






ICLRD 20th Anniversary Conference

PLANNING THE FUTURE: PEOPLE, PLACE, PROCESS, POSSIBILITIES – THE NEXT TWENTY YEARS

The Future of Spatial Planning on the Island of Ireland

Ballymascanlan Hotel, Dundalk; Thursday, 21st May 2026

Speaker Profiles:

	<p>Ms. Mary MacIntyre, OBE Mary is a Chartered Town Planner who has had a lengthy career in the public and private sectors in England and Northern Ireland. The majority of her career was spent in the Department of the Environment Northern Ireland, where she held the post of Chief Planner before her retirement. She has been an active member of the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI), is a trustee of Maritime Belfast and an honorary member of the Royal Society of Ulster Architects. Mary has been Chair of the ICLR D Executive Board since 2020. She was awarded the OBE in 2014 for services to planning and charity.</p>
	<p>Mr. Liz Kimmins, MLA Liz was first elected as a Newry City Councillor for Sinn Féin in 2014 and was re-elected in 2019. She was co-opted to the Assembly in 2020 as MLA for Newry and Armagh and re-elected in 2022. She has served as a member of the Infrastructure Committee and the Policing Board, and from 2024 has been in a leadership role chairing Stormont's Health Committee. Liz was appointed as Minister for Infrastructure on 3 February 2025, and has recently been recognised by the RTPI as one of The Planner's Women of Influence 2026, reflecting her leadership, impact, and contribution to the planning profession.</p>
	<p>Ms. Kerrie Sweeney, MBE Kerrie is Chief Executive of Maritime Belfast Trust. She has over 25 years' experience working in the tourism and heritage sector, including 12 years between Belfast City Council and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board, where she was a member of the team that put together the plans for the Titanic Signature Project. Kerrie's experience is in product and destination development, capital projects and place based partnership initiatives. Since joining Maritime Belfast, Kerrie has led a series of key successes: the award of a £5million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund's Enterprise Programme towards the former Harland & Wolff Drawing Offices, to restore them and develop the building into a four-star boutique hotel; the acquisition of Titanic's little sister the SS Nomadic; and the relocation and restoration of the Great Light. Kerrie also works closely with the commercial operator of Titanic Belfast, the charity's largest asset and main income generator.</p>

Kerrie's current focus is Belfast Historic Waterfront which was designated one of 15 National Lottery Heritage Places across the UK in October 2025.



Ms. Claragh Mulhern
Claragh is the Principal Adviser & Chief Planner in the Planning Division at the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, where she has worked since 2019. Previously, she worked in the local government sector in the U.K., including 11 years working for Westminster City Council on a range of planning projects. In her current role, Claragh has responsibility for the preparation of national planning policy including the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the development of related national planning policy measures, oversight of the implementation of national policy through the regional strategies and local authority development plans through liaison with the Office of the Planning Regulator, the development of land activation and active land management measures and the provision of professional planning advice in support of Government policy incl. in relation to housing, infrastructure and renewable energy development. Claragh graduated with a Master's in Regional and Urban Planning from UCD in 2003 and is a member of the Irish Planning Institute (IPI).



Ms. Rosemary Daly
Rosemary is Chief Planner & Director for Regional Planning Governance and Legislation, Department for Infrastructure, Northern Ireland, where she leads the Department's Planning Improvement Programme, oversees planning legislation and governance, and holds responsibility for planning matters relating to Rathlin Island. Rosemary spent some 18 years as a Commissioner with the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) in Northern Ireland, playing a central role in the delivery of appeal decisions and reports that have significantly shaped Northern Ireland's planning landscape. During this time, she was instrumental in the establishment and delivery of Northern Ireland's first Independent Examination of a Council's Local Development Plan, a key milestone in the evolution of the plan-making system. Prior to her current role and previously, Rosemary also worked in various planning consultancy roles, advising clients across both Northern Ireland and Ireland, bringing a strong cross-border perspective to complex planning and development challenges. She has recently been recognised by the RTPi as one of The Planner's Women of Influence 2026, reflecting her leadership, impact, and contribution to the planning profession.



Ms. Caroline Creamer
Caroline is Director of the International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD) and a Research Fellow with both the Social Sciences Institute (MUSSI) and the Innovation Value Institute (IVI) at Maynooth University. A qualified town planner, Caroline has for the past 20+ years worked in a research and management capacity on a number of funded projects in the areas of regional development, strategic spatial planning, regeneration and place-making, multi-level governance, collaborative networking and community engagement. Caroline is also Facilitator of the All Ireland Smart Cities Forum (AISCF) and ESPON Contact Point (ECP) for Ireland. In 2025, she was recognised by the RTPi as one of The Planner's Women of Influence, reflecting her contribution to the planning profession.



