



PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK 5

BALLATER, ROYAL DEESIDE

2015/2016

DUNNOTTAR CASTLE, STONEHAVEN

CONTENTS

FORWARD	6
INTRODUCTION	7
PART 1: NATIONAL HEADLINE INDICATORS	12
PART 2: DEFINING AND MEASURING A HIGH QUALITY PLANNING SERVICE:	15
1. QUALITY OF OUTCOMES	16
1A. HIGH QUALITY DEVELOPMENT ON THE GROUND	16
2. QUALITY OF SERVICE AND ENGAGEMENT	27
2A. OPEN FOR BUSINESS	27
2B. CERTAINTY	42
2C. COMMUNICATIONS, ENGAGEMENT & CUSTOMER SERVICE	60
3. GOVERNANCE	67
3A. EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE DECISION MAKING	67
3B. EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES	83
3C. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE	85
4. CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT	88
PART 3: EVIDENCE LINKS	93
PART 4A: SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS	94
PART 4B: DELIVERY OF OUR SERVICE IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS IN 2015-16	96
PART 5: OFFICIAL STATISTICS	99
PART 6: WORKFORCE AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION	101
APPENDIX 1: ORGANOGRAM	103



CASE STUDIES

CHAPTER 1: QUALITY OF OUTCOMES

CHAPTER 1A: HIGH QUALITY DEVELOPMENT ON THE GROUND

CASE STUDY 1	- EVIDENCE OF QUALITY OUTCOMES FROM LDP PROCESS	16
CASE STUDY 2	- DUFF HOUSE MAUSOLEUM – REPAIR AND RESTORATION WORKS 2016	19
CASE STUDY 3A	- BUCHAN HOUSE HEADQUARTERS	21
CASE STUDY 3B	- CHAPELTON – HUME SQUARE	22
CASE STUDY 3C	- ALFORD CAMPUS	23
CASE STUDY 3D	- BOATHOUSE – PORTSOY	24
CASE STUDY 3E	- CARMELITE STREET – BANFF	25
CASE STUDY 4A	- PROPOSED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT ENGAGEMENT	27
CASE STUDY 4B	- INNOVATIVE ENGAGEMENT	28
CASE STUDY 4C	- PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND OFFICER INTERACTION	29
CASE STUDY 5A	- PROJECT MANAGEMENT OF DELIVERY OF “SCHEDULE 4” DOCUMENTS FOR EXAMINATION.	29
CASE STUDY 5B	- PRAGMATIC APPROACH TO THE PLAN PREPARATION PROCESS - GIVING CERTAINTY	30
CASE STUDY 5C	- MEETING EXPECTATIONS FOLLOWING CONSULTATION	30
CASE STUDY 6A	- MASTERPLAN TRAINING	32
CASE STUDY 6B	- MASTERPLAN - NORTHWOODS, MINTLAW – OPEN FOR BUSINESS	33
CASE STUDY 7	- OPEN FOR BUSINESS: DELIVERING NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT NORTH CONNECT	34
CASE STUDY 8	- ALDI PETERHEAD	35
CASE STUDY 9	- CONSULTEE ENGAGEMENT TOWARDS IMPROVEMENT	36

CHAPTER 2: QUALITY OF SERVICE AND ENGAGEMENT

CHAPTER 2A: OPEN FOR BUSINESS

CASE STUDY 10A	- DELIVERY TEAM WORKING PRO-ACTIVELY	38
CASE STUDY 10B	- DELIVERY IN ACTION - CROMLEYBANK, ELLON	38
CASE STUDY 10C	- DELIVERY IN ACTION - KINTORE EAST	39
CASE STUDY 11	- ENGAGEMENT AND CUSTOMER SERVICE FOR REGIONALLY SIGNIFICANT PROJECTS	40
CASE STUDY 12A	- LOCAL PRE APPLICATION - GOOD DESIGN THROUGH NEGOTIATION AND DISCUSSION	41
CASE STUDY 12B	- LOCAL/LISTED BUILDING PRE APPLICATION – MELDRUM HOUSE HOTEL	42
CASE STUDY 13	- STAKEHOLDER - PRE APPLICATION CERTAINTY – ROADS AS PARTNERS	42

CHAPTER 2B: CERTAINTY

CASE STUDY 14	- NON HOUSEHOLD IMPROVEMENTS	44
CASE STUDY 15A	- SPEED OF VALIDATION (TO BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH CASE STUDY 15(B) BELOW	46
CASE STUDY 15B	- SPEED OF VALIDATION COMPARATIVE MONITORING	47
CASE STUDY 16	- KINTORE SECTION 42 APPLICATION	49
CASE STUDY 17	- EFFECTIVE PRE APPLICATION. STRATHBOGIE HOTEL 8 UNITS - APP/2016/0485	51
CASE STUDY 18	- CERTAINTY – CHANGE BENEFITS AND CONTINUING IMPROVEMENTS	54
CASE STUDY 19A	- MODEL CONDITIONS REVIEW	56
CASE STUDY 19B	- PROCESS MAPS	56
CASE STUDY 19C	- DM MANUAL	56
CASE STUDY 20A	- TO DEMONSTRATE ENFORCEMENT IMPROVEMENTS IN PLACE	57
CASE STUDY 20B	- TO DEMONSTRATE ENFORCEMENT - WORK TO BE COMPLETED	58
CASE STUDY 20C	- GLOIES STEADING LISTED BUILDING	60

CHAPTER 2C: COMMUNICATIONS, ENGAGEMENT AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

CASE STUDY 21	- RESPONDING TO CUSTOMER COMMENTS/CONCERNS	62
CASE STUDY 22	- ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING IN DEVELOPMENT DELIVERY	63
CASE STUDY 23A	- COMMUNITY COUNCIL FOCUS – TRAINING DAY	64
CASE STUDY 23B	- ENGAGEMENT WITH AGENTS/DEVELOPERS	65
CASE STUDY 23C	- ELECTED MEMBER ENGAGEMENT	66
CASE STUDY 24A	- FLOODING - REACTIVE - COLLABORATION-ENGAGEMENT	66
CASE STUDY 24B	- FLOODING - PLANNING ADVICE & SURGERIES	67

CHAPTER 3: GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3A: EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE DECISION MAKING

CASE STUDY 25	- LEGACY STRATEGY IN ACTION	70
CASE STUDY 26	- GOVERNANCE CHAMPION DAY	71
CASE STUDY 27	- ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL – IMPROVING OUTCOMES – THE LOCAL REVIEW BODY (LRB)	72
CASE STUDY 28	- LEGACY PREVENTION	73
CASE STUDY 29	- A NEW APPEALS PROTOCOL FOR DEALING WITH PLANNING APPEAL SUBMISSIONS TO THE DPEA BEING AGREED THROUGH THE PLANNING AND LEGAL GOVERNANCE GROUP AND IMPLEMENTED BY OFFICERS.	74
CASE STUDY 30	- SCHEME OF DELEGATION REVIEW	75
CASE STUDY 31	- PRIOR NOTIFICATION PROCESS	76
CASE STUDY 32A	- ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH LIAISON	76
CASE STUDY 32B	- ROADS LIAISON	77
CASE STUDY 32C	- MEETING WITH BAT SURVEYORS	79
CASE STUDY 33A	- ePLANNING TEAM PROGRESSION – OBSERVATIONS OF THE SUPERVISOR OF THE ePLANNING TEAM	80
CASE STUDY 33B	- WORKSMART	81
CASE STUDY 34	- EFFICIENT USE OF STAFF RESOURCES TO MAINTAIN PERFORMANCE	82
CASE STUDY 35	- ROADS COLLABORATION TOWARDS CORPORATE WORKING	83

CHAPTER 3B: EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES

CASE STUDY 36	- EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT COMMUNICATION	84
CASE STUDY 37	- SHARING PRACTICES – PROVIDING A SERVICE	85

CHAPTER 3C: FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE

CASE STUDY 38	- RESPONSIBLE BUDGETING EAR MARKED RESERVE	88
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CHAPTER 4: CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

CASE STUDY 39	- DEVELOPMENT OF PLANNING ADVICE	89
CASE STUDY 40	- SECTION 42 CASE STUDY	90
CASE STUDY 41	- SHORT TERM WORKING GROUPS – REGULATION 24	90
CASE STUDY 42	- DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT TRAINING DAY - MARCH	91
CASE STUDY 43	- HISTORIC ASSETS MANAGEMENT PROJECT (HAMP)	92



Serving Aberdeenshire from mountain to sea – the very best of Scotland

The best area

Helping to create and sustain the best quality of life for all through . . .

- happy, healthy and confident people
- safe, friendly and lively communities
- an enterprising and adaptable economy
- our special environment and diverse culture

The best council

Aiming to provide excellent services for all by . . .

- involving, responding and enabling
- finding new and more efficient ways of doing things
- providing elected leadership for our area
- working with our partners in the North East and beyond
- always looking to the future

The Planning Service is a part of Infrastructure Services which overall has a key role in helping to create and sustain the quality of life for the people of Aberdeenshire and is committed to providing excellent services for all.

We will achieve this by:-

"Supporting Aberdeenshire Council's vision to be the best area and the best Council through the effective management of the Council's physical assets, by helping to create the conditions for economic growth within Aberdeenshire and the wider region and by providing high quality local services to residents, communities, business and visitors"

FORWARD

Welcome to our Planning Performance Framework for 2015-2106 and to another year of improved performance set within an environment of challenge and change. The stabilisation and embedding of the transformational changes of the previous year have continued to produce certainty and positivity from the Development Management function, reflected in improved performance and most importantly service delivery to our communities.

Economically, well documented changes to the north east area are impacting in a variety of ways, but there remains a lot going on around us. Work is currently progressing on the Aberdeen City and Shire bid for the City Region Deal which would allow the unlocking of projects and initiatives to boost the economy further. The City Region Deal and associated additional funding will achieve a total package of £504m, as a phase one, which is very significant for the area. The Planning Service will undoubtedly play a major part in any future City Region outcomes. The Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR) continues to be scheduled for a late 2017 completion. The development of the private sector led 'Opportunity North East', with Sir Ian Wood at the helm is also bringing investment, importantly much from the private sector.

In the meantime the Planning Service continues to play a vital role in supporting the delivery of the Council's Strategic Priorities. In particular, the key service objective that ensures the creation of conditions for sustainable economic growth, diversification and regeneration within Aberdeenshire whilst developing its communities.

The changing economy is reliant upon, amongst other things, a robust and stable Planning Service. In recognising this need for certainty, I am very pleased to report that the Local Development Plan remains on course for adoption and the effective housing land supply remains at a level ensuring delivery of further housing provision. Similarly pleasing is the overall improvement of decision making throughout the reporting period. The focus on improving both major and non-householder applications has proven successful although there are still some areas of the major application process that

can benefit from further improvements and work on this continues. Continuing focus on improving the timescales for legal agreements has helped in this area as has a wholesale use of processing agreements for major applications. Notwithstanding economic fluctuations, Aberdeenshire has continued to receive a high number of major applications for varying scales of development.

The Legacy Strategy has continued to produce significant reductions in our older applications and importantly has factored in prevention to ensure legacy cases do not continue to occur.

Our Stakeholder engagement remains one of the most important aspects of the job we do. We remain committed to making sure our stakeholders are well informed and enabled in all Council activity. This is particularly important within the planning process which has wide reaching impacts on our communities and the business of ensuring development is in the right place at the right time. Particular focus continues on customer surveys and meaningful action to address particular areas of improvement highlighted. Community Council liaison has, I believe, assisted in stronger working relationships and a better understanding, in particular, of the Community Council's role in the planning process.

The commitment to the regeneration of our most valuable historic areas and investment into our built heritage continues. Various strands of project and partnership work together with Townscape Heritage (TH)/Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) continue to contribute to high quality development on the ground, potentially attracting inward investment. In addition to the funding secured in the last reporting



**STEPHEN ARCHER –
DIRECTOR OF INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES**

period, an additional £645,000 has been secured from the Scottish Government for 1 Saltoun Square – a priority project for Fraserburgh and part of the regeneration work about to commence in that area. Portsoy CARS which involved £700,000 of funding will be completed this year; Banff CARS which has funding of £500,000 and is supported by a dedicated Project Officer until 2019 should see its first project start on site this year; and the Fraserburgh 2021 TH/CARS project which has secured approximately £4million of external funding should commence this summer. These projects will make a significant contribution to our communities.

Our Staff of course remain the mainstay of achieving good performance and delivering a professional service. It is to the great credit of our staff that they have reacted so positively to the period of transformation and have delivered so effectively the improvements in performance and service delivery. Our staffing numbers have remained constant and it is this dynamic along with the mix of skills and experience, I feel, that has channelled the improvement in performance to where it currently sits.

In all, our year has produced many positive outcomes in performance and service delivery. There are of course many challenges present and ahead. Continuation of performance and improvement remains firmly as the main focus. I am confident that the current make up and resilience of the Service will enable us to face the challenges ahead as well as the demands and aspirations of the present.

Stephen Archer
Director of Infrastructure Services

INTRODUCTION



This Planning Performance Framework document continues to be read in conjunction with the suite of high level documents that embody Aberdeenshire Council.

These were specifically detailed in the [PPF 2014-15 \(Planning Performance Framework 2014-2015 \(pdf 4.65 MB\)\)](#)

These are listed as:

[The Council Plan 2013-2017 \(pdf 2.2mb\) \(Council's Strategic Priorities\)](#)

The [Community Plan](#) which informs the Council Plan and Strategic Priorities and which sets out how we work with our main partners and Aberdeenshire's communities, and our overall [vision](#).

Infrastructure Service Plan 2015-2018 (the Key Objectives within support the Council's Strategic Priorities) [Infrastructure Services 2015-2018 \(pdf 231 kb\)](#)

Each of the six areas has produced a Local Community Plan for the next four years. These can be found on the [Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership web site](#).

[Economic Development Strategy for 2011-2016](#).

The [Local Development Plan](#) and [Strategic Development Plan](#) are similarly a major tool in delivering the **Service Objectives**.

PROGRESS AND IMPROVEMENT IN THE PLANNING SERVICE IN 2015/16

The Scottish Government Feedback for Aberdeenshire on the PPF 2014-2015 recognised that in amongst many areas of improvement the following aspects still required evidence of improvement:

Decision making – major applications, non-household
Legal Agreements – major applications
Processing Agreements – accurate recording
Pre application – improvements and commitment to pre application discussions evident – statistics needed to be evidenced.

The proactive approach and resulting reduction in legacy cases was noted but that further results of the proactive approach in place should be made evident.

It was noted that the current Action Programme was kept updated and assisted in supporting applications relating to allocated sites. It was highlighted that further information was considered to be useful.

Encouragement was given to perhaps reducing the number of commitments for the forthcoming year to ensure a manageable quantity. This is acknowledged, although the number of commitments

reflect the level and volume of work that has actually been ongoing and the appetite for continually improving. It was considered necessary to record all commitments to retain awareness of, and focus on, the work required. The commitments are also utilised to document progress and ensure measurable targets.

In the other markers positive acknowledgment was given to the influence of design through the pre application process, significant reduction in timescales for local legal agreements, the continuing success of the Legacy Strategy, the use of corporate working across services and sharing good practice with others in terms of protocol work, work with Agents, Community Councils and Elected Members.

The previous reporting period of [2013/14](#) was one of transformation and change. This was followed by [2014/15](#) and a period of embedding and familiarisation of the new structures and systems. 2015/16 is considered the period of evidencing the outputs and impacts of the previous years' changes/activity.



SUMMARY OF THE DEVELOPMENT PLANNING YEAR

The Proposed Plan was published on 28 March 2015, and the period for submissions closed on 11 May 2015. The period from mid-May to 31 August was devoted to preparing reports, in the Schedule 4 format, for submission to the Local Development Plan Examination. All Schedule 4 documents were scrutinised by Elected Members over three Area Committee cycles in November with final approval by Infrastructure Services Committee on 26 November and submission of the Plan to Ministers on 1 December 2015. Feedback (in the form of information requests) from the Examination started on 1 February 2016 and 3 requests were received by the end of March 2016. Responses to the proposed Supplementary Guidance were analysed in January and February, and a Report was made to Area Committees in March 2016.

Two new pieces of Supplementary Guidance were developed during the year, the Forest and Woodland Strategy and the Special Landscape Areas. The SLA analysis was undertaken by a contractor, while the Forest and Woodland Strategy was developed in-house. Both elements of guidance were developed and reported, initially to the Infrastructure Services Committee, before starting the processes of public and Elected Member engagement.

The programme set out in the 2015 Development Plan Scheme was adhered to, and a new Development Plan Scheme for the year from February 2016 was approved by Infrastructure Services Committee on 28 January 2016.

SUMMARY OF DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT YEAR

The reporting period of 2015-2016 has been another busy year for Development Management. It has also been one reflecting success in achieving in the main overall improvement in Key Headline National Indicators for decision making, Legal Agreement timescales apart.

Priority focus, following the Government Feedback, was given to:

Major Applications – further improving performance in decision making. (-21.5 average weeks)

Legal Agreements – there has been an increase in Legal Agreement timescales. Evidence is however provided within the PPF report to explain this increase as monitoring of these timescales takes place and the preventative mechanisms now in place.

Non Household Applications – further improvement in decision making (-1.7 average weeks)

Legacy cases – further reduction in legacy cases and prevention of new cases. (reduced by 57)

Processing Agreements – further encouragement and increase of use and accurate reporting.

Pre application – overall pre application enquiries have increased and evidence is now being recorded within the Uniform system.

All of the above have been positively progressed, although there still remains areas where further improvement is required, particularly in the areas of major applications and Legal Agreements associated with major applications.

Engagement continued to focus on increasing positive working relationships with the community, developers and stakeholders.

Promotion of the use of Processing Agreements has proven to be successful. All major applications are now subject to Processing Agreements and many other non-major applications where it is felt necessary.

Customer Service

Despite budgetary pressures the decision has been taken not to introduce any additional charging into the planning service provided to customers.

Pre application service remains free of charge both for local and major development proposals.

Permitted Development enquiries remains free of charge, the Service has not gone down the route of charging or requesting Certificates of Lawfulness.

Committed Improvements

A number of committed Improvement projects rolled out to ensure certainty and good practice:

Model Conditions/Development Management Manual/Section 42 advice/Regulation 24 review.

SUMMARY OF ENFORCEMENT YEAR

The Enforcement Team was created as part of the overall transformation of the Planning Service and have continued to re shape and build on the aspirations to be more effective and responsive as a single unit in dealing with complaints and unauthorised developments. The combination of the appointment of a Senior Planner and additional staff and the implementation of new recording and work management systems has proven successful in achieving the aim of being a fit for purpose Service.

SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENT YEAR

The Environment and Specialist Services teams have continued to make an important contribution to the quality of design, placemaking and wider environmental and biodiversity agendas through a wide variety of project work and by providing specialist support to planners, other Council professionals, partners and stakeholders. They have been particularly successful in securing external funding and partnership working. The teams have made significant progress with a number of improvement projects to ensure our data sets are accurate and robust to support quality decision making and can properly inform our investment decisions to ensure effective use of resources. We have made some good progress with reviewing our strategies but further work is required in this area to ensure alignment with national and corporate priorities and our activities make the best use of resources available.

Service Plan

Infrastructure Services has a key role in helping to create and sustain the quality of life for the peoples of Aberdeenshire and is committed to providing excellent services for all. We will achieve this by:-

“Supporting Aberdeenshire Council’s vision to be the best area and the best Council through the effective management of the Council’s physical assets, by helping to create the conditions for economic growth within Aberdeenshire and the wider region and by providing high quality local services to residents, communities, business and visitors”

[The Service Plan 2015-2018](#)

PERFORMANCE MARKERS - PRIORITY FOCUS FOR 2014/15: SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES FOR 2015/16

The priority focus comes from the Feedback of the previous PPF (2014/15) under the relevant Performance Markers. These are summarised/ reported back with outcomes. These outcomes are further detailed throughout the PPF.

