



Publication of Annual Report and Accounts 2015

9th August, 2016 - An Bord Pleanála today published its 2015 Annual Report and Accounts.

During 2015, the number of cases received by An Bord Pleanála was up 9% on the previous year reflecting the reported increase in construction activity. That trend has continued in the first half of 2016 with case intake up 21% compared with the same period last year.

Performance in terms of deciding cases within statutory deadlines was strong in 2015 with 83% of planning appeals being disposed of within the target of 18 weeks (81% January to June 2016). The average number of weeks to decide planning appeals was down from 16 weeks in 2014 to 15 weeks by the end of 2015.

Decisions for large strategic infrastructure developments were issued for seven cases including the redevelopment of Dublin Port, Ringaskiddy Port (Cork), the National Rehabilitation Hospital in Dun Laoghaire, National Forensic Mental Health Services Hospital, Portrane and windfarms at Cluddaun, Co. Mayo and Ardderoo, Co. Galway.

The requirements of the Habitats Directive in relation to appropriate assessment continue to pose challenges for developers seeking planning permission for projects. The standard of survey data and information to be provided in Natura Impact Statements required when projects are deemed likely to have a significant impact on

EU Natura sites is extremely high. Following assessment, where reasonable scientific doubt remains, the Board is obliged to refuse the development or to seek further information to remove such doubt. This has led to delays in decision making in some cases and to a number of developments, which otherwise may have gone ahead, being turned down.

In 2016, An Bord Pleanála will prepare a new Strategy to ensure the organisation is equipped to successfully meet the present and future challenges of an increasingly legally complex planning system and within expanded areas of competence. This will take into account the findings of the independent review of An Bord Pleanála conducted during 2015 and published in March 2016. The review includes recommendations which build on the track record of An Bord Pleanála and ensure its fitness for purpose in a fast-changing and more complex operational environment.

Chairperson of An Bord Pleanála, Dr. Mary Kelly said,

“We are proud of the excellent reputation acknowledged by the Review Group which we will continue to work assiduously to maintain. We intend to use the review as an important input in developing a strategy for the coming years to ensure An Bord Pleanála is appropriately positioned, resourced and operated to meet the challenges of the future.”

An Bord Pleanála’s strategy will also take into account measures set out in the recently published Action Plan for Housing, Rebuilding Ireland to enhance the responsiveness and flexibility of the planning system. An Bord Pleanála is involved in discussions on how best to administer a system to allow for direct applications for housing developments greater than 100 units. Dr. Mary Kelly said, *“We are all aware of the problems of homelessness and housing shortages and I have assured the Minister that An Bord Pleanála will play its part to contribute to a solution to these problems.”*

Significant progress was made on plans for an online planning appeals and application service which forms part of a major investment in ICT for An Bord Pleanála. It is intended that the service will be in operation in 2017.

An Bord Pleanála's Annual Report and Accounts 2015 is available at www.pleanala.ie.