



Planning
Inspectorate

Planning Inspectorate Business Plan 2025/26



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Contents

Introduction

CEO Message	1
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About Us

About the Planning Inspectorate	3
Our Contribution	4

Meeting the Challenge of the Year Ahead

Addressing the Government's Priorities	6
The Key Challenges	8

Front Line Services

Delivering the Inspectorate's Front Line Services	10
Infrastructure Decision and Application Service	14
Plan Examination Service	16
Planning and Environmental Appeal Decision Service	18
Planning and Environmental Application Decision Service	20
Rights of Way and Commons Decision Service	22
Measuring Success	24

The Inspectorate's Enabling Functions

Providing High-quality Support Services	25
Delivery, Productivity and Workforce Team	26
Chief Planning Inspector Unit	26
Digital and Data Unit	27
Strategy Unit	27
Finance, Commercial and Business Support Unit	28
People Unit	28
Corporate Workstreams	29
Budget	30

Conclusion	31
Glossary	31

CEO Message

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 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.

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 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 targets without any diminution in the quality standards that are the Inspectorate's calling card. We are making significant strides to make 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 government's ambitions on driving economic growth, securing universal local plan coverage and a step change in infrastructure delivery. We will achieve this by continuing our relentless focus on productivity to ensure we can maximise the output and potential of our existing resource.

This document contains 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 we are increasing our headcount in response. 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.

About the Planning Inspectorate



Our Contribution

1. Infrastructure Decision and Application Service

By making recommendations to government on significant infrastructure development proposals, we consider the future needs of our society, balancing economic growth and environmental considerations, and paving the way for vital transport, electricity and other crucial infrastructure. Our inspectors conduct rigorous assessments and ensure communities' views are heard.

2. Plans Examination Service

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. We are preparing the service for the implementation of a new local plans examination regime and, in the longer term, the introduction of new strategic planning powers set out in the Planning and Infrastructure Bill.



Image created using Microsoft Designer

3. Planning and Environmental Appeals Service

By providing an impartial appeals service, we help to maintain a fair planning system. Our inspectors consider all appeals carefully, judging each case on its individual merits and assessing development proposals against local and national planning policies. Last year we decided close to 18,000 appeals, providing vital clarity to communities on new housing and to householders developing their homes.

4. Planning and Environmental Application Decision Service

By delivering crucial services for other parts of government, such as DEFRA and DESNZ, we play a critical role in facilitating the delivery of government ambitions in priority policy areas. From this year, this will include a new route to consider applications for Crown Development. We also support continued planning decision making in areas where Local Planning Authorities have required government intervention.

5. Rights of Way and Commons Decision Service

By making decisions and recommendations to government on rights of way, coastal access and common land, we provide opportunities for countryside access and active travel, providing important health and economic opportunities. Inspectors work across a range of legislation to deliver certainty to the public, land owners and developers in relation to important historical and future assets.

Addressing the Government's Priorities

Since coming to power in July 2024 the government has set a clear and challenging development agenda.



PLAN FOR CHANGE
Milestones for mission-led government
5 December 2024

CP 1210

Its ambitions in this area could not be clearer. The ‘Plan for Change’, published in December 2024, 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 (LPAs) 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’. These plans are essential to ensuring that communities have a say in how development happens. Without achieving this goal, too many housebuilding permissions will be delayed, and more ill-planned development is taken forwards. So we must examine more local plans, and do so more quickly than we are used to, turning the tide on the high proportion of LPAs (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 local plan examination process is successful, and that we and the sector are fully prepared for the upcoming gateway system which will increase speed by ensuring LPAs are more prepared for examination.

Our second requirement must be to ensure that we deliver on the proposals set out in the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, accelerating the speed at which development consent orders for nationally significant infrastructure projects (NSIP) 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.

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, 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 the number of open cases in our system so we start delivering all cases within their target timescales. As a result of this, we have cleared a significant proportion of our oldest planning appeals casework and in the calendar year we reduced median decision times for appeals casework by nearly 10% compared to the previous calendar year. Nevertheless, as we knew would be the case at this stage in the plan, we continue to process a backlog of cases and there remains much to do before we can say that our mission has been accomplished. In the calendar year just gone, 74% of written representation appeals failed to meet the timeliness targets set for us by ministers. Whilst this is an improvement on the 2023 calendar year, 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 LPAs. We have secured agreement from ministers to take forward regulations that will enable more appeals casework to be handled through faster procedures (in line with the current Householder Appeals Service). And the Planning and Infrastructure Bill is implementing further changes, in addition to the measures from the 2023 Levelling Up and Regeneration Act, and 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 LPAs 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 services.

