



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## Research and Information Service Briefing Paper

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# Planning Decision Times – comparison across the UK and Ireland

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A comparison of planning decision times across the UK jurisdictions and Ireland.

This information is provided to Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) in support of their duties, and is not intended to address the specific circumstances of any particular individual. It should not be relied upon as professional legal advice, or as a substitute for it.

# 1 Introduction

The following paper is in response to a request from the Infrastructure Committee for a comparison across the UK jurisdictions and Ireland on planning decision times.

The paper provides a snapshot of decision times in NI using statistics published by the Department for Infrastructure (DfI). Where possible, it provides some comparisons of the decision times with the other jurisdictions, highlighting some of the limitations in performing the exercise. The final section provides some additional information on more recent developments in relation to the planning systems in other jurisdictions.

# 2 Decision times in NI

The Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) Report on the review of the NI planning system highlighted the delay in decision-making, especially with most major applications not meeting statutory decision-making targets. In fact, the report stated that it appears that the planning system in Northern Ireland is slower than in other jurisdictions.<sup>1</sup>

In terms of planning performance in relation to decision times, NI statistical bulletins report against targets under [the Local Government \(Performance Indicators and Standards\) Order 2015](#) (Sch 4). These are 15 weeks for minor applications and 30 weeks for major applications from date valid<sup>2</sup> to decision/withdrawal.

The latest finalised annual statistics for [April 2024 to March 2025](#) show that:

- The average processing time<sup>3</sup> for local applications from the validation date to a decision or withdrawal was 19 weeks across all councils. This exceeds the 15 week target and represents a decrease of 1.8 weeks

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<sup>1</sup> NI Audit Office (2022) [Planning in Northern Ireland](#) p.28

<sup>2</sup> When all accompanying information is received as outlined Art 3 [The Planning \(General Development Procedure\) Order \(Northern Ireland\) 2015](#)

<sup>3</sup> Times are taken from the valid date, to a decision or withdrawal date: [Northern Ireland Planning Statistics - Statistical Bulletin](#) p.13 (minor), p.14 (major), p.9 (RSD).

from the previous year. Three of the 11 councils met the 15 week target in 2024/25<sup>4</sup>.

- The average processing time for major applications during 2024/25 was 39.6 weeks across all councils; this is the lowest annual processing time since the transfer of planning powers. While exceeding the 30 week target, this represents a decrease of 6.9 weeks compared with the previous year. Five of the 11 councils met the 30 week target in 2024/25.<sup>5</sup>
- Of the five Regionally Significant Development (RSD) applications live in the planning system at the end of March 2025, all have exceeded the 30 week period (two at ministerial recommendation stage, three awaiting)<sup>6</sup>. For further detail on the RSD process see: [Department's Determination of Applications | Department for Infrastructure](#).
- There were 9,716 planning applications received in Northern Ireland (NI) during 2024/25, a 3% decrease from the previous year.
- Comparing these annual figures with [annual 2014/15](#) (pre-reform) figures<sup>7</sup>: in 2014/15 the average processing time for local applications was three weeks quicker at 16 weeks<sup>8</sup>, and 3.6 weeks quicker for major applications at 36 weeks<sup>9</sup>. Higher amounts of applications were received with 12,864 in 2014/15<sup>10</sup>.
- However, other factors need to be considered when making comparisons on decision times, such as, delays due to new processes and systems (e.g. new Planning Portal/ IT system) since reform, quality of applications etc.

More recent [provisional 2025 quarterly](#) statistics for [April to June](#) and [July to September](#) 2025 show that:

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<sup>4</sup> DfI (June 2025) [Northern Ireland Planning Statistics – Annual Statistical Bulletin April 2024 to March 2025](#) p.3

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Ibid p.9

<sup>7</sup> Also see: [Northern Ireland planning reform ten years on: mission accomplished?](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Northern Ireland planning statistics 2014/15 annual bulletin](#) p.18/20

<sup>9</sup> Ibid p.20

<sup>10</sup> Ibid p.1

- Major application processing times have continued to improve since the annual figures, with 30 weeks and 34 weeks respectively.
- Local applications have not improved with 19.8 and 19.4 respectively compared to 19 weeks for the annual figures.
- RSD applications continue to exceed the 30 week period.
- So far each quarter in 2025 has seen nearly a 2% decrease in the number of applications received from the previous quarter.

