



Corporate and Business Plans

2005/06 - 2007/08

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Foreword

I am pleased to present the Planning Service's Corporate and Business Plans for the period from 2005/06 to 2007/08.

As is evident from our plans, we have a significant programme of work to deliver in the coming year, not only in determining the ever increasing numbers of planning applications we receive but also in taking forward our area plan and planning policy programmes, handling the planning consequences of a major programme of investment in the pipeline and preparing for the possible transfer of planning responsibilities to local government following the review of Public Administration.

In addition, we remain committed to the major programme of change set out in the *Modernising Planning Processes* implementation plan, which is being taken forward under the auspices of *Planning to Deliver*. A key aim of the programme is to deliver a simpler, faster and more accessible planning process.

There is of course a tension between the speed of the decision-making process and its openness and transparency. Applicants understandably want quicker decisions, but there are many people with particular interests in development proposals who want to see how applications are being processed and decided and to ensure that time is taken to have objections properly heard. In an increasingly complex policy and legislative context and with the public becoming more and more conscious of planning and its effect on their daily lives, that can be a very difficult circle to square.

It is our responsibility in the Planning Service to try to do so, just as it is our responsibility to try to manage an end to end process over which we have far from total control. We need the active co-operation of all those involved to achieve our goals, and we will continue to work to that end. The Corporate and Business Plans in this document set out an ambitious and challenging agenda that reflects our commitment to do so.

DAVID FERGUSON
Chief Executive

The Planning Context

Priorities and Budget 2005-2008

The Government's priorities and associated budget allocations are set out in *Priorities and Budget 2005-2008*, which was published in December 2004. At the heart of these priorities lies a commitment to reform and modernise public services. In the Planning Service, our commitment to modernising our service is being taken forward through the *Planning to Deliver* programme, which includes the process changes detailed in the *Modernising Planning Processes* Implementation Plan.

Priorities and Budget 2005-08 also contains Public Service Agreements (PSAs) drawn up by Departments. The Department of the Environment's PSA sets out the Department's targets and objectives for the 2005/06 business year and includes those of the Planning Service.

Department of the Environment Corporate & Business Plan

To support the Government's *Priorities and Budget*, each Department prepares their own Corporate and Business Plan. The DOE Corporate and Business Plan sets out the actions to be taken to ensure delivery of the Department's targets and objectives for the 2005/06 business year as well as the reforms that will be undertaken during that time. The *Modernising Planning Processes* Implementation Plan and implementation of the ePIC project are included in the reform element of the Department's plan.

Planning to Deliver

Through reform and modernisation we know that we can make a real impact in improving the planning process and in meeting the challenges that we face today and will face in the future. *Planning to Deliver* is about changing processes, systems and cultures. These changes will have a major impact on the planning process - a process that involves not only the Planning Service but also applicants, agents, consultees, including District Councils, interested parties and many others. The programme reflects a clear commitment to reform through which we are driving forward all areas of our business.

A good deal of progress has been made in our reform and modernisation programme over the last 2 years but the 2005/06 period will be the most challenging year. We will see not only the completion and implementation of a number of projects, in particular the delivery of our new e-planning system, but also substantial changes in our legislative framework through the Planning Reform Order.



Corporate Plan

2005/06 - 2007/08

1. Introduction

1.1 Our Aim, Vision and Values

Our aim is to improve the quality of life of the people of Northern Ireland by planning and managing development in ways which are sustainable and which contribute to creating a better environment.

Our vision is of an organisation which:

- earns respect and trust;
- delivers high quality and timely decisions and services;
- is open and in touch;
- works together;
- values its people;
- works with and learns from others;
- makes the best use of resources.

Our values are:

- integrity and honesty;
- objectivity;
- political impartiality;
- fairness;
- professionalism;
- courtesy.

1.2 The Planning Service

The Planning Service is an agency of the Department of the Environment. The three key business areas are:

- the development control process (the system for dealing with individual planning applications), including enforcement;
- formulation of planning policy for Northern Ireland;
- preparation of development plans.

The purpose of the planning system is to regulate development and land use in the public interest. The planning functions are set out in the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 (as amended).

2. Our Targets and Objectives

In support of its aim, the Agency has set a number of key medium term strategic objectives which are reflected in the corporate plan. The business plan provides additional detail on the actions that will be taken to deliver on these commitments.

2.1 Public Service Agreement Targets

The key Ministerial target for the Planning Service, as reflected in the Department of the Environment's Public Service Agreement (PSA), is:

- to reduce the target time taken to process planning applications to decision (or withdrawal) from 70% within 17 weeks to 70% within 15 weeks by 2007/08.