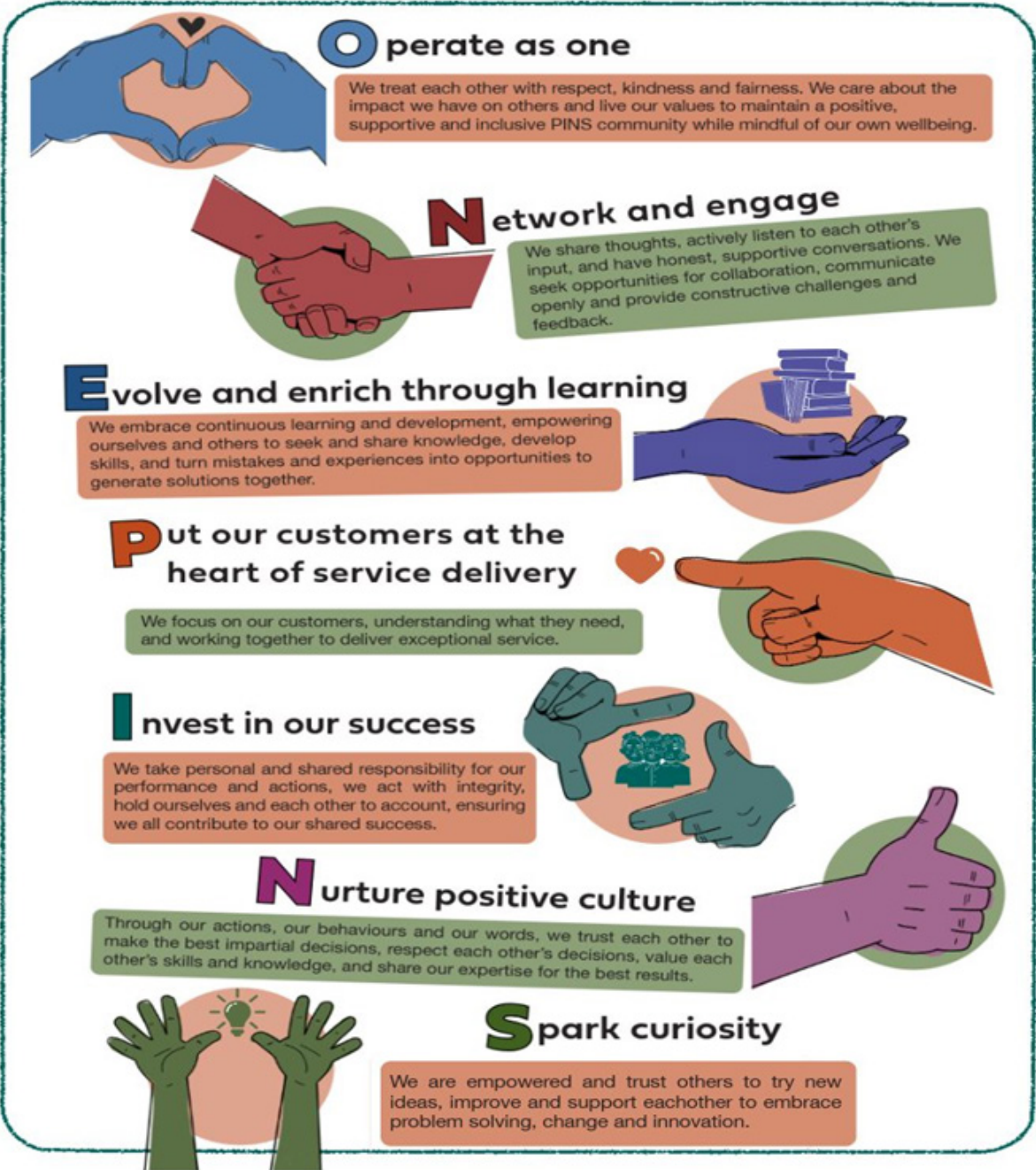
We will continue and expand our work in modernising the Inspectorate’s digital and data tools, processes and technology to improve the experience of all users of the Inspectorate’s services and make the services themselves more effective, as set out on page 27.

