



Oifig an
Rialaitheora Pleanála
Office of the
Planning Regulator

Candidate Information Booklet

Planning Officer (Engineer Grade II) positions x 2 at the Office of the Planning Regulator

About the Office of the Planning Regulator

The Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) is an independent oversight body that was 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.

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 local authority county/city development plans and local area plans, and regional assembly regional spatial and economic strategies to ensure consistency with relevant regional or national policies;
- reviews of the systems and procedures used by any planning authority, including An Bord Pleanála, in the performance of their planning functions; and
- research, training and education programmes that support the progressive development of Ireland's planning process.

Responsibilities

The OPR is currently seeking to fill 2 Planning Officer (Civil Service Engineer Grade II) positions in the following areas:

- Plans Evaluation; and
- Planning Research, Training and Public Awareness.

The Planning Officers will perform essential roles in the delivery of the statutory functions of the OPR. The successful candidates will report to the Senior Planners in the Plans Evaluations and Research and Training Teams. They will be responsible for technical analysis and input into the delivery of our statutory plans evaluation and planning research and training mandates. They will be required to ensure delivery of work within tight deadlines.

Responsibilities of the successful candidates will include:

- Assessing and evaluating statutory development plans, as outlined in the Planning and Development Amendment Act 2000, as amended;
- Input into the preparation of the OPR's statutory observations on development plans, balancing all the relevant requirements;

- Undertaking planning research and analysis, in line with the OPR's Planning Research Framework and the Strategic Planning Research Programme. Contributing to the OPR's functions in relation to public awareness of planning and training;
- Continuously and pro-actively keeping up to date with 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, wider researchers, professional bodies and other key stakeholders in the achievement of the business objectives of the OPR;
- Supporting OPR focus groups such as the National Planning Knowledge Group, Plans Evaluation forum; and
- Such other duties as may be assigned from time to time.

Who we are looking for

We are seeking experienced planning professionals with a career track record in delivering a broad range of work duties, looking to add to that portfolio working within a new and national level planning body and who will work well under tight statutory deadlines in a fast-paced environment. The ideal candidate will therefore be self-starting, innovative and dynamic, demonstrating very high quality communication skills and the ability to learn and adapt to rapidly changing requirements or circumstances.

Skills

- Self-motivated, energetic and able to offer informed insight on policy;
- Organised, methodical and have strong time management skills;
- Ability to research and communicate findings clearly;
- Excels at working as an integral part of focused teams.

Essential criteria

Candidates must, on or before 30 December 2020, demonstrate or possess:

- 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. This experience will have been gained over a period of 5 or more years and will include experience in the processes for preparation and adoption of statutory plans and/or undertaking research and analysis;
- 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 proven track record in delivering high performance outcomes against a background of demanding time-driven requirements;
- A proven ability to build productive working relationships with internal and external stakeholders;
- Highly developed communication skills with an ability to express articulately, concisely and persuasively; and
- 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.

Desirable qualities

- Previous administrative experience/qualifications;
- Staff management experience;
- Ability to interact using Irish language.

Location of the post

The post will be located at the OPR offices at Park House, Dublin 7.

Principal Conditions of Service

The appointment is to a permanent post in the Civil Service and is subject to the Civil Service Regulations Acts 1956 to 2005, the Public Service Management (Recruitment and Appointments) Act 2004, and any other Act for the time being in force relating to the Civil Service.

Tenure and Probation

The appointment is to a permanent position on a probationary contract in the Civil Service.

The probationary contract will be for a period of one year from the date specified on the contract. Notwithstanding this paragraph and the paragraph immediately following below, this will not preclude an extension of the probationary contract in appropriate circumstances.

During the period of your probationary contract, your performance will be subject to review by your supervisor(s) to determine whether you:

- (i) Have performed in a satisfactory manner,
- (ii) Have been satisfactory in general conduct, and
- (iii) Are suitable from the point of view of health with particular regard to sick leave.