PERFORMANCE MARKER	PRIORITY – AMBER	OUTCOMES	PRIORITY - GREEN	OUTCOMES
Driving Improved Performance	<p>Major Developments - improvement but higher than national average Local Developments improvements but remains higher than national average</p> <p>No statistics for pre application submitted</p>	<p>Overall improvement in average timescales. Focus remains on Major Application performance</p> <p>Pre application figures – system now up to date. Focus remains on encouragement of pre application</p>	<p>Processing Agreements – ensure correct statistics are used.</p> <p>Improvements in all aspects of Legal Agreements. Time to conclude Legal Agreements still far too long.</p> <p>Timescales should continue to reduce.</p> <p>Improvement evident in decision making, pre application, processing agreements and legacy case reduction.</p> <p>Significant number of Commitments for forthcoming year – encourage a more manageable quantity to ensure completion.</p>	<p>Statistics recording reviewed. Focus continued on promotion and use of Processing Agreements</p> <p>Collaborative work and focus continued to further reduce timescales and improve efficiency of overall process.</p> <p>Progress on Committed improvements – Significant number reflects the volume of work and projects dedicated to continuous improvement in performance.</p>
Delivering Development	<p>Legacy cases have been reduced through focused work. Further result of proactive reports in next report.</p> <p>New policy on Developer Contributions – further work to be undertaken prior to LDP adoption</p>	<p>Focus continued on Legacy case reduction and prevention – evidenced.</p> <p>LDP now sets out key requirement for facilities and likely infrastructure which development is required to contribute proportionally. Detailed rates have been included within the Draft SG to provide greater certainty.</p>	<p>LDP Action Programme kept up to date – further information on this would be useful.</p>	<p>Extensive coverage of Action Programme in 2013-14 PPF. Further work and information evidenced.</p>



PERFORMANCE MARKERS - PRIORITY FOCUS FOR 2015/16

PERFORMANCE MARKER	PRIORITY - AMBER	PRIORITY - GREEN
Decision Making	<p>Reduction of average timescales for Major Development. Further significant improvements required.</p> <p>Average timescales for non-householder developments to improve to meet/better national standard</p>	Continue focus on Processing Agreement promotion and process
Early Collaboration		Pre application data recording system and linkages.
Legal Agreements		Continue focus on improving timescales for Section 75 conclusions
Continuous Improvement	Continue consistent progress on improving all decision making timescales	Review number of commitments – although focus on completing those outstanding
Stalled Sites/Legacy cases	Continue focus on reducing Legacy cases and ensuring Legacy prevention – evidence outcomes of proactive approach.	
Developer Contributions		Evidence further pre LDP adoption work on policy.

PART 1: NATIONAL HEADLINE INDICATORS (NHIS)

KEY OUTCOMES	2015 - 2016		2014 - 2015		
Development Planning: › Age of local/strategic development plan(s) (years and months) at end of reporting period <i>Requirement: less than 5 years</i> › Will the local/strategic development plan(s) be replaced by their 5th anniversary according to the current development plan scheme? (Y/N) › Has the expected date of submission of the plan to Scottish Ministers in the development plan scheme changed over the past year? (Y- earlier/Y-later/N) › Were development plan scheme engagement/consultation commitments met during the year? (Y/N)	3 years 3 months SDP -2 Years LDP – Yes by 2017 SDP -Yes No Yes		2 years 3 months SDP – 1 year LDP – Yes SDP –Yes LDP – Yes – later Yes		
Effective Land Supply and Delivery of Outputs	AHMA	RHMA	AHMA	RHMA	
› Established housing land supply	33,821 units	13,084 units	34,731 units	13,569 units	Note 1
› 5-year effective housing land supply	11,250 units	3,510 units	12,091 units	3,686 units	Note 1
› 5-year housing supply target	7,668 units	3,271 units	7,827 units	3,336 units	Note 1
› 5-year effective housing land supply (<i>to one decimal place</i>)	7.3 yrs	5.4 yrs	7.7 yrs	5.5 yrs	Note 1
› Housing approvals	2,512 units		2,654 units		Note 2
› Housing completions over the last 5 years	5,831 units		5,733 units		Note 3
› Marketable employment land supply	341 ha		360 ha		Note 4
› Employment land take-up during reporting year	16.1 ha		14.1 ha		Note 4



STONEHAVEN HARBOUR

Note 1

Housing land supply figures are not available for Aberdeenshire, only for Housing Market Areas (HMAs) as required by the Strategic Development Plan. The Aberdeen Housing Market Area includes Aberdeen City.

There is currently 7.3 yrs worth of effective housing land in the Aberdeen HMA, demonstrating the generous supply provided by allocations in the Strategic Development Plan and Local Development Plan. Over the last year there has been a small decrease in the effective housing land supply. This is partly the result of take up on existing sites but also a slowing of development rates on some sites to reflect the current market situation which continues to be negatively influenced by difficulties in the oil and gas sector.

In the Rural HMA the effective supply has decreased slightly since 2014/15 but is still above the 5 years required. The extent of the effective supply in the Rural HMA is primarily limited by low demand in parts of the area which affects the number of units which can reasonably be expected to come forward within five years. As a result, only a small amount of the total land available appears in the five year effective supply. There are many more sites in the post five year effective supply (3,675 units) which could come forward earlier if required. In addition, there are almost 3,000 units in the constrained supply which are constrained only by marketability and therefore could become effective if demand picks up.

Source: Housing Land Audit 2016

Note 2

The number of housing approvals is very slightly less than previous year at 2,512. 1,485 units were approved in the Aberdeenshire part of the Aberdeen HMA and 1,027 units in the Rural HMA.

Source: Uniform Housing Approvals 2015/16

Note 3

Despite more difficult market conditions in the last couple of years, completions are continuing to increase as sites progress. There were 1,316 completions in Aberdeenshire in 2015. Over the last five years 3,320 units were built in the Aberdeenshire part of the Aberdeen HMA and 2,463 in the Rural HMA.

Source: Housing Land Audit 2016

Note 4

The marketable employment land supply has decreased slightly since the previous year as sites have been taken up but remains well in excess of Strategic Development Plan targets. Of this marketable land, 60 ha is classed as being immediately available. This is a significant increase since the previous year (40 ha) and highlights the progress on sites. In addition, a further 7 ha of land is currently under construction.

Take-up of employment land was 16.1 ha, a slight increase on the previous year.

Source: Employment Land Audit 2014/15 Figures correct as at 1 April 2015



KEY OUTCOMES	2015 - 2016	2014 - 2015	
Development Management			
Project Planning			Note 1
› Percentage of applications subject to pre-application advice	10%	0	
› Number of major applications subject to processing agreement or other project plan	7	6	
› Number of applications subject to other project plan	0	0	
› Percentage planned timescales met	57%	100%	Note 2
Decision-making			
› Application approval rate	94%	92%	
› Delegation rate	91%	90%	
Decision-making timescales			
Average number of weeks to decision:			
› Major developments	86.3	107.8	
› Local developments (non-householder)	14.1	15.8	
› Householder developments	6.8	7.3	
Legacy Cases			
› Number cleared during reporting period	86	138	
› Number remaining	41	98	
Enforcement			
› time since enforcement charter published / reviewed (months) <i>requirement: review every 2 years</i>			
› number of breaches identified / resolved	674/1050	408/297	

Note 1

10% of applications determined during the reporting period were subject to pre-application advice. This shows the data history building up in the system since initial go-live.

Note 2

this figure relates to Major applications only. Over the year 109 applications have been determined subject to a processing agreement, 88% of those have been issued within the agreed timescale. *This figure excludes National Development applications.*

ELLON CAMPUS, ELLON



PART 2: DEFINING AND MEASURING A HIGH-QUALITY PLANNING SERVICE



FISHING VILLAGE OF GOURDON



FOOTPATH, LOCHNAGAR

CHAPTER 1 - QUALITY OF OUTCOMES

CHAPTER 1A - HIGH QUALITY DEVELOPMENT ON THE GROUND

Building on the Scottish Government's purpose "to create a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish through increasing sustainable growth" this plan encourages high-quality development. It promotes the efficient use of land to deliver long-term benefits for the public, while protecting and improving nature and local culture. It sets out policies and development land allocations that deliver the four outcomes that the Scottish Government expects: successful, sustainable places; low carbon places; natural and resilient places; and better connected places.

(From the Proposed LDP)

Quality of the development on the ground, amongst other things, is guided by the Local Development Plan (LDP). Quality outcomes are derived from each step in the LDP process from the levels of engagement, communication, working with Stakeholders, Communities, Elected Members and the Scottish Government.

CASE STUDY 1 – EVIDENCE OF QUALITY OUTCOMES FROM LDP PROCESS

The Local Development Plan is a key determinant of the quality of the places that we create. Development planning is a continuous cycle, and in the past year we have received over 700 submissions to our proposed [Local Development Plan 2016](#), raising over 1700 individual issues.



Future confidence in the Plan led system depends on the fair, open and transparent assessment of those issues before they are submitted to the Directorate of Planning and Environmental Appeals (DPEA). Evidence of the quality of the work undertaken to support the Examination is provided by the very few requests for further information that were received in the first four months of the Examination process. The DPEA has complimented us on the standard of our submission and advised that it should make the Examination both quicker and clearer.



ABERDEENSHIRE AND DESIGN

Aberdeenshire Council recognises that good design is important to the public realm and in a wider context believes that development must be of benefit to the people. The aspirations of the Aberdeenshire Design Awards are to encourage the very best in environmental design, to stimulate and develop a deeper and broader interest in our traditional and recent architectural surroundings, and to improve the built environment within Aberdeenshire, thus raising the profile and benefit of good architectural design within our communities.

Aberdeenshire Design Awards 2016

2016 is the Year of Innovation, Architecture and Design, to reflect this Aberdeenshire Council has modified the 2016 biennial award scheme.

ABERDEENSHIRE 2016 INNOVATION, ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN AWARDS

The awards will focus on conceptual design based on innovation, in addition to completed projects, to encourage new design ideas and entries from students and young designers as well as established architects and developers.



There is an ongoing commitment to Placemaking within Aberdeenshire in line with the national focus of demonstrating the six qualities of successful place.

PLACEMAKING

Work carried out by both the Environment Team and the Specialist Services Team makes an ongoing contribution to placemaking across Aberdeenshire, through e.g.

1. Various Project work (*See below and refer to Case Studies 2,3d&3e*).
 2. Conservation Area Regeneration Schemes in [Portsoy \(2011-16\)](#), [Banff \(2014-2019\)](#) and [Fraserburgh \(2016-2021\)](#).
 3. Townscape Heritage schemes in [Fraserburgh](#).
 4. An ongoing programme of [Conservation Area Reviews](#) (*see below*).
 5. Provision of advice in support of planning applications - to promote ecological coherence on development sites and retain historic and cultural identity.
 6. Provision of targeted biodiversity information through the [Northeast Biological Records Centre \(NESBReC\)](#).
 7. Work relating to upholding access rights, core paths and long distance trails e.g. [Deeside Way](#), [Formartine and Buchan Way](#).
 8. [Ranger Service](#) sessions enabling communities to have the skills and knowledge to make decisions to sustainably develop their local areas for biodiversity.
-

BUILT HERITAGE, AND REGENERATION AND INVESTMENT PROJECTS

In the previous PPF major built heritage and regeneration projects were reported under 'Open for Business' to demonstrate not only the on going support, investment and partnership working dedicated to these historically important areas within Aberdeenshire, but to also promote them as places to work, live and do business within. This time under Quality Outcomes some of the projects are still ongoing but some are now completed.

Various strands of project work together with Townscape Heritage (TH)/ Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) contribute to high quality development on the ground, potentially attracting inward investment:

-
- › Continuation of [Portsoy Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme](#) (CARS) (2011-2016). Funding of £700,000 distributed to various projects, including four priority projects and numerous small grants. Two priority projects complete, two on site nearing completion. The Scheme will be complete by September 2016. (Refer to Case Study 3d).
 - › Continuation of [Banff CARS](#) (2014-2019), [Bridge Street CARS \(Banff\) - Aberdeenshire Council](#). Funding of £500,000 supported by a dedicated Project Officer. Five major projects are envisaged and a Grant Scheme to support small projects has been established. One priority project is fully funded and will start on site June 2016. The project will see the revival of silversmithing in Banff with the redevelopment of a former Smiddy building.
 - › [Fraserburgh 2021 Townscape Heritage \(TH\) scheme and CARS](#). The second round application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Townscape Heritage Scheme has been submitted and it is expected that the Scheme will start in July 2016 and run until June 2021. An additional £645,000 has been secured from the Scottish Government for 1 Saltoun Square - a priority project for the Scheme.
-

A WIDE VARIETY OF INDIVIDUAL BUILT HERITAGE PROJECTS HAVE COME FORWARD TO COMPLETION. THESE DEMONSTRATE THE CONTINUED COMMITMENT TO THE PRESERVING AND ENHANCING OF THE BUILT HERITAGE OF ABERDEENSHIRE THROUGH COLLABORATIVE MEANS AND PROACTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORK.



1. [STONEHAVEN CLOCK TOWER](#)



This project appeared in last year's PPF as one of several built heritage project underway and nearing completion. Having been completed and now open to the public the project has been Awarded Conservation Category Award under the Aberdeen Society of Architects' Award Scheme. The Society of Architects judging panel found that the project was:

[Stonehaven Clock Tower](#)

"...an exemplary example of a rigorous conservation approach based on a thorough research-led approach. The restoration is honest, authentic and judiciously carried out, and brings a much loved landmark in the townscape of Stonehaven back to life...."

2. HADDO COUNTRY PARK



A £1.8 million project supported by HLF, delivered in Partnership with Haddo Estate and the National Trust to promote a high quality built and landscaped environment at Haddo, and increase visitor numbers. Quotes from 2015 visitor surveys include the following:

[Haddo Country Park](#)

"I've been coming here for 40 years and continue to enjoy the experience. I think all organisations connected with Haddo are doing an excellent job"
"Great new visitor centre."
"Love the new park."

3. DUFF HOUSE MAUSOLEUM

Restoration of 'A' Listed Building, including cleaning of tomb and gates and replacement of tracery window following vandalism. The Friends of Duff House, a proactive community group of volunteers who help educate the wider community on the history of Duff House Estate, have welcomed the improvements, observing this was:

"... a really skilful piece of manufacture - something that could not clearly be seen before' and '... many thanks to Aberdeenshire Council and the contractors for enhancing the visitor experience and showing that these sort of monuments are not forgotten."

CASE STUDY 2 - DUFF HOUSE MAUSOLEUM - REPAIR AND RESTORATION WORKS 2016

THE DUFF HOUSE MAUSOLEUM HAD BEEN SUBJECT TO VANDALISM AND WEATHERING FOR A NUMBER OF DECADES.

As a Category 'A' Listed Building set within the grounds at Duff House it was considered a priority for upgrade and repairs – not only to enhance the quality of visitor experience, but to prevent further vandalism with immediate effect.

The three key elements of work required were:

- › Repairs to a damaged tomb
- › Replacement of a tracery window
- › Restoration of the mausoleum screen



Specialist contractors were engaged as part of the Council's Historic Assets Management Project, with works completed in June 2016. The Friends of Duff House, a proactive community group of volunteers who help educate the wider community on the history of Duff House Estate, have welcomed the improvements.

4. REV. DR. GEORGE SKENE KEITH MEMORIAL, OLD KEITHALL

Repair and restoration of a memorial to a local resident who was a Founding Member of the Photographic Society of Scotland and part of a team that pioneered the use of chloroform as an anaesthetic.

CONSERVATION AREA REVIEWS

THE COUNCIL HAS A ROLLING PROGRAMME OF IDENTIFYING, PRESERVING AND ENHANCING AREAS OF OUTSTANDING BUILT HERITAGE AND HISTORIC CHARACTER ACROSS ABERDEENSHIRE.

Recent Conservation Area designations (2015) include Auchenblae, Benholm and Kirktown of Fetteresso, where management plans are to be in place by the summer of 2016. Conservation Area reviews completed in 2015/ 2016 include Port Errol, Old Deer and Fraserburgh; future reviews/designations for 2016/2017 include: Dunecht, Ardmure Distillery and Kennethmont, Stonehaven, Buchanhaven and Inverallochy.

[Conservation Area Reviews](#)

PARTNERSHIP WORK

- › To deliver high quality development e.g. with [Haddo Estate](#) and the National Trust at Haddo House and Country Park.
- › With the [Northeast Scotland Preservation Trust](#) to bring historic buildings back into productive use e.g. [The Sail Loft at Portsoy](#); Benholm Mill, Duff House Vinery, Banff (ongoing).

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT AND QUALITY OUTCOMES

Within Development Management high quality development remains a key objective. This is reflected in the policies of the existing Local Development Plan and also the Proposed Local Development Plan which was published with a policy framework that reflects and gives local substance to the six qualities of successful place. The following case studies aim to reflect this approach and the resulting quality of the outcomes demonstrating the developments to be:

- › Distinctive
 - › Safe and Pleasant
 - › Welcoming
 - › Adaptable
 - › Resource Efficient
 - › Easy to Move Around and Beyond
-

CASE STUDY 3A – BUCHAN HOUSE HEADQUARTERS



BUCHAN HOUSE HEADQUARTERS



BUCHAN HOUSE HEADQUARTERS
DURING CONSTRUCTION

BUCHAN HOUSE IN PETERHEAD WAS OPENED IN JUNE 2015 AS ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL'S NEW AREA HEADQUARTERS.

Located in the defined town centre on a brownfield site, it houses a wide range of Council Services that were previously spread across a number of offices.

This consolidation of Services has resulted in a 'one stop shop' for both employees and residents offering access for customers to 16 different Services including dedicated rooms for Committee meetings, marriage ceremonies and other ancillary functions.

The new building utilises a range of sustainable and energy efficient features such as photovoltaics on the roof, high levels of insulation and a biomass heating system. It also features a high level of design and materials that complement its position within the historic core of Peterhead.

Aberdeenshire Council has led the way by transforming a derelict and brownfield site whilst contributing to ongoing regeneration efforts in the town by redeveloping a prominent gateway site.

[Buchan House, Peterhead](#)

- › Welcoming
- › Adaptable
- › Resource Efficient

CASE STUDY 3B – CHAPELTON – HUME SQUARE

An example of successful place including quality design and layout has been the first neighbourhood developed within the new town of Chapeltown and has included the main town square:



- › Distinctive
- › Safe and Pleasant
- › Welcoming
- › Easy to Move Around and Beyond



THE FIRST PART OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD WILL BE HUME SQUARE AND THE 233 HOUSES SURROUNDING IT. HUME SQUARE WILL BE CHAPELTOWN'S FIRST PUBLIC GREEN, LINED WITH TRADITIONAL TERRACED HOUSES AND THE TOWN'S FIRST BUSINESSES.

The following design principles have been applied to the neighbourhood and the Square:

- › New development should be mixed-use, with homes, shops, businesses, public transport and community facilities located within close proximity, to discourage car use and generate a sense of community.
- › Roads should accommodate all users, including pedestrians, cyclists, public transport users and cars.
- › Streets should provide pleasant and visually interesting experiences for pedestrians without unnecessary clutter.
- › Neighbourhoods should include homes of many sizes, shapes and costs, catering to a diverse population and allowing residents to easily upgrade or downsize within the same neighbourhood.
- › Design and architecture should follow some regional precedents, respecting local history, location and climate.



Three new academy campuses have been completed within Aberdeenshire in the last 3 years.

The most recent one was completed and occupied within the reporting period, following a comprehensive project-led approach involving multi cross service input from the Council, and similar multi-agency involvement. The quality outcome is evidenced in many ways in terms of the successful place making that has resulted. The rural setting was a major influence in the design and layout. Comprehensive and regular pre application discussion took place with the Planning Service amongst other stakeholders forming part of the overall project plan.