Delivering the Inspectorate’s Front Line Services

Values, Mission and Delivery.

Values

The primary way in which we will realise the government’s priorities is through developing the right behaviours. Our values of Fairness, Openness and Impartiality govern the way our inspectors deliver their obligations. These values are understood and respected by the wider sector. In addition, our corporate values - The PINS Way - guide how we work together to achieve our goals and deliver for the users and customers of our services.



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 24. 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 take forward regulations that will enable more appeals casework to be handled through faster procedures (in line with the current Householder Appeals Service); we have progressed trials of the use of standardised decision wording; we have worked closely with MHCLG and other actors to frame the sector’s response to planning reforms; and we 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, which are central to our mission and so necessary for our service users.

So this plan is integral to realising our Strategic Plan. To understand how this year’s work will support the strategy, look out for the below icons throughout the document indicating 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

1. A more efficient, proportionate and streamlined approach
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.

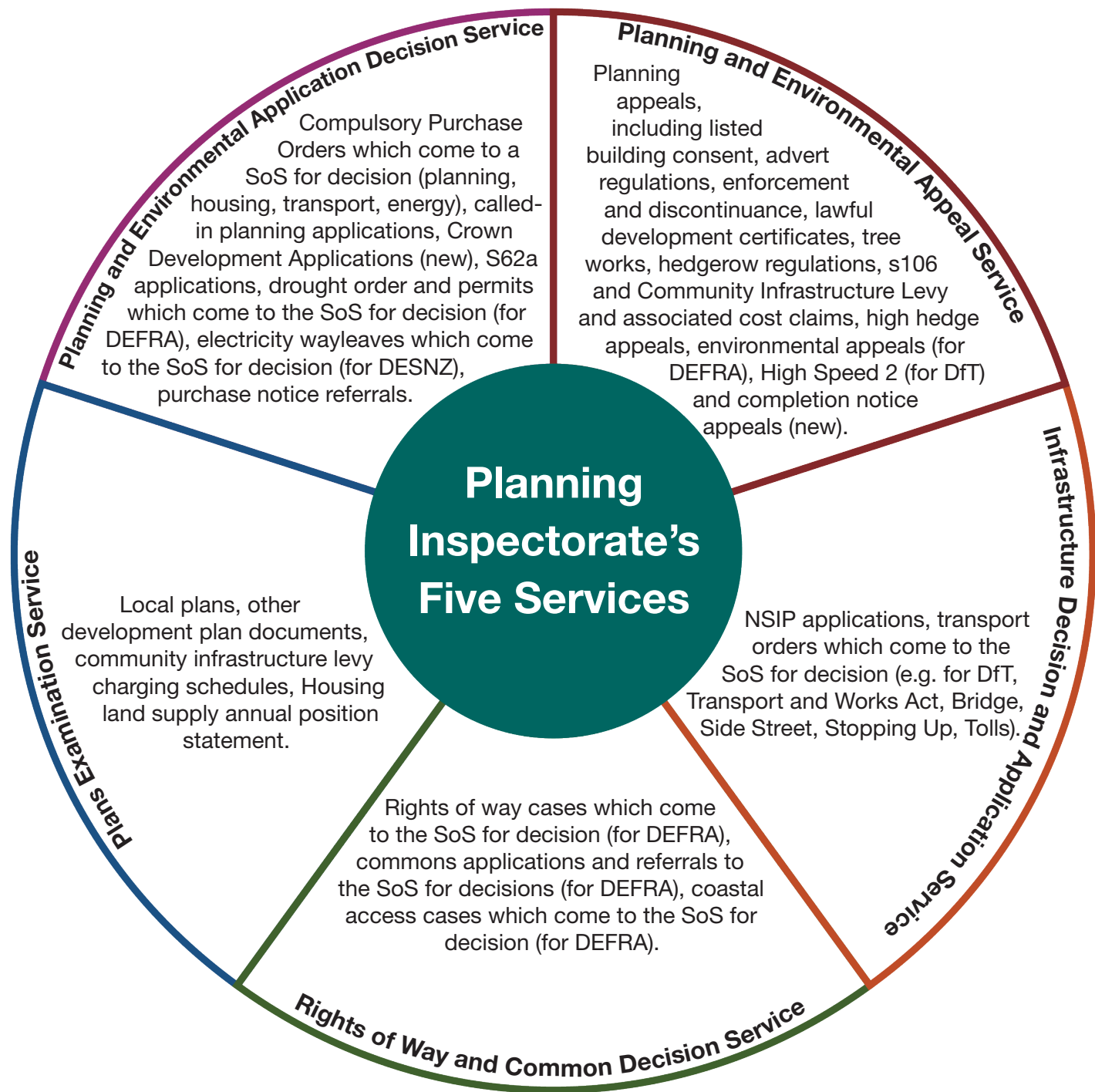
2. A leader in bringing the planning system together
Use our unique, highly-connected position to influence the system and its actors to support both our service delivery and the design and implementation of planning policy.

