

An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

Strategic Plan

2026-2028

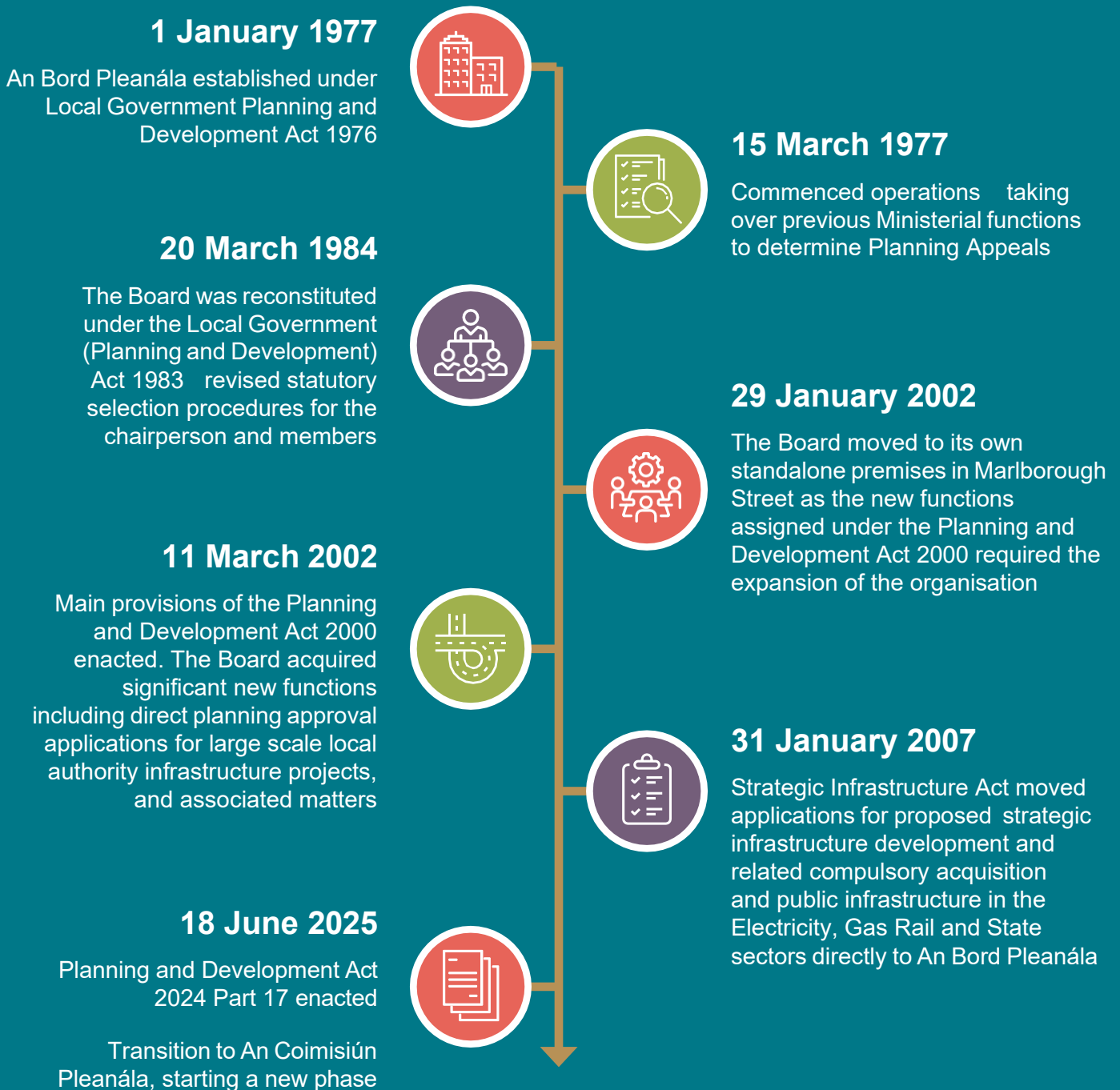


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How We Got Here...

From An Bord Pleanála to An Coimisiún Pleanála



Message from the first An Coimisiún Pleanála Chairperson

I am delighted to be part of this respected national planning body, whose role and remit is critical to Ireland’s social and economic success.