CASE STUDY 3C – ALFORD CAMPUS



Chair of Aberdeenshire Council's Infrastructure Services Committee, Councillor David Aitchison, said:



- › Welcoming
- › Adaptable
- › Resource Efficient
- › Easy to Move Around and Beyond

Work on the new Alford Community Campus officially got underway in June 2014 and followed advance works in October 2013 that saw an access road created for construction traffic and initial ground works.

The facility on the village's Greystone Road caters for all pupils in early years, primary and secondary education and comprises of a theatre, sports hall and dance studio, with all weather and grass playing fields located outside.

"Alford's campus is another shining example of Aberdeenshire Council's commitment to enhancing the facilities for residents across the area."

"Huge investment has taken place in recent years and it is good to see projects reaching completion and bringing benefits to the community economically as well as the wider aspect of wellbeing."

(also applicable to Open for Business – and pre application benefits)

THE CONSERVATION AREA REGENERATION SCHEME (CARS) FOR PORTSOY DEMONSTRATES A COLLABORATIVE PROJECT-LED APPROACH WITH LOCAL PARTNERS WHICH HAS DELIVERED A SENSITIVELY RESTORED BUILDING FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE WIDER COMMUNITY, AND TOURISM, BEFITTING OF THE HISTORIC SETTING OF THE ANCIENT 18TH CENTURY HARBOUR.



PORTSOY BOATSHED - BEFORE

CASE STUDY 3D – BOATHOUSE – PORTSOY

- › Distinctive
- › Welcoming
- › Adaptable
- › Resource Efficient

The Portsoy Boat House is a key feature within the rich historic fabric of the village of Portsoy found on Aberdeenshire's northern coast and home to the category A listed 17th century harbour which hosts the annual Scottish Traditional Boat Festival (STBF). The building lay in a redundant and dilapidated manner for many years until it was identified for redevelopment as part of the Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) for Portsoy - a project led by Aberdeenshire Council in conjunction with Historic Scotland (now Historic Environment Scotland - HES) and local partners with a view to retaining and enhancing the high concentration of built heritage in Portsoy.

In order to bring the Boat House back into an active and sustainable use, specialist conservation architects Brown & Brown were commissioned to work with the STBF to develop a scheme for the sympathetic restoration of the building. The STBF had acquired the building with a view to relocating their main operations closer to the harbour to better publicise its activities.

The finalised proposal was submitted as a planning application in March 2013 for the 'change of use and renovation of derelict building to form training facility for boat building and restoration and ancillary accommodation'. As part of its consideration of the planning application, the Planning Service engaged with the applicant, agent, built heritage consultees within the Council and HES to ensure that the final use and design of the building was acceptable in the context of existing policy and guidance,



Andrew Brown of Brown & Brown remarked on the overall planning process: *"The planners were very helpful and really informed what we were doing in that the building shouldn't appear modern from the harbour"*

PORTSOY BOATSHED - AFTER

with a strong emphasis on achieving a key item of regeneration which would also be physically compatible with the wider Portsoy conservation area. The proactive approach towards the project and close working relations between all parties to discuss matters allowed the Planning Service to determine the planning application in a timely manner with full planning permission being granted on 31 May 2013.

Since its completion, The Boat House has won the Aberdeen Society of Architects Design Award and has been nominated for the RIAS Awards and the Andrew Doolan Award for the best building in Scotland. It will be used to deliver traditional boat building courses for school children, locals as well as inviting new visitors to the town and is generally considered to be an excellent example of the sensitive restoration of a building within an historic setting for the benefit of the wider community.



PORTSOY BOATSHED INTERIOR - AFTER

CASE STUDY 3E – CARMELITE STREET – BANFF

- › Distinctive
- › Safe and Pleasant
- › Welcoming

CARMELITE STREET IS LOCATED WITHIN THE CENTRE OF BANFF; A HISTORIC COASTAL TOWN IN NORTHERN ABERDEENSHIRE.

The site lies within the designated Town Centre and also the Conservation Area for Banff as defined in the Aberdeenshire Local Plan 2012. Furthermore, the site is immediately adjoined by category 'B' and 'C' Listed Buildings, and lies very close to an 'A' Listed Building.

Demolition of the former property on the site had been required due to it being "dangerous and in a state of near collapse" and it had lain in a vacant, derelict condition for over 30 years. Only fragments of the original property remained standing, and the site had become overgrown and something of an eyesore. Despite interest in redeveloping the site, questions over ownership had proven a hindrance to progress.



Initially proposed under the Townscape Heritage Initiative, a scheme for the development of three single bedroom flats was progressed with the approval of the Banff & Buchan Area Committee. When that bid was unsuccessful, the project was progressed with Regeneration Funding, Housing Revenue Account Funding, Developer Obligations Funding, and enhanced Scottish Government Funding. Historic Environment (HES) were involved in discussions at an early stage for the proposals to ensure initial support, and following preparation of initial draft proposals by the Council, final design of the scheme was passed to a Conservation Accredited

firm of local Architects. A contemporary design to complement the surrounding properties was approved by the Banff & Buchan Area Committee in January 2014, and Conservation Area Consent granted by Historic Scotland on 25 March, 2014.

The development has since been completed, resulting in the successful delivery of three low cost housing units for Banff, and redevelopment of a derelict site which in visual terms has been of benefit to the character and appearance of Banff Town Centre and the Conservation Area.

CHAPTER 1 - QUALITY DESIGN - OTHER

IN THE REPORTING PERIOD A WIDE AND VARIED COLLECTION OF NEW DEVELOPMENTS HAVE BEEN COMPLETED DEMONSTRATING DESIGN QUALITY, INNOVATIVE ARCHITECTURE, SENSE OF PLACE, COMMUNITY FOCUS, BUSINESS AND FUNCTION.



CHAPTER 2 - QUALITY OF SERVICE AND ENGAGEMENT

CHAPTER 2A - OPEN FOR BUSINESS



DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

ENGAGEMENT ON THE PROPOSED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

This reporting year commenced midway through the public consultation on the Proposed Local Development Plan 2016. This consultation took three forms: printed media advertising; drop in events; and use of the internet.

The following three case studies focus on these elements of engagement and the successful outcomes:

CASE STUDY 4A – PROPOSED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT ENGAGEMENT



As with previous plans, a significant on-line presence was created and promoted. Social media was used to publicise events with internet advertising used for the first time to promote the Local Development Plan to, “hard to reach groups” through Facebook advertising.

This proved to be highly successful, generating 90,587 website clicks from 5,500 people. 1,505 came from the youth market targeted adverts, with a further 1,345 clicking from the Aberdeen Housing Market Area and 2,650 from the adverts targeting the Rural Housing Market.



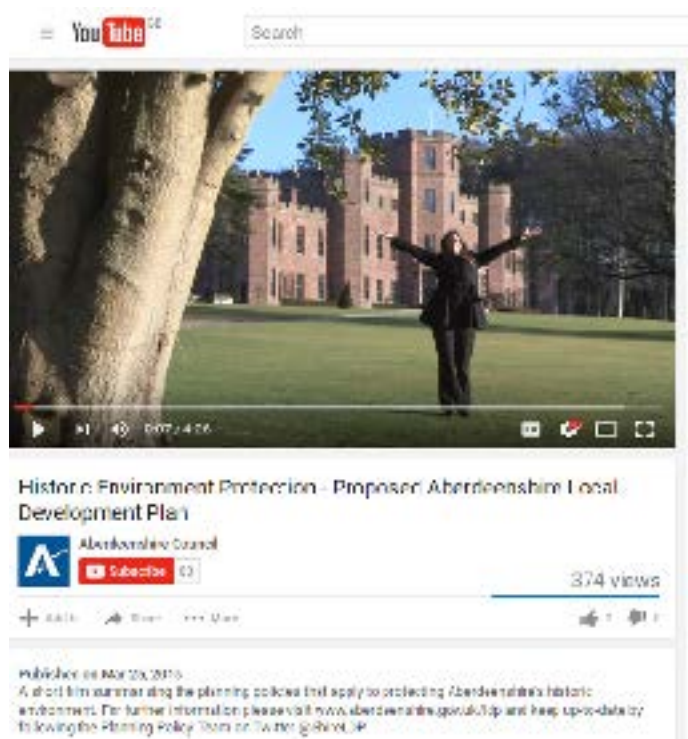
CASE STUDY 4B – INNOVATIVE ENGAGEMENT



A further innovation was the production of a series of short films covering the function of the Local Development Plan, Development in the Countryside, Neighbour Notification, Natural Heritage Protection, Historic Environment Protection, Developer Obligations and a trailer video. This too was a highly successful innovation with 3316 views recorded, and recognition by the Award for Quality of Service in the 2015 Scottish Awards for quality in Planning.



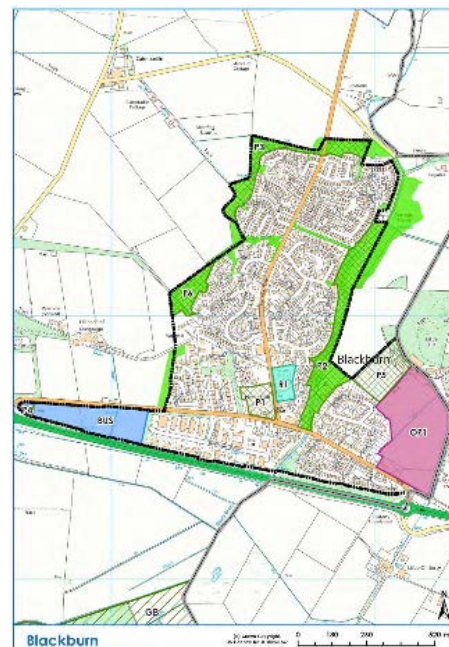
Neighbour notification - Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan



CASE STUDY 4C – PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND OFFICER INTERACTION

The drop-in sessions were also an innovation for Aberdeenshire Council with staff manning a display during the afternoon and early evening at public venues across Aberdeenshire. This provided the opportunity for much greater in depth discussion with stakeholders of their views on the Plan and arguably reduced the number of submissions ultimately received. 13 such events were held across Aberdeenshire and a total of 427 people “dropped in”.

The success of our engagement processes associated with the Plan was recognised in the response by the Directorate of Planning and Environmental Appeals to our Report on Conformity with the Participation Statement produced under Sections 12 (2) and 19 (4) of the Town and Country Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006, in allowing the [Examination](#) to proceed.



MEETING TARGETS - ASSESSING SUBMISSIONS TO THE PROPOSED PLAN

Assessing the scale of submissions made to the Proposed Local Development Plan (Published in March 2015) required meeting stringent deadlines to ensure that all the necessary political approvals were received before the Plan was submitted for Examination. Stakeholders could expect

that we would meet the targets that were set in the [Development Plan Scheme](#) for the submission of the Plan and maintaining that certainty was important. In the final analysis, the deadline was met and the Plan submitted on the day advised 11 months previously in the Development Plan Scheme.

PROJECT LED APPROACH

Six Local Area Committees required to be serviced prior to the approval of the Schedule 4 summary documents by the Infrastructure Services Committee. A Project Plan was developed within a PRINCE II environment which managed risks and externalities to ensure the timetable was met.

CASE STUDY 5A – PROJECT MANAGEMENT OF DELIVERY OF “SCHEDULE 4” DOCUMENTS FOR EXAMINATION

Following the close of the period for representations Aberdeenshire Council was presented with some 700 submissions, equating to over 1700 individual comments on the Plan. A Project Plan was put in place to develop the Schedule 4 documents required for submission to the Ministers for Examination.

A “long list” of potential issues was developed and all six members of the Policy Team very quickly assigned each comment to a long list issue. Within 2 weeks every comment was assigned to an issue.

A “short list” of issues emerged and staff members were each charged with completing the “Schedule 4” document according to a universal template. The use of the template ensured that all of the correct information was gathered at one time and reduced the need for re-editing.

CASE STUDY 5B- PRAGMATIC APPROACH TO THE PLAN PREPARATION PROCESS - GIVING CERTAINTY

Throughout this part of the Plan making process there is limited opportunity for dialogue with stakeholders as the Examination is based on the information submitted, but we took the opportunity to ensure that the responses being made to comments represented the holistic view of Officers from a range of Services, and in some cases key agencies. We know that “negotiating away” of objections with respondents would be a preferred solution, but fully recognised that agreement by Members of a “modified” Proposed Plan would be the only way to

unequivocally demonstrate to respondents that they could withdraw their representation. Instead, all respondents’ comments were submitted to the Examination, but within the text it was made clear that the minor changes requested would be adopted as “non-notifiable modifications”. This was a pragmatic way of maintaining the certainty of the Plan preparation process, within the agreed timetable and consequently the service being provided.



OTHER ADDITIONAL SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDANCE

COMMITMENTS MADE IN THE 2015 DEVELOPMENT PLAN SCHEME HAVE ALSO BEEN MET TO TIMETABLE.

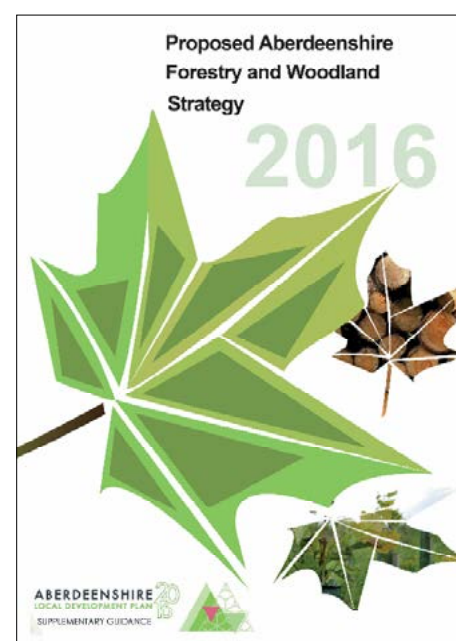


BENNACHIE CANDIDATE SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREA (COPYRIGHT LUC)

CASE STUDY 5C– MEETING EXPECTATIONS FOLLOWING CONSULTATION

Two new pieces of Supplementary Guidance have been developed, again in a PRINCE II environment, to support the emerging Plan ([The Forest and Woodland Strategy](#), and [Special Landscape Areas Supplementary Guidance](#)). Both of these were the subject of best practice in public consultation and it is anticipated they will be approved with the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan in December 2016. The Special Landscape Areas Supplementary Guidance was the subject of three separate stages of consultation prior to the publication of the draft guidance and associated candidate areas for statutory consultation. Both new pieces of Supplementary Guidance were also supported during Public Consultation by You-Tube videos designed to explain the objectives of the guidance.

Throughout all the work undertaken this year we have applied a protocol that requires all discussion and conclusions to be reviewed by at least two Senior Managers prior to its consideration by Elected Members. This has promoted the use of clear language and consistency in the documentation produced.





BALLATER, ROYAL DEESIDE



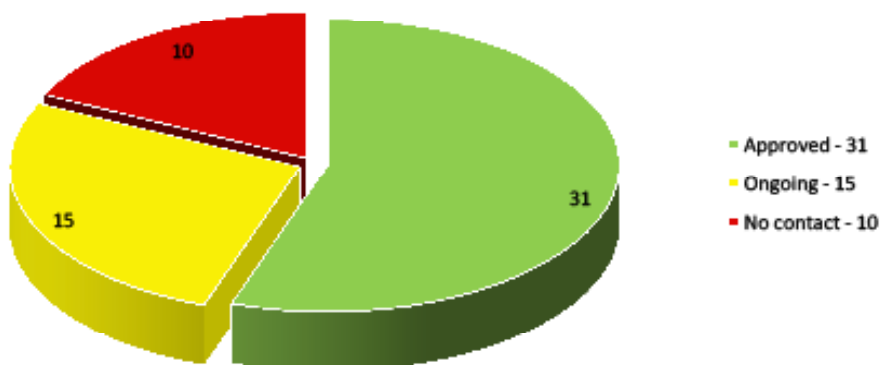
DUNNOTTAR, STONEHAVEN

MASTERPLANS

Masterplanning is an established tool for improving the standard of design of new development in Aberdeenshire. It has been enshrined in LDP Policy since 2012 and applies to all sites over 50 houses in scale.

82% of sites allocated in the LDP requiring Masterplans in Aberdeenshire have been approved/are currently being progressed. This compares to 75% in the 2014/15 period.

AREA	TOTAL	APPROVED	ONGOING	NO CONTACT
BANFF & BUCHAN	10	3	0	7
BUCHAN	10	3	6	1
FORMARTINE	12	7	4	1
GARIOCH	9	9	0	0
KINCARDINE & MEARNS	8	5	3	0
MARR	7	4	2	1
ABERDEENSHIRE	56	31	15	10



Footnote: LDP Allocated Sites and Non-Allocated Sites over 50 Units for 2015 - 2016

MASTERPLAN TRAINING WITH ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN SCOTLAND

The Strategic Development Delivery Team (SDDT) carried out training in conjunction with Architecture and Design Scotland in late spring 2015. This strengthened the commitment to the use of masterplans, with a view to rolling this out further to developers through a review in the process.

CASE STUDY 6A - MASTERPLAN TRAINING

The aim of the event was to support and stimulate the development of staff knowledge and skills in masterplanning and specifically in relation to Placemaking. The training was aimed at planners and various internal consultees. The training involved attendees getting involved in hands-on workshops with the purpose of developing techniques for thinking about and preparing masterplans.



MASTERPLAN TRAINING WITH ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN SCOTLAND



MASTERPLAN TRAINING

REVIEW OF MASTERPLAN PROCESS

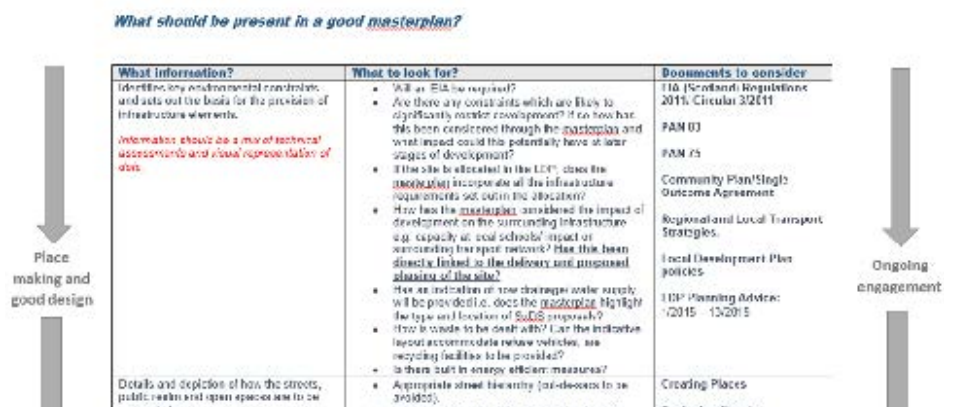
Beyond the masterplan training carried out in 2015, the SDDT have commenced an internal review of the masterplan process; specifically looking at how the process can be improved to aid in the delivery of higher quality development on the ground. The internal review to date has involved circulating a survey to all Planning Teams in order to get feedback on how they consider the masterplan process is working.

A 'benchmarking' survey has also been carried out with other Planning Authorities throughout Scotland. Final responses and findings from the review will feed into updated guidance on masterplans for implementing in the 2016/2017 period.

GUIDANCE OF MASTERPLAN PROCESS

The ongoing review of the masterplan process will feed into the preparation of updated guidance to be used by planners involved in the masterplan process. The guidance will identify good practice procedures to help facilitate the process of considering and agreeing masterplans as well as focusing on what should be present in a good masterplan. Examples of where the process has worked well have been identified and the lessons learned from these examples will be fed into the guidance.