Prof. Niamh Moore-Cherry

Niamh is Dean of Social Sciences and College Principal in the UCD College of Social Sciences and Law, Full Professor in Geography and an Honorary Professor at the Bartlett School of Planning, University College London. She founded and leads the Cities, Governance and Sustainability research group comprising PhD, postdoctoral researchers and colleagues exploring the relationship between governance, urbanisation and sustainability in a range of contexts. Her work is funded by a variety of public and private organisations. She is an independent member, nominated by An Taoiseach, of the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) and has been a PI on two previous ESPON projects – SIESTA and ENSURE. She also serves on the oversight group of a number of initiatives in a range of government departments



Mr. Diarmaid Lawlor

Diarmaid is an Associate Director at Scottish Futures Trust. He is a designer, educator, and communicator. With a multidisciplinary background, and over 20 years' experience working across sectors in the UK and Europe, Diarmaid champions collaborative approaches to making better places to live well locally.






Mr. Pádraig Maguire

Pádraig is a qualified town planner and senior local government official with 27 years experience at local and regional level in both Ireland and Northern Ireland. He is currently seconded to the Housing Activation Office (HAO) within the Department for Housing, Local Government and Heritage as a Programme Manager. Prior to this recent secondment, he was a Director of Services for Planning, Building Control and Strategic Projects in Meath County Council (MCC), where he spent almost 10 years working in various roles. Pádraig previously worked within a number of local authorities in Ireland and Northern Ireland, and in one of his previous roles, was Regional Planner responsible for implementation of the Regional Planning Guidelines and managing EU Projects with the Border Regional Authority. Throughout his career, he has held numerous other leadership roles and managed multidisciplinary teams across various organisations, making significant contributions to economic, urban and rural planning policy in Ireland. He is a current member of the Irish Planning Institute (IPI) and a member of Executive Board of ICLRD.



Ms. Karen Kenny

Karen is a senior professional with experience in the areas of planning and urban development. Since 2021, she has served as a Senior Planning Adviser in the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. Prior to this, Karen worked as a Senior Inspector with An Bord Pleanála, now An Coimisiún Pleanála, and has held positions across several local authorities. Over the last year, Karen has led the establishment of the Housing Activation Office (HAO) in the Department of Housing. Prior to this, she was involved in the development of national planning policy including the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlement Guidelines and updated Apartment Guidelines. She holds degrees in Economics and

	<p>Geography and in Regional and Urban Planning from University College Dublin (1999 and 2001), a higher Diploma in Environmental Engineering from Trinity College Dublin (2004) and a certificate in Senior Public Service Leadership from the Institute of Public Administration.</p>
	<p>Mr. James Redmond James is a Fellow and Chartered Traffic and Transport Engineer/ Planner (CEng) of 25+years, with a wealth of experience gained within both the public and private sectors and across the UK and Ireland. James is currently the Head of Transport Planning and Modelling Unit and the Technical lead for the Transport Sector on Climate within the Department for Infrastructure. He has previously had senior leadership roles with Jacobs, Amey and RPS delivering transport planning, mobility and engineering design solutions across the UK and Ireland. In his spare time, James enjoys travelling, and a sports enthusiast (anything with a ball). Now that his old legs have gone you will often find him coaching kids (girls and boys) in GAA and soccer at the weekends for his local clubs.</p>
	<p>Ms. Caitriona Mullan Caitriona is a specialist in territorial governance, development cooperation and cross-border cooperation, working across the EU, EEA and wider European neighbourhood. Her technical background includes three decades of public service and policy work in both Ireland and Northern Ireland in the areas of central and local government, regional development, EU Funds, health systems, and tertiary research and education (including as a former Chairperson of ICLRD). Caitriona is a Senior External Expert for the European Commission (DG REGIO) and an International Expert with the Council of Europe/Congress of Local and Regional Authorities Centre of Expertise in Multilevel Governance. She is an advisor and facilitator for the AEBR/DG REGIO B Solutions initiative, addressing legal and administrative obstacles to transboundary development across the EU and on external borders. Her current portfolio also includes occasional support to ICLRD as a senior research associate, most recently as lead author of an advocacy paper on a future health ecosystem for the South West Region of Northern Ireland. She is also senior associate with the Center for Cross Border Cooperation and north south advisor to the Astronomical Observatories of Ireland, an Ireland/Northern Ireland-UK scientific research, public education and heritage partnership.</p>
	<p>Prof. Peter Roberts, OBE Peter is Co-Chair of the ICLRD Advisory Board and Professor Emeritus at the University of Leeds. He is also Former Chair of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE). He is Chair of the Planning Exchange Foundation and Kirklees Climate Commission. Peter’s research and professional interests include strategic spatial planning, regeneration and place-making, housing and community development and, more recently, climate adaption and approaches to net zero.</p>
	<p>Dr. Claire Cockerill Dr Claire Cockerill is the Director of Climate Action Delivery Division within the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) in Northern Ireland. Within this role, Claire has responsibility for development of the Green Growth Strategy, co-ordinating the</p>



