



Planning
Inspectorate

Draft Business Plan 2025/26

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Introduction

Paul Morrison, Chief Executive

This is the third Annual Business Plan I have had the pleasure of introducing since I started as Chief Executive in December 2022. Each of them has represented a step forward.

The first focused primarily on a plan for the discretionary transformation activity the Inspectorate was going to deliver that year.

The second built on that by setting out how all resources, both change and business as usual, would be allocated to the different functions of our organisation to deal with the amount of work we predicted we would get coming through the door.

This next step is where, rather than allocating strictly by function (e.g. People, Finance, Operations, Digital, Data etc), we are focusing our attention on how the resources align with the public facing services we deliver. The reason for this is simple. All of us need to focus our collective effort on delivering the excellent service our users require of us. They do not care about the individual excellence of our internal functions, unless they can see the tangible outcome in the form of consistently timely and high-quality decisions, recommendations and advice.

This plan covers the second year of our three-year strategy which will see us, by 2027, eradicate all backlogs and consistently hit all of our public timeliness service targets without any diminution in the quality standards that are the Inspectorate's calling card. We are making significant strides to making this mission a reality – but more needs to be done, particularly in removing older cases from our system, to unlock the ability to meet our timeliness targets across all casework areas. Getting this right is more important than ever. The Inspectorate stands at the centre of so many of the new Government's ambitions on driving sustainable development, securing full local plan coverage and a step change in the delivery of infrastructure. We will deliver this by continuing our relentless focus on productivity by making certain we have the very best processes to ensure we can maximise the output and potential of our existing resource.

The Service Model provides a leadership structure that combines operational effectiveness with professional standards, ensuring collective responsibility for making our services as effective as possible. The wider teams that deliver them will include all the professionals that are needed to deliver a modern operation in terms of quality, timeliness and cost effectiveness.

This plan is the framework to guide our approach. It describes the allocation of funding, the new processes and governance that will be the platform on which we can do what the Government and public expect of us. But the plans, structures and processes are only as good as the people who work on and in them. Fortunately, we are blessed in the Inspectorate with exceptional colleagues. The challenge is for us to become more than the sum of our parts.

That is why the plan also focuses on the PINS Way. This is the set of values and behaviours we want. We want to be a place where we challenge and support each other to be the best we can be, where we are respectful to one another both as individuals and professionals and are curious about each other and how we can make our organisation even better. Continuing to

deliver this will be as critical in achieving the outcomes we want as all the technical changes we make to processes.

This year will see the asks made of us rise and the resource we deploy therefore increase by necessity. This is a great responsibility and a challenge. But it is also a privilege to be part of delivering the services that are so critical to the health of our country and wellbeing of our fellow citizens. I look forward to working with all of you to make this plan a reality.



Our Contribution



1. Infrastructure Decision and Application Service	2. Plan Examination Service	3. Planning and Environmental Appeals Service	4. Planning and Environmental Application Decision Service	5. Rights of Way and Commons Decision Service
By making recommendations to Government on significant infrastructure development proposals we consider the future needs of society, balancing economic growth and environmental considerations. Our inspectors conduct rigorous assessments and ensure communities' views are heard.	By examining Local Planning Authorities' development plans we help ensure that proposals meet citizens' and businesses' future needs, while adhering to legal requirements and securing appropriate environmental benefits.	By providing an impartial appeals service we help to maintain a fair planning system. Our Inspectors consider all appeals carefully, assessing development proposals against local and national planning policies.	By delivering crucial services for other parts of Government, (such as DEFRA, DESNZ and the Crown Estate), we play a crucial role in facilitating the delivery of Government ambitions in priority policy areas. We also support continued planning decision making in areas where local authorities have required Government intervention.	By resolving disputes about Rights of Way and Commons Land we provide certainty to land owners and local communities on issues of access.

About the Planning Inspectorate

[Find out what we do](#)

[Read our 2024-27 Strategic Plan](#)

[Find out about our relationship with MHCLG](#)

[Access our publications](#)

[Read our latest Annual Report and Account](#)

Addressing the Government's Priorities

Since coming to power in July last year the Government has set a clear and challenging development agenda.



Its ambitions in this area could not be clearer. The Plan for Change, published in December, sets out six milestones against which the Government's progress should be judged including:

- rebuilding Britain with 1.5 million homes in England and fast-tracking planning decisions on at least 150 major economic infrastructure projects; and
- securing home-grown energy, protecting billpayers, and putting us on track to at least 95% clean power by 2030, while accelerating the UK to net zero.

These milestones have clear implications for the sector and the Inspectorate. As local planning authorities and developers respond to the Government's actions and policies in these areas, so the volume of work reaching the Inspectorate will increase.

The challenging agenda within the Plan for Change requires the Inspectorate to think differently about how it performs its critical roles. If we do not reform the way we operate our services, we risk failing to keep up with the increased demand, and failing to support the growth and accelerated delivery the Government is demanding.

How will the Inspectorate support the delivery of these milestones?