Draft Extract of the Masterplan Guidance being developed



CASE STUDY 6B – MASTERPLAN - NORTHWOODS, MINTLAW – OPEN FOR BUSINESS

In recognition of the changing economic climate in the North East the Planning Service worked collaboratively with a developer (Colaren Homes) and a Planning Consultant (Knight Frank) to work towards amending a previously approved masterplan.

The key change to the [masterplan](#) resulted in removal of reference to detached properties, semi-detached, terraced, and flatted properties – instead stating that the specific mix for each phase may be dependent on the prevailing socio-economic factors in the area at the time of construction

On the process and experience of amending the masterplan Gary Purves of Knight Frank had the following to say:

“Overall I would say that my experience in the process of updating the Northwoods masterplan has been positive. There were pragmatic discussions with officers from the outset. We have been very satisfied with the process for updating the masterplan to reflect current economic circumstances and allow a more fluid response to market changes for future applications”

The Planning Service considers the amendment to the Northwoods masterplan a success. Through honest and pragmatic discussions with the applicant and agent, the Service has removed obstacles to development on the site – while retaining a mix of house types and sizes.



[Masterplan - Northwoods, Mintlaw](#)



SITE PLAN
2015

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Unlike many other Authorities Aberdeenshire Council continue to deal with National developments in addition to the other casework. One such development is the North Connect application, the processing of which is an example of an outcome focused approach, working collaboratively and using project management techniques to deliver strategically important development.

OPEN FOR BUSINESS CASE STUDY: DELIVERING NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

CASE STUDY 7: NORTH CONNECT

North Connect

THE NORTH CONNECT PLANNING APPLICATION INVOLVES THE INSTALLATION OF A 1.4GW INTERCONNECTOR STATION AND HVDC CABLE AT BODDAM, PETERHEAD. THIS IS A SIGNIFICANT PROJECT, IDENTIFIED IN THE NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK (NPF3) AS A NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, WHICH WILL PROVIDE ENHANCED INTEGRATION OF UK AND EMERGING INTERNATIONAL ELECTRICITY GRID NETWORKS.

The Interconnector Station and underground cable represent Phase 1 of the onshore elements of a wider project to install an electricity transmission link between Scotland and Norway. The link is designed to allow renewable energy to be transferred between Scotland (wind) and Norway (hydro) when required.

The SDDT were involved in extensive pre application, screening and scoping discussions with both Scottish and Norwegian sides of the development team and their agents. These discussions helped to prepare and shape the proposal, allowed the discussion and resolution of issues and established a detailed timeline for the submission, consideration, reporting and determination of the planning application within timescales required for various national and international interests. The timescales were all set out and agreed within a Planning Processing Agreement (PPA) which was key to the delivery of the project.

Working with the development team, establishing information requirements and timelines allowed all aspects of the application to be prepared and reviewed prior to submission meaning that the application could be fully considered then reported at a Pre Determination Hearing, local Area Committee and ultimately Full Council within a time period of 4 months and 14 days as set out in the PPA.

Following each public/committee meeting, notes and minutes were incorporated into a Q & A document in order to inform the subsequent meeting and to ensure that as much information was provided to Elected Members as possible. This contributed to a timeous and, ultimately, a positive decision to be reached within the agreed timescale. The



use of project management techniques and innovative ways of working helped manage the development through the planning process and offered certainty and clarity for the developer for this Nation Development. It serves as an example of working openly and constructively with developers to progress strategically important projects and demonstrates the advantages of a tailored and project management approach to such proposals.

DR RICHARD BLANCHFIELD, UK HEAD OF DELIVERY, NORTHCONNECT KS –

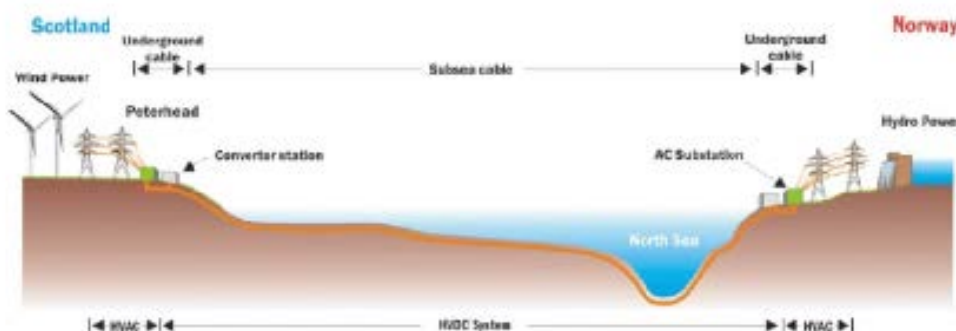
"NorthConnect have been working with the SDDT in relation to the Scottish section of the interconnector project since the project's inception in 2011. The team have been extremely proactive through the planning and consenting processes. Regular liaison and updates have always been sought regarding the project's wider progress and ongoing regulatory and political issues at national and international level.

Concerning the consenting process for our onshore works at Peterhead, the relationships had already been built over proceeding years, but the SDDT were still happy to engage in several pre-application meetings with regular questions and discussions on the phone. In particular they advised and assisted NorthConnect to develop a workable

consenting approach to phasing our onshore from our offshore permitting in agreement with Marine Scotland and the Scottish Government. Due to NorthConnect's status as a National Planning Framework (NPF3) and European Project of Common Interest (PCI) scheme this needed to be agreed at national level to conform to Scottish, UK and EU requirements for major infrastructure projects.

Having a team dedicated to strategic development projects of this nature must greatly assist the above considerations, but at the same time, we always felt the important local aspects and considerations for the community around Peterhead, which lay at the heart of the onshore planning process, were never lost or secondary. Support, advice and facilitation was always on hand from the dedicated Officer to liaise with Authority experts in specialist fields, area Councillors, the local community and interest groups.

In summary, NorthConnect have been very impressed by the philosophy of the SDDT and the way it is specifically tailored deal with projects of this nature, and also by the competence and professionalism of the people it employs to balance local, national and international considerations whilst ensuring the planning process remains robust but smooth".



MAJOR APPLICATIONS

A significant number of Major Applications (22) were determined in the reporting period. Performance has improved in the determination period for major applications from 107.8 average weeks to 86.3 average weeks. (Refer to *Performance Priorities in Chapter 2b - Certainty*)

The message that Aberdeenshire is 'open for business' in terms of new and strategic developments continues. Evidence of effective processes through both the dedicated Strategic Delivery Team and the Area Teams, the major pre application process

and an overall project management approach to these type of applications has proven to be successful with an overall improved performance delivery.

The following case study demonstrates the overall package of expected process in ensuring good outcomes in terms of a Major Application:

- › Pre application/engagement/collaboration/regeneration/use of processing agreements/good quality design, layout, positive economic benefits.

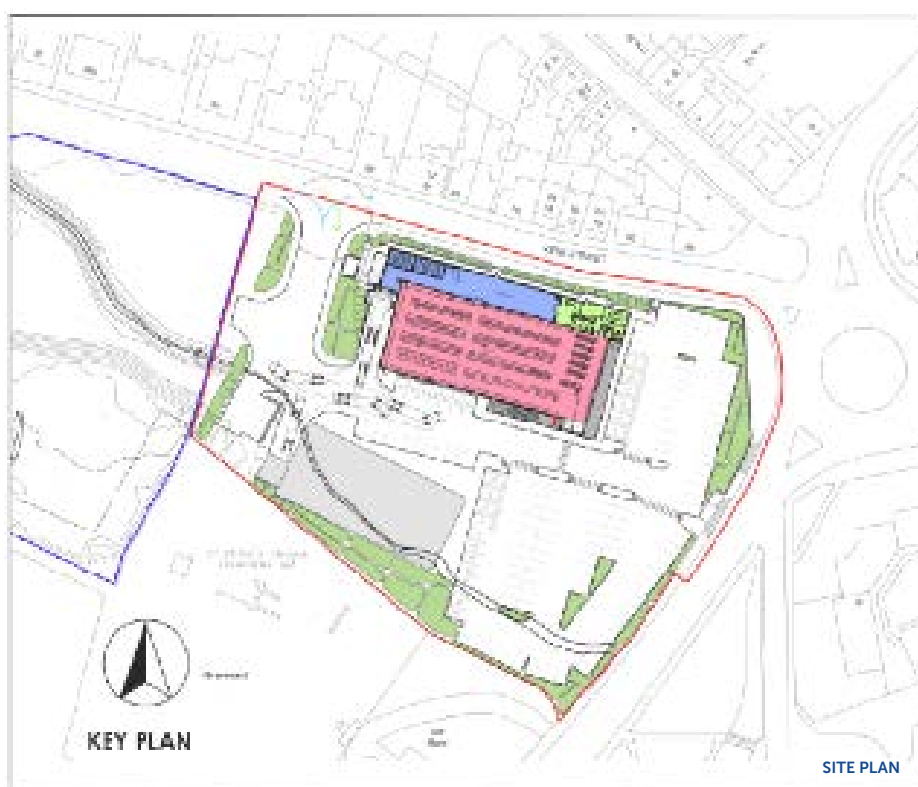
CASE STUDY 8 – ALDI PETERHEAD

The former Kirkburn Mills has lain derelict for many years. The Council pro-actively worked with Aldi to bring forward a scheme of regeneration of the site. This is an example of collaborative working which, when delivered, will enhance the visual entrance into Peterhead. Key project management tools (such as Processing Agreements) were utilised here to deliver a permission in a manner acceptable to all parties. Pre-application discussions had resolved many of the technical issues prior to the submission making the formal planning process more streamlined.



Planner, Planning, Development and Regeneration, GVA James Barr said:

"We appreciated the opportunity to engage meaningfully with officers during a comprehensive pre-application process, which helped front-load the determination process, addressed a number of planning matters up front and ensured the application submission addressed the main determining issues for the proposal. We were also happy to enter into a Processing Agreement, which provided our client with more certainty on the application process and timescales that were to follow."



QUALITY OF SERVICE AND ENGAGEMENT

Consultee work:

GENERAL COMMENTARY ON LIAISON AND PROTOCOLS:

A committed improvement for the reporting year was to carry out a consultee review through survey usage. During the year, the Planning Service have continued to review and build upon existing working relationships with internal and external consultees.

By learning from recent consultation engagement exercises, the Planning Service revisited the initial approach to consultee surveys and opted to pursue a more tailored approach to engagement. It was considered that this would be more resource and time efficient by enabling the Service to focus on a number of key consultees where specific queries and issues had been identified during engagement throughout the year.

CASE STUDY 9 – CONSULTEE ENGAGEMENT TOWARDS IMPROVEMENT

Specific Issues highlighted related to consultation response timescales impacting upon Planning Service performance, relevant information not being provided by the Planning Service at the consultation stage to enable consultees to comment and/or the reason for consultations not being clear or what comments/information were being requested by the Planning Service.

The approach adopted has involved the formation of working groups comprising of representatives from Development Management and consultees to develop DM/consultee protocols covering criteria, timescales and response formats. Specifically work to date has focussed on working with internal consultees including Environmental Health, Environment Teams, Legal Governance, Developer Obligations, Roads and Transportation and has also included work with SEPA, SNH and HES.

Benefits of this approach to engagement have resulted in greater certainty and clarity for the Planning Service and consultees. The Planning Service have improved consistency in practices by applying the consultation criteria and ensuring that

the relevant information is made available to the consultees. This approach has achieved benefits in the streamlining of the consultation process by reducing unnecessary consultations and minimising timescales for consultation responses to assist the Planning Service with improved determination periods.

The establishment of working groups has also assisted in providing a dedicated group/forum facilitating better communication between the Planning Service and consultees enabling matters to be discussed as they arise and quicker resolution to be reached and information disseminated to teams. This in turn ensures that the Planning Service can continue to develop and maintain good working relationships with consultees.

In moving forward the Planning Service are seeking to undertake further targeted engagement with consultees including the Flooding and Coastal Protection Unit and Waste Sections. The outcomes of the current and future working relationships with consultees will be reported in the next PPF. *(Refer to Section 4A – Service Improvements 2016-2017)*

ABERDEENSHIRE IS 'OPEN FOR BUSINESS'

Development Management

SERVICE PRIORITIES FOR 2016 - 2019

Continue to review and improve the performance of the Planning and Development Service to ensure that all planning applications are processed in an efficient and effective manner without sacrificing service quality.

A measurement of on going business is the level of development and associated planning applications being received.

Changes in economic circumstances nationally, and with particular focus on the impacts of the oil turndown 2015-2016 will have impacts on the area in terms of the rate of development progressing although this has not been quantified to date.

YEAR	ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL APPLICATIONS REVIEWED
2012-2013	3828
2013-2014	3515
2014-2015	3677
2015-2016	3421

The total for 2015-2016 has decreased slightly from the previous year, perhaps in some part to the economic circumstances. However, once again Aberdeenshire received the most planning applications in Scotland.

ABERDEENSHIRE PROGRESS IN DELIVERY

Delivery Team: Quality of Service

Evidence of success from development plan action programmes, pre-application processes, policy in practice

Aberdeenshire Council's Delivery Team, now in its third year since formation, continues to operate as a dedicated cross-service body working within Infrastructure Services, primarily tasked with working with industry/ services to aid the progression and delivery of allocated sites identified within the Council's Local Development Plan (LDP). This is in addition to acting as the main single point of contact for the development industry, which increasingly use the Team as a first point of contact to resolve a variety of issues.

The Delivery Team have recently published an updated [Action Programme](#) in support of the LDP 2016 maintaining the Council's commitment to publishing the document annually.

The Action Programme is used as a project management tool, with Officers actively working with stakeholders to advance the actions required to bring sites forward. It has an increasingly important role in identifying ineffective sites and influencing future land release and therefore, the Delivery Team work closely with the Information and Research and Policy teams to ensure that there is consistency with the information that informs the [Housing Land Audit](#) and the [Local Development Plan](#) respectively. As a result, the Action Programme is increasingly being used as a proactive tool to forward plan and identify potential delays or restrictions before they become issues. Moving forward, it is envisaged that confidence testing will be incorporated into the Action Programme to help prioritise infrastructure requirements to bring development forward and being able to demonstrate a viable path to delivery of a site within the plan period.



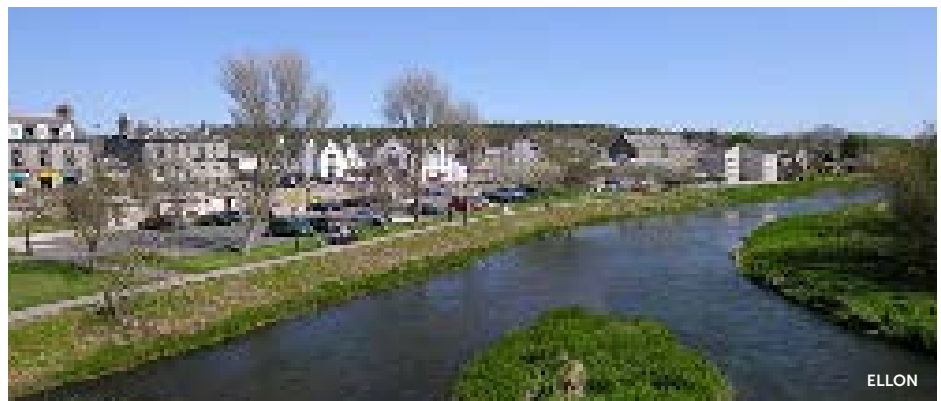
CASE STUDY 10A – DELIVERY TEAM WORKING PRO-ACTIVELY

As mentioned above, developers and internal Council Services have a better awareness of the Delivery Team's availability to assist with a variety of issues. One example of this is a query received recently from a landowner who owns part of an allocated site to determine whether the Team knew who owned the remainder of the site through the work that has been undertaken during the Action Programme updates. The Delivery Team have recently used [land registry searches](#) and local information to improve the knowledge of landownership

of allocated sites in order to fill gaps in the Action Programme and were able to put the two landowners in touch so that they can progress a Masterplan together. Both parties were happy to work together which will produce a more sustainable layout overall and a Masterplan is expected soon. The Delivery Team will continue to monitor the progress of this site and will be on hand to assist if communications become difficult between parties or if any other issues arise through the Masterplan process.

The following case studies provide evidence of the Delivery Team's proactive approach:

CASE STUDY 10B - CROMLEYBANK, ELLON



The Delivery Team facilitated pre-application discussion and consultation regarding this development which is one of the largest allocated and currently undeveloped sites in the Local Development Plan, acting as a major expansion to the town of Ellon which currently has a population of approximately 9,000 people. Ellon is located within the [Energetica](#) strategic growth corridor running from Peterhead to Aberdeen.

Early and regular engagement between the Council and the developer/relevant stakeholders has been key to initiating the early stages of delivering this development.

The mixed use development aims to provide one of the largest and most prosperous towns in Aberdeenshire, with an integrated package of high quality development including 980 units of housing, new employment land and community facilities on and adjacent to the site of the recently built secondary school (built under a separate planning consent). However the site comes with significant infrastructure issues that need to be addressed.

To achieve the above required a co-ordinated approach with the developer and a number of bodies to provide the necessary Development Framework which represented the first stage in the delivery of this development, scheduled to be delivered over the next 7 years.

The approval of the Development Framework was facilitated by monthly project meetings involving the Delivery Team and the Developer's own Project Team (consisting of landowner, architect and other appropriate consultants). Significant work was undertaken to identify and address major infrastructure challenges which were fundamental to the successful delivery of the site. Issues regarding phasing/servicing, affordable housing provision, community engagement and layout were also discussed at length at these meetings.

Following this collaboration, the development is now at the stage where a planning application can be submitted. The work that has gone into the pre-application and delivery process has meant that significant progress has been made towards resolving

the issues that constrained the development. Additionally, a Processing Agreement has been agreed, setting out the timescales for submissions and a route to determination.

The above serves as an example of the Delivery Team project managing an allocated site in line with the timeframes specified within the Action Programme to overcome constraints. This is a good example of working in tandem and engaging with the development industry and other stakeholders/services at an early stage to progress a large scale development, building up a knowledge base and developing effective relationships between the development industry and Aberdeenshire Council.

CASE STUDY 10C - KINTORE EAST

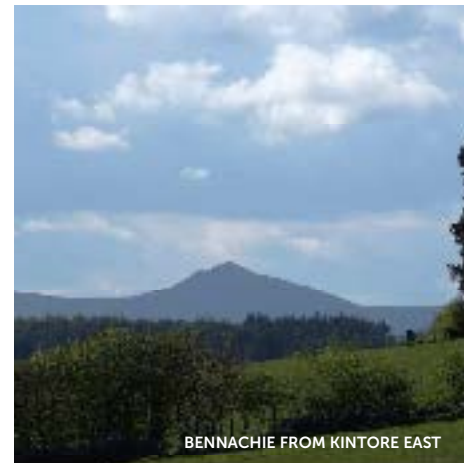


KINTORE EAST

Kintore East, a site allocated within the Local Development Plan for up to 600 houses and employment land, is being brought forward for development by a consortium of three developers. The Delivery Team were integral to the approval of the [Development Framework](#) for this site, and have continued their involvement by supporting the Case Officer with the [Masterplan](#) and Planning Application in Principle which are both now approved.

During the course of the Delivery Team's involvement with this project it has been necessary to liaise with various Services within the Council, such as Education and Property. Primary education capacity was a key constraint to this development and

the collaboration between the developers and the Council has allowed the proposed housing development to progress alongside the construction of the new primary school. Although no housing is to be occupied until the school is functional, the consortium can move forward with Matters Specified in Conditions for the substantial infrastructure requirements on site, including the delivery of a new bridge across the Tuach Burn, and an employment area enabling the provision of much needed local facilities including retail. The Delivery Team are assisting with the co-ordination and assessment of the MSC Applications which are complex for a site of this size and continue to attend project team meetings.