The overall target is sub divided by category as follows:

- to reduce the target time taken to process residential applications to decision (or withdrawal) from 70% within 16 weeks to 70% within 14 weeks by 2007/08.
- to reduce the target time taken to process commercial applications to decision (or withdrawal) from 70% within 19 weeks to 70% within 18 weeks by 2007/08.
- to reduce the target time taken to process industrial applications to decision (or withdrawal) from 70% within 18 weeks to 70% within 17 weeks by 2007/08.

In the PSA Technical Notes we have reflected that the baseline for measuring performance was drawn from performance during 2000-03. However, over the last 18-24 months there has been a significant and unprecedented growth in applications and although we are not currently achieving these target times, we are committed to continuing to work towards the reduction that has been set out in our targets.

2.2 Other Key Targets

In addition to the PSA target, we have also reflected a number of commitments included in the DOE Corporate and Business Plan.

Under the Reform and Modernisation Programme and in support of the Modernising Planning Processes Implementation Plan we will:

- bring forward legislation to reform key aspects of the planning process and support the Agency in planning and managing development in a sustainable way;
- by March 2006, implement year 3 of Modernising Planning Processes programme to support a simpler, speedier, more transparent and accessible planning system;
- implement the ePIC project by March 2006; and
- continue progress on the Area Plan and Planning Policy Statement programmes.

2.3 The Agency's Strategic Objectives

The Planning Service follows the balanced scorecard approach to corporate and business planning and its strategic objectives are set out in the quadrants below:

RESULTS To make good, timely planning decisions within an up-to-date set of Area Plans, policy and legislative framework and in line with the Department's sustainable development principles.	PROCESSES To review, streamline, improve and monitor the Planning Service's key systems and processes.
CLIENTS/STAKEHOLDERS To promote a mutual understanding of expectations and the capacity to meet them between Planning Service and its clients/stakeholders.	PEOPLE To have well-motivated people with the right skills in the right place at the right time.

A number of business year objectives have been agreed. They set out how the Agency intends to implement its strategic objectives. Information on these objectives and the associated target timescales is contained in the business plan.

2.4 Current and Future Issues

In addition, we are committed to focusing not only on the objectives outlined in our business plan but also on wider issues that have significant implications for our work. These include:

- our contribution to delivering the Government's Waste Management Strategy in Northern Ireland;
- facilitating the delivery of sewage treatment infrastructure;
- expediting major or strategically significant planning applications;
- handling workload pressures; and
- taking forward relevant recommendations in the Review of Public Administration.

We will continue to work in conjunction with relevant partners both within and outside Government to progress work or respond to issues arising in these areas.

3. Organisational Issues

3.1 Staffing Issues

The Planning Service Management Board comprises:

David Ferguson - Chief Executive
Marianne Fleming - Director of Corporate Services
Pat McBride - Director of Operations
Tom Clarke - (Acting) Director of Plans and Policy

The Agency currently employs 768 staff. However, the recruitment programme is continuing and by the end of the 2005/06 business year we anticipate having approximately 814 staff in post.

Our services are provided through a network of 6 Divisional Planning Offices, 2 sub Divisional Planning Offices and the Planning Service headquarters, which is based in Belfast.

3.2 Financial Resources

We strive to make effective and efficient use of resources provided through our public expenditure budget and receipts from planning application fees. The latter was the subject of the consultation paper on the Review of Planning Fees, issued under the auspices of the *Modernising Planning Processes* Implementation Plan in June 2003. The review examined the scope of the costs being recovered by the Planning Service and our key consultees. It also brought forward proposals for simplifying the fee structure. The outcome of the review and the subsequent public consultation will be reflected in Planning Fees Regulations, which will be brought forward during this business year and will be operative from May 2005.

Our budget allocations for this year and next year are set out below. Last year's figures are also shown for comparative purposes.

2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
13.6 M	18.3 M	13.5 M

3.3 Risk Management

In line with corporate governance requirements, the Chief Executive, as Accounting Officer for the Agency, has to be in a position to sign a Statement of Internal Control in relation to the Planning Service Annual Report and Accounts 2005/06. We are committed to improving the way in which we work and manage our business, and part of

this improvement is ensuring that we have effective risk management arrangements in place.

We fulfil this role by developing, monitoring and reviewing an Agency Risk Register, which identifies the key risks, those responsible for ensuring that the risks are managed, and the action that will be taken to manage them. This process is also cascaded through the three Directorates and the relevant business areas. Risk management is taken forward as an integral part of the business planning process and, like the Agency Business Plan, is monitored on a quarterly basis.

4. Cross Cutting Issues

4.1 Equality of Opportunity, Human Rights and New Targeting Social Need

The Planning Service is committed to ensuring that equality of opportunity and good relations is at the forefront of all its policies and programmes. It also strives to ensure that Human Rights implications of proposed policies and legislation are reviewed to ensure that proposals are compatible with the requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998.

