



RTPI Ireland

mediation of space · making of place

Annual Report 2015

Introduction by the Chair, Conor Norton



This short report presents the highlights of the year. It aims to show our members and our stakeholders what we have achieved in 2015.

This is an important time for planning in Ireland. We have seen the publication of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act this year whilst a Bill looking to establish a new planning Regulator is being progressed. We are in the midst of a review of An Bord Pleanála and

there will be a General Election next year.

This year has been an interesting and challenging one. We have worked hard to engage with the immediate issues on new legislation and the review of An Bord Pleanála, but we have also aimed to look ahead through undertaking work on a manifesto for next year's election. I also recently launched a programme we want to take forward in 2016 exploring how we can have a national discussion to stimulate thinking on change that is required in taking forward a new planning system for Ireland that is fit for the future. Watch this space on that!

Throughout the year we have been looking to be on 'the front foot' and have introduced new things such as our member Open Forums that allow us to discuss key issues whilst our study visit to Scotland helped us to see what can be learned from practice elsewhere. And, on a personal note, I was delighted that Dublin Institute of Technology became the third RTPI accredited institution in Ireland.

My thanks go to the RTPI Ireland Executive Committee who have been of great support throughout the year in terms of helping take things forward and for sharing their expertise and knowledge.

Conor Norton MRTPI



Policy and Public Affairs

Planning Bills

We have engaged in the Bills promoted by the Government on planning issues. As part of this, we organised a Member Open Forum to discuss what was then known as “Bill 1” to help us to develop clear lines. We published a briefing paper on this and wrote to the Chair of Environment Committee offering to discuss this with him and the Committee.

We also organised a Member Open Forum session looking at “Bill 2” which has helped us to discuss the key issues involved such as the Planning Regulator. We have also sent a joint letter with IPI to DOECLG advising on ways that the Bill can secure professional recognition for qualified planners, including a definition of ‘Chartered Planner’. We believe that this would go some way to providing confidence in the profession in the aftermath of the Mahon Tribunal.

Election Manifesto

Throughout the year we have had an eye towards the General Election and so have spent much of 2015 developing the messages that we want to promote to politicians and political parties so that we can be on ‘the front foot’ when the election is announced. We will be promoting those messages to all political parties with aim of presenting planning as positive and important tool that can help them to achieve their objectives. The key themes we will be promoting are based around the need to:

- provide a quality home for everyone who needs one
- ensure that planning authorities have the resources they need
- support communities to shape the place they live in
- support and protect villages, towns and city centres
- invest in infrastructure
- create great places for people
- set out a clear, integrated framework for energy
- establish an independent and adequately resourced Planning Regulator

Consultations

We have responded to a number of consultations or reviews, including:

- The Department of Finance’s consultation on The Potential of Taxation Measures to Encourage Development of Zoned and Serviced Land
- DOECLG’s consultation on the arrangements relating to prescribed bodies under article 28 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001-2015
- The review of Review of An Bord Pleanála

Review of An Bord Pleanála

RTPI Ireland was delighted that RTPI Legal Associate Gregory Jones was appointed to lead the review of An Bord Pleanála. We submitted written evidence and were called to give oral evidence in November. Our response highlighted the impeccable reputation of ABP and discusses issues including independence and impartiality; the appointment of the Chair and Board; corporate governance; management; decision making processes; oral hearings; skills; relationship with the proposed Regulator; and performance.



Financial Viability

RTPI Ireland Immediate Past Chair Marion Chalmers has been at the forefront taking forward work looking at financial viability in planning. This is being taken forward along with Chartered Surveyors Ireland, IPI and NAMA. A meeting was held with DOECLG on how best to take this forward and work is ongoing looking at developing key principles, models and approaches that can be taken forward.

MyPlan

Executive Committee member John Bradley continues to represent the Institute on the MyPlan Project Board. However, in view of staff changes in the Department, progress on this very important project has been delayed. RTPI Ireland continues to support the delivery of the MyPlan Project Board objectives.