BENNACHIE FROM KINTORE EAST

AFTER THREE YEARS SINCE INCEPTION, THE DELIVERY TEAM ARE MAKING REAL PROGRESS IN FACILITATING THE DELIVERY OF SITES ALLOCATED IN THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN. THE TEAM AIM TO CONTINUE TO PROGRESS THIS WORK AND OVER THE NEXT YEAR WILL:

- › Develop and promote the Action Programme as a proactive tool for multiple purposes;
- › Be clearer on the prospect of delivery of sites within the Plan period;
- › Enhance the level of information available in the Action Programme particularly in relation to funding / responsibility of infrastructure provision; and,
- › Work more closely with the Information and Research Team to improve correlation between the Action Programme and the Housing Land Audit.

OPEN FOR BUSINESS CASE STUDY: ENGAGEMENT AND CUSTOMER SERVICE FOR REGIONALLY SIGNIFICANT PROJECTS

Example of engaging with the developer at an early stage in the planning process and maintaining a close relationship throughout the process focusing on outcomes

CASE STUDY 11: STATOIL HYWIND PARK

THE HYWIND SCOTLAND PILOT PARK PROJECT INVOLVES THE INSTALLATION OF FIVE 6MW 180M HIGH FLOATING TURBINES APPROXIMATELY 30KM OFF THE COAST OF PETERHEAD IN AN AREA OF WATER KNOWN AS THE BUCHAN DEEP.

Statoil have been involved in the development of the world's first full scale floating turbines following the inception of a Hywind demo project located off the Norwegian coast since 2009. The Hywind Pilot Park is a significant project for the north-east of Scotland in that it will demonstrate the scale and commercial viability of this innovative technology and is a step towards developing a full commercial scale floating wind farm.

Aberdeenshire Council's interest related primarily to the essential onshore infrastructure which was the subject of a planning application. Close working relations were developed with Marine Scotland on the offshore elements which resulted in a better understanding of the entire project end to end and allowed areas of cross over between the terrestrial and marine planning to be assessed and planned for.

The Planning Service had been involved in pre-application discussions with the developer, Statoil, since 2011, during the early EIA screening and scoping stages. The SDDT took over the pre-application project in 2014 and have been in regular and ongoing communication with Statoil throughout the 2015/2016 period.

The SDDT were also consulted at the pre-Marine Licence stage for the offshore works and provided a scoping response and attending meetings with Marine Scotland. Frontloading of information and highlighting issues at the pre-application/ pre-Licence stage meant that issues could be identified early and addressed. This allowed the determination of the planning application to take place speedily in accordance with a PPA.



The Statoil project team are based in Norway so communication and engagement has taken a variety of forms throughout the project. This initially involved face to face meetings when the project team would fly from Bergen to Aberdeen for key meetings. As the project progressed and Council ICT infrastructure improved the Council was able to offer teleconferences and Skype meetings between Aberdeen and Norway. Engagement and ongoing communication during the pre-application stage, planning process, and post planning was felt to be very effective. Engagement and communication is still ongoing between the SDDT and Statoil and this now includes the appointed contractor in relation to the discharge of planning conditions and review meetings are held every two weeks to progress the final stages of the project prior to the onshore works commencing. It is expected that the works will commence summer 2016.

In summary, the Hywind project acts as an excellent example of how successful pre-application engagement can facilitate the efficient and effective determination of a regionally significant energy project. It also acts as a good example of how ongoing and proactive engagement between the SDDT and the applicant/ contractor allows project timescales to be met from pre-application discussions right through to delivery.

KARI LURÅS, STAKEHOLDER MANAGER, HYWIND SCOTLAND PILOT PARK, STATOIL -

"Statoil has been developing the Hywind Scotland Pilot Park Project since 2010. The first contact we had with Aberdeenshire Council was in 2011. Regular meetings and more informal updates from the very early phase of the project are important reasons for the good and efficient working relationships we have been able to establish with key personnel with the SDDT during these years. We experience a very proactive and qualified team within the SDDT. Always available when we needed to clarify challenges related to the development of the Hywind Scotland project. High level of engagement from key personnel made it easier for the Hywind project team to understand local stakeholders concerns related to this development. Having a dedicated team available made the pre-application stage very efficient and allowed enough time for Statoil to do necessary changes to be implemented in time for internal processes.

We believe the level of engagement from key personnel within SDDT and the informal approach we have built up over a long time has resulted in what we experience as a very successful planning process, both prior to submitting the planning application and also after granted planning permission. We experienced a results-oriented team which has made it possible to clarify matters quickly and has enabled Statoil to deliver on the original project schedule."

PRE APPLICATION RECORDING (FEEDBACK - AMBER)

In the last reporting period pre application recording was impacted upon due to the implementation of the new system and the significant transfer of the pre application data. Not all records had a full site history at that juncture and it was a case of waiting for the time to lapse to enable the system to develop in order for the site histories to build up in the system.

UPDATE

The Uniform system has been developed and processes are in place to link any pre-application record to the related planning application record.

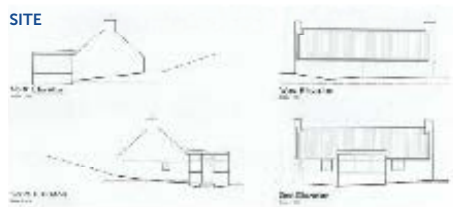
The pre-application history is starting to build up in the system with 10% of applications determined this year reported as being subject to pre-application advice. Examples of the positive use of the pre application process is demonstrated in Case Studies 12a and 12b below.

PRE-APPLICATION PROCESS IN ACTION

CASE STUDY 12A - LOCAL PRE APPLICATION - GOOD DESIGN THROUGH NEGOTIATION AND DISCUSSION

THIS EXAMPLE SHOWS WHERE THE BENEFITS OF PRE APPLICATION AT AN EARLY STAGE WOULD HAVE BEEN BENEFICIAL.

The site comprised a dwelling house/bothy of traditional proportions located on a sloping site.



The Agent submitted a planning application to refurbish and extend the existing building to provide a 3 bedroom house. No pre application approach had been made to the Planning Service.

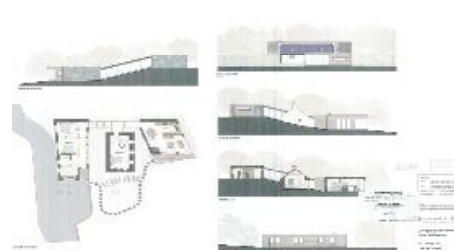
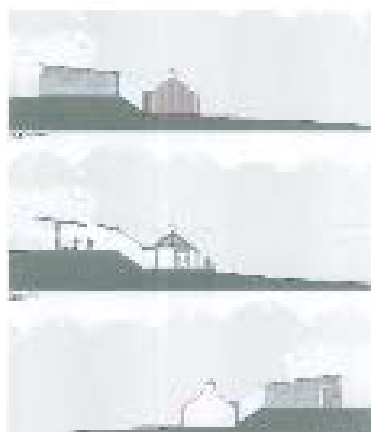
The proposal involved contemporary extensions to the front and rear of the original building. The proposed extensions were considered to dominate the site and affect the character of the site.

The applicant was advised that the proposal could not be supported as it was not subordinate to the existing cottage and impacted on the traditional character.

The applicant submitted an alternative design.

This was considered to address all the concerns highlighted in the original proposal. The applicant was advised to withdraw the planning application and to re-submit it with the amended proposal.

A revised planning application was submitted and subsequently approved.



PLANNING APPLICATION

APPROVED APPLICATION



CASE STUDY 12B – LOCAL/LISTED BUILDING PRE APPLICATION: MELDRUM HOUSE HOTEL



MELDRUM HOUSE IS IMPORTANT BOTH CULTURALLY AND ECONOMICALLY IN THE ABERDEENSHIRE AREA.

In recognition of the business needs to grow, the Planning Service engaged in early pre-application discussions with the agent and other stakeholders, including Historic Environment Scotland, to ensure that any proposal submitted would find favour at Officer level and thus enable a high quality and timeous outcome. This engagement led to both planning and listed building consents being determined within the statutory 2 month periods. The development, now nearing completion, is an example of high quality development whilst meeting business needs and demonstrates the benefits of early pre application engagement with all parties.



PRE APPLICATION REMAINS VITAL AND IS ALSO FACILITATED BY OTHER SERVICES AND CONSULTEES IN LIAISON WITH THE PLANNING SERVICE.

CASE STUDY 13 – STAKEHOLDER - PRE APPLICATION CERTAINTY – ROADS AS PARTNERS



Project Meetings with Developers and their agents took place throughout the year. The Roads Development teams pushed for early meetings to provide guidance and advice on how to apply the principles of Designing Streets to a new development in a practical way to conform to technical standards and which could be effectively maintained once built. This was generally welcomed by Developers as it provided greater certainty that scheme designs would be fit for purpose and could be adopted by the Council without

any undue delays. A good example of the advice given was how to create a street space safe for children to play whilst avoiding the need for speed humps and keeping in place the practical elements needed to provide effective drainage and protect areas for laying services and installing street lighting. This ensured consistency, compatibility and certainty in the pre planning process, pre major process and master plan process. An example of this is below within the Chapelton development street layout.

CHAPTER 2B – CERTAINTY

Service Priorities For 2015 - 2016

Service priorities remain focused on improved performance.



DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

THE IMPORTANCE OF ADOPTING A PROJECT PLANNING APPROACH TO THE PREPARATION AND MONITORING OF THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN CANNOT BE UNDERESTIMATED.

The Development Plan Scheme 2016 sets out the targets and deadlines for each step in the preparation process.

	2013					2014				2015				2016			
	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
LDP Programme																	
Stage 1 Monitoring Report																	
Stage 2 Main Issues Development																	
Stage 3 Main Issues Report																	
Stage 4 Responses to MIR																	
Stage 5 Additional consultation on LDP Issues																	
Stage 6 Proposed Plan Published																	
Stage 7 Consultation and Responses to Proposed Plan																	
Stage 8 Examination																	
Stage 9 Adoption																	

DEVELOPMENT PLAN SCHEME – GANT CHART – TIMELINES FOR LDP PROGRAMME

Certainty is also encompassed in robust and meaningful engagement. Aberdeenshire Council is committed to the principles that community engagement must be meaningful and must be at an early stage to influence the shape of plans and proposals. We have adopted the "National Standards for Community Engagement" as our benchmark. (Also refer to Chapter 1 Case Studies 4a-4c)

THE TEN STANDARDS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- › We will identify and involve the people and organisations with an interest in the focus of the engagement.
- › We will identify and overcome any barriers to involvement.
- › We will gather evidence of the needs and available resources and use this to agree the purpose, scope and timescale of the engagement and the actions to be taken.
- › We will agree the use methods of engagement that are fit for purpose.
- › We will agree and use clear procedures to enable the participants to work with one another efficiently and effectively.
- › We will ensure necessary information is communicated between the participants.
- › We will work effectively with others with an interest in the engagement.
- › We will develop actively the skills, knowledge and confidence of all the participants.
- › We will feedback the results of the engagement to the wider community and agencies affected.
- › We will monitor and evaluate whether the engagement meets its purposes and the national standards for community engagement.

CERTAINTY AND PERFORMANCE IN DECISION MAKING

In 2014-15 – performance was impacted upon with the implementation of the new electronic planning system. Overall the performance for 2014-15 was less than the previous year although by the final quarter this has shown strong evidence of recovery

as the systems and structures were bedding in. During the reporting period 2015-16 it can be demonstrated how the overall transformational period has delivered its objective of improved performance.

PERFORMANCE 2015-2016

2015/16	QUARTER 1 %/ AVERAGE WEEKS	QUARTER 2 %/ AVERAGE WEEKS	QUARTER 3 %/ AVERAGE WEEKS	QUARTER 4 %/ AVERAGE WEEKS	TOTAL 2015/16 %/ AVERAGE WEEKS
Householder	96.9 / 6.6	91.6 / 7.2	91.5 / 6.8	95.0 / 6.5	93.6 / 6.8
Non-Householder	64.3 / 16.8	65.0 / 12.3	65.5 / 12.7	68.6 / 14.6	65.7 / 14.1
2015/16	76.1 / 13.1	74.9 / 10.4	75.3 / 10.5	78.1 / 11.7	76.0 / 11.4
2014/15	51.0 / 12.4	66.8 / 13.2	70.6 / 12.0	73.4 / 11.6	65.4 / 12.4
2013/14	71.7 / 16.8	74.2 / 12.1	68.4 / 13.4	61.4 / 14.1	69.4 / 14.2

ALTHOUGH HOUSEHOLD PERFORMANCE HAS ALWAYS BEEN CONSISTENT THERE IS NEVER ANY ROOM FOR COMPLACENCY AND FOCUS WAS RETAINED ON FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS IN ALL THE APPLICATION TYPE DECISION MAKING.

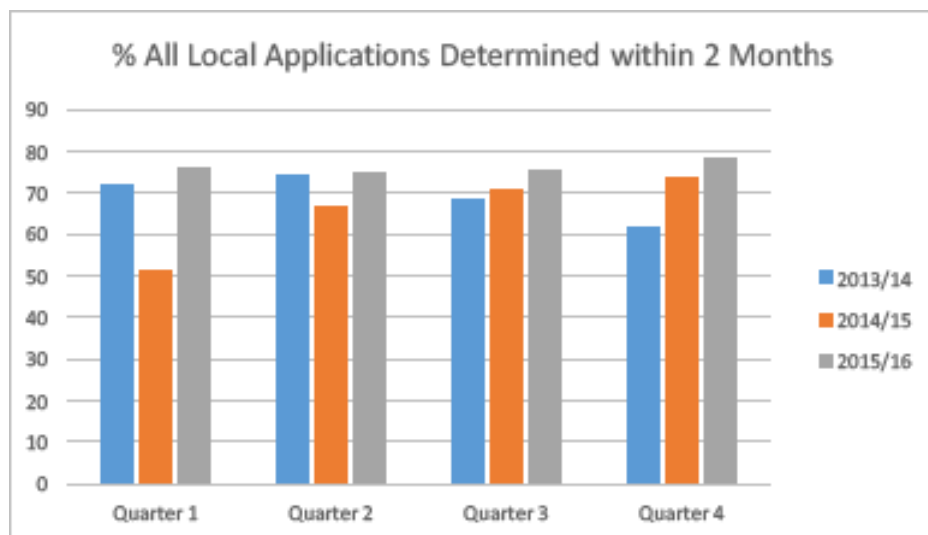
Household performance continued to improve from the last reporting period at 85.7%/7.3 average weeks to 93.6%/6.8 average weeks.

Non-Household performance has always been a priority for pushing forward improvements as performance often varies. This has improved from the last reporting period at 15.8 average weeks to 14.1 average weeks.

CASE STUDY 14 - NON HOUSEHOLD IMPROVEMENTS

- › **Priority focus** – improving performance
- › **Use of Processing Agreements** – for more than just Major Applications
- › **Improving Legal timescales** - through joint working
- › **Developer Obligation Protocol** - adhering to timescales
- › **Better pre application engagement** - better recording of pre application
- › **Certainty re Heads of Terms** – agree all Heads of Terms before application is reported to Committee
- › **Officer capacity** – Officer caseloads manageable – more attention given to complexities of non-householder applications

OVERALL PERFORMANCE 2015-16



2015/16	QUARTER 1	QUARTER 2	QUARTER 3	QUARTER 4	TOTAL 2015/16
2013/14	71.7	74.2	68.4	61.4	69.4
2014/15	51.0	66.8	70.6	73.4	65.4
2015/16	76.1	74.9	75.3	78.1	76

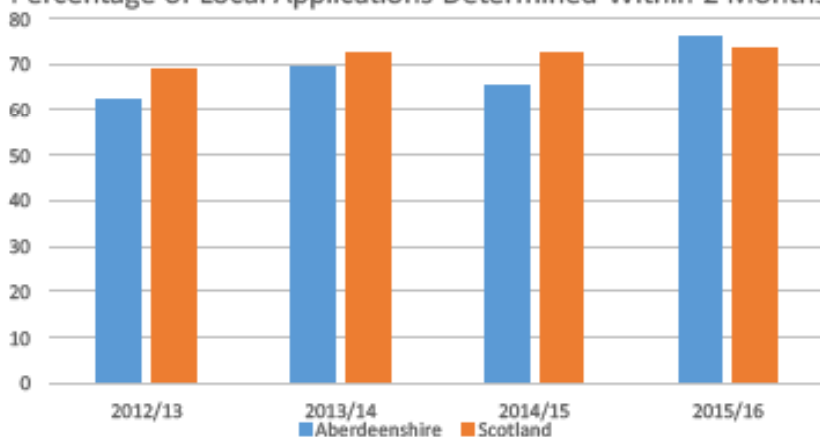
Overall the improvement to our performance was particularly pleasing, as it evidences that the efforts and resources that have gone towards the transformational changes over the last 2 reporting periods have proven to be largely successful.

PERFORMANCE – NATIONAL COMPARISON

PERCENTAGE OF LOCAL APPLICATIONS DETERMINED WITHIN 2 MONTHS

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Aberdeenshire	62.3%	69.4%	65.4%	76.0%
Scotland	69.0%	72.5%	72.1%	73.4%

Percentage of Local Applications Determined Within 2 Months



As before in the previous reporting period the approval and delegated rates have improved and remained consistent.

The evidence relating to this consistency is throughout the document in terms of :

- › Robust adherence to the local plan policies and guidance,
- › Providing good/consistent pre application advice
- › Collaborating with our stakeholders
- › Working with our customers and communities
- › Enabling our elected members access to professional advice and training

APPROVAL RATES

PERCENTAGE OF APPLICATIONS APPROVED DURING THE REPORTING PERIOD HAS RECORDED AN INCREASE.

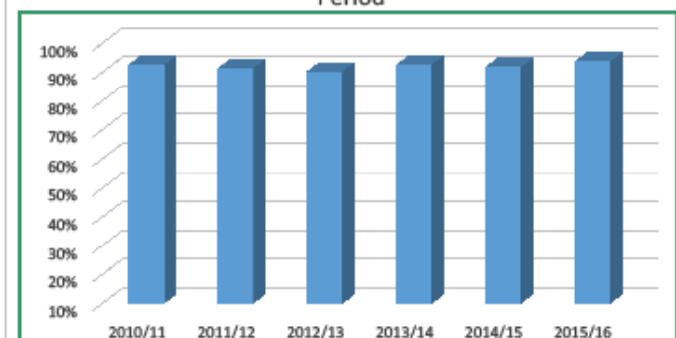
	% APPROVED
2010/11	92.8%
2011/12	91.6%
2012/13	90.5%
2013/14	92.8%
2014/15	92.0%
2015/16	93.9%

DELEGATED RATES

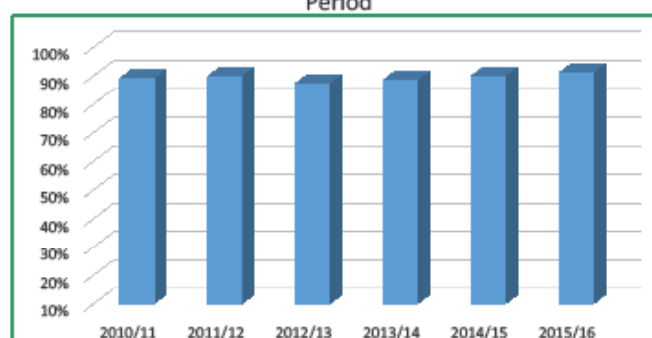
PERCENTAGE OF DELEGATED DECISIONS DURING THE REPORTING PERIOD HAS RECORDED AN INCREASE.