Planning plays such an important role in our society, enabling us to make the best use of our resources and improve the lives of all who live here. An Coimisiún Pleanála is an integral part of Ireland’s planning system, and its effective performance is critical to meet the challenges of our housing, transport, and utility infrastructure needs in a sustainable way that respects proper planning principles. This Strategic Plan has been informed by key reforms set out in the Planning and Development Act 2024, the National Planning Framework (revised) and the recent Accelerating Infrastructure report and action plan.

The Planning and Development Act 2024 aims to enhance clarity, improve consistency and ultimately increase confidence in the planning system. This will be achieved with the introduction of mandatory decision-making timelines, greater alignment of all tiers of development plan-making, improvements to the judicial review process and the reorganisation of An Bord Pleanála as An Coimisiún Pleanála. Our revised organisational structure now provides a distinct separation between corporate, decision-making and governance functions and I became Chairperson of the very first external Governing Board when Part 17 of the Act was commenced on 18 June 2025.

With these new structures embedded in the organisation, our focus now is to build on strong performance, reach the targets and

timelines set for decision-making under our new legislation, and to continue with service enhancements.

An Coimisiún Pleanála Strategic Plan 2026-2028 presents how we will realise our vision to be “a trusted, effective and progressive national planning body delivering for the common good” over the next three years. As the Governing Board, we commit to the public that governance, ethics and performance will remain central as we support the CEO, Planning Commissioners and staff with this ambition.

Paul Reid,
Chairperson



Message from the first An Coimisiún Pleanála Chief Executive Officer

As the first full-time Chief Executive Officer, I am proud to lead An Coimisiún Pleanála into the future and deliver on the vision set out in this Strategic Plan over the coming years. This plan is built upon strong foundations: the expertise, commitment and values from An Bord Pleanála’s long history as a quasi-judicial, independent decision maker since 1977.

The four strategic pillars and five values set out in the plan will give certainty on decision-making timelines and ensure integrity of the decision-making process by being transparent, innovative, respectful and fair to all who interact with An Coimisiún Pleanála during the planning process.

This Strategic Plan was formulated by an organisation going through a fundamental change as we transitioned from An Bord Pleanála to An Coimisiún Pleanála. Our mandate and position in the planning system remains broadly the same, but ‘who we are’ and ‘how we are structured’ has changed. This strategy represents a bridge from our past to a plan for the future that ensures we meet the challenges of the current economic and political environment, and the opportunities that tomorrow brings.

We developed the plan by listening to the experiences of staff, Commissioners, stakeholders and Governing Board members. Their experiences of the operating environment helped shape and contextualise our objectives and implementation plan. We robustly assessed what values are important to us and how they will support the delivery of the overall vision. As an organisation we are committed to living our values in how we conduct our business, provide our services and make our decisions.



This Strategic Plan is focused on building an agile, development-focused organisation that can achieve the requirements and new functions under the Planning and Development Act 2024. Given our state body mandate, it also aligns with Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage strategic goals for planning and building to contribute to sustainable and balanced development, and a good quality housing supply.

The challenge of delivering on the vision in this strategy calls for innovative thinking, new ways of working and the intelligent deployment of our resources to achieve the best outcomes. As we work towards our vision, it will be important to develop and strengthen our organisational capabilities and

capacity. An Coimisiún Pleanála benefits from the collective talent, dedication and diversity of its people. We take this opportunity to recognise their contribution and to highlight our commitment to developing a culture and organisation that offers purposeful and rewarding opportunities to our key asset, ‘our people’.

Implementation will require a high level of commitment from all. I am sure that commitment will be forthcoming and together with the support of the new Governing Board and Chairperson, the objectives and vision of An Coimisiún Pleanála’s Strategic Plan 2026 -2028 will be achieved.

Peter Mullan,
Chief Executive Officer





Who We Are and What We Do

An Coimisiún Pleanála is Ireland’s national planning body with responsibility for making independent, timely, quasi-judicial decisions on appeals of planning authority decisions and direct applications for strategic infrastructure projects. We are also responsible for deciding on proposals for compulsory acquisition of land by local authorities amongst a range of other planning related functions.