Our first requirement is to lead the delivery of up-to-date Local Plan coverage necessary to support the Plan for Change. Without achieving this goal, too many housebuilding permissions will be delayed or may be progressed in a manner that results in ill-planned, speculative development. This means examining more Local Plans and doing so more quickly than we are used to, turning the tide on the high proportion of Local Planning Authorities (approximately 70% at the start of the financial year) without an up-to-date Local Plan. The volume of Local Plan work coming towards us in 2025/26 is, therefore, a step change on what we are accustomed to delivering. And whilst meeting this challenging demand, we must also ensure that the implementation of the new, quicker Local Plan gateway process is successful, and that we and the sector are fully prepared for these changes.

Our second requirement must be to ensure that we deliver on the requirements of the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, accelerating the speed at which Development Consent Orders for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects can be determined. We must deliver more efficient processes for the pre-application, examination and recommendation stages. And where major projects are integrated, we need to work collegiately across Government to ensure we align with and apply the quickest and most robust assessment methods.

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The new milestones set for the sector move the dial on the Inspectorate's work, increasing its volume and importance. This shift has been recognised and supported by the Government, which has grown the Inspectorate's financial settlement for 2025/26, allowing us to recruit and train more inspectors and invest further in our operations. The imperative to grow the organisation's capacity will, therefore, be a key focus for us throughout the year, as will managing the growing pains that all organisations face in these circumstances.

What does not change is our strategy. Our three-year (2024-27) strategic plan committed us to the mission of providing consistently timely, high-quality and cost-effective decisions, recommendations and advice. As we embark upon the second year of the strategic plan period the case for this improvement remains our central goal.

The 2024/25 Business Plan launched a programme of work to drive up the productivity of the organisation and the efficiency of our casework delivery. Significant improvement has been made, including reducing our older cases backlog so we start delivering all cases within their target timescales. As a result of this, we successfully cleared $x\%$ of older cases in our backlog as reduced median decision times for appeals casework by $y\%$. Nevertheless, as we knew would be the case at this stage in the plan, there remains much to do before we can say that our mission has been accomplished. In the year just gone $X\%$ of written representation appeals failed to meet the timeliness targets set for us by Ministers. Whilst this is an improvement on the $Y\%$ of 2023/24, every single one of these missed targets manifests as a potential delay to development, and uncertainty for local communities. Now more than ever, if we are to deliver on our promise to meet the Government's priorities, we must pursue our strategy to a successful resolution.

The Key Challenges

Whilst we focus on meeting the Government's heightened expectations, we expect our work in the year ahead to be framed by the following overarching issues.

The below sets out three key challenges facing the Inspectorate and how it will rise to them.

The planning system is changing at pace

The Government has implemented a new National Planning Policy Framework and tightened the sanctions and incentives it applies to Local Planning Authorities. Ministers have approved an expansion of the Householder and Commercial Appeal Service, so more appeals can be dealt with via a streamlined procedure. And the Planning and Infrastructure Bill / Act will bring further changes, in addition to the measures from the 2023 Levelling Up and Regeneration Act, such as the establishment of a faster Local Plans examinations process. All our services are affected by this volume of change and, in some areas (such as Crown Development), we are required to establish entirely new services. These changes will have an impact on our operations and ways of working, including but not limited to Inspector resource and the need for new digital tools and platforms to support the new services.

We will map the implications of the planning changes onto our services and plan forward to ensure we are prepared for peaks in workload that flow from their implementation.

The Inspectorate is growing

As the volume and scope of our work is increasing, the Government has recognised that we need more resources to deliver our critical services and ensure that we keep up with and further catalyse the pace of sectoral reform. The scale of our necessary growth will cause challenges. We plan for the organisation to grow by as much as a fifth, and for our inspector cohort to grow by approximately a quarter, as we rapidly recruit more inspectors and support staff to meet our casework demands. New staff need onboarding and training so that they can contribute effectively to our work and deliver the high standards for which we are renowned. If not managed carefully, this focus on recruiting, onboarding and training new colleagues has the potential to slow down our casework delivery and destabilise our existing work programmes. In parallel, we must ensure that in growing we do not take our eye off the central principle of our strategy: making improvements to our productivity and cost-effectiveness.

We have established an accelerated recruitment and onboarding working group to supervise the programme of work and ensure that we are considering as broadly as possible the implications of our rapid growth. In addition, to ensure that our growth does not detract from our productivity, we have maintained the business planning assumption that at least 10% of the capacity gap that emerges from our new and growing casework demands will be closed by achieving the productivity and efficiency savings set out in our transformation agenda.

Our digital advancement continues

The significant programme of reform to our digital services will continue this year, with all Local Planning Authorities transitioning to our appeals digital service, and a concerted drive to progress the Appeals as Data programme, which will lead to significant long-term benefits for how the system operates. On top of this, significant investment is needed to stand up new digital services for Local Plan Examinations, Crown Development and some other casework areas. And our artificial intelligence (AI) Action Plan commits us to piloting AI functionality in five discrete areas, in line with the Government's clear prioritisation of this work. Taken together these changes have significant implications for our back-office systems. They place additional asks on colleagues embedding and navigating new systems. And they require a general upskilling in the digital literacy of our support service.

