Digital Planning and Analytics Strategy 2023-2025

OPR

Oifig an Rialaitheora Pleanála

Office of the Planning Regulator

May 2023

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword

Data and information is a critical underpinning of co-ordinated public service provision and in the planning sector there is significant scope for enhanced digital shared service initiatives. This will involve fundamental changes in our ways of working and investment in the skills and capabilities of the workforce.

Recognising the role of other stakeholders in developing digital planning services, our first Digital Planning and Analytics Strategy 2023-2025 seeks to clarify the OPR's role in embracing new technologies and driving the advancement of integrated digital solutions to the benefit of the public and our stakeholders.

The OPR is uniquely placed, as a catalyst that can drive digital planning transformation in the sector by:

- Committing to best practice in our data management, analysis and sharing,

- Working with our stakeholders and the public to make planning services and supports available on line,

- Identifying gaps in service, with a particular focus on the statutory plan-making process, exploring the opportunity for an integrated and end-to-end digital solution that can collectively support planning authorities with the plan-making, implementation and monitoring process.

Moreover, this strategy recognises our role in building trust and leadership in the sector. We are transparent, engaged and customer focussed, working to raise standards and build competency in the sector through expertise and professionalism, research, training and public awareness.

We recognise the importance of wider sectoral initiatives such as the Departments of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) Information Strategy and the on-line planning project and also a shifting policy and legislative context. We will work to foster a culture of innovation, managing risk and sharing good practice and learning from both successful and unsuccessful projects. This will benefit policy makers, consumers of planning services and the public.

The OPR looks forward to working with our stakeholders on the implementation of this strategy and contributing to a shared vision for the digital transformation of the sector.

Niall Cussen
Planning Regulator

Our Role

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

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

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

Our role also encompasses the implementation of comprehensive programmes of planning research, training and public awareness in order to promote the public's engagement in the planning process and to enhance knowledge and public information about planning in Ireland.

PLANNING REGULATOR

Director of Planning Reviews and Examinations	Deputy Regulator and Director of Plan Evaluations	Director of Research and Training	Director of Corporate Services
• Stakeholder engagement • Reviews methodology • Reviews programme • Caseload management • Research support • Customer service	• Stakeholder engagement • Assessment methodology • Policy analysis • Research support • Caseload management • Communications • Digital Planning/GIS	• Stakeholder engagement • Planning education • Training and events • Public awareness programmes • Research programme	• Corporate Services • Financial management and procurement • Human resources • ICT • Governance and legal • Health and safety

Digital Planning and the OPR

The OPR recognises the value in digital investment and views the development of digital tools and systems as essential in the planning process. This is reflected in the ambitious actions, goals and objectives contained within OPR's Strategy Statement, Business Plan, Annual Report and Planning Research Framework:

"Implement interactive, ICT-driven solutions to enable better participation by the public in the plan-making process."
OPR Strategy Statement 2019-2024

"Implement GIS that supports mapping, visualisation, spatial analysis, monitoring, analytics, decision-making, and engagement with our stakeholders."
OPR Strategy Statement 2019-2024

"Driving innovation and learning for all stakeholders in the planning process is a key goal for the OPR. Development of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) is essential in planning."
OPR 2019 Annual Report

"….advocate and support the use of new technologies and innovation in the planning research realm ….."
OPR Planning Research Framework

"The OPR is also committed to developing new technology and innovation including online GIS tools and applications."
OPR Planning Research Framework

Our Role in Driving Digital Planning Transformation

The OPR can be a catalyst driving digital planning transformation in the sector.

Transparent, engaged and customer focussed – building trust and leadership in the sector

Expertise and professionalism – in statutory plan evaluation and review of LA/ABP processes and procedures

An Independent Role Working with LAs, ABP, prescribed bodies, government departments and state agencies in overseeing the planning system

Research – developing knowledge, data and insights to inform the sector

Education, training and public awareness – raising standards and competency in the sector

Key Achievements 2019-2023

Public Digital Planning Tools

Evaluations of Statutory Plans Dashboard

Development Plan-Making Calculator

Local Area Plan-Making Calculator

2020 Annual Report Highlights Story Map

2019 Annual Report Highlights Story Map

Development Plan Reviews & Variations Map Viewer

Technical assessment of draft and adopted development plans e.g. renewable energy proposal assessments

Internal Digital Planning Tools

OPR GIS Portal

Core Strategy Calculator

OPR Map Viewer

All Island Natura Sites Map

Planning Authority Online Planning Files Accessibility Survey Map Viewer

OPR Planning Adviser Map Viewer

Housing Delivery Data Analysis Project – OPR collaboration with Meath County Council and DHLGH

Our Stakeholders

As outlined in the OPR Strategy Statement, the OPR must work with and take account of the inputs of many stakeholders in the planning process. Here are just some of the stakeholders that we will seek to work with and take account of in relation to the delivery of this Strategy:

