



Corporate Plan 2025-26

Annex A Business Plan 2025-26
June 2025

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Annex A - Business Plan 2025-26

Priority: Focus on Performance

Objective 1:

To deliver a high-quality service that meets the needs of our customers. To achieve this, we will:

- Continue to reallocate cases as and when resources become available to ensure timely decision making. In all cases, the appellant will be notified if a reallocation has been made.
- Actively review the remaining long-standing cases to ensure they are delivered as soon as practically possible.
- Aim to ensure that new cases entering the system are issued in a timely fashion.
- Continue to invest in the training and development of our workforce.
- Continue to ensure that the quality of decisions is maintained.

Priority: Looking Forward

Objective 2:

To ensure that the organisation is placed in the best position to deal with future challenges we will:

- Aim to be at full operational capacity by 2026/27.
- Undertake customer engagement exercises.
- Continue discussions with our sponsor body regarding funding and resourcing.
- Respond to any recommendations arising from the publication of the Northern Ireland Audit Office report.
- Engage in meaningful outreach work to ensure all interested parties understand our role in the planning process.
- Implement updates to the website including updating the keyword facility.

In addition to these objectives, we have several cases in hand which we will deal with in line with the resources that we have available.

A total of 19 Hear and Report cases are in the system. There are 10 requests for public inquiries, six of these are referrals from the Department for Infrastructure (DfI). Four of those referred by the DfI are included in the Curraghinalt Project (Dalradian) conjoined public local inquiry (consisting of eight applications). These provide a particular challenge for the organisation, given the time and effort involved in organising and conducting a Public Inquiry of such magnitude. The remaining nine cases are requests for hearings, four of which challenge if Environmental Impact Assessments are required and the remaining are either regionally significant or called-in applications.

In respect of the above area of work, for the business year 2025/26 we intend to:

- Recommence the hearing sessions in relation to the Dalradian conjoined public inquiry (2021/C005, 2021/C006, 2021/C007, 2021/DR001, 2021/WHR01, 2021/WHR02, 2024/WHR01, 2024/WHR02).
- Issue decisions in respect of legal grounds for the enforcement cases linked to EIA hearing requests and schedule hearings in respect of the EIA determination if necessary.
- Conduct at least two other hearings and issue reports thereafter.
- Focus on improving the timeliness of appeal decisions.

The resourcing implications of the Dalradian Inquiry continue to pose a challenge. It is important that the Inquiry recommences at the earliest opportunity, but this is largely outside the control of the Commission and is subject to external factors which have caused delay. Whilst we have taken steps to allocate other Hear and Report cases in light of the suspension of all works on the Inquiry; we must be mindful of the implications of its recommencement on Commission resources in all forward planning.

We have made good progress in terms of improving upon the quantum of decisions issued and will now focus on the timeliness of decision making. We have made some progress to date but we acknowledge that it may not be possible to deliver on KPIs within the forthcoming year due to some longstanding cases which have yet to be delivered. We will use our best endeavours to improve on delivery timelines where these are within our control, subject to the resources we have available.