development of the Northern Ireland Climate Action Plan on behalf of the Northern Ireland Executive and supporting the achievement of sustainability for our economy, society and environment. Prior to taking up this post in February 2023, Claire held previous policy and project management roles in the Department for Infrastructure, NIO, and the Department for the Environment. Before joining NICS in 2013, Claire worked as a Lecturer in Sustainability at Queen’s University Belfast and as a policy advisor for an international environmental NGO. She holds a PhD in Environmental Economics.




Ms. Lucy Pyne
Lucy works in the Climate Division in the Irish Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment, overseeing the Local Government Team which funds and assists local and regional climate teams and leads the EU Climate Neutral and Smart Cities Mission for the participating Irish cities. Prior to this, Lucy worked in the Just Transition Team. Before joining the Department, Lucy managed the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme in Pobal, a programme designed to reduce poverty and promote social inclusion. After completing a Masters in Regional and Urban Planning, Lucy worked in the OECD for almost five years as a Policy Analyst on local economic development.



Dr. Brendan O’Keeffe
Brendan is an independent researcher, with his own consultancy company. Previous roles have included being a senior lecturer in geography and Director of Quality in Mary Immaculate College (University of Limerick), and a community development team leader with IRD Duhallow (Local Action Group). In addition, he has been a research associate of the ICLRD since its inception. He has supported cross-border collaboration in the fields of spatial planning and place-making, and he has contributed to several ICLRD studies and action-research projects. He has delivered training and capacity-building programmes with local authorities and their networks, and with civil society. Brendan has consistently promoted ICLRD’s international reach and lens, as evidenced by the wealth of case study material he has brought to bear on best practices on this island. Through these roles, Brendan has a proven strong academic and practitioner background, and continues to be an active volunteer in his local community, and with environmental and social justice organisations.



Prof. Frances Fahy
Frances is the Director of the Ryan Institute at University of Galway where she leads several international research teams on sustainable consumption and energy citizenship research. She is an established professor of environmental geography, and she has published more than 100 publications including four books (Methods of Sustainability Research in the Social Sciences published by Sage, 2013, Challenging Consumption Routledge, 2014, Energy Demand Challenges in Europe Palgrave 2019 and Energy Citizenship across Europe, 2025). Within her work on just energy transitions Frances’s work has a critical focus on why place, people and participation matter. Frances has also coordinated > 20 funded research projects and obtained competitive large research funding including funding from Horizon Europe, H2020,

	<p>JPI-Climate, Interreg, NESC and the EPA. A Fulbright Scholar, Frances previously served as Head of Geography at University of Galway and is the past President of the Geographical Society of Ireland.</p>
	<p>Mr. Kevin Hegarty</p> <p>Kevin is the Delivery Director of the Northern Ireland Investment Strategy. Previously, Kevin was seconded to Department of Agriculture Environment & Rural Affairs as Director of Green Growth and Climate Action leading the development of the Northern Ireland Executive’s first Climate Action Plan and the Executive’s Green Growth Strategy. Kevin has held a number of senior roles within the Strategic Investment Board where he was Head of the Energy Management Unit and a Strategic Adviser on Energy. Kevin has nearly 30 years’ experience working in the public, private and utility sectors and has spent his entire career addressing the climate challenge. Previous roles have included Acquisitions, Development & Policy Manager for ESB as well as senior roles with SSE Airtricity as Head of Onshore Development and with E-ON North America as Chief Development Officer. Kevin holds a BSc in Environmental Planning from Queens University Belfast and an MSc in Rural Development, also from QUB.</p>