

Candidate Information Booklet

Senior Planner (AP Equivalent) at the Office of the Planning Regulator

About the Office of the Planning Regulator

The Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) is a new independent public body that has been established by Government to oversee the functioning and policy consistency of Ireland's planning process to ensure quality outcomes in relation to proper planning and sustainable development. The Planning Regulator who is the Chief Executive of the Office is Mr Niall Cussen who was appointed as Ireland's first Planning Regulator subsequent to a Government Decision in December 2018 and following an open and competitive recruitment process conducted by the Public Appointments Service.

In establishing the OPR, the Government's aim is to enhance proper oversight of the planning system and to promote quality outcomes from, and consistency within, the planning system. Under the provisions of the Act, the OPR is fully independent of the wider government.

Functions of the OPR

The Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2018 established the legal basis for the OPR and outlines its role and functions, which include the following:

- assessment of all local authority and regional assembly forward planning, including development plans, local area plans, regional spatial and economic strategies, etc. The OPR will provide statutory observations during the drafting of statutory plans to ensure consistency with relevant regional or national policies;
- organisational review of the systems and procedures used by any planning authority, including An Bord Pleanála, in the performance of any of their planning functions, including assessing risks of maladministration or corruption. The OPR will not overlap with the role of existing appeals procedures in relation to individual planning applications as operated by An Bord Pleanála, cases being considered by the Ombudsman, the criminal justice system or under judicial review;
- driving national research, training, education and public information programmes. The OPR will establish best practice in planning matters and highlight the role and benefit of proper planning.

Job Description

Responsibilities

The Senior Planner will report to the Deputy Planning Regulator or the relevant Director and provide the necessary professional planning input required in order for the OPR to discharge its statutory functions including (a) evaluation and assessment of statutory plans, (b) assisting in the reviews and examinations of the organisation systems and procedures used in the planning functions of planning authorities, including An Bord Pleanála and (c) undertaking programmes relating to research, public awareness and training in

planning. This is an exciting opportunity for a suitable candidate to implement policy on a national level and to be involved in the establishment of a state agency from inception.

This is an exciting opportunity for experienced planners to take their careers to the next level of overseeing the implementation of planning policy and practice at a national level and the development of new insights and best practice approaches, as well as being involved in the establishment of a state agency from inception.

The role will therefore entail:

- development of procedures and processes in relation to the implementation of the Office's statutory functions, as set out in the Planning & Development Amendment Act 2018;
- assessment & evaluation of statutory development plans, as outlined in the Planning & Development Amendment Act 2018;
- preparation of the Office's statutory observations on development plans, balancing all the relevant requirements;
- assisting the Regulator and Deputy Regulator in instances where the OPR recommends the use of Ministerial Powers of Direction, as set out in sections 28, 29 and 31 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended);
- handling of planning complaints/reviews, as necessary;
- undertaking research and analysis into planning topics and contributing to the OPR's functions in relation to public awareness of planning and training;
- continuously and pro-actively keeping up to date in the latest developments in professional planning practice in relation to planning and sustainable development;
- liaising and interacting with planning authorities, regional assemblies, central Government, higher education institutes, professional bodies and other key stakeholders in a positive and constructive manner;
- acting at all times in the public interest and with the sustainable development of the state in mind;
- such other duties as may be deemed necessary for the proper establishment and functioning of the Office.

Essential criteria

Candidates must, on or before 21 May 2019, possess or demonstrate:

- a professional qualification in planning recognised by the Irish Planning Institute or the Royal Town Planning Institute as a qualification enabling the person to seek full membership of the relevant Institute;
- a strong career track-record in the planning area post the qualification above, which experience will have been gained over a period of seven or more years and a significant amount of which will have been at responsible and senior levels within the processes for preparation and adoption of statutory plans and/or undertaking research and analysis and high-level professional planning assessment to inform statutory decision-making functions;
- a strong working knowledge of the principal policy, legislative and regulatory requirements, including EU Directive requirements, relevant to the role and functions of local authorities and regional assemblies in their statutory plan-making functions;

- a high level of proficiency in making professional planning judgements, analysing and balancing the relevant factors in arriving at considered, well researched inputs supporting robust decision making processes;
- strong leadership, teamwork and management qualities;
- project management skills in advancing across multiple areas of work at any point in time;
- a clear understanding of the role of the Office of the Planning Regulator, its development needs and of the opportunities and challenges it faces in the planning environment; and
- a proven ability to build productive working relationships with internal and external stakeholders
- excellent communication skills and the ability to communicate effectively with people at all levels both orally and through written communications.