TII

Ombudsman

Uisce Éireann

OGP

OPW

LGMA

CARO

IPI

CSO

LDA

AIRO

An Bord Pleanála

Planning Authorities

Elected Members

The Public

HEI

Regional Assemblies

MHLGH

Gov Departments

NTA

NPWS

SEAI

CCMA

EPA

OGCIO

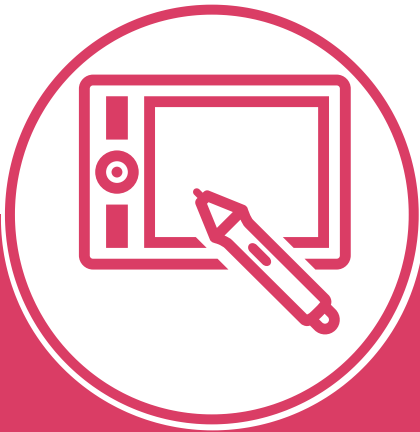Tailte Éireann

Housing Agency

Our Digital Vision

To be a digital leader in the planning sector driving best practice in information capture, management, analysis and sharing, for the benefit of the planning sector and its stakeholders including staff, planning authorities, businesses and the public.

Our vision will be implemented under three focus areas:

Focus Area One

Building our capacity as a digital leader with a commitment to best practice in data capture, management, analysis and sharing at the OPR

Focus Area Two

Driving digital transformation in the planning sector through engagement and collaboration

Focus Areas Three

A trusted resource for evidence-based plan-making and implementation that is supported by digital infrastructure

Focus Area One

Building our capacity as a digital leader with a commitment to best practice in data capture, management, analysis and sharing at the OPR.

GOAL
The OPR in the performance of its core functions and oversight of the planning system, must also in its own internal operations and systems strive to be an example of good practice in the sector.

We recognise and value data as a key organisational resource, and will develop appropriate procedures, policies and processes to support transparency, governance, accountability and sharing of data where appropriate.

This provides the foundation needed to inform the spatial analysis of data, essential to the development of digital planning in the OPR.

Ensure that the organisation's operating model, structures and capacity are appropriate to deliver on the goals of the Strategy.

Get the best value out of the GIS by expanding and promoting the use of spatial data across the organisation to improve working procedures.

Strategic Objectives

Ensure that we use the most appropriate technology to deliver current and future needs.

Develop GIS, IT, BI, CRM, and workflow tools and processes to achieve a seamless technology-based experience in the OPR.

Integrate our geo-spatial and digital planning across the functions of the organisation and embedded in the OPRs processes.

By 2025, we will have strengthened the organisation's capacity, resources, structures and systems to deliver a whole-of-organisation response to data capture, management and analysis.

We will deliver the following;

- The structures, technology, resources and people to deliver on this strategy.

- A data management and governance framework for the organisation.

- Authoritative datasets relevant to the planning system will be accessible to all OPR staff, and our stakeholders where appropriate.

- A staff development programme in digital planning and analytics delivered through training, awareness and leadership development.

- A further suite of digital planning applications and tools for both internal and external use (dashboards, map based applications, decision support tools etc.) that support the effective, practical, and innovative use of the data.

10

Focus Area Two

Driving digital transformation in the planning sector through engagement and collaboration.

GOAL
The OPR will champion the making of planning data and services more accessible, transparent and equitable.

Through both leadership and partnership with our stakeholders, we will seek to deliver and promote digital shared services for plan-making, monitoring and implementation to support integration across the wider

planning sector to drive efficiency, standardisation, consolidation, reduction in duplication and control cost.

Enhance our internal and external stakeholder experience of spatial data.

Leverage GIS to improve spatial information communication with our stakeholders.

Strategic Objectives

Champion digital services that enhance the customer experience of digital planning.

Develop working relationships with our stakeholders to drive the digital agenda.

Working within the national policy and legislative context, which includes the National Planning Framework, Housing for All, Climate Action Plan and Planning and Development Bill 2022, collaborate with stakeholders in making planning more accessible and transparent to the public.

By 2025, we will have created synergies with our stakeholders and investigated strategic partnership opportunities to encourage digital collaboration and advance the digital agenda across the planning sector.

We will deliver the following;

- A stakeholder engagement plan to support the delivery of the strategy;

- A digital stakeholders forum to drive digital transformation in the sector;

- Collaborative working arrangements with key stakeholders (DHLGH, Tailte Éireann, LGMA, CCMA, LAs etc.)

- Active participation on committees and relevant technical groups;

- The first Digital Planning Conference for the sector to advance the agenda and share learning.

Focus Area Three

A trusted resource for evidence-based plan-making, monitoring and implementation that is supported by digital infrastructure.

