Government
Management Agency