

**Planning, Safety and
Transport Policy Group**



Department for

Infrastructure

An Roinn

Bonneagair

www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

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Your Reference:

Our Reference:

29 April 2021

Dear Alison

NI PLANNING IT SYSTEM – PROGRESS UPDATE

As you are aware, last summer we awarded a contract to TerraQuest (TQ) for a new Planning IT System for 10 of the 11 Local Councils and the Department for Infrastructure. You are the Solace representative on the Planning Portal Governance Board and your engagement to date and your role in updating Solace has been most helpful. We agreed at the last Governance Board that I would write to update you on the current position on the project, which you could then use to engage with the wider Solace group.

Since last summer, the joint local and central project team have been working closely with TQ to develop the IT system for full implementation by 2022. This work has been progressing well with good engagement from all councils, consultees and other stakeholders. The team also negotiated a revised payment profile with TQ, which resulted in a 14% reduction in the implementation costs. In parallel with this work, the Department has recently agreed to extend the contract with DXC for the maintenance and support of the NI Planning Portal (NIPP) until December 2022.

Looking ahead there are still some significant challenges in delivering the new Planning IT system. One of these key challenges is data migration and in particular the extraction and transfer of data from the NIPP to the new IT System, given the significant bespoke nature of the NIPP and the legacy nature of the data. Despite best endeavours, unfortunately this work has not progressed as quickly as planned and will have an impact on the overall timetable for the new IT System. The team are working closely with DXC and colleagues in CPD to expedite this work and to reduce any potential delays. TQ have



indicated that this could push out the time for full implementation of new IT System until spring 2022 (go lives were originally planned as November 2021 and February 2022).

We are working with TQ to understand the revised timeframe and to identify potential mitigation measures to reduce this potential delay. As you are aware, the Planning Portal Governance Board, which includes all Heads of Planning, have been updated on this position and the collective aim is to ensure that any delay is as short as possible.

I also understand that councils are keen to understand the phased implementation approach and in particular, which councils will be in phases one and two and when these phases will happen. While all councils have previously indicated a preference for phase one and/or two these have NOT been agreed by the Governance Board. This will be considered further by the project team in the coming weeks when a revised project plan has been agreed and it will require agreement with Solace at the appropriate point.

I look forward to continuing to work with all councils as we move forward to deliver a new and modern Planning IT System. If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me or Angus Kerr and I am happy to attend the next meeting of Solace to discuss this further, if that is helpful.

Yours sincerely



Julie Thompson
Deputy Secretary

Copied to:-
Chief Executives of Councils (who are part of Regional Planning IT System)
DfI Permanent Secretary