D L a DIGITAL LOCAL aGENDA

INTERREG IVC
INNOVATION & ENVIRONMENT
REGIONS OF EUROPE SHARING SOLUTIONS

European Union
European Regional Development Fund

DLA Project – Component 3 – Good Practices identification

Common form for proposition

Good practice form (final version)

Title	ePlan – the Internet Planning Application tracking facility
Acronym	ePlan
Web site	http://www.longfordcoco.ie/eplan41/searchtypes.aspx http://www.laois.ie/eplan41/searchtypes.aspx http://www.westmeathcoco.ie/ePlan41/searchtypes.aspx http://ww2.offaly.ie/eplan41/SearchExact.aspx
Practice logo	ePlan online enquiry
Type of initiative	Please indicate the type of the GP **X** Project or service ☐ IS policy / legal framework ☐ Strategic initiative ☐ Network ☐ Capacity building ☐ Award scheme ☐ Other (*please specify*): _____ _____
DLA Country/Region	Please indicate your DLA region ☐ Baden-Württemberg (Germany) ☐ Estonia ☐ Galicia (Spain) ☐ North Hungary ☐ Latvia ☐ North Portugal **X** Midlands(Ireland) ☐ Tuscany (Italy) ☐ Western Greece

	☐ Macedonia (Greece)
City / Region	Midland Regional Area (Also available Nationally)
Period of realization	Insert here the start date – end date of practice realization **2003**
Date of activation	Insert here the date on which the case became operational **2004-2005 made available over the four different Local Authority web sites.** **The system was then updated in 2007.**
Focus area **(see DLA manifesto)**	Please indicate an item: **X** e.Participation ☐ Secure digital local networks **X** e.Inclusion **X** Advanced municipal and local services ☐ Full broadband access
Type of service	☐ Not applicable/Not available ☐ Training/Education ☐ Content provision ☐ IT infrastructures or products **X** Awareness/Raising information **X** Inclusive services of general interest **X** Participation
Topic(s) **(see DLA manifesto)**	According to the focus area, please indicate the topic of your practices choosing from the "i2010 Digital Local Agenda Action Goals" (see DLA Manifesto) • **To facilitate multichannel content provision and dissemination of policy** • **To increase transparency and accessibility** • **To improve the quality of information** • **To enhance e-capacity by developing and sharing materials** • **To develop models of seamless services delivery that are citizen-centred / oriented / constructed** • **To encourage optimum use of appropriate technology (appropriate access channels) for each user/stakeholder**
Abstract	

In accordance with the relevant legislative provisions, all of the Local Authorities in the Midlands region carry out a number of functions in relation to planning and development control.

ePlan allows the citizen to view planning applications online. Maps and submissions may be viewed simply by querying the online system.

ePlan is an Internet enquiries front end to the iPlan Planning Administration system. Iplan is the system used by the Planning Authority to process all planning applications. Eplan runs against a replicated version of the iPlan database, which is refreshed at regular

intervals. ePlan is used to provide the public with information on the status of planning applications submitted to the Local Authority.

Policy context and strategic framework

Please describe briefly the context in which you operate (including EC policy, if applicable) and the local/national/European policy and/or strategic framework (if applicable). (*1/2 page max*)

In March 2002 the Irish goverment published *a strategy to realise the potential of the Information Society,* through a document entitled "*New Connections*".

This document acknowledged that a supportive public policy environment was critical to shaping the States development as an Information Society and provided a strategic framework for renewed commitment to the Information Society agenda across all areas of Government.

The document stated that "*The technologies of the Information Society present Government with new opportunities to reshape the delivery of government services around user needs, and on a 24x7 basis. They also provide a possible competitive advantage through reduced costs, higher efficiencies, better services and opportunities to allow Irish industry to develop new applications and content around the electronic government services. Online services can be structured around life events and their business equivalents, and need not be constrained by traditional organisational boundaries. ICTs therefore make possible new connections – both within Government itself, and between Government and the citizen and Government and the business users of its services*".