Prior to the completion of the probationary contract a decision will be made as to whether or not you will be retained pursuant to *Section 5A(2) Civil Service Regulation Acts 1956 – 2005*. This decision will be based on your performance assessed against the criteria set out in (i) to (iii) above. The details of the probationary process will be explained to you by the Office of the Planning Regulator and you will be given a copy of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's guidelines on probation.

Notwithstanding the preceding paragraphs in this section, the probationary contract may be terminated at any time prior to the expiry of the term of the contract by either side in accordance with the Minimum Notice and Terms of Employment Acts, 1973 to 2005.

In certain circumstances your contract may be extended and your probation period suspended. The extension must be agreed by both parties.

- The probationary period stands suspended when an employee is absent due to Maternity or Adoptive Leave
- In relation to an employee absent on Parental Leave or Carers Leave, the employee may require probation to be suspended if the absence is not considered to be consistent with the continuation of the probation
- Probation may be suspended in cases such as absence due to a non-recurring illness

The employee may, in these circumstances, make an application to the employer for an extension to the contract period.

The appointee will serve a one-year probationary period. If an appointee who fails to satisfy the conditions of probation has been a serving civil servant immediately prior to their appointment from this competition, the issue of reversion will normally arise. In the event of reversion, an officer will return to a vacancy in their former grade in their former Department.

[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 1 October 2020) is as follows.

Engineer grade II (PPC)

63,275 – 64,720 – 66,163 – 67,612 – 69,056 – 69,441 – 70,845 – 72,268 – LSI 1 74,584 – LSI 2 76,907

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.

A different 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.

[Important Note](#)

Entry will be at the minimum of the scale and the rate of remuneration will not be subject to negotiation and may be adjusted from time to time in line with Government pay policy.

Different terms and conditions may apply if you are a currently serving civil or public servant.

Subject to satisfactory performance, increments may be payable in line with current Government Policy.

You will agree that any overpayment of salary, allowances, or expenses will be repaid by you in accordance with Circular 07/2018: Recovery of Salary, Allowances, and Expenses Overpayments made to Staff Members/Former Staff Members/Pensioners.

[Annual Leave](#)

In addition to the usual public holidays, annual leave for this position is 29 working days rising to 30 after 5 years' service.

[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.

An officer who will be paying Class A rate of PRSI will be required to sign a mandate authorising the Department of Employment Affairs and 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 Employment Affairs and Social Protection within the required time limits.

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 worked 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: www.singlepensionscheme.gov.ie

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 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 a 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 (IHR)

Please note any person who previously retired on ill-health grounds under the terms of a superannuation scheme are required to declare, at the initial application phase, that they are in receipt of such a pension to the organisation administering the recruitment competition.

Applicants will be required to attend the CMO's office to assess their ability to provide regular and effective service taking account of the condition which qualified them for IHR.

Appointment post ill-health retirement from Civil Service

If successful in their application through the competition, the applicant should to be aware of the following:

1. If deemed fit to provide regular and effective service and assigned to a post, their Civil Service ill-health pension ceases.
2. If the applicant subsequently fails to complete probation or decides to leave their assigned post, there can be no reversion to the Civil Service IHR status, nor reinstatement of the Civil Service IHR pension, that existed prior to the application, nor is there an entitlement to same.
3. The applicant will become a member of the Single Public Service Pension Scheme (SPSPS) upon appointment if they have had a break in pensionable public/civil service of more than 26 weeks.

Appointment post ill-health retirement from Public Service:

1. Where an individual has retired from a Public Service body his/her ill-health pension from that employment may be subject to review in accordance with the rules of ill-health retirement under that scheme.
2. If an applicant is successful, on appointment the applicant will be required to declare whether they are in receipt of a Public Service pension (ill-health or otherwise) and their Public Service pension may be subject to abatement.
3. The applicant will become a member of the Single Public Service Pension Scheme (SPSPS) upon appointment if they have had a break in pensionable Public/Civil Service of more than 26 weeks.

Please note more detailed information in relation to pension implications for those in receipt of a Civil or Public Service ill-health pension is available upon request to the Public Appointments Service.