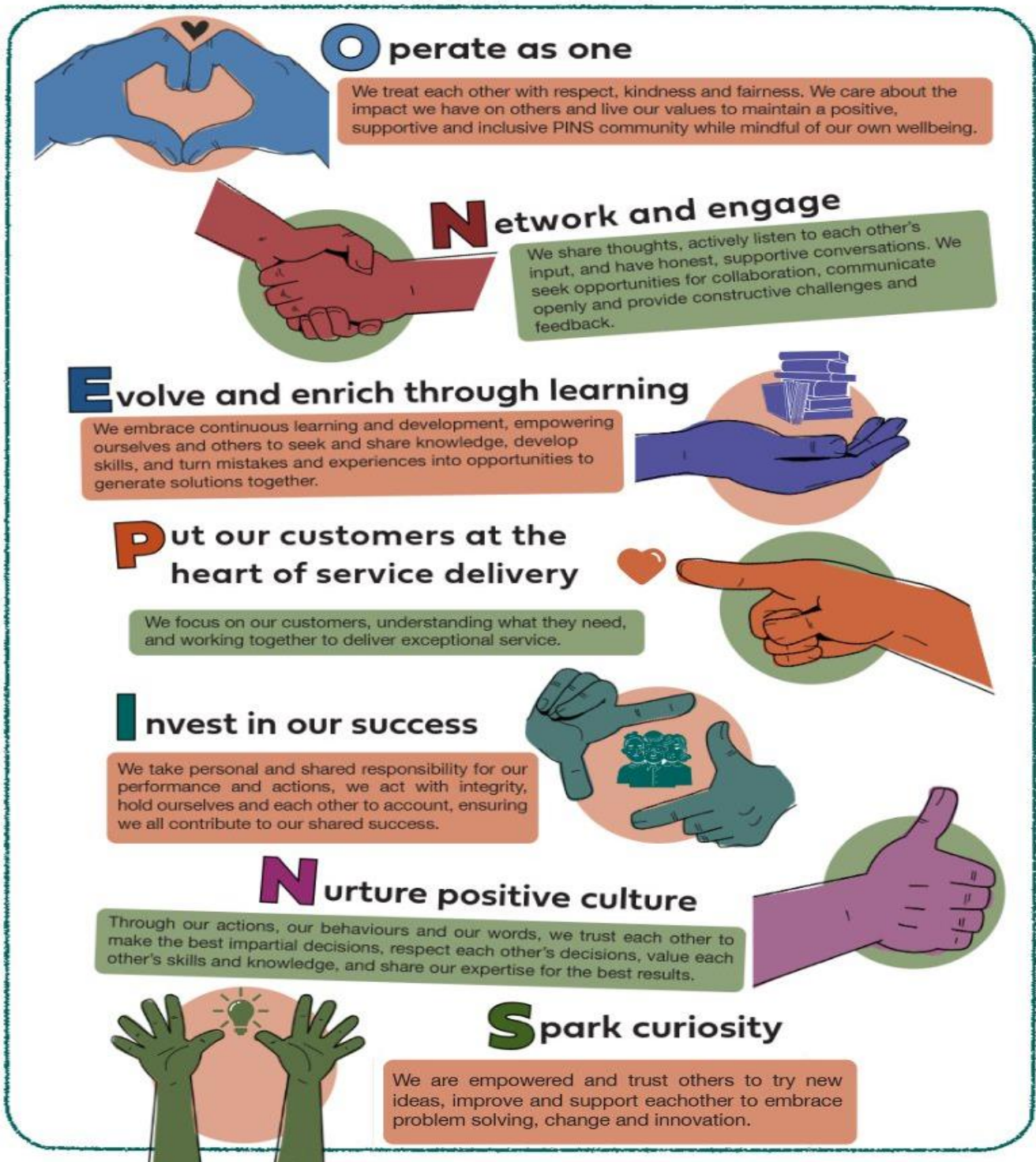
We will continue and expand our work in modernising the Inspectorate's Digital and Data tools, processes and technology to improve the experience of all users of the Inspectorate's services and make the services themselves more effective.



Delivering the Inspectorate's Services: Values, Mission, and Delivery

Values

The primary way in which we will realise the Government's priorities is through developing the right behaviours. The PINS Way, below, sets out our corporate values and guides how we work together to achieve our goals. This statement is additional to the long-standing principles of Fairness, Openness and Impartiality which govern the way our Inspectors deliver their obligations, and which are so well understood and respected by the wider sector.



Mission

As we enter into the second year of the 2024-27 Strategic Plan, it is important to remember that all of the work in this Plan is focused on realising its mission and ambitions.