	% DELEGATED
2010/11	89.4%
2011/12	90.2%
2012/13	87.7%
2013/14	88.9%
2014/15	90.3%
2015/16	91.4%

% of Applications Approved During the Reporting Period



% of Delegated Decisions During the Reporting Period



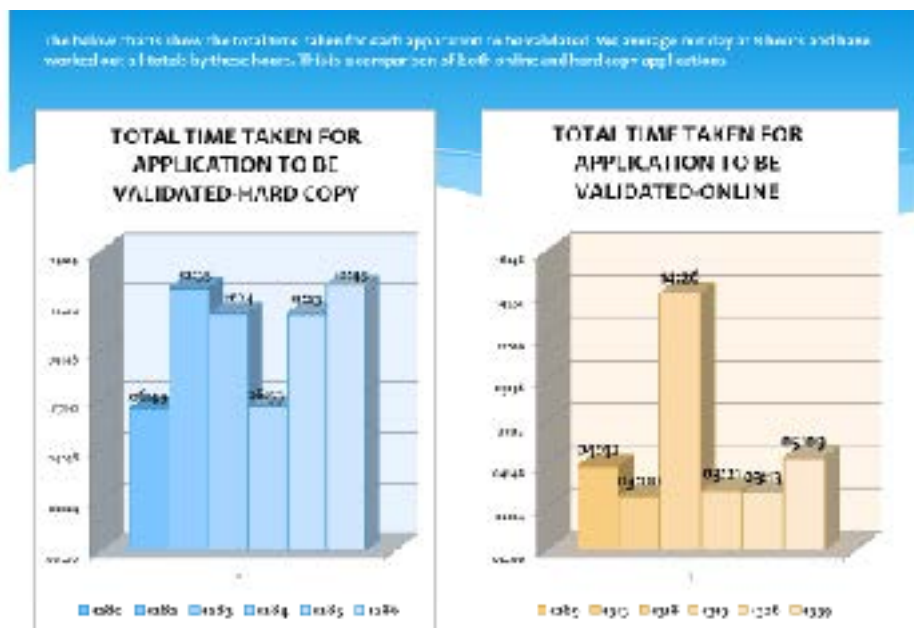
The use of the e planning portal is closely monitored. Firstly to continue and retain consistency in the performance of validation speed, considered a vital part of the overall decision making process, and speeding up performance. It is also used to monitor the use of the e planning portal in order to further

promote its use. To date over 60% now use the portal, but we now need to work on getting the 40% of those who still submit by hard copy or by e mail to also be electronic users. This will become a committed piece of work for 2016-2017.

CASE STUDY NO 15B – SPEED OF VALIDATION COMPARATIVE

Comparison monitoring is done on times taken to validate applications through the system for both those applications submitted via the e planning portal and those that are submitted by other means e.g. paper/e mail. The very specific timings per application are recorded and this is used to monitor staff and team performance as well as monitor the action of the customer to enable us to identify those we need to target with more promotion of the advantages of e planning.

THE CHARTS SHOWN OPPOSITE SHOW THE TOTAL TIME TAKEN FOR EACH APPLICATION TO BE VALIDATED. WE AVERAGE OUR DAY AT 8 HOURS AND HAVE WORKED OUT ALL TOTALS BY THESE HOURS. THIS IS A COMPARISON OF BOTH ONLINE AND HARD COPY APPLICATIONS.



PERFORMANCE PRIORITIES

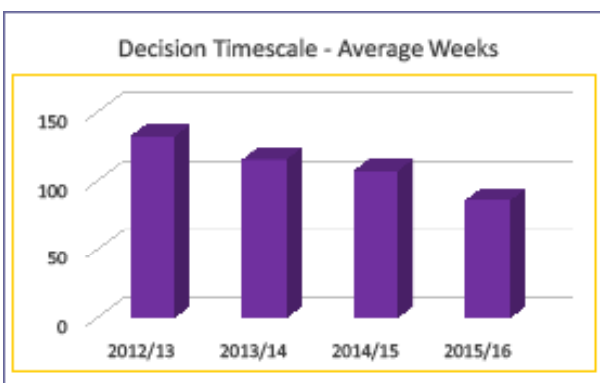
(Also refer to Chapter 4 - Continuous Improvement)

THE 5 MAIN AREAS OF PRIORITY HAVE CONTINUED WITH THEIR FOCUS FROM THE LAST REPORTING PERIODS.

These are :

- Major Application Timescales – (also refer to Chapter 2a- Open for Business 'Major Applications')
- The use of Processing Agreements – (also refer to Part 1 – NHI's – Note 2)
- Legacy Cases – (also refer to Chapter 3a - Efficient and Effective decision making)
- Developer Obligations
- Legal Agreement Timescales

MAJOR APPLICATION TIMESCALES



AVERAGE WEEKS	
2012/13	132.9
2013/14	115.9
2014/15	107.8
2015/16	86.3

MAJOR APPLICATION TIMESCALES HAVE IMPROVED, ALTHOUGH STILL LIKELY TO BE ABOVE THE NATIONAL AVERAGE.

The use of Processing Agreements have assisted in this improvement, although the legal timescales associated with the major applications in the reporting period have held the average week figure at 86.3 average weeks. (Refer to 'Legal Timescales' below)

IMPROVEMENTS REVIEW OF MAJOR APPLICATION (PRE- APPLICATION) PROCESS

The Council offers a pre-application advice service for Major Applications and this has been in place since 2007. A meeting to discuss major development proposals is held every month in the Council Headquarters, Woodhill House and Development Management planners and consultees attend, as required, specific to the development proposal. This is when first stage discussions are held and feedback is given on the proposals. This is followed up by further meetings that are arranged in the local planning offices thereafter throughout the pre-application process. The SDDT

have commenced an internal review of the Major Application pre-application advice process; looking specifically at the strengths and weakness of the process and have commenced consultation with stakeholders in spring 2016. Work will continue on this through the 2016/2017 period, including benchmarking with other Local Authorities, with a view of providing improvements to the process for stakeholders and customers of the service.

This will continue as a committed improvement for 2016-17 (Refer to Part 4a)



USE OF PROCESSING AGREEMENTS

PROCESSING AGREEMENTS

Planning Processing Agreements (PPA) are a recognised tool for managing the planning application process in Aberdeenshire. The use of PPA's has significantly increased from the previous period with the number of applications determined using PPA's rising from 2 to 113. This has delivered a number of benefits to the Service and its customers:

- › Transparency in decision making
- › Greater predictability and certainty over key stages in process, including Committee dates and Legal Agreement timescales.
- › Faster and more efficient decision making
- › Clear lines of communication between the Planning Service and the applicant
- › More effective and earlier engagement of key stakeholders

From a developer's perspective, wider benefits to a large scale project have also been realised. The greater transparency, predictability and buy in from stakeholders has allowed developers to accomplish a more efficient project plan. Examples include knowing when a planning decision is likely, thus allowing appropriate time to prepare a Roads Construction Consent or a Building Warrant to make for a more efficient development process as a whole.

All National Development applications were successfully delivered on time through the use of a PPA with 100% of applications determined within the terms of the PPA. The performance of PPA's in relation to Major Applications was disappointing with 57% of applications determined within time. The main reasons for Major Applications not

meeting their PPA targets were due to delays with Section 75 Agreements * and a technical error with the Uniform System.** In terms of Local (Non- Householder) Applications, the reasons were largely due to applicants/ agents not submitting information on time or not agreeing to an extension of time. The use of PPA's to manage Local (Householder) Applications and Other Consents achieved good performance and with it increased benefits to customers in terms of certainty and efficient decision making.

** see monitoring of delayed Section 75's in Timescales for Section 75 Legal Agreements below.*

*** this was down to a technical error and has now been resolved.*

THE USE OF PPA'S PER APPLICATION TYPE AND % WHERE TIMESCALE WAS MET:

National planning applications subject to PPA	Number of applications where PPA date was met	Performance
4	4	100%
Major planning applications subject to PPA	Number of applications where PPA date was met	Performance
7	4	57%
Local Non Householder applications subject to PPA	Number of applications where PPA date was met	Performance
93	83	89%
Local Householder applications subject to PPA	Number of applications where PPA date was met	Performance
4	4	100%
Other Consents subject to a PPA	Number of applications where PPA date was met	Performance
5	5	100%

CASE STUDY 16 : KINTORE SECTION 42

THIS IS AN EXAMPLE OF A PPA BEING USED AS PART OF A TAILORED, PROJECT MANAGEMENT APPROACH TO DELIVERING A NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION WITHIN TIME.

This was a National Development for the construction of a 400/275kV Electricity Substation & Switchgear Building at Kintore. The development was an essential part of upgrade works to the national transmission system. The development was originally approved in December 2012.

Late 2015, the developers approached the Council outlining the need to extend the life of the permission to meet revised project timescales for the upgrade works. A Section 42 application was thereafter submitted. This resulted in tight and very challenging timescales to meet statutory provisions, both prior to the expiry of the permission and during the application process. Since the application was a national development it required additional layers of consultation and scrutiny to be carried out in accordance with the regulations.

The Planning Service took a delivery focused approach, using project management techniques and working collaboratively with the developer to determine the application timeously within agreed timescales.

A PPA was central to the management of the process, setting out timescales and dates for key stages of the process from end to end, including a potential Pre Determination Hearing as well as Local Area Committee and Full Council Meeting dates.

Given the restricted timescales, the submission and validation process was also tailored to meet the needs of the development - ensuring that statutory time periods, including the advertisement of the application, could be carried out timeously allowing key dates to be met, including identifying provisional dates for a Pre Determination Hearing or Committee. This included front loading advert requests in anticipation of a valid application being submitted on an agreed date.



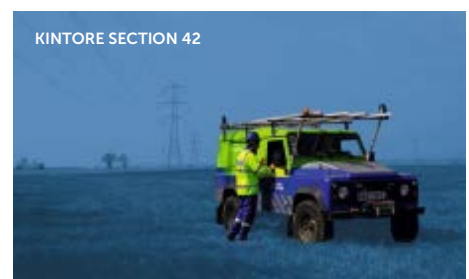
Ultimately the organisation and tailoring of the process to meet the needs of the development meant that this National application could be determined in 3 months, 15 days, all in accordance with the overriding PPA. This is a good example of working collaboratively with the developer to ensure that an application for essential transmission infrastructure can successfully navigate the planning process through a tailored, project management style approach. The Council is continually looking to improve processes and offer a better and more efficient service. This example is a demonstration of how the Planning Service found solutions to a problem in order to help deliver strategic development speedily and with certainty. This has subsequently been endorsed and complimented by the developer.

James Wheeler MRTPI - Town Planner
Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission plc

"I write on behalf of Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission plc to thank you and your officers (Stuart Murison and Wendy Forbes of the Strategic Development Delivery Team) for the swift and efficient handling of our aforementioned application which was approved in November 2015.

Given the tight deadlines required to meet a Full Council committee date prior to the expiry of our previous permission your officers ensured that the application was considered on time and within the 4 month statutory determination period for a national planning application. We consider that the focus and expertise which result from the use of a dedicated team dealing with strategically important applications is a major factor in the ability to process our application efficiently and without unnecessary delay.

We welcome the project managed approach taken to the consenting process and found the use of Processing Agreements gave certainty to our own project timescales and a focus for information provision."



DEVELOPER OBLIGATIONS

Local Development Plan/ Supplementary Guidance

DEVELOPER OBLIGATIONS ADDRESS THE IMPACT OF A DEVELOPMENT ON LOCAL INFRASTRUCTURE. WITHOUT SUCH INTERVENTION MANY PROPOSALS WOULD BE UNABLE TO BE SUPPORTED THROUGH THE PLANNING PROCESS, GIVEN THE LEVEL OF INCREASED PRESSURE ON EXISTING FACILITIES WHICH WOULD INEVITABLY RESULT.

Policies are contained within the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan and Supplementary Guidance. Policy 9: Developer Contributions set out the Council's policy on Developer Obligations. This policy is supported by related supplementary guidance policies SG Developer Contributions 1 and SG Developer Contributions 5. These provide detailed policy guidance as well as setting out the methodology employed in calculating the

level of developer obligations which may be required as a result of new development. In order to provide transparency, standardised charges and formulae form the framework for calculations dependent on site specific requirements. Schedule 3 and the Settlement Statements set out the key requirements for facilities and likely infrastructure which development is required to contribute proportionally. Detailed rates have been included within the draft Supplementary Guidance to provide greater certainty to developers going forward.

The use of funds received from developer contributions must be in line with the original agreement under which they were secured. Contributions are directed towards capital costs.

Any Developer Obligations sought must be linked to the specific development and meet the tests set out on Circular 3/2012: Planning Obligations and Good Neighbour Agreements -

The Developer Obligation Assessment Reports issued to the Agent/ Applicant set out the basis for any agreement the applicant enters into with Aberdeenshire Council either in terms of Section 69 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 [Section 69 Agreement] or in terms of Section 75 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 [Section 75 Agreement].

The Council undertake to spend contributions in respect of an appropriate project or projects in line with the detailed Assessment Report within 5 years of the date of the final payment received. In the event of all or part of the secured contribution not being spent within this time period the contribution or part will be refunded to the applicant, in line with Circular 3/2012.

PRE-APPLICATION

THE COUNCIL ENCOURAGES DEVELOPERS TO ENGAGE WITH THE DEVELOPER OBLIGATIONS TEAM DURING THE PRE-APPLICATION STAGE, TO ASCERTAIN THE LIKELY LEVEL OF CONTRIBUTIONS REQUIRED.

Pre-Application Enquiry Reports follow the same template as a Developer Obligations Assessment Report. However, detail included within the Report is not prejudice to any future submitted planning application. The Reports set out indicative contribution levels based on the submitted detail and knowledge at the time, to provide the developer with an indication of the likely levels of contributions, and/or identify any in kind requirements at an early stage.

A Pre Application Assessment is carried out based on circumstances at the time of the enquiry, and will remain valid for a period of 6 months, after this time period a new assessment will be required.

When a pre application enquiry is carried out prior to submission of a planning application, this has noticeable impacts on the time taken to conclude Developer Obligations at the planning application stage. The reason being the developer is fully aware of potential infrastructure requirements and likely levels of contributions, taking these into consideration prior to submission. The result of this is a reduction in the time allocated to disputes and allows the assessment process to be carried out more timeously, from consultation to conclusion.

An example of this is provided below

CASE STUDY 17 – EFFECTIVE PRE APPLICATION. STRATHBOGIE HOTEL 8 UNITS - [APP/2016/0485](#)



A pre application enquiry was received in July 2015 to allow the agent/developer to consider all likely costs taking into account the site history. Initial figures were prepared and sent to the agent on September 2015, following a review of complex site history and requirements under current policy. Ongoing discussions followed between the Developer Obligations Team and the agent with regards to the various mix of tenure options and viability issues. Once a finalised unit mix was known, a pre application enquiry response was provided to the agent in advance of the application being submitted which considered viability.

Following the application being formally submitted, the [Developer Obligations](#) Team were consulted by the Planning Service on 02/03/2016 and sent a Developer Obligations Assessment Report to the agent on 11/03/2016. No issues were raised as the Assessment Report was in line with the pre application enquiry. The agent accepted the level of contribution on 04/04/2016, and a Section 75 instruction was prepared and sent to the Planning Service on 06/04/2016. They instructed Legal Services and a draft was issued on 20/04/16

[APP/2016/0485](#)

LEGAL TIMESCALES

Timescales for Legal Agreements continues to be a priority focus given the impact delays can have on delivery outcomes. All major applications are now subject to a Processing Agreement, although these are still subject to applicant willingness. Stop the Clock is also used, but perhaps not as effectively as it could be and work is being done to remedy this in terms of Section 75 delays. A Master Section 75 spreadsheet is used to identify delays and where they sit and how they can be resolved/progressed. reduction in the time allocated to disputes and allows the assessment process to be carried out more timeously, from consultation to conclusion.

MAJOR APPLICATIONS

FIVE MAJOR APPLICATIONS WERE SETTLED IN 2015/2016. THE AVERAGE TIMESCALES HAVE INCREASED FROM THE LAST REPORTING PERIOD. EACH APPLICATION SUBJECT TO A SECTION 75 IS MONITORED TO IDENTIFY DELAYS AS ABOVE. IN SUMMARY:

1. APP/2012/0565, Golden Knowes Banff

Application submitted on 28 March 2012. The original application was for 127 dwellings.

- › Masterplan delays - lack of provision of an adequate master plan.
- › Legal Agreement took 6 months to conclude - lack of evidence of the title from the Landowner who was also party to the S75.

2. APP/2014/3296, Merryhillock

- › Masterplan delays - the approved master plan showed football pitches but no consideration had been given to who would be responsible for these. This produced further discussion and negotiation.
- › A S75 instruction sent 23 April 2015 and S75 agreed May. Committee approval in May

but with amendments to delivery of pitches – this required subsequent Committee referral.

- › The delay here has been due to the masterplan not corresponding with what can actually be delivered, as opposed to conclusion of the Legal Agreement which took 6 weeks.

3. APP/2012/3943, Newmachar

- › Protracted negotiations with the developer to agree contributions.
- › Revised assessments required covering multiple versions
- › Section 75 Heads of Terms negotiations continued. The Section 75 not signed until September 2015.

4. APP/2013/3196, Port Elphinstone Inverurie

- › Significant delays in this application both pre and post the S75 process.
- › Further transportation information required
- › Signing of Section 75 delayed as there were issues with the changes in ownership to the site with landowners.

5. KM/APP/2007/2042 Poultry sheds, Schoolhill, Portlethen

- › Significant legacy case where the applicant had refused to progress the application post Committee approval and to conclude the planning process.
- › The applicant was finally written to and advised that if there was no progress the matter would taken back to Committee.
- › Constant negotiations and discussions with applicant from January 2014 until the S75 was concluded and registered in 20th May 2015
- › There was other outstanding relevant information to deal with consultees to finally allow the Planning Service to issue the consent.

It should be noted with 3 of these applications, APP/2007/2042, APP/2012/3943, and APP/2013/3196, with the changes to Scheme of Delegation as noted below, these applications would have been able to be refused and the applicant could then come back once they were in position to progress with a decision which could then be implemented by them.

TIMESCALES FOR S75'S

The Legal Services Team have worked closely with the Planning Service to reduce the timescales for applications with a Legal Agreement. It is noted that the overall timescales have gone from 46.2 weeks to 55.7 which is not unexpected given the focus on removing legacy cases and as explained in detail, as under noted.

A dedicated spreadsheet has been set up by legal services to track S75 Agreements and an extract of this as it pertains to 2015/2016 applications is attached. (*Refer to Master Section 75 Spreadsheet below*)

This is the breakdown for all 70 decisions issued in the reporting period which had a S75 recorded (these are the figures reported in the PPF). This shows where the major delay occurred regarding the legacy case work.

- (a) Total number of planning decisions issued in reporting period with S75 recorded = 70
- (b) Number of (a) which also had a PPA in place = 16 (reported separately)
- (c) Number reported with S75 in Statutory Timescale (a-b) = 54 (5 of these were major)
- (d) Number of (c) which were legacy cases = 27 (50%)

Breakdown of (d) looking at legacy cases (based on the valid date of the application):
2007 - 1
2011 - 1
2012 - 4
2013 - 7
2014 - 14

Although the Scottish Government statistics splits the averages between Major/Local, the following is the split between legacy/non legacy:

- › Average Weeks for Non Legacy S75 Case (27) 22.5 weeks.
- › Average Weeks for Legacy S75 Case (27) 110.2 weeks.
- › Average Weeks for All S75 Cases (54) 66.3 weeks.

CURRENT AND FUTURE MEASURES

TIME LIMITS

A number of extra measures have been introduced to reduce the number of legacy applications in the future and subsequent impact on planning timescales. There were no time limits in terms of current planning policies or the Scheme of Delegation for refusing applications where the applicants were not progressing without taking each application back to Committee. Legal Services and the Planning Service took a Report to change the Scheme of Delegation to allow such refusals and this has been approved by the Council but this also requires Ministerial approval. This is currently awaited. In terms of the changes, Major Applications require to be concluded within 6 months of agreeing Heads of Terms and 4 months for Local Applications and this is similar to timescales which have been adopted by other Local Authorities. This would preclude the applicants delaying applications as outlined in the Major Applications examples noted above.