**Members may wish to ask for:**

- Clarity around why decision times appear to have increased since reform of the planning system almost 10 years ago.
- Clarity around the continued lack of improvement in local planning applications, and what factors may be contributing to this?
- What measures/actions is the Department taking to address this (which may come under the Planning Improvement Programme)?
- Clarity around the annual and quarterly decreasing trend in the number of applications received. What may be causing this? Could this have an impact on decision times going forward?

### 3 Comparison with other jurisdictions

The following section considers the processing/decision times for planning applications across Northern Ireland, the other UK regions and Ireland. The categories of applications referred to are minor applications (or local/non-major as sometimes referred to in other jurisdictions), major applications and regionally significant development (or nationally significant infrastructure development etc as referred to in other jurisdictions).

For the purpose of consistency and to give a more complete picture, this section refers to the latest annual statistics (at the time of writing) for each jurisdiction as referenced in [Northern Ireland Planning Statistics Background and User Guidance Document](#) (p.12):

- **Northern Ireland** - April 2024 to March 2025: [Planning activity statistics | Department for Infrastructure](#) (as discussed previously in section 2).
- **England** - Year ending Sept 2025: [Planning Performance Dashboard Year Ending September 2025](#) at [Planning applications statistics - GOV.UK](#). 2024/25 statistics published for England are in quarterly form so a simple average<sup>11</sup> was taken across the four quarters from April 2024 - March 2025.
- **Wales** - January to March 2025: [development-management-quarterly-survey-january-to-march-2025.ods](#) (Tables 1 and 6) at [Development management quarterly surveys | GOV.WALES](#). Similar to England, a simple average was taken across the four quarters (April 2024 to March 2025 in Tables 1 and 6).
- **Scotland** - Annual 2024/25 [Planning Applications Statistics 2024/2025: Annual and Yearend \(October 2024 to March 2025\)](#) at [Planning statistics - gov.scot](#)
- **Ireland** – 2023 [Annual Planning Applications 2009 onwards](#) at [Planning Statistics](#).

### 3.1 Caveats

The paper uses the most recent annual published statistics on planning and planning decisions across the different jurisdictions at the time of writing. However, it appears that not all regions categorise and present data in the same way which makes direct comparison difficult. For example:

- The paper refers to the latest annual reports from April 2024-March 2025. However, the latest for Ireland is 2023. England and Wales publish quarterly reports only (so the (simple) average across the four quarters from April 2024 to March 2025 was calculated).
- Targets may be presented in different forms across the jurisdictions, making direct comparison difficult. For example, NI, Scotland and Wales

provide both an average in weeks (days for Wales<sup>12</sup>) and the percentage meeting targets. England and Ireland only provide the percentage of decisions made within the statutory targets.

- While NI, Scotland and Wales appear to be the most comparable by providing an average time in weeks/days, this may mean different things in each of the jurisdictions, making direct comparison of these figures difficult, for example:
  - The average may be calculated differently, as either the mean or median value. The median is likely to be smaller than the mean, as the mean can be affected by extreme values.<sup>13</sup>
  - NI refers to average 'processing time' in weeks (when the application is deemed valid to when a decision or withdrawal is made), whereas Scotland refers to average 'decision time' from validation to decision (no mention of withdrawal). Wales refers to '*average time to determine planning applications*' from date received.
  - The starting points may not be the same e.g. starting from validation in NI and Scotland (when all accompanying information is received<sup>14</sup>) may be different to Wales where it is the date when the application is received.
- Most give a breakdown between minor (or local/ non-major) and major. Apart from Ireland and Wales, where an overall figure is given, and a breakdown between the two categories does not appear to be presented.
- England is slightly different as it provides data for both district and county level decisions. For consistency with other jurisdictions, the paper only refers to district level decisions as they provide decisions made within the

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<sup>12</sup> Wales actually report in days but these have been converted to weeks for purposes of analysis.

