



Statement from Chairperson of An Bord Pleanála

16th August 2022

The Chairperson of An Bord Pleanála, Dave Walsh, has noted the Minister's statement yesterday evening (15 August) in respect of his decision to refer to the Director of Public Prosecutions, to the Garda Commissioner and the Standards in Public Office Commission the report prepared by Senior Counsel, Remy Farrell, in respect of a number of issues relating to the former Deputy Chairperson, Mr. Paul Hyde. The Chairperson and Board are committed to fully co-operating with these public bodies in determining whether further action is required arising from the report's findings. Pending the completion of this assessment which may result in legal proceedings, it would not be appropriate to comment any further on this matter.

The Chairperson confirmed that the Board is in the process of finalising its own internal review into certain issues and allegations raised with it and he will be providing a report to the Minister shortly on the analysis and findings of this review, as well as information on any proposed actions to be taken, including, in particular measures, to strengthen the effectiveness of the Board's existing controls, protocols, procedures and systems to manage potential conflicts of interest.

Mr Walsh also acknowledged the interim steps that have already been taken by the Board, inter alia, to strengthen and more transparently document the procedures already in place in respect of identifying potential conflicts of interest. These interim reforms will be considered and reflected in the Board's ongoing review of its Code of Conduct. Furthermore, any matters or recommendations arising from the Office of the Planning Regulator's recently announced focussed review of An Bord Pleanála's systems and processes, which is expected to be completed before the end of the year, will be fully considered and addressed in the context of further strengthening our systems, procedures and controls.

The Chairperson welcomed the Minister's commitment to addressing the acute resource challenges facing the Board and acknowledges the supports provided to date in sanctioning posts under the current 2021-2022 Work Force Plan and in considering the additional resources and specialist expertise identified by the Board to assist in managing both the significant caseload currently lodged with An Bord Pleanála and the anticipated volume and complexity of applications and appeals over the coming months and years, including in relation to the new marine consent functions.

Finally, the Chairperson noted and endorsed the development of legislative proposals to reform and update the appointment process for Board members. The open and transparent recruitment of suitable candidates who can add to the Board's broad range of expertise and society-wide perspectives will assist in ensuring an efficient and timely appointment process and reinforce our capacity to manage the substantial work before the Board.

ENDS