Pension Accrual

A 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

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 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 them. 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.

Competition Process

How to Apply

Applications should be submitted via email to recruiting@opr.ie by **30 December 2020 at 5pm**.

Candidates should submit a completed application form and a covering letter, as separate documents, in pdf format, in a single email.

Please note that omission of any or part of the two 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 the 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 applications: **30 December 2020 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 declaration.

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.

Interviews

The interviews for this post are likely to be held in January/February 2021. 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.

A panel of successful candidates may be formed to fill other positions at the grade of Engineer Grade II at the Office of the Planning Regulator.

References

Candidates should start considering names of people who would be suitable referees 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.

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 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 them. 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



Higher Executive Officer Level Competencies

Effective Performance Indicators

Team Leadership	Works with the team to facilitate high performance, developing clear and realistic objectives and addressing and performance issues if they arise
	Provides clear information and advice as to what is required of the team
	Strives to develop and implement new ways of working effectively to meet objectives
	Leads the team by example, coaching and supporting individuals as required
	Places high importance on staff development, training and maximising skills & capacity of team.
	Is flexible and willing to adapt, positively contributing to the implementation of change
Analysis & Decision Making	Gathers and analyses information from relevant sources, whether financial, numerical or otherwise weighing up a range of critical factors
	Takes account of any broader issues and related implications when making decisions
	Uses previous knowledge and experience in order to guide decisions
	Makes sound decisions with a well reasoned rationale and stands by these
	Puts forward solutions to address problems
Management & Delivery of Results	Takes responsibility and is accountable for the delivery of agreed objectives
	Successfully manages a range of different projects and work activities at the same time
	Structures and organises their own and others work effectively
	Is logical and pragmatic in approach, delivering the best possible results with the resources available
	Delegates work effectively, providing clear information and evidence as to what is required
	Proactively identifies areas for improvement and develops practical suggestions for their implementation
	Demonstrates enthusiasm for new developments/changing work practices and strives to implement these changes effectively.
	Applies appropriate systems/ processes to enable quality checking of all activities and outputs
Practices and promotes a strong focus on delivering high quality customer service, for internal and external customers	
Interpersonal & Communication Skills	Builds and maintains contact with colleagues and other stakeholders to assist in performing role
	Acts as an effective link between staff and senior management
	Encourages open and constructive discussions around work issues
	Projects conviction, gaining buy-in by outlining relevant information and selling the benefits
	Treats others with diplomacy, tact, courtesy and respect , even in challenging circumstances
	Presents information clearly, concisely and confidently when speaking and in writing
Specialist Knowledge, Expertise and Self Development	Has a clear understanding of the roles, objectives and targets of self and team and how they fit into the work of the unit and Department/ Organisation and effectively communicates this to others
	Has high levels of expertise and broad Public Sector knowledge relevant to his/her area of work
	Focuses on self development, striving to improve performance
Drive & Commitment to Public Service Values	Strives to perform at a high level, investing significant energy to achieve agreed objectives
	Demonstrates resilience in the face of challenging circumstances and high demands
	Is personally trustworthy and can be relied upon
	Ensures that customers are at the heart of all services provided
	Upholds high standards of honesty, ethics and integrity

Appendix 2: Eligibility to compete and certain restrictions on eligibility

Citizenship Requirements

Eligible Candidates must be:

- (a) A citizen of the European Economic Area. The EEA consists of the Member States of the European Union, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway; or
- (b) A citizen of Switzerland pursuant to the agreement between the EU and Switzerland on the free movement of persons; or
- (c) A non-EEA citizen who is a spouse or child of an EEA or Swiss citizen and has a stamp 4 visa; or
- (d) A person awarded international protection under the International Protection Act 2015 or any family member entitled to remain in the State as a result of family reunification and has a stamp 4 visa; or
- (e) A non-EEA citizen who is a parent of a dependent child who is a citizen of, and resident in, an EEA member state or Switzerland and has a stamp 4 visa.

To qualify candidates must meet one of the citizenship criteria above 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.