<sup>13</sup> In NI the 'average' is calculated via the median [Northern Ireland Planning Statistics Background and User Guidance Document](#) (p.9). In Scotland they use both the mean and median (though headline figures seem to be the mean) [Planning Applications Statistics 2024/2025: Annual and Yearend \(October 2024 to March 2025\)](#) (p.15). The Welsh survey does not explicitly state whether it uses the mean or the median.

<sup>14</sup> Scottish Gov (Dec 2025) [Planning Applications Statistics 2024/2025: Annual and Yearend \(October 2024 to March 2025\)](#) p.26

target period only. However, county level only gives decisions within the target or agreed time (between an applicant and authority).

- Differences in how regionally significant / strategic infrastructure development applications are categorised, scaled and recorded across the jurisdictions.

In summary two of the jurisdictions (England and Ireland) use a different measurement style altogether (percentage within target), while the other two (Scotland and Wales) on the surface appear more comparable, but have differences which make direct comparisons difficult.

### 3.1 Overview

Table 1 provides an overview of each jurisdiction in terms of the statistical dates used for minor/local and major planning applications, the targets and the times taken to process/make a decision by the local planning authorities. It also provides for regionally/nationally significant applications, most of which are determined by the respective Ministers/Secretary of State.

**Table1: Planning decision targets and times across jurisdictions**

Region	Dates	Minor/ local Target	Minor/ local	Major target	Major	Regionally/ Nationally Significant Dev targets	Regionally/ Nationally Significant Dev Decisions
NI	<a href="#">April 2024- March 2025</a>	15 weeks from date valid <sup>15</sup> .	<b>Over target</b> with av 19 weeks 42.1% within target <sup>16</sup>	30 weeks from date valid <sup>17</sup> .	<b>Over target</b> with av 39.6 weeks. 42.6% within target <sup>18</sup>	<a href="#">Regionally Significant Development</a> (RSD) processed by DfI: <a href="#">30 weeks</a> from validation date to Ministerial recommendation.	5 RSD applications in the system - <b>all over the 30 week target.</b>  Renewable energy applications – 45.6 weeks (2024/25) <sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> As stated in the statistical report [Northern Ireland Planning Statistics – Annual Statistical Bulletin April 2024 to March 2025](#) and [The Local Government \(Performance Indicators and Standards\) Order 2015](#) (Sch 4) see section 4 of this paper for more detail.

<sup>16</sup> NI planning statistics 2024/25 annual statistical tables [Table 4.2.6](#)

<sup>17</sup> As stated in the statistical report [Northern Ireland Planning Statistics – Annual Statistical Bulletin April 2024 to March 2025](#)

<sup>18</sup> NI planning statistics 2024/25 annual statistical tables [Table 3.2.6](#)

<sup>19</sup> NI planning statistics 2024/25 annual statistical tables [Table 7.2.6+](#)



<b>England</b>	<a href="#">April 2024-March 2025</a> <sup>20</sup>	<a href="#">8 weeks</a> from date received. (16 if EIA required)	40.8% within target <sup>21</sup>	<a href="#">13 weeks</a> from date received. (16 if EIA required)	19.5% within target <sup>22</sup> . Av of 28 weeks (2023 figure reported by <a href="#">UK Gov</a> 2024). <sup>23</sup>	<a href="#">Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects</a> (NSIP): require consent from Planning Inspectorate and SoS (includes reserved scale projects Wales see s.5.2).  The Government expects that decisions should be delivered within <a href="#">17 months</a> of an application being submitted.	7 NSIPs currently at decision stage (while more at earlier stages): From date application form submitted - 3 just over the 17 months (2 submitted early 2024, one submitted 2019). The other 4 were submitted later in 2024 and are approaching 17 months. <sup>24</sup>
<b>Wales</b>	<a href="#">April 2024-March 2025</a>	8 weeks from date received	<b>Over target:</b> av	8 weeks from date received.	See local – No breakdown	<a href="#">Development of National Significance</a> (DNS): 36 weeks from date	December 2022-2023 Welsh Ministers determined 5 DNS

