



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Library Service Briefing Note

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Planning Service in GB and ROI

Scotland

The following information was received from phone conversations with Research in the Scottish Parliament:

- There is no centralised planning service in Scotland, functions are operated by local authorities
- There is a small centralised body (The Directorate of the Built Environment) which deals with planning appeals, controversial cases, and produces guidance.
- Local authorities planning service is funded by block grants and tax from the government.
- Each planning service is operated uniquely depending on the local authority who decides on how much to run the service.
- Application fees are used to cover the cost of processing applications, producing draft plans etc.
- Any other functions are funded independently by the local authority.

Due to the fact that the planning functions in Scotland have been devolved to local authorities, Scottish Research has said that it is difficult to make comparisons between it and NI. Staffing models and funding of these models vary between individual local authorities, who make their own decisions on these issues. Each local authority receives grant aid and tax from central government, which goes towards their general functions and operations. They then decide how much of the funding they will allocate towards planning. Application fees do not contribute to functions such as staffing, they go towards the cost of dealing with the application and producing plans etc.

England and Wales

The situation is similar to Scotland.

- Application fees go towards the processing of applications and plans etc.
- The functions of the planning service are controlled by the local authorities. They decide on the amount of money they wish to put into the service.
- The central government body, the Planning Inspectorate, deals with planning appeals.
- Councils are encouraged to raise funds from developers through setting a Community Infrastructure Levy – this helps to speed up decision making. Proceeds from this new charge provide new infrastructure to support the new development. They do not contribute towards functions such as staffing.

Republic of Ireland

The following information came from conversations with a member of Research from the House of Oireachtas:

- The planning service is devolved to local planning authorities
- There is no centralised system, except for An Bord Pleanála who deals with appeals.
- The Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government have an over viewing role of the planning system, and develop and issue planning guidelines.

- Finance mostly comes from local government resources – two thirds from local government and one third from centralised government (which has created an issue amongst local authorities).
- Finance received, goes towards the general operation of the council, and then it is up to them to make decisions in relation to the amount of money allocated to their planning service.
- Application fees are used for the administration costs of processing an application (there has been an issue with fees not meeting the costs)

See DEHLG: [Resourcing the Planning System Consultation Paper](#) -especially p.5-9

- Similar to the charge in England, along with application fees, ROI require the payment of Development Contributions. If permission is granted to an application, then a contribution must be made to the council to go towards infrastructure and water supply to the development.