

Regional Planning Governance & Legislation



Department for

Infrastructure

An Roinn

Bonneagair

Department for

Infrastructure

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22 January 2026

Dear Colleagues

SECOND REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLANNING ACT (NI) 2011

The Department for Infrastructure has commenced preparatory work with regards to its second report on the review of the implementation of the Planning Act (NI) 2011 (the Act) as required by section 228(1)(b) of the Act. The purpose of this review (like the first) is to ensure continued oversight of the legislative framework underpinning the two-tier planning system, and to assess whether it remains appropriate and fit for purpose going forward in accordance with the associated Review Regulations¹.

The Department is required to publish the second review report within 5 years of the first report, which was published in January 2022². The second review report is therefore to be published before end of January 2027. The report deals with the implementation of the Act and is not an examination of the performance of the overall two-tier planning system.

The Review Regulations specify that a review must: consider the objectives intended to be achieved by the Planning Act; assess the extent to which those objectives have been achieved; and assess whether it is appropriate to retain, amend or repeal any of

¹ [The Planning Act 2011 \(Review\) Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2020](#)

² [Review of Planning Act \(NI\) 2011 | Department for Infrastructure](#)

the provisions of the Planning Act or subordinate legislation made under the 2011 Act, in order to achieve those objectives.

Given the councils' role in the implementation of the much of the Planning Act (NI) 2011 and associated subordinate legislation, I would very much appreciate your assessment, (in accordance with the Review Regulations), as to whether it would be appropriate to, amend or repeal any of the existing provisions, supported if possible, with additional information and/or evidence where available, including operational experience. A response at your earliest convenience but by 20th February 2026 would be very much appreciated.

In engaging with you at this time, the Department is seeking to build upon its existing body of evidence to assist the review, with a focus on supplementing that provided by Heads of Planning in response to the 2021 call-for-evidence associated with the first Review Report. Therefore, the focus of this second review is to bring forward any additional comments you wish to make.

For information, the Department has written similarly to other NI Departments and the Planning Appeals Commission which have responsibility for and/or exercise certain functions under the Act.

Regarding the broader picture and looking to the future, I can advise that the Department has commenced a scoping exercise to consider what the future of the planning system will look like in terms of regional and strategic planning policy, and a potential future Planning Bill. The former will explore whether our strategic 'framework', including the Regional Development Strategy, remains fit for purpose, while the latter will seek to advance issues that have emerged in recent years, through various reports and processes (including the planning improvement agenda and first review report), that can only be addressed through a change to primary legislation. In line with best practice, the Department will be looking to the other jurisdictions and their recent legislative and policy reforms for shared learning, and perspective on what is the best fit for our regional planning system.

I would also be happy to meet with you on this matter should you feel, this would be beneficial.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully

ROSEMARY DALY
Chief Planner & Director