At the end of the first year of the Strategic Plan, significant progress has been made against the mission and ambitions, delivering real improvements to the users of our services. With regard to the mission, reductions to our overall caseload and improvements to our timeliness are set out on page 6. And with regard to the underpinning ambitions, we worked hard throughout the year to make further improvements to our processes, to lead the sector through a period of reform and to improve the Inspectorate as a place to work. To select a few key achievements: we have secured agreement from Ministers to treat more appeals casework through faster procedures (in line with the current Householder Appeals Service), have progressed trials of the use of standardised decision wording, have worked closely with MHCLG and other actors to frame the sector’s response to planning reforms, and have launched and embedded a new Strategic People Plan to drive sustainable organisational development.

But we know that our ambitions are not realised and that we must progress substantially further. In particular, many of the initiatives launched in 2024/25 to bolster our productivity remain in train and will not conclude or bear dividends until this year or next. Most importantly we are still a significant distance away from achieving the consistent performance measures across all of our casework that is central to our mission and so necessary for our service users.

So this plan is integral to realising our Strategic Plan. To understand how our work is focused on these ambitions look out for these logos throughout the Plan, which indicate which of our Ambitions the referenced work is looking to progress.




Our Purpose

To maintain a fair planning system, support significant infrastructure development and help communities shape where they live.

Our Mission

To provide consistently timely, high-quality and cost-effective decisions, recommendations and advice.

Ambitions

 <p style="margin: 5px 0;">1. A more efficient, proportionate and streamlined approach</p> <p style="margin: 5px 0; font-size: 0.8em;">Develop our scheduling, casework and other digital systems and processes to increase our productivity, reduce our environmental impact and lay the foundation for future sustainable improvements.</p>	 <p style="margin: 5px 0;">2. A leader in bringing the planning system together</p> <p style="margin: 5px 0; font-size: 0.8em;">Use our unique, highly-connected position to influence the system and its actors to support both our service delivery and the design and implementation of planning policy.</p>	 <p style="margin: 5px 0;">3. An even better place to work, that values and builds the expertise of its workforce</p> <p style="margin: 5px 0; font-size: 0.8em;">Strengthen our offer as a modern and inclusive employer with a focus on professional standards to upskill, engage and motivate our staff to deliver.</p>
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Delivery

Our plan to meet our ambitions for the year ahead is built upon a new operating model for our front-line services. Throughout the 2024/25 year we worked collegiately to implement a new service model, which goes live in parallel with the publication of this Business Plan, and in 2025/26 a key focus for each service is to embed the service model to ensure we reap the full benefits of this new way of working. The purpose of these reforms is to improve our performance by increasing our productivity and making the Inspectorate more efficient. This will allow us to provide a better end to end oversight of the organisation’s services, improving communication across our teams and better focusing the Inspectorate on the experience of customers and users of our services. The service model implementation has also allowed us to reorganise how we group our casework and to establish clearer accountability for its delivery. The below diagram sets out the five end-to-end services we deliver, and the specific casework that sits within each service.

The next section of the Business Plan works through each of these front-line services in turn, considering the challenges and ambitions for the year ahead. Each service’s performance and progress will be scrutinised at a monthly Service Board, which also monitors the delivery of any projects, workstreams or continuous improvement initiatives associated with the service.





Infrastructure Decision and Application Service



David Price, Infrastructure Decision and Application Service Owner

The volume of work we are expecting to receive and how we are resourced to deliver it:

Infrastructure casework is increasing, with conservative estimates anticipating an annual increase of more than 30% in NSIP cases in the period to 2027, when compared to the average number of applications received per year over the last three years. This forecast predates the more recent and more ambitious Government target of deciding 150 NSIP recommendations by 2029, set out in December's 'Plan for Change'.

Incorporating our assumption that our transformation agenda will drive a 10% productivity improvement that can be realised by the service, we are working on the basis that to maintain our capacity to meet or exceed the Ministerial timeliness target of providing recommendations in nine months this volume of work will require around [85]¹ FTE Inspector and around [80]¹ FTE operational support, with additional resources predominantly recruited into the service across Q2 and Q3 of 2025/26.

Our Priorities for the year ahead:

- Work collaboratively with wider Government institutions to improve the scrutiny and delivery of new infrastructure.
- Increase the efficiency of management and control of resources needed to deliver the ambitious Government aims for infrastructure.
- Continue the development of a modern digital service, improving the application service for users.



We take pride in:

1. The deep knowledge and expertise of our team.
2. Our track record of delivering to statutory timeframes whilst maintaining a highly professional operational environment.
3. Our ability to problem-solve and a resilience developed through addressing issues of strategic national importance.
4. A collaborative and supportive teamwork environment which has been developed and nurtured against a backdrop of often intense scrutiny and challenge.

¹ Indicative only based on Business Planning commission, subject to confirmation.

