

One year on from 'Rosewell review': What have we learnt so far?

On Wednesday 12 February, Bridget Rosewell, CBE, together with the Planning Inspectorate and the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) hosted an event to mark one year since publication of the 'Rosewell Review'. The Review included 22 recommendations to speed up decision times for planning inquiry appeals and make the process more proportionate and predictable.

Bridget Rosewell, CBE, chaired the event attended by around 50 professionals representing a broad mix of appellants, legal professionals, local planning authorities, statutory and other interested parties as well as Planning Inspectorate and MHCLG staff. The session reflected on how the changes are working in practice, what can be improved further and what has been learnt so far.

Opening the event, Simon Gallagher, Director of Planning at MHCLG, described how impressed the ministry is with the amount of progress made in implementing the report over the past year and the substantial difference it has made. He commented "What our Department is particularly concerned about is the unnecessarily long time that appeals took to progress through inquiry previously. This time amounts to costs for all parties and the Inspectorate and uncertainty for communities. By now running this process efficiently, effectively and fairly we are able to reduce the risk for communities and for development in this country."

Sarah Richards, CEO of the Planning Inspectorate, commented "The event was a great opportunity to celebrate the progress made to date and to learn about where we should focus our improvement efforts next. The Planning Inspectorate is committed to continuously improving the process and listen to those with first-hand experience. The new process has more than halved receipt to decision time frames. Whilst many found adjusting to the faster turn-around times challenging, people like the greater certainty and efficiency of the 'Rosewell' timings. We also know that we can and will improve further to deliver the remaining recommendations." Sarah adds, "We are also taking the learnings from the Rosewell Review and are starting to apply these principles to other areas of our casework. This underlines how practical and useful this piece of work from Bridget Rosewell is."

Out of the 22 recommendations, the Planning Inspectorate has so far implemented 16 which includes streamlining the process, reforming the statement of case, earlier inspector engagement and overhauling statements of common ground. The remaining six recommendations are currently in progress, including developments to the new digital portal, reviewing costs of the inquiry venue and improving technology such as exploring the use of live streaming.

During the event, delegates offered views on their experiences with cases

handled in the Rosewell way. Many delegates highlighted how much they welcomed the greater certainty around event timings and receiving a timely decision and that the importance of this can hardly be overestimated. There seemed also general positivity about the early inspector engagement helping all parties in being more focused and efficient in their preparation for a case. At the same time further scope for improvement was identified regarding the consistency of inspectors deciding how to hear a case, in particular regarding the extent of cross-examination considered appropriate. There was similarly a plea for further and faster moves towards more electronic working on inquiry appeals.

[See the recordings of the presentations.](#)