

Policy Forum for Northern Ireland Keynote Seminar: Planning reform in Northern Ireland: progress, priorities and next steps

Timing: Morning, Tuesday, 1st December 2015

Venue: Stormont Hotel, Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast BT4 3LP



**POLICY FORUM
FOR NORTHERN
IRELAND**

Draft agenda subject to change

- 8.30 - 9.00 Registration and coffee
- 9.00 - 9.05 **Chair's opening remarks**
Ian Milne MLA, Northern Ireland Assembly
- 9.05 - 9.30 **Planning reform in Northern Ireland: the context**
Gavan Rafferty, Lecturer in Spatial Planning and Development, Built Environment Research Institute, Ulster University
Questions and comments from the floor
- 9.30 - 10.30 **Transition of planning powers to local authorities: progress so far and future challenges**
Perspectives on the lessons learnt and key remaining challenges following the transfer of planning powers to local authorities and how the eleven new super-councils are managing their increased responsibility. How well is the new planning system, which aims to 'bring planning closer to the public', succeeding in increasing community access to and participation in the planning process? What has been the private sector experience of the planning system since the transfer of powers? How can a culture of openness and transparency be further encouraged? What measures can be taken to support councils in delivering an effective planning service in the face of budgetary constraints? How can the backlog in planning applications following the transfer of powers be tackled and what further steps should be taken to ensure that decisions on planning applications are made in the most timely and effective manner possible? What effect has the new community consultation requirements, which require the applicant of any 'major' planning proposal to conduct significant pre-application community consultations, had on the reformed planning process? In what ways can councils be further supported to reach balanced decisions when considering large-scale and controversial planning applications such as wind turbines? How can it be ensured that local authorities are prepared for the transfer of additional powers - in the areas of urban regeneration and community development - ahead of the implementation of the 'Regeneration Bill' in April 2016? What role can the 11 Super Councils play in delivering the Programme for Government (PfG) for Northern Ireland?
Karen Smyth, Head of Policy, Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA)
Gary McGhee, Head of the Planning & Environmental Law Team, Carson McDowell
Roger Pollen, Head of External Affairs, Federation of Small Businesses
Patrick McClughan, Head of Corporate Affairs, Northern Ireland, Gaelectric
James Hagan, Chairman, Hagan Homes
Questions and comments from the floor
- 10.30 - 10.35 **Chair's closing remarks**
Ian Milne MLA, Northern Ireland Assembly
- 10.35 - 11.05 Coffee
- 11.05 - 11.10 **Chair's opening remarks**
Andrew Ryan, Partner, TLT NI
- 11.10 - 11.25 **Planning in the Republic of Ireland: the local authority experience**
Gerry Sheeran, Council Member, Irish Planning Institute and retired Senior Planner, Limerick City and County Council
- 11.25 - 12.15 **Supporting regeneration and facilitating local economic development**
How are the new local councils approaching the community planning process and the challenges of encouraging regeneration and local economic development? What is the likely impact of the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS), which outlines the Department of the Environment's new approach to regional planning following the introduction of a two-tier planning system in this regard? Has the reformed planning system and the granting of increased powers to local authorities, such as the ability to borrow, encouraged increased investment in community regeneration and large-scale infrastructure projects; what other options should be considered to increase investment? Is adopting the 'Town Centre First' policy – which prioritises town centres as locations for development – the best approach to encourage the regeneration of urban areas? Do local development plans, which set the context for planning applications, adequately balance environmental and community concerns with economic growth?
Dr Theresa Donaldson, Chief Executive, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council
Professor Jim Kitchen, Director, Sustainable NI
Brian Kelly, Director, Turley
Richard Kirk, Regional Director, Northern Ireland, Institution of Civil Engineers
Senior representative, retail
Questions and comments from the floor with **Gerry Sheeran**, Council Member, Irish Planning Institute and retired Senior Planner, Limerick City and County Council
- 12.15 - 12.55 **Implementing reform and next steps for policy**
Angus Kerr, Director of Planning Policy Division, Department of the Environment
Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.55 - 13.00 **Chair's and Policy Forum for Northern Ireland closing remarks**
Andrew Ryan, Partner, TLT NI
Sean Cudmore, Deputy Editor, Policy Forum for Northern Ireland