We will drive improvements in the service in the following areas:

- ✓ Developing an increasingly collaborative operational environment with improved change capacity and agility, ensuring a better customer experience.
- ✓ Improving the capture and use of data to support understanding of the service as well as developing and improving digital system to increase service delivery efficiency.
- ✓ Working collaboratively with MHCLG to develop and implement reforms to legislation, policy and guidance underpinning the infrastructure service.

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Plans Examination Service

Andrew Megginson, Plans Examinations Service Owner



The volume of work we are expecting to receive and how we are resourced to deliver it:

We are facing a significant increase in demand on the Local Plans Examination service over the next two years. We are facing a total of 144 Local Plans requiring examination with 70 forecast in Year 25/26 and a further 74 in year 26/27 (up until Dec 2026). These volumes compare with 18 examinations received in 2024/25. Moreover, in addition to the demand for Local Plan examination submissions in the period to Dec 2026, we need to pivot the team and Inspector skill base to deliver the new Local Plan Reform System from Dec 2025. Meeting these challenges will require the recruitment and training of a significant number of new people, including new digital capability. In addition, we will work collaboratively with MHCLG to ensure that we can operationalise new proposed policy changes including emerging policy on strategic planning.

Incorporating our assumption that our transformation agenda will drive at least a 10% productivity improvement that can be realised by the service, we are working on the basis that this volume of work will require around [93]¹ FTE Inspectors and around [15]¹ FTE operational support, based on an average of 1.5 Inspector FTE assigned per Plan, with these additional resources predominantly recruited into the service between Q2 and Q3 2025/26.

Our priorities for the year ahead:

- Supporting delivery of Local Plan reform and the development of the new gateway processes that the Inspectorate will undertake.
- Recruitment and development of more Local Plan inspectors and case teams to meet the anticipated increase in demand.
- Embracing the opportunities provided by focused, modern digital services.



We take pride in:

1. The quality of our examinations and our reputation for competence.
2. Inspectors and case teams understanding and embracing the core purpose of the service as well as their resilience and adaptability to focus on business priorities.
3. Mentoring and coaching between Inspectors and the team relationships that have formed between and within Inspector groups.
4. The quality of the data we obtain from Local Authorities that drives and informs our demand and resource forecasts.

¹ Indicative only based on Business Planning commission, subject to confirmation.

We will drive improvements in the service in the following areas:

- ✓ Embracing the opportunity that better digital tools and data reporting will provide the service. This will support us to plan for and manage the forecast increase in examinations ensuring a more timely service for our customers.
- ✓ Working collaboratively with MHCLG to develop and implement reforms to the Local Plan system by inputting into the policy regulations and guidance that underpin the Local Plans service.
- ✓ Establishing a programme of learning and development to fully embed the Local Plan reform changes to ensure inspectors and the wider service team are briefed on the new approach.

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Planning and Environmental Appeal Decision Service



Tom Warth, Planning and Environmental Appeal Decision Service

The volume of work we are expecting to receive and how we are resourced to deliver it:

Intake in 2025/26 is likely to be similar to 2024/25 (17,000-18,000 appeals cases) with changes in the external environment, where they do occur, potentially impacting on productivity (i.e. policy changes leading to changes in evidence volumes) rather than casework demand.

Incorporating our assumption that our transformation agenda will drive at least a 10% productivity improvement that can be realised by the service, we are working on the basis that to process this volume of new casework and meet our strategic ambitions of eradicating the backlog of casework not meeting Ministerial timeliness targets, will require around [280]¹ FTE Inspectors and around [180]¹ FTE operational support. With this resourcing we should be able to process between 15,000-17,000 planning appeals, between 2,500-4,000 enforcement appeals, and between 750-800 'Green' appeals.

By the end of the year, our performance expectations are that: Planning Written Representation cases older than 20 weeks will be reduced from [2,000] to 1,300; we will have increased the rolling 12 month proportion of Planning and Enforcement Hearings and Inquiries cases decided in target by 20% compared to 2024/25; fewer than 5% of Enforcement Written Representation cases will be older than 52 weeks; and we will have reduced the total number of live 'Green' appeals cases by 50%¹. To meet these aims we will continue with our twice-yearly recruitment of Band 1 Inspectors to retain a consistent number of trained Inspectors and a future pipeline of Inspectors that can operate across our casework.

Our priorities for the year ahead:

- Increasing the proportion of hearing and inquiries cases – typically our most high value cases associated with the highest economic benefits - determined within Ministerial timeliness expectations.
- Reducing the total number of live written representations cases and deciding the oldest planning and enforcement cases, whilst maintaining decision quality
- Implementing the expansion of the Householder Appeals Process to other planning appeal types **[TBD depending on timing of MHCLG announcement]**



¹ Indicative only based on Business Planning commission, subject to confirmation.

We take pride in:

1. A strong personal commitment to the core purpose of the appeal service, recognising its value to the country, amongst Inspectors and Case Officers.
2. Strong resilience in the team which enables the service to face challenges whilst continuing to deliver.
3. The good relationships between Inspectors and Casework staff, with high levels of respect between them around the importance of each other's roles.
4. The informal networks of mentoring and coaching, especially in the Inspector workforce, which help to maintain the high quality of our decisions.