We will contribute to the Department's progress report on commitments contained within the Department's Equality Scheme. We will also contribute to the New TSN Action Plan covering the period April 2005 - March 2006, which is being produced by the Department. Finally, we are also committed to the values and aims contained in the Executive's Victims Strategy and will, where appropriate, consult victims' groups about major policy proposals.

4.2 Sustainable Development

Sustainable Development refers to development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. There is growing realisation by all that the present nature and pace of development, with the associated consumption of finite natural resources and negative impacts, cannot be continued indefinitely. If we do not take decisive steps to reduce our impact on the natural world, we shall be faced with ever growing problems in relation to pollution, scarcity of resources and a deterioration of the quality of life. This means that both short and long term environmental and social considerations need to be much more closely integrated with economic issues to bring about development that is sustainable for the future.

The Planning Service is a key mechanism for delivering sustainable development on the ground. All development plans prepared by the Planning Service are required by law to be in general conformity with the Regional Development Strategy (RDS), which has embedded the need to accommodate development in a sustainable manner within its guiding principles. In order to help implement the policy directions set out in the RDS, we have an ambitious programme for the preparation of updated development plans.

A further significant measure proposed is to commit our current practice to law by introducing a statutory requirement for the Planning Service to carry out development plan functions with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development.

4.3 Waste Management

As with the remainder of the Department of the Environment and its business areas, we are very aware that in promoting sustainable development we must provide leadership by example. In addition to ensuring that our policy development is consistent with sustainable development principles, we are developing our own waste management plan in accordance with the Department's overall greening government programme.

In line with the Department's commitments, our focus at this stage is on developing and implementing an internal policy that will focus on issues such as waste control, water and energy minimisation issues and green procurement.



Business Plan

2005/06

5. Planning Service Business Plan 2005/06

The Agency's business year objectives and associated target timescales to enable us to deliver on our strategic objectives are reflected in the following sections. The business plan is a working document and may change during the course of the year in response to changing political, social or economic circumstances.

The Strategic Objectives

The Planning Service strategic objectives are:

<p>RESULTS</p> <p>To make good, timely planning decisions within an up-to-date set of Area Plans, policy and legislative framework and in line with the Department's sustainable development principles.</p>	<p>PROCESSES</p> <p>To review, streamline, improve and monitor the Planning Service's key systems and processes.</p>
<p>CLIENTS/STAKEHOLDERS</p> <p>To promote a mutual understanding of expectations and the capacity to meet them between Planning Service and its clients/stakeholders.</p>	<p>PEOPLE</p> <p>To have well-motivated people with the right skills in the right place at the right time.</p>

5.1 Results

Strategic Objective: To make good, timely planning decisions within an up-to-date set of Area Plans, policy and legislative framework and in line with the Department's sustainable development principles.

Business Year Objective	Target date
<p>To reduce time taken to process planning applications.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In addition to our PSA target, other targets include ensuring 70% of all applications are validated within 6 days & 95% validated 	<p>March 2006</p>

<p>within 10 days; 75% of decisions should issue within 4 weeks of last Council consultation and 95% within 6 weeks of last Council consultation.*</p> <p>To improve coverage of up to date area plans and planning policy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our targets include publication of 3 PPSs in final form (PPS 6, 15 & 17); 2 area plans in draft form (Northern Area and Banbridge, Newry & Mourne); 1 Issues Paper (West Tyrone) and the draft Craigavon Town Centre Plan 	<p>March 2006</p>
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* (Baseline at Dec 04 - 70% of all applications validated within 8 days & 75% of decisions issued within 8 weeks of last Council Consultation).

5.2 Processes

Strategic Objective: To review, streamline, and monitor the Planning Service's key systems and processes.

Business Year Objective	Target date
<p>To have in place more refined, measures of operational and policy performance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In particular, we will work with statisticians to produce more meaningful measures/ targets to be included in the Department's new Public Service Agreement. 	<p>March 2006</p>
<p>To have improved systems and processes in place.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In particular, we will continue to implement the Modernising Planning Processes programme, including the ePIC project and bringing forward legislation to reform key aspects of the planning process 	<p>March 2006</p>

5.3 Clients/Stakeholders

Strategic Objective: To promote a mutual understanding of expectations and the capacity to meet them between Planning Service and its clients/ stakeholders.

Business Year Objective	Target date
To have in place a structured programme of engagement with key client and stakeholder groups. <ul style="list-style-type: none">In particular, we will revise our communication strategy & develop and implement an appropriate programme for engagement.	March 2006
To scope the implications for Planning Service of decisions resulting from the Review of Public Administration which affect clients and stakeholders, including staff.	March 2006

5.4 People

Strategic Objective: To have well-motivated people with the right skills in the right place at the right time.