3. An even better place to work, that values and builds the expertise of its workforce
Strengthen our offer as a modern and inclusive employer with a focus on professional standards to upskill, engage and motivate our staff to deliver.

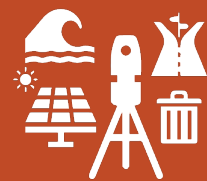
Delivery

Our plan 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 at the start of April, and in 2025/26 a key focus for each service is to embed the new way of working to ensure we reap the full benefits. 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 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 its challenges and ambitions for the year ahead. Each service’s performance and progress will be scrutinised at a monthly service group meeting, 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. We are preparing to receive 30-40 new NSIP applications in the next financial year, with around a further 40 new pre-application cases to consider. These forecasts pre-date the more recent and more ambitious government target of deciding 150 NSIP recommendations by 2029, set out in the ‘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 85 inspector FTE and around 80 FTE operational support, with additional resources predominantly recruited into the service across Q2 and Q3 of 2025/26. With this level of resource we should be able to issue around 25 NSIP recommendations, support a further 70-100 live NSIP cases in the pre-application phase and decide around 25 Transport Order Acts.

Our performance expectations are that we will reduce the average time spent on NSIP examinations from commencement of examination to recommendation to below 9 months, reduce the average time NSIPs spend in the pre-application phase to fewer than 12 months, and determine our Transport Order Act applications in line with their relevant service level agreements (which will be updated following changes in the Planning and Infrastructure Bill).



Our priorities for the year ahead:

- work collaboratively with wider government institutions to improve the scrutiny and delivery of new infrastructure
- simplify processes in NSIP casework to make operational activities easier to do thereby increasing capacity to handle more infrastructure casework in line with government aims
- 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.

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 systems to increase service delivery efficiency
- ✓ working collaboratively with MHCLG to develop and implement reforms to legislation, policy and guidance underpinning the infrastructure service

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:

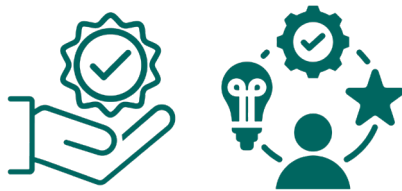
We are facing a significant increase in demand on the local plans examination service over the next two years. We are expecting to receive a total of 144 local plans requiring examination, with 70 forecast in 2025/26 and a further 74 in 2026/27 (up until December 2026). These volumes compare with 18 examinations received in 2024/25. Moreover, in addition to the demand for local plan examination submissions in the period to December 2026, we need to pivot the team and inspector skill base to deliver the reformed local plan system (enacted by the LURA) later this year. Meeting these challenges will require the recruitment and training of a significant number of new people, including new digital capability, which should enable us to realise faster examination processes. In addition, we will work collaboratively with MHCLG to ensure that we can put into operation new proposed policy changes, including emerging policy on the development of spatial development strategies set out in the Planning and Infrastructure Bill.

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 93 FTE inspectors and around 15 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. With this level of resource we anticipate being able to issue around 35 local plan decisions, and have commenced work on another 70 local plan examinations, by the end of the financial year.



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.