GOAL
Implement a Geographic Information System that promotes the effective, practical, and innovative use of spatial data that can address challenges, improve outcomes and add value to the planning process through the development of geo-spatial mapping applications, products and services that support evidence based decision making and improve spatial information communication with our stakeholders.

An integrated infrastructure will allow planning authorities to collaborate and share information and facilitate the easier integration of systems in order to provide new digital services for citizens and businesses.

Maintain and enhance the OPR's GIS service by delivering geo-spatial applications, products and services to our stakeholders.

Provide easy, efficient, essential and well-used tools.

Strategic Objectives

Leverage GIS and digital analysis to support evidence-based decision-making.

Remain a forward thinking organisation in our use of GIS.

Leverage GIS to assist with the progression of key strategic projects such as monitoring the implementation of the National Planning Framework targets and the evaluation of statutory plans.

By 2025, we will have in place working relationships with key stakeholders that responds to the challenge of providing a single point of access to digital datasets held disparately by various bodies and organisation that can support plan-making and implementation and be a trusted resource.

We will deliver the following;

- Identify gaps in service provision and opportunities to work with stakeholders to develop and support a platform for a robust repository of plan making information (data, apps, maps, dashboards, decision support tools).

- OPR Research team to identify and deliver projects consistent with the Strategic Planning Research Framework and the Research Programme.

- Progress concept of a flagship project to provide a national data centre for evidence based plan making, monitoring and implementation.

- Deliver a suite of applications and tools that can raise public awareness of statutory plan reviews and support evidence based plan making.

Monitoring and Implementation

A monitoring framework will be established to track progress in achieving the goals, strategic objectives and deliverables identified under the three focus areas.

Implementation priorities will be identified at the beginning of each year, concurrently with the annual OPR Business Plan.

Annual progress reports will be presented to the Executive Management Team for review and sign-off.

Theme	Deliverable	Timeframe
	The structures, technology, resources and people to deliver on this strategy.	2023-2025
	A data management and governance framework for the organisation	2024
Building our capacity as a digital leader with a commitment to best practice in data capture, management, analysis and sharing at the OPR.	Authoritative datasets relevant to the planning system will be accessible to all OPR staff, and our stakeholders where appropriate	2023-2025
	A staff development programme in digital planning and analytics delivered through training, awareness and leadership development.	2025
	A further suite of digital planning applications and tools for both internal and external use (dashboards, map based applications, decision support tools etc.) that support the effective, practical, and innovative use of the data.	2023-2025
	A stakeholder engagement plan to support the delivery of the strategy;	2023
	A digital stakeholders forum to drive digital transformation in the sector;	2023
Driving digital transformation in the planning sector through engagement and collaboration.	Collaborative working arrangements with key stakeholders (DHLGH, Tailte Éireann, LGMA, CCMA, LAs etc.)	2023-2025
	Active participation on committees and relevant technical groups;	2023-2025
	The first digital planning conference for the sector to advance the agenda and share learning.	2023-2025

Theme	Deliverable	Timeframe
A trusted resource for evidence-based plan-making, monitoring and implementation that is supported by digital infrastructure.	Identify gaps in service provision and opportunities to work with stakeholders to develop and support a platform for a robust repository of plan making information (data, apps, maps, dashboards, decision support tools).	2023-2025
	OPR Research team to identify and deliver projects consistent with the Strategic Planning Research Framework and the Research Programme.	2023-2025
	Progress concept of a flagship project to provide a national data centre for evidence based plan making, monitoring and implementation.	2023-2025
	Deliver a suite of applications and tools that can raise public awareness of statutory plan reviews and support evidence based plan making.	2023-2025

The next steps………………….

The OPR is working closely with its stakeholder and will establish the Digital Stakeholders Forum to support the delivery of the Strategy and to drive digital transformation in the sector.

The OPR particularly wishes to acknowledge the following organisations for sharing their knowledge and engaging in the development of the strategy: the OPR directorates, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) and the Office of Public Works (OPW) and the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA).

Glossary of Terms

ABP - An Bord Pleanála
AIRO - All-Island Research Observatory
CARO - Climate Action Regional Offices
CCMA - County and City Management Association
CSO - Central Statistics Office
DHLGH - Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
LAs - Local Authorities
GIS - Geographic Information Systems
HEI - Higher Education Authority
IPI - Irish Planning Institute
LDA - Land Development Agency
LGMA - Local Government Management Agency
MHLGH- Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage
NTA - National Transport Authority
NPWS - National Parks and Wildlife Service
NPF - National Planning Framework
OGCIO - Office of the Government Chief Information Officer
OGP - Office of Government Procurement
OO - Office of the Ombudsman
OPW - Office of Public Works
OSI - Ordnance Survey Ireland
RIAI - Royal Institute of Architects Ireland
SEAI - Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland
TII - Transport Infrastructure Ireland