The strategy highlighted a number of flagship citizen-centred services which would be prioritised, an online facility providing access to the Planning Application process, including citizen interaction with the draft development plan and the online registering of unauthorised development, commencement notices, and objections was included in those services for prioritization.
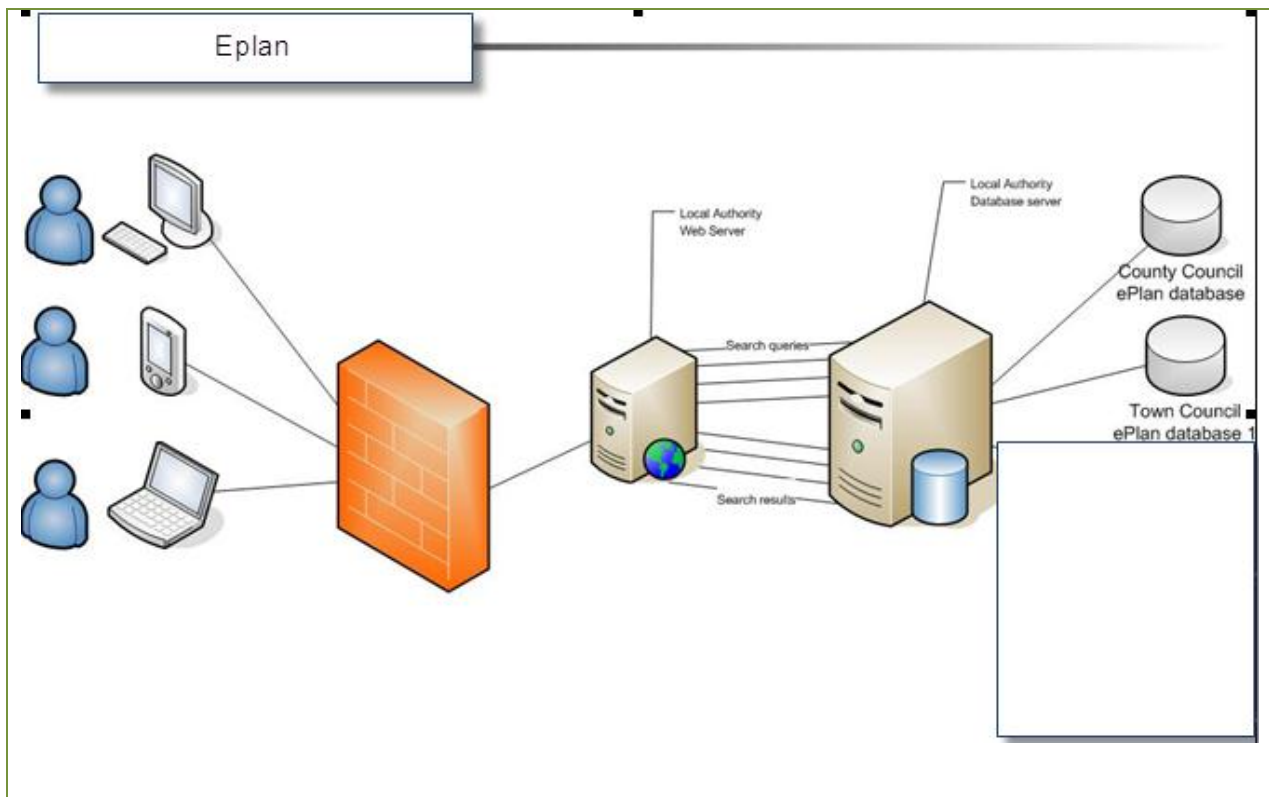
Scope	☐ City	☐ Municipality
	X Province/County	**X** Region/Nation

Target users or group	**X** Citizens	☐ Civil Society
	X Industries	☐ Other (*please specify*):
	☐ Associations	_____
	☐ Public Administrations	_____

Description of target or users group

Please describe your target group and provide some information on size, composition and needs. Provide some use cases of the practice (*1 page max*)

All citizens. The population of the midlands region is approximately 250,000 (2006 census). This population is divided across four County Councils and a further number of planning authorities. In some cases a distance in excess of 20 km can be encountered between the individual and their local planning office. The availability of planning information online is a major inclusion initiative for the citizens of the region.

