

Advisory Group for the National Planning Framework

Terms of Reference

Background / Summary

National Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework (NPF) will be the successor to the National Spatial Strategy 2002 (NSS). It will be the long-term, 20 year strategy for the spatial development of Ireland that will promote a better quality of life for all, with sustainable economic growth and an environment of the highest quality as key underlying principles. The NPF will influence regional strategies and city/county development plans as it will be the central planning policy document for the Country and through this it will provide a clear vision to guide future development and investment decisions.

The National Planning Framework will provide the strategic context for identification of nationally strategic development requirements for the growth of and investment in cities, towns and rural areas in terms of employment, future population change, and associated housing and commercial development. It seeks to do this by providing guidance and a framework for:

- Future population and employment growth and their sustainable development.
- Spatial planning of urban and rural areas, including distinctions between the differing roles of settlements.
- Investment in critical national infrastructure to support sustainable growth.
- Planning at regional and local levels including the co-ordination of regional spatial and economic strategies and city and county development plans.
- Co-operation and coordination across international borders, including our territorial waters.
- Approaches and measures to reduce and mitigate environmental impacts, greenhouse gas emissions and address the necessity of adaptation to climate change.

Organisational Structures for the NPF

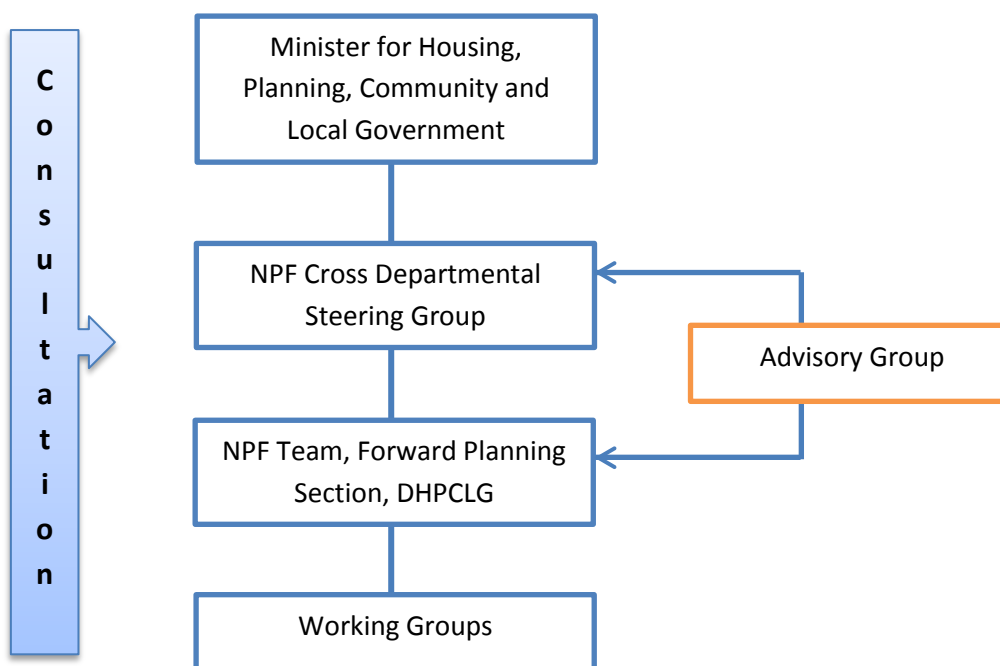
It is considered that the NPF should be a strategic and concise document informed by effective public participation and cross-departmental/agency structures to ensure buy-in with regard to its implementation.

A core objective of the preparation of the NPF will be to ensure that as well as the wider public, all relevant stakeholders are consulted and encouraged to contribute to the process of the framework's preparation. Consequently, the consultative process has been designed and structured to engage effectively in order to ensure meaningful, informative and timely contributions to its preparation. To this end the NPF process is being led by the Department for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government and overseen by a High Level Cross Departmental Steering Group.