ECTP

On the international front, Noel Riordan has represented RTPI Ireland on the European Council of Town Planners (ECTP). The ECTP Biennial Conference was held in Dublin in October with the lead organisation being the IPI. Our Chair, Conor Norton, chaired a session at the event as did our President Janet Askew.

Research

We have published research that we commissioned UCC to undertake into the analytical and research needs of planners in Ireland. The report sets out some key principles for planning research in Ireland, namely:

- The primary goal of a planning research agenda is to ensure that sufficient and appropriate evidence and data is available to support the work of planners in the pursuit of proper planning and sustainable development in Ireland.
- Informed by the key concerns of both the contextual needs of planning practice and the exploratory and theoretical concerns of the planning academy, the planning research agenda needs to be promoted widely in the public sphere.
- Framing the on-going priorities for the planning research agenda – and then promoting it - is the joint responsibility of a number of agencies in the public, professional and academic sectors.
- Planning research of all kinds should be verifiable and robust, and all research funded by public agencies should be in the public domain. The impact of planning research becomes significant only when it is well disseminated among the main actors in the planning field
- Who carries out research in planning, or who holds the evidence, is less important than the quality and relevance of the research produced. Producers of planning research of all kinds should aim to pool their outputs in a common repository.

It also establishes a number of priorities including:

- The Post-Mahon climate for planning in Ireland
- Post-recession realities and the contribution of planning
- Evidence-led decisions about land use, viability and land supply
- The office of the planning regulator
- New national planning framework and the new regions
- Integrating spatial and economic policy



- Urbanisation and settlement shrinkage
- Water and wastewater
- Energy
- Landscape

In 2016 we will be looking to disseminate and discuss how best to take this forward.

RTPI Ireland has also contributed to a number of broader research papers published by the Institute. An example of this is the RTPI Paper on strategic planning which includes specific recommendations for Ireland.

CPD and Events

We changed the way in which we deliver CPD this year and focused more on member Open Forums which allowed the Executive Committee and members to hear about key issues and then engage in discussion to help RTPI Ireland develop its thinking and how to take them forward. We held 2 open forums in the year, each looking at Planning Bill 1 and Planning Bill 2. They proved to be very popular and we will be taking more forward in 2016.

In September we organised a study visit and fact finding tour to Edinburgh and Glasgow to explore the Scottish planning framework. It was felt that this would be useful given the proposed Irish National Planning Framework and its nod to the Scottish version. The visit involved discussion and presentation from the Assistant Chief Planner in Scottish Government, the Chief Executive of Planning Aid Scotland, the Policy and Practice officer in RTPI Scotland, a Manager of a Strategic Planning Authority, the Head of Planning in Glasgow City Council the Head of Urbanism at Architecture and Design Scotland and private consultants. It covered the Scottish National Planning Framework, Strategic and Local Development Plans, community engagement, design and development management. A report of the visit has been drawn up.

Our annual dinner took place on 12 November where Chair, Conor Norton, outlined how we would be leading a national discussion to stimulate thinking on change that is required in taking forward a new planning system for Ireland that is fit for the future. We will be kicking this off in the New Year. Guest at the dinner included Niall Cussen from DOECLG and RTPI Chief Executive Trudi Elliott.

Communications

We have worked to improve our communications and have sent out regular e-bulletins keeping members up to date with our work, forthcoming events and policy consultations. Our Twitter account @RTPIIreland now has around 530 followers. We have regularly updated our web pages so that they become the key place to keep in touch with RTPI Ireland activity. We have also been working to ensure that Irish planning issues are given more prominence in The Planner magazine and other RTPI publications.