(Refer to Chapter 3 Governance – Planning/ Legal Governance)

UPDATED TEMPLATE

A revised Section 75 template was launched on 26 February 2016 at an event attended by a number of local Agents, Planning Officers and Developers ([Section 75 Template Link](#)). This template is now being used for all Agreements except the most complex. This has allowed for Agreements to be produced and agreed much more quickly.

EVENT - ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL
S75 TEMPLATES WOODHILL HOUSE -
26TH FEBRUARY 2 – 3 PM


- › CERTAINTY
- › EFFICIENCY
- › DELIVERY

DEDICATED OFFICER

There continues to be a dedicated Legal Officer in post who exclusively deals with Section 75 Agreements. This gives external Agents a direct point of contact for queries and discussion which enables agreement to be reached more efficiently.

MASTER SECTION 75 SPREADSHEET

The master Section 75 spreadsheet has continued to prove invaluable in tracking the status of the various live Agreements. This will continue to be updated by both the dedicated Section 75 Officer and colleagues in Developer Obligations. The spreadsheet allows statistics to be collated throughout the year to identify bottlenecks in the process.



This process has resulted in a change of practice whereby the dates at which Developer's Agents are contacted and chased for progress are noted and then actioned more regularly. This means that it is clear where an agreement rests and is more in line with the "Stop the Clock" provisions used by other Planning Authorities. More use of this information will be introduced shortly when all Planning Officers will be given access to the spreadsheet.

SUMMARY

The Planning Service and the Legal Services continue to work to reduce the amount of time that applicants must wait before planning permission is released. Our overall statistics have increased as a result of making a concerted effort to reduce the number of outstanding legacy applications. It is clear from the statistics that relate to the new applications that the waiting time for these has significantly reduced. Our overall statistics will continue to decrease as further legacy applications are resolved.

CHANGE BENEFITS

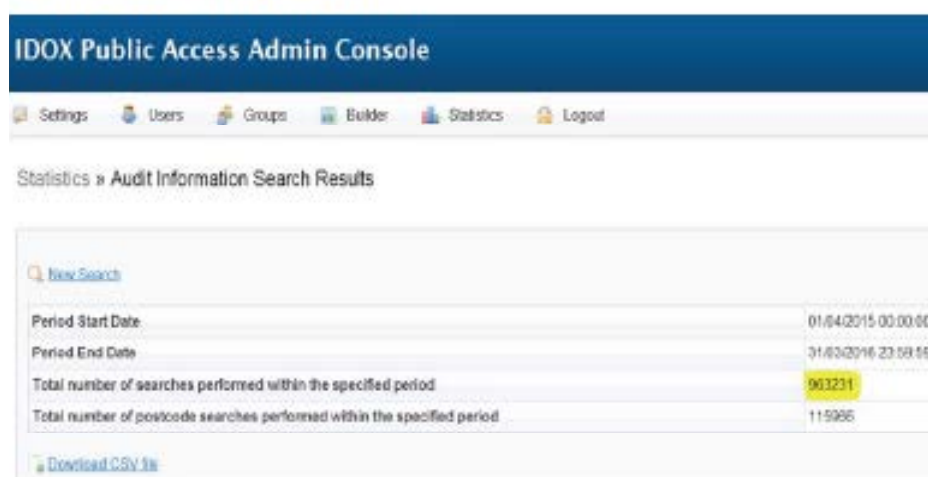
In the last [PPF 2014-15 \(page 25\)](#) a summary of the change benefits that were becoming apparent were documented. It is evident that these benefits have, and continue, to benefit performance as they have become embedded in operational process and procedure many being improved and enhanced. As an example

CASE STUDY 18 – CERTAINTY – CHANGE BENEFITS AND CONTINUING IMPROVEMENTS APPLICATION

IN TERMS OF SYSTEMS IMPROVEMENT IN 2015/16 WE :

- › Upgraded our Public Access website to the latest version, with improved mapping, searching, etc.
- › Upgraded our Uniform back office system to the latest version.
- › Smoothly transitioned to the new Scottish Government CCF website.
- › Extended our Public Access system to include the Enforcement Register.
- › Pl's improving, in Feb 2016 372/373 applications were validated within 3 days (99.73%) (refer to Case Studies 15a & 15b).
- › Continued to grow the percentage of applications submitted online, from about 50% to over 60% (67% in November 2015).
- › In November 2015, in the Scottish Government newsletter on the eDevelopment initiative Aberdeenshire Council was "Spotlighted" as having "transformed the management of caseloads across a substantial land mass – containing a number of area offices – bringing savings in both time and costs".
- › Our one day validation statistics would equate to approximately 2/3 of applications.

In terms of our Public Access Register we have had almost a million searches in 2015/16. As below, some evidence of its popularity:



The screenshot shows the 'IDOX Public Access Admin Console' interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Settings, Users, Groups, Builder, Statistics, and Logout. Below this, the 'Statistics' section is active, displaying 'Audit Information Search Results'. A table shows search statistics for a specific period, with the total number of searches highlighted in yellow.

New Search	
Period Start Date	01/04/2015 00:00:00
Period End Date	31/03/2016 23:59:59
Total number of searches performed within the specified period	903231
Total number of postcode searches performed within the specified period	115986

Below the table, there is a link to 'Download CSV file'.

STAFF ENGAGEMENT

CLEARLY THE MAJORITY OF THE PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENTS IS RELATED TO OUR STAFF. IN THE LAST PPF REPORTING PERIOD A STAFF SURVEY WAS CARRIED OUT FOLLOWING THE STRUCTURAL AND TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGES. THE RESULTS HIGHLIGHTED SOME AREAS WHERE IMPROVEMENTS COULD BE CARRIED OUT :

PROJECTS/INITIATIVES	PROGRESS
There was a lack of clarity between some roles in the Service.	Commitment to update process maps now done
We should have given more training when introducing new systems.	More training on Uniform has been purchased/Internal training given
That some staff were not aware of the Team's performance.	Performance is on the agenda for every Team Manager Meeting and Area Team meetings. Performance is discussed at every Team Manager one to one with the Planning Manager. Quarterly statistics are shared with all staff. Staff are involved in the PPF.

PROJECTS/INITIATIVES

Last year as part of the outcomes of the Development Management Review new projects/ initiatives were added to an overall Improvement Project and Initiative Strategy. These were in addition to those completed, ongoing and being refreshed. Team Managers were made responsible for heading up the majority of these projects. Examples of these were:

PROJECTS/INITIATIVES	PROGRESS	OUTCOMES
Finalise and publish Model Conditions	Model Conditions have been completed and published (see Case Study 19a)	Confidence in applying conditions that meet the 6 tests. Certainty for applicants – they are aware of what to expect, the community - confidence in control of development and officers in terms of competent application of conditions.
Update staff role process maps	Staff process maps are complete (see Case Study 19b)	Confidence and certainty for staff in their roles.
Website improvements,	Website more user friendly for mobile devices in particular better search facilities	Better customer service and provision of information.
Continue survey work,	Customer Surveys have continued (see Case Study 21)	Better connection and communication with customers and associated actions making customer comments more meaningful in terms of their engagement in the planning process.
Development Management Assessment of administrative support.	This project is continuing. The use of the Costing of the Planning Service methodology is being applied to our administrative support roles.	This piece of work is to ensure our admin support is fit for purpose and continuing to be effective following restructuring.

Of these projects/initiatives all have been progressed largely to completion.

The following two Case Studies demonstrate the work done on these projects to bring them to completion.

In respect of officers as users, enforcing and customer confidence in the competency of decisions, the Council's model conditions were reviewed with a view to ensuring they were fit for purpose and adhering to the 6 tests as set out in the legislation.

CASE STUDY 19A - MODEL CONDITIONS REVIEW

The Model Conditions Group have completed a further review of the Planning Conditions & Informative's document. As part of the Review, the group liaised with relevant consultee/stakeholders to check whether the proposed Model Conditions still met their requirements, or if any updates were required to bring the conditions into line with any recent changes in their practices. A standardised format and wording for each condition was agreed and discussed with the relevant consultees to ensure consistency within the document. This approach has assisted by improving communication and certainty between the Development Management Section and consultees in

ensuring that relevant planning conditions are applied when determining planning applications.

In conjunction with the Review, the Working Group have completed training with Development Management staff to ensure that the best use of conditions and of the document is promoted when determining planning applications. A training event organised in conjunction with the Enforcement Team provided an opportunity to present the document and promote best practice on the use of conditions and the document when determining planning applications.

Following the document being finalised, it will be published on the Council's website, while the group will remain in place as a point of contact. The group will continue to review and monitor this document to ensure that the conditions are up to date and relevant to the practices which the Service utilise when determining planning applications.

<http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/planning/planning-applications/advice-and-guidance/>

Table of Contents	
INTRODUCTION	1
MODEL CONDITIONS	2
MODEL TIME LIMIT REQUIREMENTS & DIRECTIONS	2
MODEL REQUIREMENTS	2
CONSIDERATIONS WHEN DRAFTING CONDITIONS	2
GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS WHEN DRAFTING CONDITIONS	2
Specific Considerations	2
SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS WHEN DRAFTING PLANNING CONDITIONS	2
Supervision Conditions	2
DEVELOPMENT VS. WORK	2
Approval of Details via Condition	2
"Unacceptable" or "Not in the Interest"	2
AVOID CIVIL REVENUE	2
DE - TIME LIMIT COMMITMENT & SUBMISSION OF DECISIONS	2
0101. Validated Time Condition - Full Planning Permission	2
0102. Validated Time Condition - Listed Building Consent	2
0103. Standardised Address Required - Further Approval Condition for Planning Permission in Principle	2
DE - TEMPORARY PERMISSIONS	2
0201. LIMITED PERIOD FOR REMOVAL	2
0202. REINSTATE LIFE AFTER TEMPORARY PERMISSION FOR BUILDING	2
0203. REINSTATE LIFE AFTER TEMPORARY PERMISSION FOR USE	2
DE - REGULATION OF DEVELOPMENT FOLLOWING APPROVAL OF APPLICATION	2
0301. Removal of PD rights - (one dwelling)	2
0302. Removal of PD rights - FENCES	2
0303. Removal of PD rights - DRIVEWAYS	2
0304. FENCES, PERIMETERS	2
0305. RESTRICTIONS ON USE - LIMITED TO ONE OR MORE CLASSES	2
0306. RESTRICTIONS ON USE - NO CHANGE PERMITTED WITHIN A USE CLASS	2

CASE STUDY 19B – PROCESS MAPS

As part of the re-structuring of the Service a series of processing maps were created which effectively charted each step of the process from receipt to determination of an application. These were used to good effect to create the right balance and effectiveness within the new structure. These process maps then needed to be populated according to the new electronic planning system to set out the roles of staff. These process maps were used to great effect as tools in restructuring but were only used initially by

the restructuring Project Team. Following the Staff Survey post review a further task was to review and update the processing maps and make them accessible to all staff. This task was part of our overall Improvement Project and Initiative Strategy - tied in to our committed improvements.

The following is an extract from our Validation Process by the Planning Technicians. This picks up the process after receipt by the e-planning team.



Process Maps

CASE STUDY 19C – DM MANUAL

OTHER

One of the commitments carried forward from the last PPF reporting periods has been the creation and publication of a formal Development Management Manual. This has been a resource intensive project given the scope of the Manual and the vast amount of data required. The DM Manual Group have now produced the document.

The document has now been made available and is being used by staff. Although in a format for using, the idea is that the document is a 'live document' which will be constantly updated and reviewed. Already changes and updates have been made. A review will be carried out to include a more comprehensive split between Best Practice and Operational advice. The document is in an electronic format only which will allow updates as and when required.

[DM Manual](#)

ENFORCEMENT

A priority throughout the reporting period has been a conscious effort to record improvements in our Enforcement function and the delivery of such following a radical re organisation over the last 2 reporting periods. Both Member and Senior Management focus on Enforcement has been prevalent as it was considered that more was needed to build on certainty, confidence and public credibility in an Enforcement Service that would be robust and effective.

ENFORCEMENT – PROGRESS AND IMPROVEMENTS – FIT FOR PURPOSE – REPORTING/EVIDENCING IMPROVEMENTS

The Planning Enforcement Team is still relatively new with the most experienced Officers being in place since May 2014. In August 2015, a Senior Planner was appointed which has resulted in the better management of the workload, improved support to Officers on a day to day basis, and improved performance in investigating and closing cases. An additional Planning Enforcement Officer was also appointed in 2015 for a temporary period to help with reducing the backlog and taking pressure off the Officers in the areas of highest workload. The increase in staffing has borne results in terms of improved overall performance of the Enforcement Team, dealing with a higher volume of complaints than the previous year, reducing and removing the backlog of previous unclosed cases, and receiving fewer Service complaints about delays. Significant improvements have been made over the period which has resulted in the Team becoming more effective and responsive in dealing with complaints of unauthorised development. Refer to the Case Studies 20a, b & c for evidence of a more responsive and effective Service.

The **Action Plan** approved in 2015 is being progressed and continues to be the focus of the improvement work being carried out.

Work has also been progressing on developing an **Enforcement Policy for Aberdeenshire** which will underpin how the Enforcement Service is provided in the future and the priorities to be met. A desktop Review of Scottish Local Authority Enforcement Charters, English Enforcement Policies and Research Papers on Enforcement was carried out and areas of best practice established. The findings of the Review and priorities to be considered were the subject of consultation with the Enforcement Team and Senior Managers within the Planning Service and consultation with Elected Members is to be undertaken in the Autumn 2016, with a draft Enforcement Policy and Priority System being reported to the Infrastructure Service's Committee in late 2016 for approval. This is added as a new Committed Improvement for 2016-17.

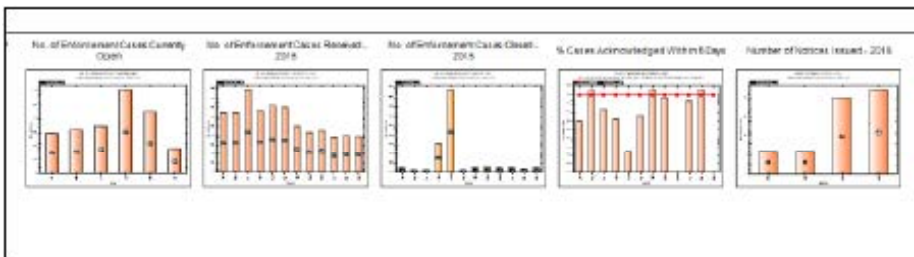
CASE STUDY 20A - TO DEMONSTRATE ENFORCEMENT IMPROVEMENTS IN PLACE

- › **Reassess the Role of Administrative Support for the Planning Enforcement Team** – this was completed in late 2015 and put in place a dedicated admin support function providing a front line service and support service for the Enforcement Team.
- › **Online Planning Enforcement Register** – the new online Register allows all Enforcement Notices served since 2011 to be viewed online and provides a consolidated list of all Notices issued prior to 2011.
- › **Increase staffing resources in the short term** – a Senior Planner Post and additional Enforcement Officer Post were created to help support the team and take pressure off officers in the areas of highest workload. These appointments have been successful and have resulted in a more effective Team.
- › **Improved communication/briefings with Development Management Teams** – Enforcement Staff attend Development Management Team Meetings twice yearly, or when required, which has helped improve relations and a better understanding of enforcement. The Enforcement Team have also contributed to a training workshop on planning conditions and inputted to the group reviewing model planning conditions. A process has also been set up to inform DM Teams when Enforcement Notices are served in their areas.
- › **Use of Uniform and Performance Monitoring** – all planning enforcement complaints (post 2013) are logged on Uniform. This now provides the Team with a comprehensive database of complaints and provides the basis for performance monitoring. Performance indicators for key stages of the enforcement process have been set up which allow Managers to monitor performance. This is still at an early stage and will be developed further once the formal Priority System is put in place with new indicators.

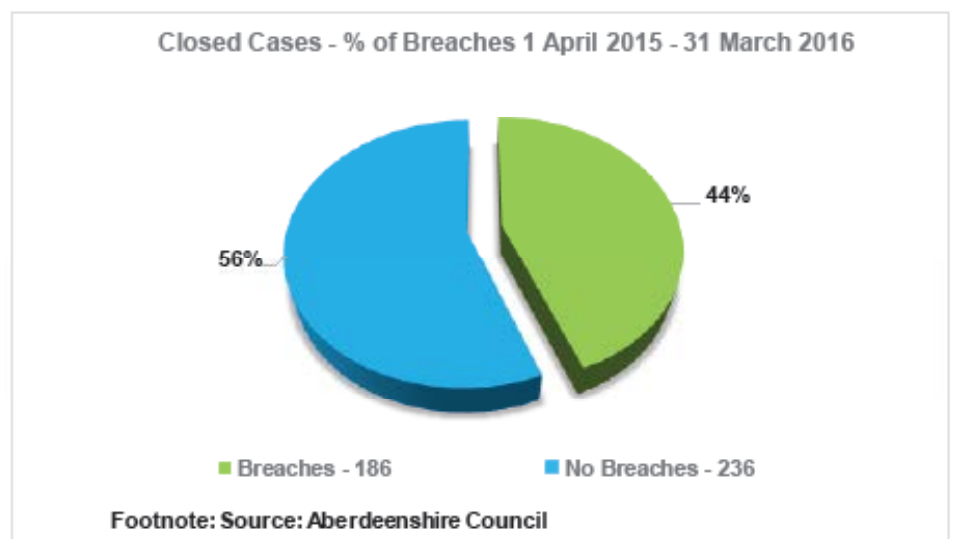
CASE STUDY 20B - TO DEMONSTRATE ENFORCEMENT - WORK TO BE COMPLETED - (REFER TO TABLE OF COMMITMENTS - PART 4A)

- Prepare a Member and Area Committee Briefing Protocol** – this work is in progress and will be developed fully once other enforcement priorities are complete. Interim briefing measures have been put in place to inform Local Members and the Area Managers of enforcement action being taken within their areas and for more high profile enforcement cases, they are also kept updated on key case developments. This is continued as a Committed Improvement for 2016-17
- Enforcement Charter** – the Enforcement Charter is currently up to date. However, work on a new Charter, which will include a new Enforcement Policy and more formal Priority System, is underway. A desktop Review of relevant information and practice elsewhere has been completed, consultation has been carried out internally, and engagement with Local Members is planned prior to drafting the new Enforcement Policy for approval in late 2016.
- Website development** – this work will be progressed once the other enforcement priorities are complete. Some of the current work being undertaken, when complete, will be made available on the website, for example the Enforcement Policy, Priority System and updated Charter.
- Uniform Information System** – further work on the system to allow a fully electronic process for enforcement cases is being progressed. Enforcement Officers have had training on generating correspondence in Uniform and this is now being implemented and follow up training will involve drafting Notices in Uniform.