Desirable qualities

- Previous administrative experience and/or qualifications.
- Previous management experience and/or qualifications.
- Experience in change management/working as part of a newly established organisation.

Skills

- Strong leadership and management skills.
- Self-motivated, organised, methodical and have strong time management skills.
- Excellent written and verbal skills.
- Strong project management skills.
- Ability to research and communicate findings clearly.
- Excel at working as an integral part of focused teams.

Location of the post

The post will be located at the interim premises of the Office of the Planning Regulator, 77 Sir John Rogerson's Quay, Dublin 2, pending the acquisition of permanent premises for the Office.

Principal Conditions of Service

Tenure

The appointment is on a permanent basis as a civil servant, subject to the satisfactory completion of the specified probationary period.

Hours of Attendance

Hours of attendance will be fixed from time to time but will amount to not less than 43 hours 15 minutes gross per week. The successful candidate will be required to work such additional hours from time to time as may be reasonable and necessary for the proper performance of his/her duties subject to the limits set down in the working time regulations. The rate of remuneration payable covers any extra attendance liability that may arise from time to time.

Salary Scale

The salary scale for the position (rates effective from 1st January 2019) is as follows. This rate applies to new entrants and will also apply where the appointee is an existing civil or public servant appointed on or after 6th April 1995 and is required to make a personal pension contribution.

Senior Planner (AP Equivalent - Engineer Grade I):

69,931 – 72,045 – 74,167 – 76,284 – 78,398 – 80,913 – LSI 1 83,776 – LSI 2 86,632

The following rate will apply where the appointee is a civil or public servant recruited before 6th April 1995 and who is not required to make a Personal Pension Contribution.

Senior Planner (AP Equivalent – Engineer Grade I):

66,558 – 68,570 – 70,586 – 72,600 – 74,605 – 76,993 – LSI 1 79,716 – LSI 2 82,438

Long service increments may be payable after 3 (LSI 1) and 6 (LSI 2) years' satisfactory service at the maximum of the scale.

Subject to satisfactory performance increments may be payable in line with current Government policy. Different terms and conditions may apply if, immediately before appointment, you are a currently serving civil/public servant.

Annual Leave

In addition to the usual public holidays, annual leave for this position is 30 working days.

Sick Leave

Pay during properly certified sick absence, provided there is no evidence of permanent disability for service, will apply on a pro-rata basis, in accordance with the provisions of the sick leave circulars.

Officers who will be paying Class A rate of PRSI will be required to sign a mandate authorising the Department of Social Protection to pay any benefits due under the Social Welfare Acts directly to the employing Organisation. Payment during illness will be subject to the officer making the necessary claims for social insurance benefit to the Department of Social Protection within the required time limits.

The above represents the principal conditions of service and is not intended to be a comprehensive list of terms and conditions of employment which will be set out in the employment contract to be agreed with the successful candidate.

Competition Process

How to Apply

Applications should be submitted via email to recruiting@opr.ie by **21 May 2019 at 5pm**.

Candidates should submit a completed application form and covering letter.

Please note that omission of any or part of the 2 requested documents, as set out above, will render the application incomplete. Incomplete applications will not be considered for the next stage of the selection process.

An acknowledgement email will be issued in respect of all applications received (this email will acknowledge receipt of application but will not confirm eligibility or otherwise). If an applicant does not receive an acknowledgement email within 3 working days of the date of submission, the applicant should contact the OPR to ensure their application has been received.