We will drive improvements in the service in the following areas:

- ✓ Rolling out new digital tools to customers and staff, improving productivity and providing the customer with a more streamlined service.
- ✓ Improve our data around productivity, utilisation and deployment to help form more robust resource plans and set clearer individual performance expectations.
- ✓ Establishing a more regular pattern of Inspector Learning and Development to ensure our Inspectors are kept up-to-date with changes to the planning system and to increase the flexibility of our workforce.

Planning and Environmental Application Decision Service

Kay Sully, Interim Planning and Environmental Application Decision Service Owner



The volume of work we are expecting to receive and how we are resourced to deliver it:

Our central forecasts suggest a steady flow in our planning and environmental application casework volumes in 2025/26, with around 100-120 applications likely to be received. New Crown Development casework is forecast to start arriving with the Inspectorate soon after the legislation comes into force in April, which will see a change in our forecast having previously not had any cases of this type. We are standing up a new digital service to support this work. Reforms to the Compulsory Purchase process and Compensation Rules in the year ahead will also draw upon the service's resource.

Incorporating our assumption that our transformation agenda will drive at least a 10% productivity improvement that can be realised by the service, we are working on the basis that this volume of work will require approximately the same level of Inspector and operational support as this year, with some colleagues drawn from other service areas as necessary, and with additional digital expertise onboarded into the digital service throughout Q1 to support its ongoing development.

Our priorities for the year ahead:

- Implementing new processes and systems for the new Crown Development casework, including standing up new digital systems for users.
- Removing barriers to enable Inspectors to process a variety of casework to increase productivity.
- Simplifying invoicing processes for Compulsory Purchase Orders and other rechargeable casework.



We take pride in:

1. The high quality of our outputs.
2. Our efforts to build trust and confidence among customers and stakeholders, driving our collective progress and innovation.
3. The strong personal commitment within Inspector and casework teams to the work they do and the role it plays in the wider industry.
4. The good relationships between Inspectors, casework teams and stakeholders resulting in meaningful and purposeful engagement. The established good relationships between case teams and Inspectors which fosters a collaborative and supportive work culture

We will drive improvements in the service in the following areas:

- ✓ Streamlining the Inspector scheduling process to enable better deployment of Inspectors and ensure a timely and effective service for our customers
- ✓ Developing tools and processes for capturing data to better understand the service and improve our output
- ✓ Streamlining our processes to increase efficiency and reduce wait times for customers, including improving the scheduling process for Inspectors to make deployment more efficient.
- ✓ Enhancing our learning culture and improve training and support to Inspectors and casework teams to ensure the service is equipped to deliver the new casework.

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Rights of Way and Common Land Decision Service



Kay Sully, Interim Rights of Way and Common Land Decision Service Owner

The volume of work we are expecting to receive and how we are resourced to deliver it:

Our central forecasts suggest a continuation of volume but an increase in complexity in the volumes of Rights of Way and Common Land casework we received in 2024/2025. From April we are recharging for opposed order casework and Rights to Apply will come into effect, bringing into force a statutory application procedure which will require our service area to process casework it is not previously handled. In addition our progression towards full cost recovery in Rights of Way may lead to variations in the volumes we receive of this type of casework. In total we are working on the basis that we will receive around 400 applications across the service.

Incorporating our assumption that our transformation agenda will drive at least a 10% productivity improvement that can be realised by the service, we are working on the basis that this volume of work will require approximately [8]¹ FTE Inspectors and similar levels of operational support.

Our priorities for the year ahead:

- Reduce casework backlogs that have built up in previous years so that more of our work meets Ministerial timeliness expectations.
- Increase and develop Inspector workforce in support of effective deployment.
- Modernise systems and better ways of working that will enable efficient service delivery.



We take pride in:

1. Providing accurate and consistent information, striving towards delivering exceptional quality so customers can trust the service
2. A strong personal commitment amongst Inspectors and casework teams to the work they do and the role it plays in the wider industry.
3. A good relationship between Inspectors and casework teams as well as stakeholders resulting in meaningful engagement with purpose.

We will drive improvements in the service in the following areas:

- ✓ Enhancing customer experience by providing transparent communication, and being upfront about service expectations
- ✓ Streamlining invoicing processes to significantly improve efficiency
- ✓ Investing in innovative solutions to stay ahead and continuously elevate the quality of our output
- ✓ Increasing quality of training and support to Inspectors and casework teams and identifying ways to improve productivity

1 Indicative only based on Business Planning commission, subject to confirmation.

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Measuring our Success

Our mission is to provide consistently timely, high-quality and cost-effective decisions, recommendations and advice.

Central to our performance framework is, therefore, a rigorous examination of the timeliness of our services, the quality of our decision-making and the unit cost of our operations.