Business Year Objective	Target date
To maintain recognised standards for people management and development. <ul style="list-style-type: none">In particular, we will develop and begin implementation of a revised HR strategy to meet the new liP standard across the key areas of employee resourcing, employee development, employee reward and recognition, and employee relations.	March 2006

5.5 Implementation, Monitoring and Review

The Planning Service Management Board will monitor performance and review progress against key objectives and targets on a regular basis.

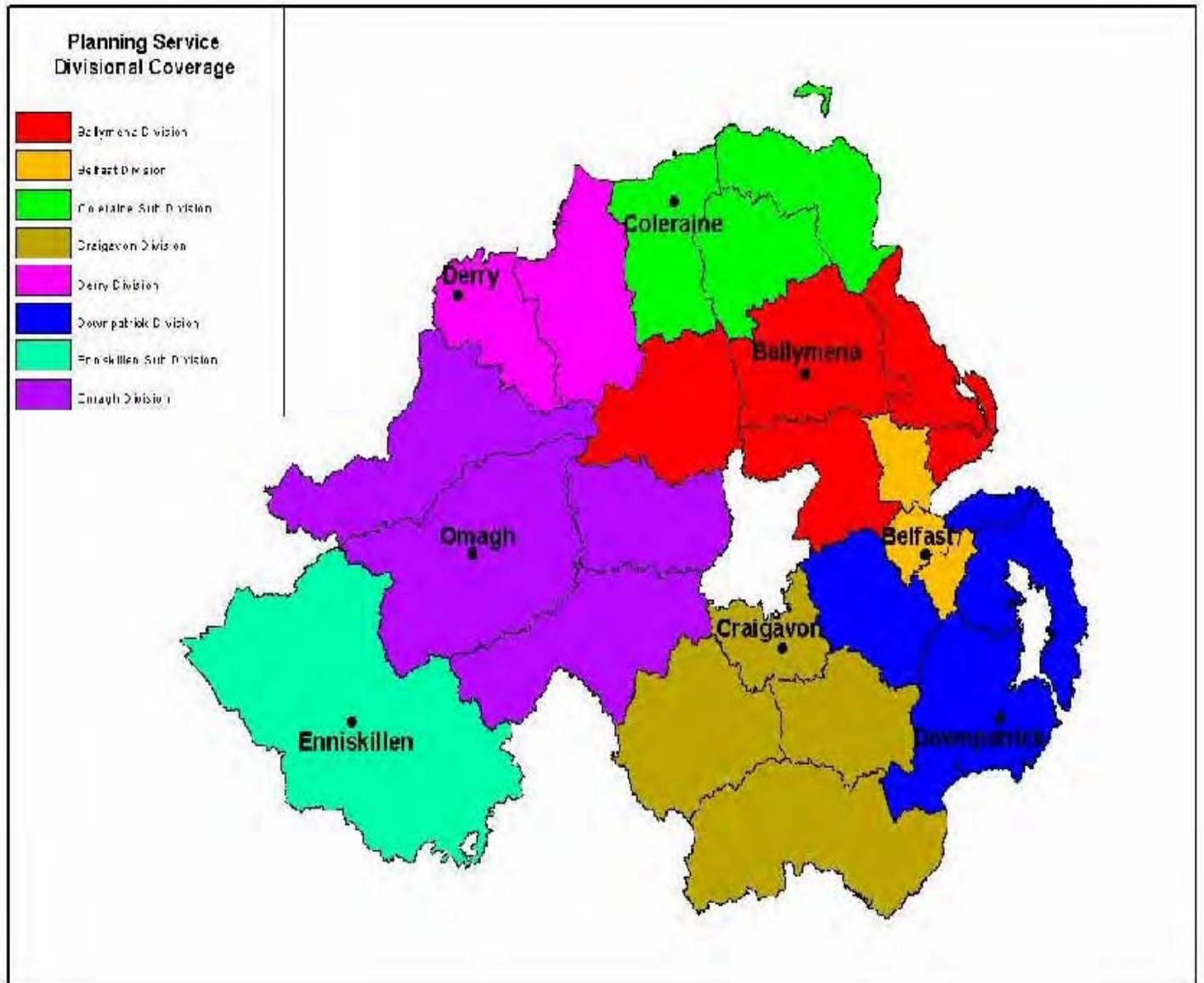
Following the end of the financial year, the Chief Executive will publish an Annual Report and Accounts. The Report will review the Agency's activities during the year and will comment specifically on progress in relation to our strategic objectives and achievements against our performance targets.

Appendix 1

Organisational Chart



Appendix Two Map of Divisional Planning Offices



Appendix 3

PLANNING SERVICE RESOURCES 2005/06 - 2006/07

	2005/06	2006/07
	£m	£m
Admin/DRC	21.0	20.5
Depreciation/Capital Charge	0.5	0.5
Other Resource/Programme	5.8	5.2
Capital	4.2	0.5
Receipts	-13.2	-13.2
TOTAL	18.3	13.5