An Coimisiún Pleanála operates under complex national and EU planning legislation. It is not a policy making body, nor is it an enforcement body. Our role is set out in statute. We were established on 18 June 2025 under Part 17 of the Planning and Development Act 2024 and were formerly An Bord Pleanála (established 1977).

An Coimisiún Pleanála’s structure consists of three distinct but interdependent elements, each accountable and responsible for the delivery of our mandate in a fair, equitable and timely manner.

The Governing Board is responsible for the overall governance and sets the strategic direction and performance objectives of An Coimisiún Pleanála. The Governing Board is also responsible for the monitoring and attainment of those objectives. The Governing Board cannot be involved in considering or determining any planning case, as that decision-making function is solely reserved to the Planning Commissioners.

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for management of the day-to-day administration and business. The CEO is not involved in any case decision-making and so can engage in more external communication to increase transparency, public trust and confidence in the organisation.

Planning Commissioners are responsible for independent decision-making on all appeals and direct application cases and they are overseen by the Chief Planning Commissioner.

Our experienced and professional staff are responsible for supporting and delivering on the organisation’s objectives and functions.

GOVERNING BOARD
responsible for the overall governance functions of the Commission, including appointing Commissioners, its strategy and performance

CEO
responsible for overseeing the day-to-day running of the organisation, the Executive and operational matters with staff at its core

PLANNING COMMISSIONERS
responsible for independent decision making on all appeals and direct applications

The Planning and Development Act 2024 is a significant piece of legislation that consolidates previous planning acts and introduces mandatory timelines for planning decisions to give greater certainty. Decisions must be made within 18 to 48 weeks depending on the case type. The Act

also provides that the relevant period can include additional time, for example if further information is required or documents need to be circulated. The EU Renewable Energy Directive (RED) III also mandates specific timelines for renewable energy projects.



2 Our Purpose, Vision and Values



Purpose

As an integral part of the planning system, we will deliver robust, independent, and impartial decisions in a fair, efficient and transparent manner that promotes sustainable development and proper planning.



Vision

To be a trusted, effective and progressive national planning body delivering for the common good.

Values

We will be guided by these values:



EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS:

We are timely, professional and robust in our decision making and our operations. We understand the impact of our role in the planning process as a decision making body.



INTEGRITY:

We perform our functions with the highest standards of professional behaviour and ethics. We protect the independence and impartiality of our decision making.



TRANSPARENCY:

We are open and accountable in our decisions, systems, and processes. We are clear and honest in our communication and actions. We are proactive in our engagements with stakeholders.



INNOVATION:

We are agile and collaborative. We continually seek to improve our systems, processes, and how we work together and with others.



RESPECT:

We recognise the value and dignity in everyone. We are clear on the right of fair, accessible participation for all in the planning system

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Context and Opportunities

Economy

Ireland must provide the critical infrastructure needs of a growing population and economy to improve competitiveness, ensure balanced regional development and meet our climate obligations. The Government has announced significant capital investment and legislative reforms to accelerate this development, setting a challenge for the planning system to evolve and improve in response. An Coimisiún Pleanála must meet mandatory timelines in all appeals, direct strategic infrastructure applications and large-scale residential developments. We expect our workload to increase amid the current housing challenges and infrastructure pressures, and must ensure continuous performance and efficiency improvements to meet demand.

Legislative Framework

The planning legislative framework continues to be complex. There has been a significant increase in the number of planning decisions subject to Judicial Review in recent years. Reforms set out in the Planning and Development Act 2024 and Accelerating Infrastructure action plan seek to limit the legal costs and reduce the impact of judicial reviews. An Coimisiún Pleanála has established a legal affairs team to defend decisions, align decisions with precedents of the Superior Courts and to take learnings from court judgments. We will continue to support initiatives and reforms that expedite the hearing and conclusion of applications for judicial review in the High Court's Planning and Environment list.

Environment

Environmental assessments required under EU and national legislation have become a much more significant factor in planning decisions in recent years. In parallel, there has been an increase in the volume of legal challenges to planning decisions that interact with Environmental Directives. An Coimisiún Pleanála now has dedicated environmental and legal specialists to increase our capacity in an increasingly complex context. We will continue to learn from evolving case law and grow our specialist teams to ensure we maintain our expertise and deliver robust decisions.