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

- ✓ embracing the opportunity that better digital tools and data reporting will provide, supporting 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 and ensure inspectors and the wider service team are briefed on the new approach.

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 FTE inspectors and around 180 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: planning written representation cases older than 20 weeks will be reduced from 1,859 to 1,300; we will have increased the 12 month proportion of planning and enforcement hearings and inquiries cases decided in target by 20% compared to 2024/25; fewer than 5% of open enforcement cases will be older than 52 weeks; and we will have reduced the total number of live ‘green’ appeal cases by 50%. 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 and deciding the oldest planning and enforcement cases, whilst maintaining decision quality
- introduce a simplified process for written representation appeals, in line with the current Householder Appeals Service



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 relationship 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
- ✓ improving 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, 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 80-120 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 - these will be the first cases we have received under this new legislation and 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 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 wider 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 record of building trust and confidence among customers and stakeholders, driving our collective progress.
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 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 realising 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 waiting times for customers
- ✓ enhancing our learning culture and improving training and support to inspectors and casework teams to ensure the service is well-equipped to deliver the new casework

Rights of Way and Commons Decision Service



Kay Sully, 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 continuation of volume but an increase in complexity to the Rights of Way and Common Land casework we received in 2024/25. In the year ahead right to apply is due to come into effect, bringing into force a statutory application procedure which will require our service area to process casework it has 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 FTE inspectors and similar levels of operational support to that used currently within the service.



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 to enable efficient service delivery



We take pride in:

1. Providing accurate and consistent information and 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, casework teams and stakeholders resulting in meaningful and purposeful engagement.

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 continuously elevate the quality of our output and identify ways to improve productivity
- ✓ increasing quality of training and support to inspectors and casework teams

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. These measures relate to: the timeliness of our casework, our rates of quality assurance, levels of customer satisfaction with our services, and the proportion of appeals we receive which are valid on first submission. Since August 2023 we have been publishing our performance against these measures quarterly as part of our regular 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 issued requiring corrective action and volumes of complaints per casework processed
- output and productivity, including total volume of casework processes and units of casework processed per inspector

The exact measures used vary from service to service. Further detail is 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 and our Board and will also form the basis of our reporting in our 2025/26 Annual Report and Accounts.

Commitment to transparency

The Inspectorate is committed to operating with transparency and publishes information on its performance every quarter 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 on pages 8 and 9 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 section below sets out the priorities that will be taken forward by the Inspectorate’s 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 under-invested.

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

- directly supporting the almost 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 work closely with the 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 repeat 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 and Data landscape that supports our citizens, staff and users throughout the planning system. Our ambition is to continue and expand this work, ensure Digital and 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 establishing new digital services for Crown Development and local plans casework, improving efficiency through automation and digitisation and improving data management
- 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 thereby supporting quicker decision making
- evolving our central source of data and 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 by establishing 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 at and the systems embedded in the Inspectorate

Finance, Commercial and Business Support Unit

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.

In the year ahead, we anticipate that around £30 million 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 and an ambition to be better. To realise our initial commercial ambitions, the Inspectorate’s newly published Commercial Strategy sets out 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

As indicated by Civil Service People Survey results that consistently surpass the Civil Service average, 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:

- putting a spotlight on learning and development across the organisation, including embedding a culture of blended and accessible learning built on the foundations of our new Capability Framework (which sets out the core and professional capabilities that we need)
- 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 responsibility 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 Team and Board. The corporate workstreams for 2025/26 are set out in the table below, alongside its significance for 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

Details	£m
Income	18.1
Gross Resource Departmental Limit (RDEL)	97.9
Net Resource Departmental Limit (RDEL)	79.8
Capital Departmental Expenditure Limit (CDEL)	15.0

More information on where the Inspectorate spends funds 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 quarter 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](#)

To read further about the Inspectorate’s governance, please visit [Our governance - Planning Inspectorate](#)

Follow us to stay informed and receive the latest updates. You can do this via:



Glossary

- DEFRA** - Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs
- DESNZ** - Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
- DfT** - Department for Transport
- FTE** - Full Time Equivalent
- LPAs** - Local Planning Authorities
- LURA** - Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023
- MHCLG** - Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
- SoS** - Secretary of State