Our sponsoring department, MHCLG, has set a list of Ministerial performance measures against which we are assessed. Since August 2023 we have been publishing our performance against these measures quarterly, alongside our monthly performance updates.

In addition to these Ministerial performance measures we will also be tracking our performance in achieving our mission. We will routinely monitor the measures set out in our Strategic Plan 2024-27, including measures on:

- timeliness of casework, including median decision times, age profile of caseload, and proportion of cases meeting Ministerial timeliness targets;
- unit costs per case processed;
- casework quality, including data on proportion of cases issues requiring corrective action and volumes of complaints per casework processed;
- output and productivity, including total volumes of casework processes and units of casework processed per Inspector.

The exact measures used will vary from service to service, and further detail will be provided in our statistical releases.

Further indicators – such as those tracking organisational vacancy rates, proportion of cases submitted through digital services and additional customer satisfaction indicators – will be monitored regularly by services and across the organisation and reviewed routinely by our Executive Team.

Progress towards achieving our performance expectations will be reported regularly to our Executive Team, our Board and will also form the basis of our reporting in our 2025/26 Annual Report and Accounts.

Commitment to transparency

The Planning Inspectorate is committed to operating with transparency and publishes information on its performance every month on GOV.UK. This information includes summaries of appeals decisions and events held, time taken to reach decisions, number of open cases and numbers of Inspectors on roll.

Providing high-quality support services

The Inspectorate's enabling services will play a fundamental role in rising to the challenges of our casework delivery. The high-level challenges set out in Section 3 generate new and complicated work for our specialist colleagues who support our casework delivery. These services are integral to our operations, to our customers, to our staff and to our regulatory compliance.

The Annual Report and Accounts sets out more detail about the critical importance of these enabling services in our work.



The below section sets out the priorities that will be taken forward by functional units in the coming year.

Delivery, Productivity and Workforce Team

The Inspectorate is a delivery organisation, operating multiple concurrent and complex operational processes. To realise our strategic goals, we are focused on delivering a higher level of operational performance, including improving some of the areas where we have historically underinvested.

In 2025/26 we are investing in new teams to focus on:

- Directly supporting the nearly 200 Operational Delivery Profession colleagues engaged in operational delivery in the Inspectorate, with new professional learning and development opportunities and communities of practice to support the development of operational delivery capabilities.
- Supporting the whole organisation to improve its productivity by supporting teams with approaches for and expertise on delivering continuous improvement.
- Overseeing medium- and long-term planning for the people and capabilities we need to deliver our operational services.
- Increasing our capacity to track how we are delivering this and future business plans and embedding business plan delivery in everything we do.

Chief Planning Inspector Unit

We will continue to address a wide range of business-as-usual activity, focusing particularly on continued close working with Government on the wide range of legislative and policy changes it is enacting to support its Plan for Change and wider planning agenda. We will engage with stakeholders across the sector, advise on challenges to our work and maintain professional standards for the more than 400 colleagues in the Planning Inspector Profession.

In 2025/26 we will focus on:

- Driving the development of our Appeals Service quality assurance processes. Decision reading cycles and headline data capture processes were set up in 2024/25. We now need to iterate to enable finer grain analysis of the data, which can better inform learning and development needs and other changes that will improve the quality of our services.
- Working with other units to develop a more rounded picture of quality, systematically pulling in data from decision reading, high court challenges, queries to Knowledge Centre and customer complaints. This will be contextualised with feedback from our frequent engagement with stakeholders.
- Continuing to develop a more structured Inspector learning and development programme, and continuing to iterate our initial Inspector training offer, which will use the most up-to-date tools and methods available to us. Further development of the Library will support this work.

Digital and Data Unit

The Inspectorate has made significant progress in recent years in modernising the Digital & Data landscape that supports our citizens, staff, and users throughout the planning system. Our ambition is to continue and expand this work, ensure Digital & Data tools, processes and technology improve the experience of all users of the Inspectorate's services, and make the services themselves more effective.

In 2025/26 we will focus on:

- Delivering user-centred digital services by standing up new digital services for Crown Development and Local Plans casework and improving efficiency through automation and digitisation.
- Ensuring a seamless flow from Digital solutions to data products, including supporting the long-term sector-wide Appeals as Data programme.
- Leveraging emerging technologies, including AI, where we are progressing five pilot projects on different aspects of our casework operations.
- Providing structure to unstructured documentation to make it easier to understand and use so supporting quicker decision making.
- Evolving our central source of data, improving the quality of our data to better inform operational and strategic decision making.
- Continuing to prioritise the security of our systems and our data.

Strategy Unit

The Strategy Unit provides an important bridge between the Inspectorate's internal teams and external environment. Through its horizon scanning, business planning, communications and customer functions it translates trends in industry, society and planning into well-planned, measurable activity in support of the Government's ambitions.