Closing Date

Deadline for application: by **21 May 2019 at 5pm**.

Applications will not be accepted after the closing date.

Selection Process

The selection process may include:

- shortlisting of candidates (on the basis of the information contained in their application);
- a competitive interview;
- a second competitive interview may be held;
- assessment testing may be held.

Please note that any offer of employment made to a successful candidate will be subject to satisfactory:

- reference verification;
- pre-employment medical assessment.

Shortlisting

The OPR will carry out a shortlisting process to select a group of applicants who, based on an examination of the applications submitted, appear to be the most suitable and qualified for the position.

An expert panel will examine the application forms against agreed shortlisting criteria based on the requirements of the position. The shortlisting criteria may include both the essential and desirable criteria specified for the position. It is therefore in an applicant's interest to provide a detailed and accurate account of their qualifications/ experience in their application.

A panel of successful candidates may be formed with a view to filling several Senior Planner positions at the OPR.

Interviews

The interviews for this post are likely to be held in June 2019. Interviews will be semi-structured in format, with candidates asked to provide examples of the **competencies for the role as outlined in Appendix 1**. We will endeavour to give as much notice as possible of interview dates.

Candidates who do not attend for interview as scheduled, or who do not furnish such evidence as required in regard to any matter relevant to their application, will have no further claim to consideration in this process.

References

Candidates should start considering names of people who would be suitable referees and that we might consult. The referees do not have to include your current employer but should be in a position to provide a reference for you. Please be assured that we will only contact referees should you come under consideration after interview stage. Please note, should you be successful in this competition, we will require a reference from your current employer, prior to recommendation for appointment.

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

When your application is received, we create a record in your name, which contains much of the personal information you have supplied. This personal record is used solely in processing your candidature. Such information held is subject to the rights and obligations set out in the Data Protection Acts 1988 to 2018.

If you have any queries related to the processing of your data, or if you wish to make a request under the Data Protection Acts 1988 to 2018, please submit your request in writing to dataprotection@opr.ie.

General Information

Candidates should note that canvassing will disqualify. The OPR will not be responsible for any expenses, including travelling expenses that applicants may incur in connection with their application for this post.

Should the person recommended for appointment decline, or, having accepted it, relinquish it or if any additional vacancy arises, the OPR may, at its discretion, select and recommend another person for appointment on the results of this selection process.

The OPR is committed to a policy of equal opportunity.

Subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2014, applications will be treated in strict confidence.

Appendix 1: Competencies



Assistant Principal Officer Level Competencies

Effective Performance Indicators

Leadership	Actively contributes to the development of the strategies and policies of the Department/ Organisation
	Brings a focus and drive to building and sustaining high levels of performance, addressing any performance issues as they arise
	Leads and maximises the contribution of the team as a whole
	Considers the effectiveness of outcomes in terms wider than own immediate area
	Clearly defines objectives/ goals & delegates effectively, encouraging ownership and responsibility for tasks
	Develops capability of others through feedback, coaching & creating opportunities for skills development
	Identifies and takes opportunities to exploit new and innovative service delivery channels
Analysis & Decision Making	Researches issues thoroughly, consulting appropriately to gather all information needed on an issue
	Understands complex issues quickly, accurately absorbing and evaluating data (including numerical data)
	Integrates diverse strands of information, identifying inter-relationships and linkages
	Makes clear, timely and well grounded decisions on important issues
	Considers the wider implications of decisions on a range of stakeholders
	Takes a firm position on issues s/he considers important
Management & Delivery of Results	Takes responsibility for challenging tasks and delivers on time and to a high standard
	Plans and prioritises work in terms of importance, timescales and other resource constraints, re-prioritising in light of changing circumstances
	Ensures quality and efficient customer service is central to the work of the division
	Looks critically at issues to see how things can be done better
	Is open to new ideas initiatives and creative solutions to problems
	Ensures controls and performance measures are in place to deliver efficient and high value services
	Effectively manages multiple projects
Interpersonal & Communication Skills	Presents information in a confident, logical and convincing manner, verbally and in writing
	Encourages open and constructive discussions around work issues
	Promotes teamwork within the section, but also works effectively on projects across Departments/ Sectors
	Maintains poise and control when working to influence others
	Instills a strong focus on Customer Service in his/her area
	Develops and maintains a network of contacts to facilitate problem solving or information sharing
	Engages effectively with a range of stakeholders, including members of the public, Public Service Colleagues and the political system
Specialist Knowledge, Expertise and Self Development	Has a clear understanding of the roles objectives and targets of self and the team and how they fit into the work of the unit and Department/ Organisation
	Has a breadth and depth of knowledge of Department and Governmental issues and is sensitive to wider political and organisational priorities
	Is considered an expert by stakeholders in own field/ area
	Is focused on self development, seeking feedback and opportunities for growth to help carry out the specific requirements of the role
Drive & Commitment to Public Service Values	Is self motivated and shows a desire to continuously perform at a high level
	Is personally honest and trustworthy and can be relied upon
	Ensures the citizen is at the heart of all services provided
	Through leading by example, fosters the highest standards of ethics and integrity