<sup>20</sup> England figures are for district level decisions only as county only provides percentage within target and agreed time. See s.4 [Planning applications in England: January to March 2025 - statistical release - GOV.UK](#)

<sup>21</sup> Calculated as a simple average across the four quarters for minor applications: April 2024- June 2024: 41%; July 2024- Sept 2024: 41% ; October 2024- Dec 2024: 42%; Jan 2025 – March 2025: 39%. Simple average percentage April 2024- March 2025 = 40.75%.

\*Note: simple average is not weighted and does not take account of potential fluctuations in applications/decisions made each quarter.

<sup>22</sup> Calculated as a simple average\* across the four quarters for major applications: April 2024- June 2024: 20%; July 2024- Sept 2024: 20%; October 2024- Dec 2024: 19%; Jan 2025 – March 2025: 19%. Simple average percentage April – March 2025 = 19.5%

<sup>23</sup> This reported as an average median, similar to NI.

<sup>24</sup> Planning Inspectorate - National Infrastructure consenting [Project search](#) (As of 26/02/2026). Post SoS decision there is a 6 week period for [challenge by Judicial review](#).

		(16 if EIA required)	of 15.96 weeks <sup>25</sup> 51% within target <sup>26</sup>	(16 if EIA required)	between local/major	accepted by Welsh Ministers. <sup>27</sup> *DNS replaced by a new <a href="#">consenting process</a> (similar to England). Began Dec 2025 (see s.5.2)	within/on the target (e.g. 2 at 35 wks, 3 at 36 weeks) <sup>28</sup> .
<b>Scotland</b>	<a href="#">2024/ 2025</a>	Within 2 months (8.7 wks) of validation date. Or 4 months if	<b>Over target:</b> av 11.8 weeks (11.6 wks 2023/24)	Within 4 months <sup>30</sup> (17.4 wks) of validation date.	<b>Over target:</b> av 29.9 weeks (median) <sup>31</sup> 37.4 weeks (mean).	Large energy infrastructure applications (>50MW) are made to the Scottish Ministers through the <a href="#">Energy Consents Unit</a> .	Can take up to 4 years to consent National Infrastructure type developments, such as large-scale onshore electricity infrastructure projects <sup>32</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Calculated as a simple average\* across the four quarters (Q1-Q4) from Table 6 [development-management-quarterly-survey-january-to-march-2025.ods](#). Simple average percentage April 2024- March 2025: 111.75 (days) = 15.96 weeks.

<sup>26</sup> Calculated as a simple average across the four quarters for applications April 2024 – June 2024:53%; July 2024 - Sept 2024:51%; October - Dec 2024: 51% Jan 2025 - March 2025: 49%. Simple average percentage April 2024 - March 2025 = 51% 111.75 days = 15.96 weeks [Development management quarterly surveys | GOV.WALES](#). Data doesn't appear to provide a breakdown between minor and major applications.

<sup>27</sup> Senedd Research (October 2024) [planning-guide-13-development-of-national-significance.pdf](#)

<sup>28</sup> Senedd [Developments of National Significance Annual Report. December 2022 – December 2023](#).

<sup>30</sup> Includes major and national development as categorised under [The Planning etc. \(Scotland\) Act 2006](#) and designated under [National Planning Framework 4 \(NPF4\)](#).

