

**MINUTES OF NATIONAL PLANNING KNOWLEDGE GROUP MEETING
HELD ON 14 MAY AT 11.00AM VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

PRESENT:

Niall Cussen, Chair
Dr Berna Grist, Vice-Chair
Neale Blair, Ulster University
Philip Boland, Queens University Belfast
Shane Burke, Housing Agency
Noel Cahill, NESC
Erika Casey, An Bord Pleanála
Gerard Crowley, RTPi

Justin Gleeson, Maynooth University
David O'Connor, Technological University Dublin
Sean O'Leary, Irish Planning Institute
Eoin O'Neill, University College Dublin
Karen Ray, University College Cork
Alma Walsh, DHLGH

PART-TIME ATTENDANCE:

Cian O'Mahony, Environmental Protection Agency

APOLOGIES:

Caroline Creamer, Maynooth University
Deirdre French, Environmental Protection Agency
Liam Kenny, AILG
Niamh Lennon, MARA

Tommy Moylan, AILG
Bernie O'Donoghue Hynes, LGMA
Aidan Sweeney, Ibec

IN ATTENDANCE

On behalf of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
Aoibheann Nevin

From the Office of the Planning Regulator

Caren Gallagher
Sinéad Mullen
Mary Murphy
John Keating

Eugenia Thompson
Louise Bunyan
Ciara O'Connor

INTRODUCTIONS AND WELCOME

THE OPENING ADDRESS

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees.

AGENDA

The Chair noted that the agenda and meeting papers were circulated to the Group in advance of the meeting. The Chair tabled the agenda and the following items were discussed.

ITEM 1 – APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6 FEBRUARY 2025

No comments were received. As there were no objections or corrections, the minutes were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting and were approved.

ITEM 2 – CONFIRMATION OF INFORMATION FOR COMPLIANCE WITH LOBBYING LEGISLATION

The OPR provided an overview of information relating to the National Planning Knowledge Group (NPKG) that will be published on the OPR website in order to comply with the transparency criteria set out in the Transparency Code prepared under the Lobbying Act 2015.

ITEM 3 – UPDATE ON RESEARCH PROJECTS AND OTHER RELATED WORK

(i) Update from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH)

The DHLGH provided an update on:

- the approval of the revised National Planning Framework (NPF) and confirmed that work has commenced on its implementation; and
- the implementation of the Planning and Development Act 2024 (the 2024 Act) including the publication of an implementation plan which outlines the commencement schedule for the 2024 Act, and the range of initiatives to support training and engagement for the planning sector to prepare for the phased transition to the 2024 Act.

In the context of the revised NPF and the revisions to the national housing targets, a discussion took place in relation to the incorporation of the updated targets into city/county development plans and the potential implications for current Strategic Housing Development (SHD) and Large-scale Residential Development (LRD) planning applications.

(ii) Update from the All-Island Research Observatory (AIRO) at Maynooth University on the new National Census Atlas Dashboard

The Maynooth University representative provided an update on:

- the Regional Development Monitor (RDM) and gave an overview of the various tools and dashboards that are available within the RDM;
- the training that is being rolled out on the RDM for stakeholders; and
- the new National Census Atlas Dashboard that forms part of the RDM.

A discussion took place regarding the benefit and use of the National Census Atlas Dashboard, the rollout of training for stakeholders and the development of a focused communications strategy for the dashboard.

(iii) Update from the OPR on Research Output

The OPR gave an update on projects being progressed in accordance with the Strategic Planning Research Programme including:

- Case Study Paper 07 on Quarries and the Local Authority Development Plan; and
- Practice Note 06 on Development Plan Monitoring.

The OPR noted a number of research projects that are being partnered with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The OPR also noted that the following projects are at scoping stage:

- Case Study Paper on Best Practice in Integrating Green Infrastructure,
- Nature-based Solutions and Ecosystem Services into the Preparation of Land Use Plans;
- Marine Spatial Planning (which will be a key focus area for 2026); and
- Public realm developments and regeneration.

ITEM 4 – TRAINING AND AWARENESS UPDATE

The OPR gave an overview of the training and awareness work that is being undertaken including:

- Planning training webinars that were delivered in March, April and May 2025 and upcoming training webinars to be delivered on 30 May and 27 June for local authority and regional assembly staff and elected members;
- Progress achieved on the implementation of the Local Authority Planning Sector Learning and Development Strategy including the ongoing rollout of the Planning Fundamentals training and the development and delivery of new courseware as part of the Intermediate Training for middle to senior management and more senior professional and technical staff;
- The intention to publish the eighth issue of the Learning from Litigation bulletin in June which will have a focus on renewable energy projects; and
- Initiatives being taken to actively promote planning as a career of choice including:
 - o Promotion on the OPR's LinkedIn page, in the OPR Newsletter, and at the IPI Annual Planning Conference;
 - o Regular updates on the CareersPortal.ie website and associated newsletter; and
 - o Through the work of the Ministerial Action Plan on Planning Resources working groups.

ITEM 5 - OPEN DISCUSSION

The potential for the delivery by the OPR and the DHLGH of a briefing session for elected members, when the Section 28 guidelines are published on the implementation of the revised housing supply targets, was discussed. The implications for Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies of revisions to the local housing supply targets were also discussed.

The EPA provided an update on ongoing Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) research work.

The recent publication by the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) of a report on Deepening Compact Growth in Ireland was noted.

ITEM 6 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No items were raised under this heading.

CONCLUSION

The Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting and noted that the next meeting is scheduled to take place on 1 October at 11am.