

OPR-AILG Planning Training Webinar for Elected Members October 2021

‘How to Implement National Renewable Energy Targets in Development Plans’ Q&A Responses

Introduction:

A number of questions that elected members raised during the course of the October 2021 training webinar could not be answered during the ‘live’ Q&A session due to time constraints. However, responses to all questions have been collated and responses are set out hereunder. We would stress that the Minister and his Department are responsible for planning policy and responses should be considered in the context of the explanations of same.

Development Plans and Local Authorities

Question from Elected Member	Answer
<p>My experience during our CDP was that the council were very reluctant to be a lead on climate change within the development plan process.</p> <p>We must show the public that we are leaders and taking the whole green agenda seriously.</p> <p>Simple policy like planting a percentage native trees in areas could have been implemented, ensuring that green space zoning took place to future proof parks.</p> <p>We wanted to designate park and ride areas, car parks to keep cars off beaches and were prevented from doing it. Park land zoning was scaled back and we had to hold our ground to get just 80 acres in my town.</p> <p>We want areas designated as Special areas of conservation, areas prone to erosion looked at. These didn’t happen as it was more of an affordability issue.</p> <p>We had a presentation on Irish cement burning tyres to produce concrete no one had the expertise to look at emissions, PM etc and couldn’t answer my query on this.</p> <p>Hedgerows are being decimated all over the county with one off housing and there are no resources for planning enforcement and you</p>	<p>National policy on climate action has been developing rapidly in recent times and there will be a much greater level of interaction and co-ordination between climate and planning policies into the future.</p> <p>For example, local authority climate action plans and development plans will need to be in sync under the latest provisions of the Climate Action Act and forthcoming guidance will provide additional detail on how this will be achieved.</p> <p>The OPR’s assessment of plans has also been focused on their climate action aspects.</p> <p>It is also fair to say that detailed data on the climate implications of different patterns of development has been difficult to obtain but research is advancing quickly in this area at national and EU levels.</p> <p>Co-ordination of all local authority development plan reviews to a single timeline has always been difficult given their various existing timescales.</p> <p>Nevertheless, adoption of the National Planning Framework in May 2018, following a pause in plan making while the NPF was being formulated, has in part re-set the timelines and</p>

<p>can't put a cut down or destroyed hedgerow back in place afterwards.</p> <p>Some talk about the climate crisis because it's the in thing but won't make the hard decisions that we need to make now to ensure that our economy is resilient in the future local knowledge isn't taken into account, councillors need additional training on climate and the public need to be listened to.</p> <p>Public consultation is key and this hasn't been listened to. So my question is why aren't development plans all done at the same time? This would make it easier to implement policy across the state.</p>	<p>most, if not all, local authorities are engaged in plan review processes.</p> <p>The above has significantly enhanced the scope for alignment across the various development plan review processes.</p> <p>The current plans are the first in this new regime and in time it is expected that the alignment will be further improved.</p> <p>It must also be acknowledged that the plan-making process does allow for a certain amount of local flexibility on the internal timelines for making a plan.</p> <p>For example public consultation periods are set in terms of both maxima and minima, meaning that it is unlikely to be feasible that all plans would run on the exact same course. Indeed this would pose practical difficulties for prescribed authorities, elected members and the public in engaging and participating in the plan-making process, if every plan were on the exact same timetable.</p>
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Portlaoise Low Carbon Town

Question from Elected Member	Answer
<p>Can you tell us more about the set up at the remote working hubs? Are they in place already, are they council run, how many workers can they (each) facilitate, how does someone book a desk, what amenities are available (broadband, video conferencing etc)?</p>	<p>County Laois has a total of six remote working hubs which are located in the following towns:</p> <p>2no. in Portlaoise 1no. in Mountmellick 1no. in Mountrath 1no. in Portarlinton 1no. in Rathdowney</p> <p>Each of these units are privately/community run facilities which were completed with the assistance of funding from the Department. Laois Leader and/or Laois County Council.</p> <p>They each offer a variety of hot desks/individual office spaces/training facilities/industrial units.</p> <p>Further information is available in the MidlandsIreland.ie publication on 'Remote Working and Co-Working Spaces'. This publication provides details on the co-working</p>

	facilities available in the midlands and the costs associated with same.
How much of the €150 million has been committed? And from where?	This was an estimated cost of €150m referred to for implementing hypothetical renewable solutions for the town. There is no money committed for these solutions as of yet.