<sup>31</sup> Using the median value as this is more comparable with NI. See [Planning Applications Statistics 2024/2025: Annual and Yearend \(October 2024 to March 2025\)](#) p.15

<sup>32</sup> DESNZ (online)[Electricity infrastructure consenting in Scotland \(accessible webpage\) - GOV.UK](#)

		EIA required <sup>29</sup>	62.9% within target.			Applications for marine energy are made to <a href="#">Marine Scotland</a> .	
<b>Ireland</b>	2023 for county and city planning authority stats	8 weeks beginning date of receipt. (An extra 4 or 8 wks on compliance with a notice for extra info or EIA) <sup>33</sup>	61.88% of all county and city decisions made within 8 weeks	See local. No breakdown of local/ major	See local. No breakdown of local/ major	18 weeks for <a href="#">Strategic Infrastructure Development</a> (SID) submitted to <a href="#">An Coimisiún Pleanála</a> <sup>34</sup>	Strategic Infrastructure Development (2024) <sup>35</sup>  <b>Over target:</b> av of 53 wks with 11% within target.

<sup>29</sup> This is the date when the last piece of information on the content is received p.26 [Planning Applications Statistics 2024/2025: Annual and Yearend \(October 2024 to March 2025\)](#)

<sup>33</sup> Planning and Development Act 2000 s. 34 (8). However, a [A Guide to Planning Permission](#) (DHLGH) suggests it can take up to 12 weeks and longer should further information be requested, or an EIA needed (p.4).

<sup>34</sup> Has replaced An Bord Pleanála under Part 17, Section 495(3) of the Planning and Development Act 2024 in relation to large scale development such as Strategic Infrastructure development, largescale residential development (LRD) and renewable energy. [Overview of Planning in Ireland](#)

<sup>35</sup> An Bord Pleanála (June 2025) [An-Bord-Pleanala-Annual-Report-2024-EN\\_1.pdf](#) Table 2 p. 71

## 3.2 Main comparisons

The following section attempts to provide a summary of the main comparisons from Table 1. However, these should be read in line with the caveats detailed in section 3.1 which emphasises how direct comparison across the jurisdictions is difficult.

### 3.2.1 Targets

#### **Minor/major:**

- In general, the targets in other jurisdictions appear to be shorter than NI's (15 weeks for minor and 30 weeks for major): Wales is 8 weeks for both local and major, England with 8 weeks (minor) and 13 weeks (major). Scotland is 2 months for anything that is not major/national (e.g. minor), where major/national is 4 months. Ireland is 8 weeks for local/major.
- In terms of percentages, NI and England are similar with most minor and major decisions made over target, albeit that NI is better than England for major (however the target period for NI is much longer). Scotland, Wales and Ireland are within their targets, however Wales and Ireland combine minor and major together, and Scotland reports major percentages against agreed time scales only (determined by developer and local authority) rather than against a target.<sup>36</sup>

#### **Regionally/Nationally Significant:**

- It's difficult to form a picture for regionally/nationally significant type decisions, as not all jurisdictions may categorise and report on them in the same way as NI [Regionally Significant Development](#) (RSD) which is determined by the Department. For example, England and (since Dec 2025 Wales) has a separate process for largescale [National Strategic Infrastructure Projects](#), where anything else is considered major development and dealt with by local planning authorities. Scotland has a

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<sup>36</sup> Scottish Government (December 2025) [Planning Applications Statistics 2024/2025: Annual and Yearend \(October 2024 to March 2025\)](#) (p.15). .

process for largescale [energy infrastructure development](#), where anything else is classed as [National Development](#) which falls under the category of major development dealt with by local planning authorities.<sup>37</sup>