Appendix 2: Eligibility to compete and certain restrictions on eligibility

European Economic Area Nationals

Candidates should note that eligibility to compete is open to citizens of the European Economic Area (EEA). The EEA consists of the Member States of the European Union along with Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. Swiss citizens under EU agreement may also apply. To qualify candidates must be citizens of the EEA by the date of any job offer.

Collective Agreement: Redundancy Payments to Public Servants

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform letter dated 28 June 2012 to Personnel Officers introduced, with effect from 1 June 2012, a Collective Agreement which had been reached between the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Public Services Committee of the ICTU in relation to ex-gratia Redundancy Payments to Public Servants.

It is a condition of the Collective Agreement that persons availing of the agreement will not be eligible for re-employment in the public service by any other public service body (as defined by the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act 2009 – 2011) for a period of 2 years from termination of the employment.

People who availed of this scheme and who may be successful in this competition will have to prove their eligibility (expiry of period of non-eligibility).

Incentivised Scheme for Early Retirement (ISER)

It is a condition of the Incentivised Scheme for Early Retirement (ISER) as set out in the Department of Finance Circular 12/09 that retirees, under that Scheme, are debarred from applying for another position in the same employment of the same sector. Therefore, such retirees cannot apply while the above restrictions continue in force.

Department of Health and Children Circular (7/2010)

The Department of Health Circular 7/2010 dated 1 November 2010 introduced a Targeted Voluntary Early Retirement (VER) Scheme and Voluntary Redundancy Schemes (VRS). It is a condition of the VER scheme that persons availing of the scheme will not be eligible for re-employment in the public health sector or in the wider public service or in a body wholly or mainly funded from public moneys. The same prohibition on re-employment applies under the VRS, except that the prohibition is for a period of 7 years. People who availed of the VER scheme are not eligible to compete in this competition. People who availed of the VRS scheme and who may be successful in this competition will have to prove their eligibility (expiry of period of non-eligibility).

Department of Environment, Community & Local Government (Circular Letter LG(P) 06/2013)

The Department of Environment, Community & Local Government Circular Letter LG(P) 06/2013 introduced a Voluntary Redundancy Scheme for Local Authorities. In accordance with the terms of the *Collective Agreement: Redundancy Payments to Public Servants* dated 28 June 2012 as detailed above, it is a specific condition of that VER Scheme that persons will not be eligible for re-employment in any Public Service body [as defined by the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Acts 2009 – 2011 and the Public Service Pensions (Single Scheme and Other Provisions) Act 2012] for a period of 2 years from their date of

departure under this Scheme. These conditions also apply in the case of engagement/employment on a contract for service basis (either as a contractor or as an employee of a contractor).

Declaration

Applicants will be required to declare whether they have previously availed of a public service scheme of incentivised early retirement and/or the collective agreement outlined above. Applicants will also be required to declare any entitlements to a Public Service pension benefit (in payment or preserved) from any other Public Service employment and/or where they have received a payment-in-lieu in respect of service in any Public Service employment.