Overall implementation approach	**X** Public administration(s)	☐ Partnerships between administration and/or private sector and/or non profit sector
	☐ Private sector	
	☐ Non profit sector	☐ Other (*please specify*): _____ _____

Description of the way you implement and manage your initiative/service

Please explain the implementation and management approach followed, indicating the key components and success factors (*1 page max + 1 scheme if helpful*)

ePlan was originally developed by the Local Government Computer Services Board (LGCSB) on behalf of the State's Local Authorities. The rollout of the system commenced in April 2003. The system was then reengineered (upgraded to .NET etc) with the current version released in September 2007. This reengineering was carried out by a third party software provider, PMI Software Limited, in close liaison with the LGCSB and cost approximately €90,000.

The ePlan system is available to the public through each Local Authority's web site. Once the citizen accesses the service they can query all planning applications under two main categories, 1. view all planning applications, 2. view received \ decision due \ decisions made on recent applications. If the user wishes to query all planning applications they may do so through a query related to the planning application number, development address or applicant name. ePlan is also integrated with a graphical interface gPlan which displays the site location on a map. It is also integrated with the document management system iDocs which allows the citizen to view all the documents associated with the file i.e. the 'Planning File online'.

Technology solution

Explain the technological choices and the approach followed. Indicate the degree to which interoperability (semantic, organizational or technical), the use of standards and/or proprietary technology are important in your project (*1/2 page max + 1 scheme if helpful*)

The User experience for the ePlan application is through a web standards bassed appliation. This application is installed on the local authorities web server and is accessible from a link on their web site.

The ePlan application, installed on the local authority web server accesses a database on a shared database server. There is replication to transfer the data from the iPlan database (planners tool) to the web database. This copies a subset of the iPlan data to be used by ePlan. The replication process is controlled by SQL Server and alerts the DBA team to any faults or timeouts that occur.

The architecture employed is an ASP.Net 2.0 web application using a SQL Server database.

Funding source	☐ Public EU funding	X Public Local funding
	X Public National funding	☐ Private sector (s)
	☐ Public Regional funding	☐ Voluntary contributions

Implementation costs (overall)	X Not applicable	☐ € 300.000 - 1 million
	☐ € 0 - 15.000	☐ € 1 million - 5 millions
	☐ € 15.000 - 50.000	☐ € 5 millions - 10 millions
	☐ € 50.000 - 100.000	☐ More than 10 millions
	☐ € 100.000 - 300.000	

Main results, scope and benefits

Please, describe the main results (qualitative and quantitative) for all stakeholders involved: you should mention issues such as impact, scope, added value and results achieved and/or expected by your initiative, including user impact and user satisfaction. (1 *page max + indicators of results + schemes if helpful*)

The Eplan system provides a number of advantages for all stakeholders; the main benefits achieved are highlighted below.
- **Eplan provides a comprehensive search facility of planning applications including tailoring of time periods to be analyzed.**
- **Snap shot views of applications received in recent past with ease of use time period**

selection.
- **Snap shot views of decisions made.**
- **Snap shot views of forthcoming decisions.**
- **Provides a secure means of allowing the public view planning applications electronically**
- **Schedules of conditions can be loaded up and made available to the public**
- **Provides a seamless link to online mapping**

Return of investment

Please estimate the direct savings that will result from the project over its total estimated duration. The savings should ideally benefit your country/region or users. In case you cannot provide an amount, please describe your return on investment (*1/2 page max+ schemes if helpful*)

The service offers citizens the opportunity to view planning application details from their home or business. The service is not constrained by office hours. The availability of this information should provide for fewer queries being made at Local Authority offices and thus providing for obvious human resource benefits.

Since its implementation the Authorities have found a decrease in the number of front desk (in office) enquiries this is attributed to the success of the ePlan system. The system is seen by most Authorities as maximizing the openness and transparency of the planning system within the region. The system has also proved to be an excellent tool in exposing unauthorised developments.

Moving forward it is hoped that the system could be extended to include planning appeals functionality as well as a number of other useful developments.

Sharing feautures

Evaluate the potential for others to learn from your case and describe mechanisms for exchange, transfer and replication. Also, please specify whether you have shared this case or project with others (peers, public sector actors, such as governments, etc.) and the results (*1 page max + schemes if helpful*)

This practice does provide an opportunity with others to review the practice simply by accessing the relevant web sites mentioned above.

Could the GP be available for a DLA "on site" study visit?	**X** Yes