- By definition, Wales and Ireland seem most comparable to RSD with reports on Development of National Significance (DNS) and Strategic infrastructure development (SID)<sup>38</sup>. However, from 15 December 2025 the DNS system in Wales has been replaced with the [Significant Infrastructure Projects \(SIP\)](#) system (similar to England)<sup>39</sup>.
- Similar to NI, both Wales and Ireland have separate targets: NI with a 30 week target is longer compared to Ireland with 18 weeks. However, it's shorter than Wales with 36 weeks. In England, with respect to largescale NSIP, the Government expects decisions within 17 months (74 weeks), however it's not clear whether this is a statutory target. Scotland does not appear to make reference to a general statutory target for large energy infrastructure decisions.
- In general it appears that most jurisdictions struggle to make decisions within their targets or suggested periods. Both NI and Ireland are over their targets. Wales was just within target for 2023/24, however it has changed to a new consenting process (similar to England) from January 2025<sup>40</sup>. England currently has some over 17 months and the rest are approaching it this year. The Scottish Government suggests that it can take up to 4 years.

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<sup>37</sup> Aberdeenshire Council (online) [Major and national developments - Aberdeenshire Council](#)

<sup>38</sup> 26 (4) of the Planning Act defines RSD to be of significance to the whole or a substantial part of Northern Ireland or have significant effects outside Northern Ireland. Similar to the definition of [DNS](#) in Wales and [SID](#) in Ireland.

<sup>39</sup> See section 5.2 of the paper and [Developments of national significance \(DNS\): guidance | GOV.WALES](#)

<sup>40</sup> The Infrastructure (Wales) Act 2024 introduced a bespoke consenting process for Significant Infrastructure Projects (SIPs) >50MW, which came into operation in January 2025. It sits outside the planning system. Those <50MW will remain DNS under the planning system and be determined by Welsh Ministers. [Development Management Manual](#) (p.98) and [planning-guide-13-development-of-national-significance.pdf](#). Applications can be viewed [Search for a case - Planning Casework](#)

### 3.2.2 Decision times

When considering the time taken to ‘process’, ‘make decisions’ or ‘determine’ applications, the differences highlighted in section 3.1 of the paper should be considered. Wales provides the time in days, but has been converted to weeks for the purpose of analysis. England and Ireland do not provide such figures in the reports referred to and are therefore not comparable in this respect.

However, it appears that:

- In general, NI takes longer to process applications on minor and major applications, than Scotland and Wales take to make decisions or determine them: NI (with 19 and 39.6 weeks) takes longer than Scotland (11.8 and 37.4 weeks) and Wales (15.96 weeks minor/major combined). The [UK Government estimated](#) in 2024 that it takes an average 28 weeks to determine major applications in England.
- It is hard to make similar comparisons for regionally/nationally significant decision times due to differences in categorisation and reporting. Ireland is the only one that gives the average number of weeks at 53. England suggests it can take 74 weeks and Scotland up to 4 years to process applications over 50 Megawatts (MW).

## 4 Observations

- NI Statistical Bulletin refers to statutory 15 weeks (minor applications) and 30 weeks (major applications) from date valid<sup>41</sup> to decision/withdrawal as legislated for under [The Local Government \(Performance Indicators and Standards\) Order 2015](#) (Sch 4).
- The other jurisdictions explored appear to report against the targets in their respective pieces of planning legislation<sup>42</sup>. England also sets out the same decision targets from their planning legislation in its [performance indicators for planning](#).

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<sup>41</sup> When all accompanying information is received as outlined Art 3 [The Planning \(General Development Procedure\) Order \(Northern Ireland\) 2015](#)

<sup>42</sup> See references (25-28).