The Public

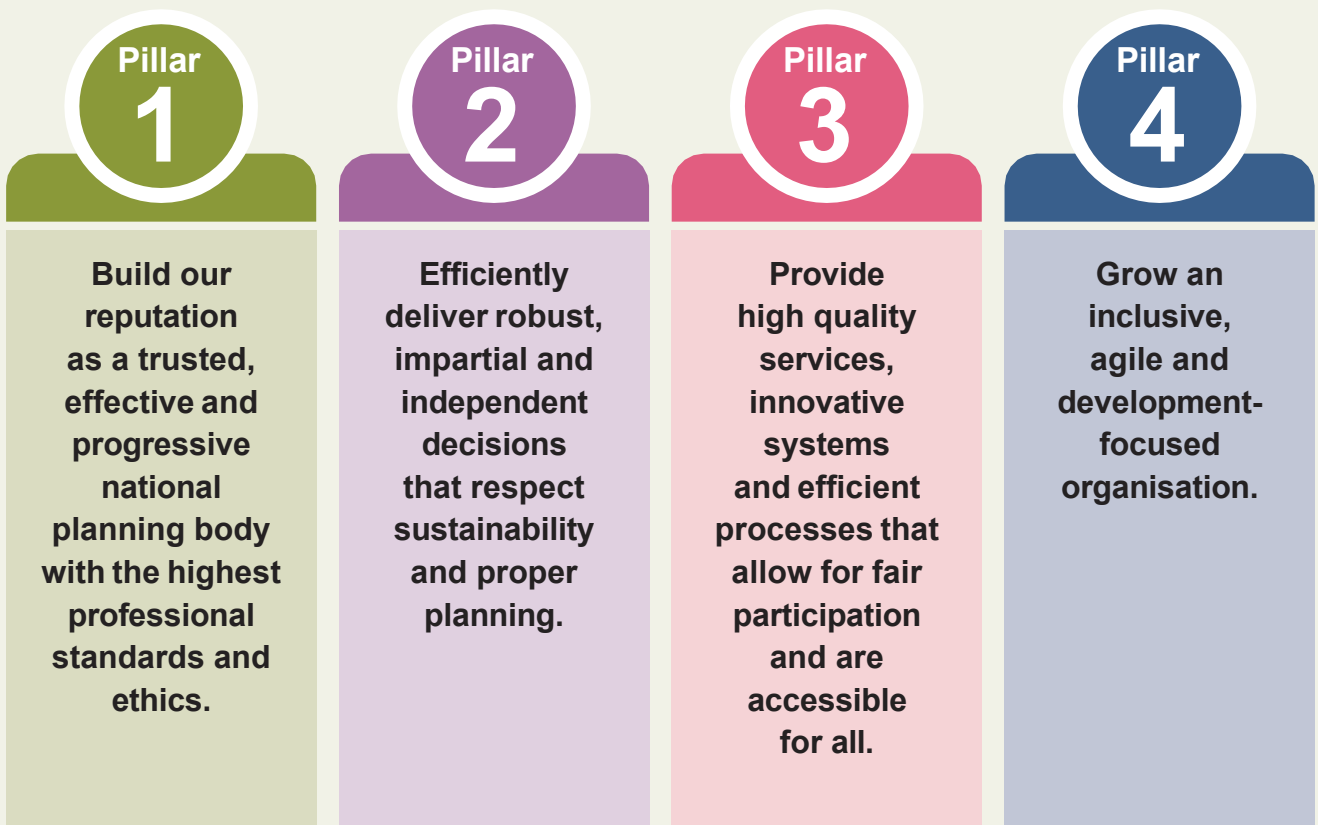
Restoring confidence in our reputation is a priority after past corporate governance failures. Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) policy and procedure recommendations have been implemented, and case backlogs have been significantly reduced. An Coimisiún Pleanála has increased staffing resources and applied prioritisation criteria to improve performance and statutory objective period (SOP) compliance.

We must continue to engage and innovate to improve our services in line with expectations of the public and continuously improve public confidence.