Superannuation and Retirement

The appointee will be offered the appropriate superannuation terms and conditions as prevailing in the Public Service at the time of being offered an appointment. In general, an appointee who has never working in the Public Service will be offered appointment based on membership of the Single Public Service Pension Scheme ('Single Scheme'). Full details of the Scheme are at:

<http://www.per.gov.ie/pensions>

Where the appointee has worked in a pensionable (non-Single Scheme terms) public service job in the 26 weeks prior to appointment or is currently on a career break or special leave with/without pay different terms may apply. The pension entitlement of such appointees will be established in the context of their public service employment history.

The key provisions attaching to membership of the Single Scheme are as follows:

- career average earnings are used to calculate benefits (a pension and lump sum amount accrue each year and are up-rated annually by reference to CPI);
- Pensionable Age - The minimum age at which pension is payable is 66 (rising to 67 and 68 in line with State Pension age changes);
- Retirement Age - Scheme members must retire at the age of 70;
- Post retirement pension increases are linked to CPI.

Pension Abatement

This may have pension implications for any person appointed to this position who is currently in receipt of a Civil or Public Service Pension or has a Preserved Civil or Public Service Pension which will come into payment during his/her employment in this position.

If the appointee was previously employed in the Civil Service or in the Public Service please note that the Public Service Pensions (Single Scheme and Other Provisions) Act 2012 includes a provision which extends abatement of pension for all Civil and Public Servants who are re-employed where a Public Service pension is in payment or comes into payment during this employment. This provision, to apply abatement across the wider public service, came into effect on 1 November 2012. Please note: In applying for this position you are acknowledging that you understand that the abatement provisions, where relevant, will apply. It is not envisaged that the employing Department/Office will support an application for an abatement waiver in respect of appointments to this position.

If the appointee was previously employed in the Civil Service and awarded a pension under voluntary early retirement arrangements (other than the Incentivised Scheme of Early Retirement (ISER), Department of Health Circular 7/2010 VER/VRS of the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government Circular Letter LG (P) 06/2013 which, as indicated above, renders a person ineligible for the competition, the entitlement to that pension will cease with effect from the date of reappointment. Special arrangement will however be made for the reckoning of previous service given by the appointee for the purpose of any future superannuation award for which the appointee may be eligible.

[Department of Education and Skills Early Retirement Scheme for Teachers Circular 102/2007](#)

The Department of Education and Skills introduced an Early Retirement Scheme for Teachers. It is a condition of the Early Retirement Scheme that with the exception of the situations set out in paragraphs 10.2 and 10.3 of the relevant circular documentation, and with those exceptions only, if a teacher accepts early retirement under Strands 1, 2 or 3 of this scheme and is subsequently employed in any capacity in any area of the public sector, payment of pension to that person under the scheme will immediately cease. Pension payments will, however, be resumed on the ceasing of such employment or on the person's 60th birthday, whichever is the later, but on resumption, the pension will be based on the person's actual reckonable service as a teacher (i.e. the added years previously granted will not be taken into account in the calculation of the pension payment).

[Ill-Health Retirement](#)

For an individual who has retired from a Civil/Public Service body on the grounds of ill-health his/her pension from that employment may be subject to review in accordance with the rules of ill-health retirement within the pension scheme of that employment.

[Pension Accrual](#)

40-year limit on total service that can be counted towards pension where a person has been a member of more than one existing public service pension scheme would apply. This 40-year limit, which is provided for in the Public Service Pensions (Single Scheme and other Provisions) Act 2012 came into effect on 28 July 2012. This may have implications for any appointee who has acquired pension rights in a previous public service employment.

[Additional Superannuation Contribution](#)

The appointment is subject to the Additional Superannuation Contribution (ASC) in accordance with the Public Service pay and Pensions Act 2017.

For further information in relation to the Single Public Service Pension Scheme please see the following website: www.singlepensionscheme.gov.ie