

## **MINUTES OF PLANNING FORUM MEETING**

**TUESDAY 7<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2012**

**PRONI, TITANIC BOULEVARD**

**Present:** Diana Fitzsimons (RICS)  
Sue Christie (NIEL)  
Des Stephens (NIIRTA)  
Michelle Hill (RSPB)  
Colm Bradley (Community Places)  
Paul McTernan (IPI)  
Councillor Jim Dillon (NILGA)  
Derek McCallen (NILGA)  
Jennifer Donald (CIH)  
David Fry (CBI)  
Stephen McKay (QUB)  
David Brown (RTPI)

**In attendance:** Anne Garvey (Acting Deputy Secretary DOE)  
Angus Kerr (Director Planning Policy Division)  
Fiona McCandless (Director Local Planning Division)  
Mary MacIntyre (Director Strategic Planning Division)

**Apologies:** Alex Attwood (Minister for the Environment)  
Ian Maye (Deputy Secretary DOE)  
Linda MacHugh (Director Local Government Policy Division)  
Rita Harkin (UAHS)  
Nigel Lucas (CEF)  
Glyn Roberts (NIIRTA)  
Brendan Murtagh (QUB)  
Greg Lloyd (UUJ)  
Richard Hunter (IOD)  
Philip Rodgers (DETI)  
Graham Hutchinson (DETI)

### **Welcome and introductions**

1. Anne welcomed everyone to the PRONI building and apologised for the absence of the Minister and Ian Maye. A special welcome was extended to Daragh Coleman from Todd Architects and Walter Boyd from Central Procurement Directorate of DFP.

Anne indicated that the reason for using the PRONI building for the meeting was to see a practical outcome of a pragmatic, “can do” approach to planning.

Daragh gave a short talk on how all parties involved in the project worked together to achieve the desired outcome and Walter highlighted the involvement of CPD in what was a key deliverable of the Investment Strategy for NI.

Forum members were then taken on a guided tour of the PRONI facility.

## 2. Matters Arising

- **Community Planning** - Minister attended a meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> April to discuss the 3 lottery funded pilot projects on Community Planning being taken forward in Northern Ireland.
- **PPS's** – Angus gave an update on the position of various PPSs including the proposed single Planning Policy Statement. Some concern was expressed about the weight given to Policy Statements during the transition phase of the reform programme. The position with regard to development plans and the possible loss of people experienced in development planning was also a cause for concern. Anne indicated that this concern had been identified within DOE planning and that a training event had been scheduled for September. Mary indicated that the Department has already commenced capacity building for staff and that that would continue throughout the transitional phase.
- **Streamlining** - Fiona updated the group on the current position of the streamlining process and discussion followed on how best to address the issue of not all councils operating the full scheme.
- **PAC reports** – The Minister has taken the decision to publish PAC reports on the Departmental website and 2 reports have already been published.
- **PADs** – a focus group on PADs has been established and will meet regularly to focus on perfecting the PADs process. The main aim at present will be to concentrate on deadlines and a productivity process which is time limited and shows delivery.
- **The agenda item “Stocktaking – one year on” has been held over for the next meeting**

## 3. Evidence based policy making and collaborative research

Sue Christie (NIEL) spoke about the need for evidence based policy making and indicated as an example a case where a housing development had been constructed on a flood plain. Some years after the developer had left the site the houses flooded and the householder and public purse were left to “pick up the tab” for making the situation right. This case was seen as clear indication that the Department needs to engage in more evidence based policy making.

The second strand of Sue’s talk was on collaborative research. There needs to be an interactive forum for research drawing on expertise of both public and private sector competence. There should be a move away from the confrontational, adversarial approach to an approach which is more pragmatic and proportionate with ownership from both private and public sectors.

Angus indicated that the development of the Single Planning Policy Document would provide an ideal opportunity for the collaborative approach and would ensure that the development of policy was balanced.

Angus also indicated that the DOE has recently commenced a best practice working group which is looking at best practise policy development within DOE but also in the context of how DOE policy sits within wider NICS policy development.

Jennifer indicated that she had recently attended a development seminar on Policy making in the age of austerity which looked at co-production rather than consultation as a way forward. The Welsh government has done some work in this area and Scotland has also recently produced a Local Housing Strategy using this approach.

**[Action Point – update on single PPS to be provided at next meeting]**

4. **Reform** – Angus provided an update on the Reform of Planning and the Transfer of a Reformed, Efficient and Fit for Purpose Planning System for 2015. The Reform Project had just commenced and members of the Forum will be kept updated on progress.

**[Action Point – update on planning Reform project to be provided at next meeting]**

5. **AOB** – Agenda items for the next Forum were discussed and include:
  - a. Stocktake one year on (carried forward)
  - b. Single Planning Policy Statement
  - c. Planning Reform update