

# **PACWAC & Dfi RPD Meeting**

**Thursday 29 September 2022**

**@3pm**

**Via Zoom**

## **Agenda**

1. Introductions – Dfi, PAC
2. DFI update
3. PAC update
4. AOB

# **Dfl Planning and PAC Meeting**

## **Thursday 29th September 2022**

### **Attendees:**

Angus Kerr (Dfl)

Andrea Kells (PAC)

Mairead Philips (DoJ)

██████████ (Dfl notes)

### **1. Welcome and introductions**

Angus welcomed everyone to the meeting. Angus advised that the Minister may be leaving soon and this would impact on what the Department could do. There was some discussion about recent referrals going to PAC from planning. Angus to check with Alistair if anymore are to be expected.

### **2. Dfl Update**

#### **Planning Improvement Agenda**

Angus informed that work is ongoing and that he had sent Andrea the draft joint work programme for information. Angus said that the Minister had approved a PI work programme for discussion with local government and the setup of a Regional planning Commission. The Commission will have an independent advisory role to look at planning issues. It will be independently chaired with representatives from various planning stakeholders. Angus said it is still to be discussed with the councils. Angus raised the issue of PAC involvement and if this would be appropriate. Andrea to look into this. As suggested at the previous meeting Angus to write formally to Andrea to set up a meeting to discuss engagement with the PAC going forward.

#### **Review of Plan Policy for Renewable and Low Carbon Energy**

Angus said that work is progressing and that the public consultation is on target for the end of the year. Andrea said she would be content to liaise on this to highlight lessons learned in the appeal context, at an appropriate time.

#### **Planning IT System**

Angus advised that the portal is on target to go live in November. Andrea informed that the PAC IT system went live this week. Mairead advised that she had been liaising with Ciara Reville regrading interfacing.

Angus also informed that he had met with the new OEP. Andrea said she expected engagement soon.

### **3. PAC Update**

Andrea advised that their Annual Report had been published recently. Andrea commented that Dalraidian had been a big focus on their resource recently and so it would be useful to know of anything else coming from planning in terms of referred

cases. Andrea also advised that recommendations had issued on a number of EIA Determination Appeals highlighting the impact of the Environmental Governance work that had been undertaken by Scott. She will keep Dfl informed.

Andrea said they planned to have stakeholder engagement on the operating model of different work streams. This would take the form of a questionnaire published on their website and it would be sent to Dfl and the councils.

Andrea also advised that their office move was due to take place in November.

### **Actions**

- Angus to write to Andrea formally to setup a formal meeting to discuss engagement with the PAC going forward.
- Next meeting to be arranged for December 2022 with possible office tour.

**PACWAC & Dfi RPD Meeting**  
**Wednesday 14 December 2022**  
**@2pm**

**Agenda**

1. Introductions – Dfi, PAC
2. DFI update
3. PAC update
4. AOB

**DfI Planning and PAC Meeting**  
**Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> December 2022**  
**4<sup>th</sup> Floor, 92 Ann Street, Belfast**

**Attendees:**

Angus Kerr (DfI)

Scott Symington (DfI)

Andrea Kells (PAC)



**1. Welcome and introductions**

Andrea welcomed everyone to the meeting. Angus advised that he would be leaving his current post from 16<sup>th</sup> January 2023 moving to the Regeneration and Housing Team in DfC. His temporary successor in DfI will be confirmed in the coming weeks.

**2. DfI Update**

**Planning Improvement Agenda**

Angus informed that work is ongoing and that the first workshop with local government to discuss planning improvement is taking place on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2022.

As suggested in the previous meeting Angus stated that there was an opportunity for the Commission to be involved.

It was agreed that Andrea would liaise with Scott to agree some possible dates for future engagement on this issue.

**Planning Application Validation Checklists**

Angus informed that in England and Wales, councils were able to identify their own planning application checklists, which addressed 'poor quality' or 'incomplete' applications entering their planning system and enabled them to process planning applications more quickly. Angus noted that the dispute process in each jurisdiction was slightly different.

Angus described that a similar process had been piloted in Belfast and was found to be successful. The Department was proposing to amend the Planning (General Development Procedure) Order (NI) 2015 to provide for the wider introduction of this process to local authorities. Angus advised that the public consultation seeking stakeholders' views on this proposal was open until 6<sup>th</sup> January 2023.

Angus stated he would share the detail of the Belfast pilot with Andrea and would formally write to the Commission to engage their views on this issue.

## **Environmental Governance Guidance**

Scott advised that Dfl has issued practice guidance on Environmental Impact Assessment screening to relevant parties and was rolling out training to councils and statutory consultees

## **Climate Change Act**

This is being led by DAERA and Dfl will have input into this. Andrea indicated that it may indirectly have an impact on the work of PAC. Angus advised it may lead to a review of the SPPS and, as per previous discussions, Dfl would value PAC's input. Andrea outlined that Commissioners are not policy makers but could provide lessons learned. It was agreed that, at the time of public consultation, the Department could write to the PAC to this effect.

## **Planning IT System**

The new IT system went live on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2022 and in early February 2023 an upgrade would be issued which would address any bugs identified in the live environment. Regarding interfacing with the PAC IT system, Dfl hoped to be able to provide a timeframe for this to be implemented within the next week. Peter Rice to be contacted for the updated position.

### **3. PAC Update**

Andrea advised that PAC's recent office move and introduction of the new IT system had been extremely resource intensive and this continued to be the case as PAC worked to address snags with premises and test the new system.

Andrea updated Dfl on recent changes of personnel in the secretariat.

A recruitment exercise had been completed for senior Commissioners, with one vacancy being filled and a second remaining outstanding. Further recruitment for new Commissioners is expected shortly.

Andrea noted that the operating capacity of the Commission was impacted by the training of new commissioners.

Andrea said that PAC have issued their stakeholder engagement questionnaire via the website and directly to councils, planning authorities and statutory consultees. Angus confirmed that he had received this and had shared with relevant colleagues in Dfl and will respond in due course.

Meeting concluded with a tour of the new PAC offices.

## **Actions**

- Andrea to liaise with Scott agree some possible dates for future engagement on the planning improvement process.