In 2025/26 our plans include:

- Becoming a more innovative organisation through standing up a new innovation function and providing direction to the inspectorate's AI adoption programme, working in close collaboration with our digital and data colleagues.
- Further embedding our horizon scanning and customer insights into both the operation of our services and future business planning, ensuring that the views of our stakeholders and customers remain at the forefront of our activities.
- Leading and monitoring the programme of transformation ongoing in the Inspectorate, including supporting the transition to a service model.
- Continuing to improve our knowledge and information management through the development of a knowledge management strategy, recognising the need to maximise the deep value of the knowledge and information held by the people working and the systems embedded in the Inspectorate.

Finance, Commercial and Business Support Unit

The Inspectorate has bid for a resource departmental expenditure budget of £Xm and forecasts that £Xm income will be generated in 25/26. The Finance Team will play a key role in ensuring the budget aligns with change ambitions and business as usual activities. This will be achieved by ensuring budget is allocated and managed effectively through collaborative business partnering, controls, risk management and governance, with accurate reporting.

Of our £Xm budget, around £Xm, pending approval of the spend review, will be spent on delivering strategic priorities through suppliers. It is more important than ever that we utilise funds to maximise value for money. This will be a challenge as the organisation faces volatile marketplaces, changing political priorities and an ambition to be better. To realise our initial commercial ambitions, the Inspectorate's Commercial Strategy sets out three priority areas that have been developed in line with best practice and government standards.

The Business Support Team will continue to provide colleagues across the organisation with great services to enable them to focus on their work and customer delivery. Examples include travel bookings, office accommodation, courier services and more.

People Unit













The Inspectorate is already a great place to work. Our ambition is that by March 2027 the Inspectorate will be 'an even better place to work, that values and builds the expertise of its workforce'. We will strengthen our offer as a modern and inclusive employer with a focus on professional standards to upskill, engage and motivate our staff to deliver.

The 2025/26 year is the second year of our Strategic People Plan, which has priorities aligned to the Civil Service People Plan, as follows:

- Aligning approaches to Learning and Development across the organisation, including embedding a primary culture of blended learning.
- Establishing better systems to fairly and effectively link reward to delivery, productivity and behaviours.
- Ensuring a suite of modern employment policies, practices and performance management arrangements and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion guidance are streamlined, accessible and utilised.
- Developing a Strategic Workforce Planning model that is agile to business needs and a mature Employee Value Proposition to enhance our ability to recruit and retain the talent we need.
- Improving our ability to form agile people project teams delivering bespoke initiatives, a continuous learning culture and flexible working practices to respond to emerging business needs.

Corporate workstreams

One important aspect of the Inspectorate’s enabling services is to implement and monitor our core corporate workstreams. These are workstreams or projects that have implications beyond a single service and are of sufficient importance, complexity or value as to require systematic monitoring and reporting to the Executive and Board. The corporate workstreams for 2025/26 are set out in the below table alongside its impact on the delivery of the 2024-27 Strategic Plan.

Workstream	Description	Impact
Scheduling	Designing a long-term solution to optimise Inspector scheduling and deployment within and across services.	
Artificial Intelligence	Continuing the AI adoption strategy across a range of casework and corporate areas, including pilot projects with ongoing monitoring of wider AI rollout through the AI working group and AI Board.	
Operational Data Warehouse	Evolving and improving the quality of our data within a single operational warehouse resource with wide applicability for back-office and front-line services.	 
Inspector Learning and Development	Investing in professionalising learning and development activity for inspectors, delivering improvements to the initial inspector training programme and reducing training time away from casework.	
Office Estate	Delivering a plan for a long-term office estate that supports the Inspectorate’s operations and development.	
Digital Security	Strengthening the Inspectorate’s digital security via a range of interventions and preventative actions.	 
SAP Modules	Implementing SAP Employee Central Modules to align our corporate systems with MHCLG and other Government Departments.	 
Quality Assurance	Utilising information from a range of areas to systematise quality assurance processes for our casework.	 

Budget

[Awaiting final financial settlement from MHCLG.]

Details	£m
Forecast Income	(xx)
Gross Expenditure	xx
Net Resource Departmental Expenditure Limits (RDEL)	xx
Capital Departmental Expenditure Limits (CDEL)	xx

More information on how we spend our budget and how this budget compares to previous financial years is available in our [Annual Report and Accounts](#).

Conclusion

Having read this plan we hope that you will understand the Inspectorate's roadmap for 2025/26, the ambitions we have set and how they will be realised. We will be reporting on the progress of this Business Plan throughout the year both internally and externally.

The Inspectorate is committed to operating with transparency and publishes information on its performance every month on GOV.UK. We also provide a comprehensive report looking back on the performance of the previous financial year in our Annual Report (link on page 3)

To learn more about the work of the Inspectorate please visit [About us - Planning Inspectorate - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/about-us/planning-inspectorate)

To read further about the Inspectorate's governance please visit [Our governance - Planning Inspectorate - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/about-us/planning-inspectorate/governance)

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Glossary

DEFRA – Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs

DESNZ – Department for Energy Security and Net Zero

DfT – Department for Transport

MHCLG – Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

SoS – Secretary of State