In addition, and as outlined in the NPF Roadmap¹ it has been proposed that an Advisory Committee (herein referred to as an Advisory Group) is established to ensure the participation of relevant non-governmental organisations, professional bodies and technical experts in the process. It is intended that the Advisory Group will be the effective link to facilitate the participation of a range of interests under the broad umbrellas of economic, environment, social and knowledge sectors while maintaining flexibility to incorporate other sectors as appropriate within the consultative forum.

A dedicated NPF Unit within the Department has been established to support the overall process of preparing the new strategy, including compliance with legal requirements under the EU Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Directives.

Figure 1: Organisational Structure: Advisory Group



Approach

Purpose of the Advisory Group

The purpose of the Advisory Group is to harness the potential and capacity of a broad range of sectors including representation from the business, environmental, social and knowledge based sectors to guide strategic thinking and decision-making in the preparation of the National Planning Framework. The Advisory Group will also inform the work of the Cross Departmental Steering Group and provide updates, reports or recommendations as required.

Role of Advisory Group

The role of the Group is to:

- Utilise professional and business acumen to provide advice on the strategic direction of the National Planning Framework (NPF) and consider issues in a national context.

¹ Towards a National Planning Framework- A Roadmap for the Delivery of the National Planning Framework 2016, December 2015.

- Provide a platform in which to develop, test, review and refine ideas, growth scenarios and policy which will inform the NPF and expected outcomes.
- Make recommendations and provide feedback to assist in shaping the preparation, content and implementation of the NPF.
- Utilise expertise, resources and relationships of representatives and to provide data and material, where relevant, to inform discussions and ideas in the preparation of the NPF.
- Assist and advise on alignment and linkages with other relevant initiatives/sectors.

Membership and Representation

The Advisory Group is representative of a broad range of sectors who are considered to have the capacity to contribute in a significant way to the preparation and implementation of the NPF. The Group shall be made up of a Chair and individual representatives of various sectoral interests relevant to the NPF.

The Advisory Group is made up of a significant number of people (excluding the Chairperson) to ensure effective representation.

The Chairperson will preside at the meetings of the Advisory Group. If the Chairperson is absent from a meeting, the Members of the Group shall choose a member from among those present to preside as Acting-Chairperson.

The Group will meet every 2-3 months and will convene extra meetings as required.

The Inception Meeting of the Advisory Group will take place on 1st December 2016 and will remain in place until a final draft of the NPF is completed. Following approval of the NPF by the Oireachtas, the role, function and requirements of the Advisory Group will be reviewed by the Minister/Cross Departmental Steering Group.

Secretariat

Secretariat services for the Advisory Group will be provided by the Forward Planning section of the Department.

In order to conduct its business efficiently and to minimise costs, the Advisory Group should seek to operate through electronic means whenever possible.

Responsibilities of the Advisory Group

The Chair shall:

- Have responsibility for running meetings efficiently and encourage open communication where all members contribute effectively.
- Work with the Advisory Group to develop and complete the Group's work and oversee agendas, minutes and post-meeting communication.
- Work with the appointed secretariat in a positive and effective manner.
- Act as spokesperson for the Advisory Group, representing the views and recommendations of the Group and representing the Advisory Group in any meetings with the Minister or Cross Departmental Group.

The Advisory Group will be:

- Provided with meaningful information in a timely manner in advance of meetings.

- Given reasonable time to make recommendations.
- Operating on the basis of a collective approach rather than sectoral interests considering that appointment to the Group is on the basis of knowledge, interest or representation of a sector, and while this may shape opinions, those interests must not supersede the role of the Advisory Group.

The membership of the Advisory Group will commit to:

- Attending all scheduled Advisory Group meetings and where this is not possible, to arrange for an alternate;
- Sharing relevant information and communicating with other Advisory Group members;
- Making timely recommendations and take action so as to assist with the expedient preparation and delivery of the NPF;
- Working with the Department in relation to particular areas of analysis or research required;
- All matters relating to the work of the Advisory Group as part of the National Planning Framework are strictly confidential and shall not be disclosed by any member in any manner or form, directly or indirectly, to any person or entity.

November 2016