As part of this we published a number of news releases including those on:

- the publication of the Planning Policy Statement and outline of the Planning and Development (No. 2) Bill 2014
- the review of ABP
- a specific Irish release on the RTPI Strategic Planning paper



- the RTPI President's visit to Dublin
- Grangegorman being presented with the President's special award

Education

We are delighted that this year saw planning courses at Dublin Institute of Technology receive accreditation from RTPI. These are the Undergraduate BSc in Spatial Planning and Postgraduate MSc in Spatial Planning. This means we now have accredited planning courses in Ireland at DIT, UCD and UCC.

The year has also seen visits to both UCD and UCC by RTPI representatives to speak to students about RTPI and career planning through outlining the role of the Institute and the different players involved across the public, private and voluntary sectors.

RTPI has created a new bursary for places on accredited University planning Masters courses. It is open to students from any discipline including law, politics, geography or architecture who decide to choose planning as a career. We were delighted that both UCD and UCC have participated in this scheme. RTPI President Janet Askew visited UCD where she talked to staff and students and presented bursaries funded by RTPI and UCD to Postgraduate students Sam Wallace and Luke Wymer. She also congratulated Dr Mick Lennon for winning the Early Career Research award at the RTPI Awards for Research Excellence.

Our Annual dinner in November saw the presentation of student awards to Hannah Breshears at UCD and Cathal Brennan in UCC.

Ireland's Voice in the Institute

RTPI Ireland continues to be an important part of the Institute. An acknowledgement of this was the fact that the Dublin Institute of Technology's campus by Grangegorman Development Agency was been awarded the President's Special Award by the RTPI in November. In presenting the award Cath Ranson, RTPI President 2014-15, said

"This project is an exemplar of quality masterplanning and attention to detail. There are many facets that deserve to be recognised: the ability to use planning to create places that reach out and serve different socio-economic groups, the creative use of a formerly closed site which now supports mixed activities and services for students and the wider community, the design of good public transport connections, the quality of heritage conservation, and the use of the arts to enhance the public and student interface. "In all of this, the role of planning has been instrumental in ensuring urban improvements have the legacy to improve lives."

In October RTPI President Janet Askew visited Dublin to talk to Irish planners about their specific needs and challenges. Janet met with Acting City Planner, John O'Hara, and Council staff who outlined the work being undertaken on the new Dublin City Plan. The key issue was about delivering housing to meet high levels of need and making sure it was of a high quality. There was then a visit to Dublin Docklands where Deirdre Scully outlined the Strategic Development Zone model used to redevelop the area. A tour demonstrated high quality design and a mixed use neighbourhood which had a real buzz. Janet had also been invited to have lunch with An Bord Pleanála and visited UCD.



RTPI Ireland continues to spread our influence within the Institute. Our Immediate Past Chair Marion Chalmers sits on the Institute's Board of Trustees. Marion also sits on the Institute's General Assembly along with Rosemary Gibbons. We also have representatives on a number of key RTPI Committees:

- Policy, Practice and Research Committee– John Downie
- Education and Lifelong Learning Committee – Marion Chalmers and Jonathan Hall
- Membership and Ethics Committee – Rosemary Gibbons
- International Committee – Philip Jackson
- Regions and Nations Panel – Conor Norton

This has allowed RTPI Ireland to engage with and influence key issues such as the RTPI's review of its routes to membership and the future RTPI research programme.

Executive Committee

The 2015 Executive Committee was:

- Conor Norton, Chair
- Berna Grist, Vice Chair
- Marion Chalmers, Immediate Past Chair
- Eamonn Kelly, Honorary Secretary
- Jonathan Hall, Honorary Treasurer
- Rosemary Gibbons, Representative to RTPI General Assembly
- Noel Riordan, Representative to European Council of Town Planners
- Steven Baxter
- John Bradley
- John Downey
- Philip Jackson
- Thomas Maguire
- Dee McGrath
- Patrena Slowey
- Tomás Bradley
- Niall Byrne
- Niall Fitzpatrick

Our staff are:

- Catherine Bolster, Coordinator
- Craig McLaren, Director