- **It may be worth asking for clarity whether specific statutory decision targets for applications are provided under NI planning legislation? And if so, are these in line with the performance indicators under the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order 2015?**
- The [Planning \(General Development Procedure\) Order \(Northern Ireland\) 2015](#) (article 20) provides that a council must give notification to an applicant of its decision/determination/referral to DfI of an application within 8 weeks for minor and 13 weeks for major applications from the date received. Otherwise an applicant may make an appeal to the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC)<sup>43</sup>.
- **The Committee may wish for further clarity on the impact this may have on the overall system and the PAC, if councils are operating to longer decision targets than the times that may trigger an appeal to the PAC.**
- **The targets/indicators used in the statistical reports were agreed in 2014/15 (during consideration of the [Local Government \(Performance Indicators and Standards\) Order 2015](#)). Members may wish for more information on how these targets were developed?**
- Similar to Scotland, NI targets (as used in the statistical reports) start from date valid, compared to date received with the other jurisdictions. **Clarity may be needed as to whether there is a difference from date valid to date received? And whether NI and Scotland decision times therefore start at a later stage in the process compared to the other jurisdictions, especially if there is delay from application receipt, to application validation.**
- In relation to RSD the target is an average of 30 weeks “*from date valid to a ministerial recommendation or withdrawal.*” RSD go through a number of stages from application made to the local authority, then recommendation as a RSD to the Department for determination<sup>44</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> Correspondence via email from DfI (26/01/2026).

<sup>44</sup> DfI (online) [Department's Determination of Applications | Department for Infrastructure](#)

**Clarity may be needed as to whether the 30 week period covers the whole decision process from application receipt date to final decision, or only part of the process?**

## 5 Further detail – other jurisdictions

### 5.1 England

A [House of Commons Library Briefing](#) (July 2024) detailed that an [operational review of the NSIP regime](#) found that decisions on NSIPs have increased from 2.6 years in 2012 to 4.2 years in 2021.

According to the briefing, off the back of the review a number of changes were made to the NSIP regime, including, but not limited to:

- An [enhanced pre-application service](#) by the planning inspectorate to resolve issues before proposed projects reach the examination stage.
- Since April 2024, planning inspectors can set [shorter notification periods](#) to speed up the examination process. Previously, inspectors had to give interested parties at least 21 days' notice.
- A [fast-track consent route](#) by the Planning Inspectorate for NSIPs that meet a 'quality standard'. The examination process will last around four (instead of six) months under the fast-track consent route.

In spring 2024, the Government said the enhanced pre-application service would be available to "any project which requests it" from autumn 2024 and the fast-track consent route would be [available to "projects which meet a quality standard" from autumn 2024](#).

The [Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025](#) received Royal Assent 18 December 2025<sup>45</sup>. One of the main aims of the Act is to speed up planning and construction for new homes, infrastructure and energy development by:

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<sup>45</sup> MHCLG (December 2025) [Landmark Planning and Infrastructure Bill becomes law - GOV.UK](#)



- Delivering a faster and more certain consenting process for critical infrastructure through streamlining NSIP consultation requirements;
- Reducing opportunities for judicial review against Government decisions on major infrastructure projects – reducing legal challenge attempts from 3 to 1 for certain cases;
- Creation of a bill discount scheme (by up to £2500 over 10 years) for people living closest to new electricity transmission infrastructure;
- A new Nature Restoration Fund that will accelerate development for housing and infrastructure projects through pro-nature measures at scale; and
- Modernising planning committees to focus on the most significant developments rather than smaller projects, speeding up local decisions on new homes.

For further information on the measures see [Landmark Planning and Infrastructure Bill becomes law - GOV.UK](#)

## 5.2 Wales

[The Infrastructure \(Wales\) Act 2024](#) introduced a new consenting process for Significant Infrastructure Projects (SIPs) in Wales, which came into operation in December 2025<sup>46</sup>.

It is described as a ‘one-stop-shop’, where permissions, consents, licences etc. can be obtained as one package.<sup>47</sup> It sits outside the planning system and will subsume many Developments of National Significance (DNS) from the planning regime. However, not all e.g. energy generating projects below 50MW will remain DNS under the planning system, managed by [Planning and Environment Decisions Wales](#) (PEDW), formerly the Planning Inspectorate Wales<sup>48</sup>.