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Strategic Pillars and Objectives

Our purpose, vision and values determine the way we work and what we will prioritise. We will drive our vision forward through four strategic pillars. Each pillar will have clear and achievable actions with an implementation plan that will be regularly monitored and reviewed.



Pillar
1

Build our reputation as a trusted, effective and progressive national planning body with the highest professional standards and ethics.

Objectives

- > Build trust with stakeholders through open and engaging communications, while ensuring the independence of our decisions
- > Lead strategically, guided by the highest professional standards and ethics
- > Ensure systems, processes and practice align with the performance and strategic direction from the Governing Board
- > Continuously improve our decisions and services respecting our unique role in the planning system

Sample Actions

Create a comprehensive, progressive communications strategy to:

- > Build awareness and understanding of our purpose, role and services
- > Strengthen and broaden our network of relationships across the planning system, sharing learning from casework and ongoing engagement with stakeholders
- > Uphold the highest standards of accessibility, transparency and professionalism in all our internal and external communication

Drive the highest level of Governance and Ethical standards

- > Implement the performance and governance requirements of the Governing Board
- > Inspire confidence in our independence and impartiality in decision-making aligned to governance requirements of the code of conduct
- > Regular campaigns to increase awareness and understanding of responsibilities under the Code of Conduct and Planning and Development Act 2024

Expected Outcome

An Coimisiún Pleanála will be a trusted and effective organisation, and the public will have a better understanding of our role in the planning system.



Pillar
2

Efficiently deliver robust, impartial and independent decisions that respect sustainability and proper planning.

Objectives

- > Fully meet the timelines as set out in the Planning and Development Act 2024
- > Recruit staff and consultants with the appropriate skills and expertise to ensure innovation in practice and excellence in decision making
- > Develop and enhance capability through learning and development, and cultural initiatives
- > Focus on consistency in decision-making practices and integrating continuous learning for service improvement

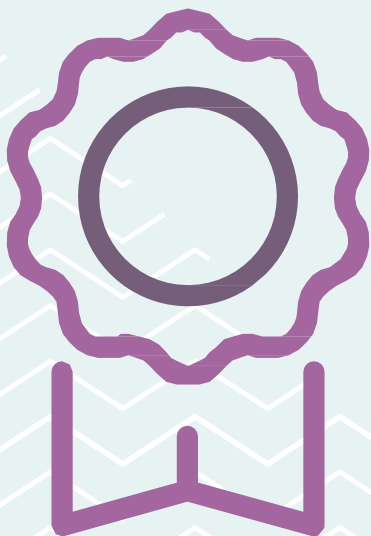
Sample Actions

Ensure robust and informed decisions through:

- > Increased use of data analysis and data reporting tools
- > Improving business processes with enhanced digital services
- > Communicating real-time progress on cases, benchmarked against agreed decision timelines on our website
- > Strengthening internal systems for continuous learning and service improvements

Expected Outcome

An Coimisiún Pleanála's decisions will be clear, easy to understand and delivered within stated/agreed timelines. Our decisions will be based on sound judgement, respecting sustainability and proper planning.



Pillar
3

Provide high quality services, innovative systems and efficient processes that allow for fair participation and are accessible for all.

Objectives

- > Provide the highest quality services while ensuring fair participation
- > Build consistency and accessibility for service users across the planning system by engaging with other planning bodies
- > Develop and adopt a new Customer Service Action Plan with public consultation at its centre
- > Drive and implement our transformation and digital strategy
- > Ensure consistent fairness and accessibility in service, recognising our unique position in a wider planning system

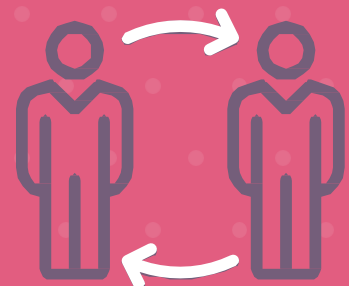
Sample Actions

Deliver digital services

- > Through our digital strategy, identify opportunities for streamlining systems and enhancing access to relevant information through greater integration of digital documentation
- > Explore how we can use emerging technologies, such as AI, in an efficient and ethical manner
- > Continue to ensure fair access to our services by all

Expected Outcome

An Coimisiún Pleanála will provide a fully digital service with online appeals and applications, and files available (to view) online.



