FAQs

Did the public and/or agents have a say in the design of the new Portal?

The design of the new Planning Portal was undertaken over several years and included engagement with the public (via user surveys) and agents (workshops) during the procurement phase to ensure that their needs were considered. There was also some engagement with agents during the development and build stage, but this was limited due to time constraints associated with the implementation timetable.

The new Planning Portal was procured following an open procurement, to ensure value for money, and the solution is primarily an off-the shelf product. It is not practical to re-design the portal to meet all individual needs.

Is the new Planning Portal delaying the approval of planning applications?

The implementation of the new Planning Portal is the largest joint local and central government IT project ever undertaken and, as with any project of this nature, there have been early technical issues. Some of these have already been addressed and others will be fixed through planned software updates. This has initially impacted the processing of applications but will improve as we address the technical issues and staff become more familiar with using the new system.

Currently over 55% of all applications being submitted to planning authorities are being submitted online and processed via the new portal.

Why can I not amend or update an application online after it is submitted?

The new Planning Portal is designed to encourage applicants to submit all of the relevant planning application information right first time and remove delays created by invalid application submissions, which can go back and forth between agents and the councils.

Agents were advised of this issue and a workaround suggested at the Fermanagh and Omagh District Council Planning Portal Agent Workshop on 23 November 2023. This is currently working well and not impeding the progress of planning applications.

There is a plan to enable amendments to be made online as part of a wider update from the supplier to all clients in England, Wales and NI later in 2023.

In the meantime, amended application details and/or plans can be submitted by pdf to the planning@fermanaghomagh.com

Why is there a maximum upload file size of 10Mb?

The system was designed with a maximum file size of 10Mb to aide an efficient submission process. It is too early to know if the size of the documents that can be uploaded needs to be increased but this will be reviewed after the initial transition period to ascertain if this needs to be reconsidered.

What are the payment options?

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council only accept payment by way of Govpay. If there are issues with the payment of larger fees please contact the planning Department at planning@fermanaghomagh.com

Why is there a planning reference and a separate planning portal reference?

There are two reference numbers used within the new Planning Portal. The Planning Portal number is the initial system reference given to the application when the submission is made online, before it is received by the planning authority. This is necessary in case a fault occurs during the process of transferring the application from the public site to the back office used by the planning authority.

The Planning Application number remains as the actual application reference number used by the planning authorities and will be assigned to the case once it has been received by them.

Why were there delays in consultations being issued by Planning Authorities?

A range of issues have had an impact on the timeliness of consultations being issued. Several changes have recently been applied to the system to improve the performance of the Consultee Hub and ensure that consultations are issued in a timelier manner.

Additional changes will be implemented during updates to the Portal on 09 & 23 February that will further improve performance.

Can Consultees access the Hub?

There were some initial technical issues, as well as user awareness of new processes, which prevented some Consultees gaining access to the new Hub but these have been resolved.

Was there an issue with consultation responses being submitted to Planning Authorities?

There have been some technical issues which prevented some consultation responses being passed to Planning Authorities in a timely manner. Several changes have already been applied to the system which has improved the performance of the Consultee Hub and further updates will be implemented to ensure that consultation responses are transferred more promptly.

Why can't I see outgoing consultations?

This is a known issue which is being considered by the project team and supplier.

Why does the map search not show the red line boundary of planning applications?

The new Planning Portal was not designed to replicate the old Public Access website and therefore provides map searches in a different way. The new system allows users to search for applications by postcode, full or partial address as well as by easting and northing co-ordinates. Users can then toggle the search radius to a maximum of 200m.

If there are planning applications against the site, the user can identify and click on the application they are interested in to view the extent of the application site boundary along with all other relevant information associated with the case. If linked, the system will also pull other application data through.

Users can also search using other criteria via the simple or advanced search tools.

Why does the map search not show any history results?

There were some initial technical issues affecting the display of plot points on the map but this has been resolved. We are not aware of any current problems and the system is operating as expected.

Why does the map search not show new addresses?

The map used within the Planning Portal is sourced from Ordinance Survey NI (OSNI) and contains the most up to date survey data.

Can I search by agent for existing applications?

There were some initial technical issues affecting the advanced search tool but these have been resolved.

Users should note that the search results will be dependent on the spelling matching with what has been recorded in the database.

If a user is unable to find specific applications using the various fields available in the advanced search tool, they can contact Fermanagh and Omagh District Councils Planning Department to report the matter at planning@fermanaghomagh.com for investigation.

Can I search by key word or address?

While there were some initial issues with the search tool, we are not aware of any current problems and this is operating as expected.

How do I track an application status?

The ability to track applications is a standard feature which is available to registered users. We are not aware of any current performance issues with the tracking feature. The system shows the status within the actual application details but not as part of the tracking overview.

Why have original document upload dates been replaced with 26 November 2022? It makes tracking the sequence of correspondence on an application difficult.

There was an issue with the data supplied from the old IT system and it was necessary to use a default date, that being the date the data transferred between the systems i.e. 26 November 2022.

The date for representations/comments has been addressed with a software update. However, there are still issues with the dates of other types of documents which were transferred and this is being investigated with the supplier.

The key dates of each application are also available on the Details tab.

Were any files or data lost from the old IT system?

All application data was successfully migrated from the old IT system and is available to staff. There is no evidence to suggest that there is any missing data, in whole or in part.

There was an issue with some documents and / or representations not being viewable on the Planning Register, however changes have been applied to the system which have sought to resolve this issue.

There is also a known historic data issue which is preventing the public viewing documents for Outline planning applications on the portal. There is a planned software release at the end of February to address this issue. In the meantime, users can contact the relevant planning authority to request access to the documents via alternative means.

Why are documents downloading as zip files?

This is due to the way the data was presented and transferred from the previous IT system. Unfortunately, there is no process that would automatically unzip these files.

This issue will reduce in the future as drawings and documents are not saved as zip files for any applications submitted since the launch of the new portal in December 2022.

Are the view and download functions working?

Yes. While there were some initial issues with this functionality, this was addressed with a software update in January.

When will the new Planning Portal be fully fixed?

Several of the issues initially identified with the new Planning Portal have already been resolved and any remaining issues are due to be addressed as part of a phased roll-out of software releases in February, March and April. This will continue to improve the service for our customers.

Who do I contact with a query / complaint about the new Planning Portal?

You should contact Fermanagh and Omagh District Councils planning department with any issues you have with the Planning System at planning@fermanaghomagh.com

What happened to the old Portal?

The previous IT system (NIPP) was maintained for a few weeks after the new Planning Portal went live but has now been decommissioned. All data transferred from that system to the new portal in advance of its launch in December 2022.