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<sup>46</sup> PEDW ( December 2025) [Developments of national significance \(DNS\): guidance | GOV.WALES](#)

<sup>47</sup> Welsh Cabinet Statement (June 2023) [Written Statement: Introduction of the Infrastructure \(Wales\) Bill \(12 June 2023\) | GOV.WALES](#)

<sup>48</sup> Welsh Government (May 2025) [Development Management Manual](#) (p.98) and Senedd Research (October 2024) [planning-guide-13-development-of-national-significance.pdf](#)

For large developments (>50MW) where consenting is not devolved, these are determined by the UK Government under the UK NSIP regime<sup>49</sup>.

### 5.3 Scotland

Projects under 50 MW are determined by local planning authorities under the [The Planning etc. \(Scotland\) Act 2006](#) as major/ national development<sup>50</sup>.

Projects over 50MW are determined under different legislation, [s.36 of the Electricity Act 1989 \(as amended\)](#). The Government's [Energy Consents Unit \(ECU\)](#) is responsible for determining these and applications to install overhead power lines, large oil and gas pipelines, and associated infrastructure. Marine energy applications are determined by the Government's [Marine Scotland](#).

[The Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 \(s.19\)](#), introduces a number of reforms to the Scottish consenting process under the Electricity Act 1989, so as to make the system more efficient. Examples include but are not limited to<sup>51</sup>:

- Mandatory pre-application requirements to improve quality of applications and reduce delays further into the process.
- Specific application submission requirements and time periods set for key stages to help keep all bodies working together.
- Removal of challenge by public inquiry to a more tailored, reporter-led process.
- Rather than judicial review, alignment of the use of statutory right of appeal and timescales to 6 weeks (from 3 months for some) for all onshore and offshore consenting.

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<sup>49</sup> Welsh Cabinet Statement (June 2023) [Written Statement: Introduction of the Infrastructure \(Wales\) Bill \(12 June 2023\) | GOV.WALES](#)

<sup>50</sup> Scottish Government (online) [Scottish Planning Series Circular 5 2009: Hierarchy of Developments - gov.scot](#)

<sup>51</sup> DESNZ (March 2025) [Electricity infrastructure consenting in Scotland \(accessible webpage\) - GOV.UK](#)

The Scottish Government have published a [consultation](#) on increasing the current 50MW threshold for onshore electricity generating stations to be considered by local authorities. Responses are due by 27 March 2026.

## 5.4 Ireland

This paper refers to the latest publicly available statistics for Ireland, which are for 2023, as provided under the [Planning and Development Act 2000](#).

However, this has been amended by the [Planning and Development Act 2024](#) which has brought a number of amendments. For example:

- It has replaced the An Bord Pleanála with An Coimisiún Pleanála who deals with larger-scale development such as Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) or Largescale Residential development (LRD).
- The 2024 Act refers to a ‘relevant period’ for planning decisions to be made by the local planning authority or An Coimisiún Pleanála<sup>52</sup>.

However, the 2024 Act is being brought into action in phases, for which some sections have been commenced, e.g. Part 1, while other sections (including decision making) have not as yet<sup>53</sup>. According to Departmental officials (20 January 2026):

*It will be later in the first half of this year by the time we commence Part 4, which relates to decision-making, like planning applications.*<sup>54</sup>

Until these sections have commenced, the relevant sections of the 2000 Act will remain in force. For the purposes of this paper, the decision time limits referred to in Table 1 are those reported under the 2000 Act.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>52</sup> [Planning and Development Act 2024](#) s.101 (standard development) and s.126 (decisions made by the Commission –e.g. strategic infrastructure etc. see s.82)

<sup>53</sup> The new decision time requirements under Part 4 are to be commenced under Block C. See [Implementation Plan for PDA2024](#) p.22 (Table 10).

<sup>54</sup> Oireachtas Joint Committee on Housing, Local Government and Heritage debate: [General Scheme of the Planning and Development \(Amendment\) \(No. 2\) Bill 2026: Discussion](#) (20 January 2026)

<sup>55</sup> [Planning and Development Act 2000](#) s. 34 (8) and s. 126

For more information on the changes brought in under the 2024 Act see:

[Overview of Planning in Ireland](#)