Pillar
4

Grow an inclusive, agile and development-focused organisation.

Objectives:

- > Build an organisation that is agile and responsive to challenges and opportunities
- > Ensure a positive and safe working environment for all that fosters collaboration and inclusiveness
- > Align organisational structure with service delivery requirements
- > Encourage innovation and excellence whilst maintaining operational stability

Sample Actions

Conduct long term workforce planning and developmental strategies to:

- > Grow skills in emerging areas, utilising existing staff expertise and targeted recruitment where necessary
- > Ensure representation of diversity across the organisation
- > Expand targeted learning and development opportunities for staff and Commissioners
- > Establish a formal mentoring programme

- to assist with knowledge sharing and succession planning
- > Formalise staff mobility practices matching skills with roles

Expected Outcome

An Coimisiún Pleanála will have an engaged and skilled workforce that is aligned with organisational objectives and evolving needs. We will be an employer of choice of highly skilled and capable staff operating in a supporting, innovative and welcoming organisation



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Consultation Process

This Strategy has been developed in consultation with our staff, Commissioners, Governing Board members, the general public and specific stakeholders who are involved in the planning system.

We would like to thank all who took the time and effort to make submissions and attend our focus group sessions. All inputs have been considered in the formulation of this plan.



6 Strategy Delivery

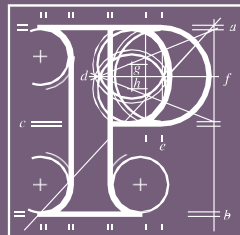
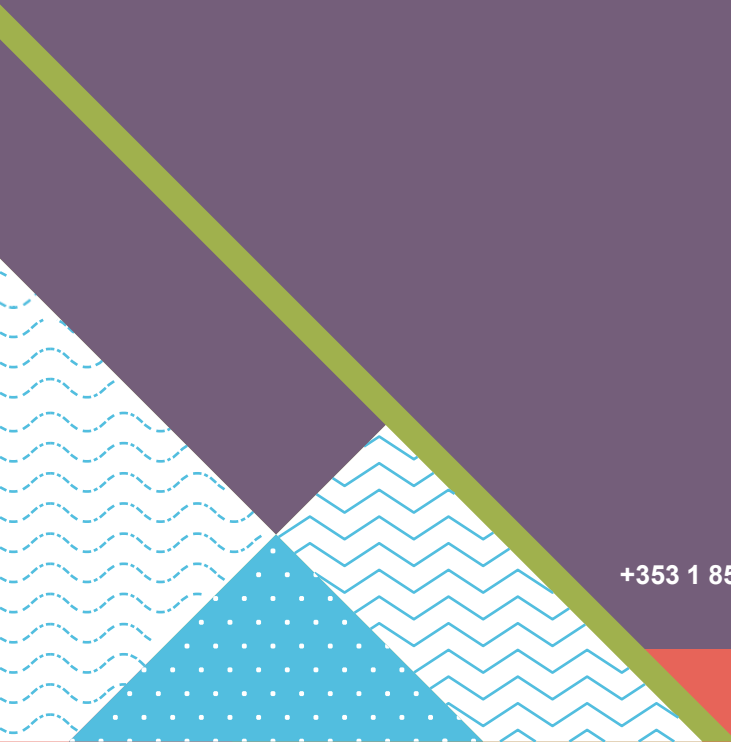
Annual Delivery Plans

An Coimisiún Pleanála will deliver this strategy through the development and implementation of annual work programmes. These will be documented in annual delivery plans that will detail actions to achieve the objectives within defined timelines. We will focus resources to deliver on our expected outcomes and in areas that will make the most significant impact.

Progress Reports

Quarterly progress will be reported to the Governing Board with annual outcome summaries for each pillar. A key focus in the reports will be data detailing compliance against the mandatory decision-making timelines, with specific details on the relevant period that may extend/pause the time period for specific reasons or by consent. The deliverables of this plan will also form part of the oversight and performance delivery agreement with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.





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