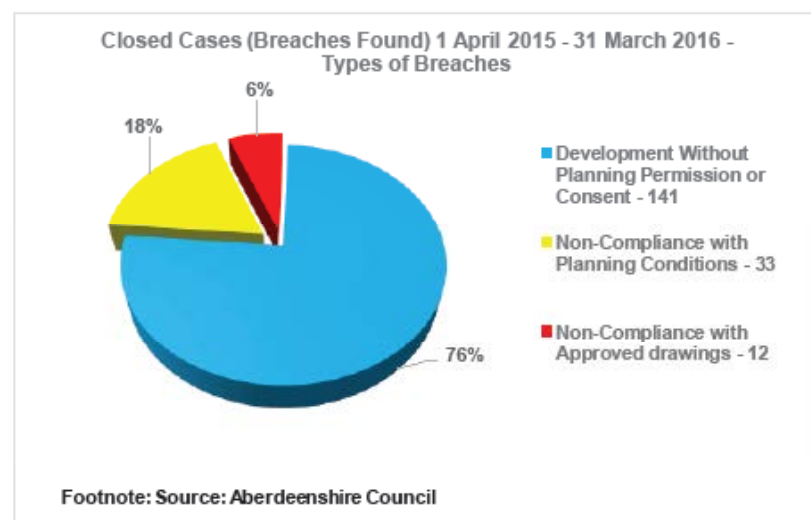
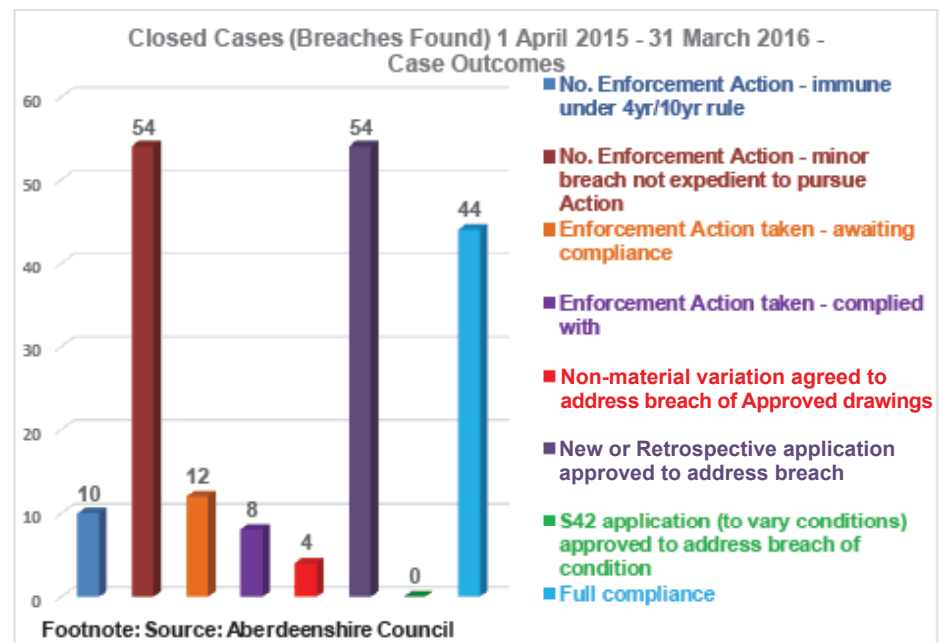
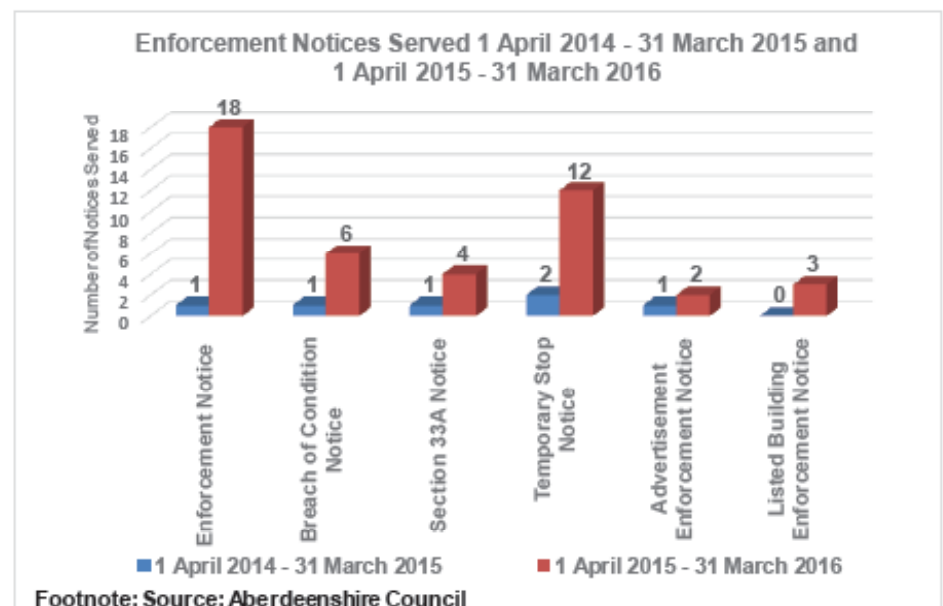
EXTRACT FROM UNIFORM ENFORCEMENT PERFORMANCE INDICATORS



EXAMPLES OF ENFORCEMENT STATISTICS SHOWING THE NUMBER AND OUTCOME OF BREACHES OF PLANNING CONTROL



EXAMPLES OF ENFORCEMENT STATISTICS SHOWING THE NUMBER AND OUTCOME OF BREACHES OF PLANNING CONTROL



EXAMPLES OF ENFORCEMENT STATISTICS SHOWING THE NUMBER AND OUTCOME OF BREACHES OF PLANNING CONTROL

CASE STUDY 20C - GLOIES STEADING LISTED BUILDING



The Local Planning Office were advised of unauthorised demolition works and alterations being undertaken to a 'B' Listed Steading. The allegation related to works that were not in accordance with an extant permission for the conversion of the building.



This was passed to the Enforcement Team and within 5 hours of receipt of the complaint the site was visited by two Enforcement Officers and an Environment (Built Heritage) Planner and a Temporary Stop Notice was served halting further damage to the building.



Breach resolved

Quick Action – Unauthorised works were stopped within 24 hours after the complaint being received. Aberdeenshire Council wanted to resolve the problem in a pragmatic way. Blame was not appointed as to why the situation had occurred, the focus was on finding a way to move forward to resolve the current situation and to protect the Listed Building from further damage and to reinstate in a satisfactory manner.

Collaboration with other agencies – Close working with Building Standards, Environment Team and Historic Environment Scotland.

Working with the Developer/Applicants – A meeting was set up 2 working days after the Temporary Stop Notice was served to discuss the unauthorised partial demolition of the steading. Discussion centred on exploring the options available to Aberdeenshire Council and the Developer/Applicants to achieve the same purpose to address the breach.

The meeting was held with the Developers and Officers from the Environment Team, Development Management and Enforcement to negotiate a resolution which was facilitated by the Enforcement Team. Enforcement Officers then worked with the Environment Planner to draft a Listed Building (LB) Enforcement Notice detailing how the works would be re-instated in a sympathetic manner. The LB Enforcement Notice was served within 15 days of the Temporary Stop Notice and provided deemed Listed Building Consent for the agreed rebuild works to proceed. The Enforcement Team then worked with the Environment Planner to monitor the works during the rebuild which has been satisfactorily completed.

Environment Planner, Aberdeenshire Council -

"Enforcement were helpful and included all those required in the discussions. A suitable compromise was agreed by all parties the result being that the building was re-instated without any un-due conflict between the applicants, agents and the Planning Service."

CHAPTER 2C - COMMUNICATIONS, ENGAGEMENT & CUSTOMER SERVICE

In line with the Service Plan a high level of communication and engagement with our customers and stakeholders takes place. A variety of types and levels of engagement are carried out in line with customer and stakeholder needs, required outcomes and continuous improvement. The following case studies demonstrate the variety and flexibility of our focus on this area of customer service, and the improvements throughout the reporting period.

Service Plan

BEST VALUE AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Infrastructure Services is committed to Best Value and Continuous Improvement. Our approach is embedded in the way we provide service delivery on a day to day basis. During the year we will use the following activities to drive forward transformational change within the service:-

- › **Customer Engagement** – we will seek regular feedback from users of our service and use this to identify areas where we need to improve.

DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

Evidence of communications and engagement has been demonstrated throughout the Local Development Plan preparation during the reporting period and this applies largely through the PPF document, demonstrated in Good Quality Outcomes (Refer to Chapter 2b -- Open for Business- Development Planning)

ENVIRONMENT PLANNING

Communications, Engagement and Customer Service

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- › Conservation Area Reviews/designations: public engagement carried out as per agreed process at e.g. .Port Errol, Boddam, Fraserburgh, Kennethmont and Auchenblae.
- › Community engagement ongoing e.g. with Friends of Tarlair pool.
- › **Doors Open day**: expanded to take place over two days and including a Community Hub in Aboyne with information stalls; delivered with Economic Development to secure additional economic benefits.
- › **Aberdeenshire Local Access Forum (ALOAF)**: engagement with the community e.g. Turriff Show.
- › Engagement with local community group in Stonehaven who have undertaken day to day running of the new Clock Tower facility.

TRAINING ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

- › Topic based workshops for staff and regular updates/training provided to DM Team meetings on natural and built heritage issues. These aim to provide clarity for new planners on the consultation process, issues to be considered and the use of conditions.

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT - CUSTOMER SURVEY

A further customer survey was completed.

There has on the whole been improvements within all teams. It does appear that customers have concerns about the following:

- › Regular updates
- › Advising applicants/agents prior to decision if refusal and explanation of the decision*

(*The majority of respondents had applications that were granted rather than refused and there were only 1-3 applications in each team which were refused.)

In terms of pre-application advice, there does not appear to be a large increase in the number of Applicants/Agents seeking pre-application advice prior to the submission of applications. This is despite further promotion of the pre application service at both local and major levels. The levels of pre application advice are monitored and further work is considered necessary to further instil the benefits of seeking pre application advice.

SURVEY OUTCOMES

As part of Service Committee Improvements for the reporting period the measurement of outputs and measurable targets for Customer Surveys were applied. An action was to improve the level of satisfactory/very satisfied to meet the Aberdeenshire target of 88%. (Refer to Section 4 A of PPF 2014-15 & Section 4B of current PPF). This level of satisfaction has improved again and now exceeds the target set.

2014	
SATISFIED/FAIRLY SATISFIED	79.5%
FAIRLY/VERY DISSATISFIED	7.8%
2015	
SATISFIED/FAIRLY SATISFIED	85%
FAIRLY/VERY DISSATISFIED	8.5%
2016	
SATISFIED/FAIRLY SATISFIED	88.6%
FAIRLY/VERY DISSATISFIED	4.8%

To ensure meaningful engagement and measurable outcomes, the action plan is used by the Team Managers and Seniors to promote specific improvements within the teams in line with the measurable targets set (*Refer to Part 4A*).

CASE STUDY 21 - RESPONDING TO CUSTOMER COMMENTS/CONCERNS

Improve availability of staff working between area offices

Improved coordination of working patterns, and promotion of use of IT (Skype messaging/calls/IP phones)

This seemed to be a common concern from some of the Survey responses. The satisfaction rate on the availability of staff had reduced slightly since the last reporting period but more customers found it easier to contact Planning Staff.

Q 10: How satisfied were you with the following:

Availability of staff:

2016: V Satisfied/F Satisfied- 88.8% F Dissatisfied/V Dissatisfied- 4.8%
2015: V Satisfied/F Satisfied- 90.1% F Dissatisfied/V Dissatisfied- 0%

Q11: How easy was it for you to contact the planning officer dealing with your planning application?

2016: V Easy/F Easy- 93.8% F Difficult- 6.1%
2015: V Easy/F Easy- 85% V Difficult- 1.3%

In response to this procedures have been reviewed and made more robust, particularly in light of the transient nature of the Planning Officers working across teams and having the ability to work smartly at hot desks across Aberdeenshire and home working.

Availability may of course cover face to face availability or by electronic or telecom means. As part of the Review all staff have to be contactable by various means at all times unless they specifically indicate otherwise (if not available a timescale should be indicated for a return communication). Staff have access to conventional telephones, IP phones where they can transfer their calls when working in other locations including home, Instant Messaging and e mail. Use of Skype for Business is fully encouraged and all staff now have headsets to enable contact, including group meetings when in different locations. Customers can still seek information from area offices which are fully equipped with website access. Area surgeries are available throughout the most remote areas where drop in access is encouraged.

Development Management Survey - Action Plan (Extract)

AREA	ISSUE	SOLUTION	Y/N OR DATE
Banff & Buchan	Improve contact in informing of refusals	Promote standard practice via updated Development Management and best practice procedure	
	Improve explanation of why application is being refused	Promote standard practice via updated Development Management manual and best practice procedure and facilitate training for less experienced team members	
	Promotion of pre-app advice and ensure that responses are provided in a consistent and timely manner	Facilitate via best practice procedure and regular monitoring at 1-1s with Senior Planners	
	Planners not returning calls within agreed timescales	Planners to make better use of IT communications (emails, skype calls/ messaging) to be regularly monitored at 1-1s and team meetings	

FEEDBACK / COMPLAINTS / COMPLIMENTS

Complaints: 109 (85 responded to within 20 days; 24 outwith 20 days):
78% responded to in time:
22% outwith timescale

Frontline Complaints have decreased in number received. In the last reporting period 80% were responded to within 20 days. There is a slight decrease within the response deadline in this reporting period (-2%).

Service Requests: 305

Service requests are not complaints but requests for information. Nevertheless these can be resource intensive.

CUSTOMER COMPLIMENTS

Compliments: 66

Compliments have increased in this reporting period.(+10)

ENGAGEMENT THROUGH PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Another area of engagement is that associated with project management in the delivery of significant /strategic development. Although the development of a new town at Chapelton has commenced and construction goes ahead, the engagement element associated with such a complex and large scale development needs to continue and develop.

CASE STUDY 22 - ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING IN DEVELOPMENT DELIVERY

QUALITY OF SERVICE AND ENGAGEMENT

The Chapelton development has featured in the last two PPFs under 'Open for Business' and more recently 'Certainty in Delivery' due to the speed at which this large-scale allocation has progressed from a bid site to development on the ground. Once complete, Chapelton will be Scotland's largest new town containing over 4000 new homes, up to 3 new schools, 11.5 hectares of employment land and associated infrastructure with the aim of becoming an exemplar of high quality mixed use sustainable development.

Continued engagement with the Project Team and key stakeholders has contributed to the ongoing success of this project and this is reflected in the quality of development now on the ground. Construction of Phase 1 is now well underway with almost 100 homes, a Park and Choose facility, village square, community woodland, children's nursery and café now also complete on site.

It is considered that this development should continue to be focused within the current reporting period under the heading of Service and Engagement. Alongside construction the high level of engagement and partnership continues through the following



METHODS:

- › Monthly project team meetings, led by the Delivery Team with the Kincardine and Mearns Area Manager, continue to provide a valuable forum for the project team, the Council and relevant stakeholders to meet and progress the project and also to address and solve any issues at an early stage.
- › Monthly meeting and clear protocols has meant that actions are undertaken within agreed timescales which align with the programmed meetings ensuring submission and subsequent reviewing of information is undertaken timeously.
- › Biannual liaison group meetings are held. These provide an opportunity for Elected Members, Community Councils and local neighbour representatives to meet with the project team, the Council and stakeholders to discuss any queries they may have about the project.
- › Another success of the regular project meetings has been the identification of a 'lessons learned' log. This is enabling the project team to positively improve the delivery of subsequent phases of the development.
- › Overall, the Chapelton development remains as one of the best examples of cross-sector collaboration throughout the planning process which the Council has been involved with to deliver a significant high quality mixed use development in Aberdeenshire. All partners continue to engage in the process highlighted to date.

SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES RECOGNISED

The strong partnership and collaborative approach being taken between Aberdeenshire Council, Elsie Development Company and the local community was recognised at the 2015 Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning where the 'Chapelton delivery process' was awarded a commendation.



Also refer to Case Study 11: Engagement and Customer Service for Regionally Significant Projects (Statoil)

COMMUNITY COUNCIL FOCUS

CASE STUDY 23A - COMMUNITY COUNCIL FOCUS – TRAINING DAY



Saturday November 7 2015 saw a Community Training event open to all Community Councils within Aberdeenshire. The Planning Service were heavily involved alongside the Developer Obligations Teams in providing informative training workshops. These ranged from Community Council influence in the planning process, Major Application Process and the Processing of Planning Applications.

Processing of Planning Applications

- › Outline of what constitutes a local application.
- › Outline of what the process is from submission to determination of a planning application.
- › Case study review with interaction on issues raised, consultees, policies, and outcomes.

Major Planning Applications

- › Outline of what constitutes a major planning application.
- › Outline of what additional processes are involved with Major Applications.
- › Case study review with interaction on issues raised, consultees, policies, and outcomes.

Community Council Influence in the Planning Process

Determination of applications – Community Council involvement and participation. Material considerations: what these are, how they are used? Application types. How to use the Local Plan. The route of determination - where does the CC fit in? Committee process/scheme of delegation. What the CC cannot influence e.g. prior notifications.

Major Application Process



2 Aberdeenshire

COMMUNITY COUNCIL FEEDBACK

Testimonies of the Day

General Comments

(Please give any helpful information and suggestions for future events)

"Very useful and informative – really learned a lot today, which will be of use when dealing with planning issues in the future"

"Very pleased and satisfied by what I gained from this event. The organisers were impressively keen and helpful."

What Worked Well?

"Facility, variety of sessions, knowledgeable presenters who presented well and were flexible to requirements, networking"

"Particularly on Planning issues it was clear that Community Council members would like to have the opportunity to engage with Roads & Transport Officers to hear what they have to say on their involvement in planning applications. Thank you to all participants at today's event. As always I found it very useful to take back to my Community Council"

AGENTS FORUM

The annual Agents' Forum took place in August 2015. This followed communication with all Agents as to their preferences in respect of topics and venue/date. A list of advance queries/questions was invited that could either be dealt with at the Forum or post Forum.

CASE STUDY 23B– ENGAGEMENT WITH AGENTS/DEVELOPERS

AGENTS FORUM WAS HELD IN AUGUST 2015

Prior to the Forum all Agents and Developers were asked:

- › Their preferences for engagement
- › Their preference for the venue
- › What topics would they want on the day
- › Any questions prior to the day



WELCOME

The Planning Manager gave the audience relevant updates on the Planning Service, planning performance, the use (and promotion) of ePlanning for agents.

1000- Scottish Water

Scottish Water talked about the changes Scottish Water are making to the teams that support their role in Development Planning. Scottish Water discussed how they already have foundations in place to become more proactive in their engagement with developers. They also talked about the importance of early engagement and their Pre-Development Enquiry process.

1050 - Roads Development Manager / Roads Policy and Asset Manager

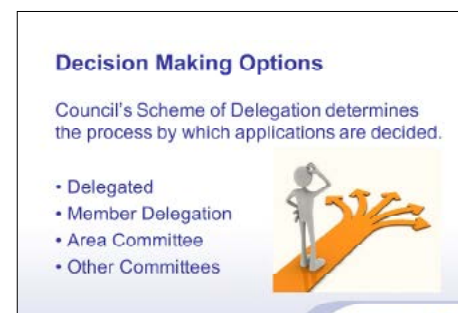
A presentation was given by the Roads Development Manager explaining how to avoid delays in the submission of Roads Construction Consent applications and how these could be coordinated with a Designing Streets planning policy approach to achieve a better standard of design. A

briefing was also provided by the Roads Policy and Asset Manager of the recent improvements made to technical standards plans to further streamline these, bringing together all the relevant information which is needed to deliver a successful and resilient development proposal. The presentations were well received by the Planning Agents and Engineering Consultants present.



OTHER

The Development Management Planning Team Managers covered topics from [validation](#), the [Council's Scheme of Delegation](#) and the [Section 42 application process](#).



Copies of the presentation and Feedback were given to the Agents after the event.

A Q&A panel completed the morning which addressed previously submitted questions by the agents and any other questions relating to the topics on the day.

Forthcoming engagement with the industry has been arranged through a House builders' Forum – June 2016 and the next Planning Focus Group – September 2016. These will be included in the next reporting period for the PPF 2016-17.

ELECTED MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

Following the PPF Feedback the Development Management Manager and Team Managers engaged with Members to discuss the Feedback, the PPF outcomes and update Members of planning performance in general in relation to the PPF in general

and the areas that still required a particular focus on improvement. This also allowed Members to raise any particular issues or concerns or highlight what they considered as performance priorities and input to the next PPF 2015-16.

CASE STUDY 23C – ELECTED MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

A NUMBER OF ELECTED MEMBERS ENGAGEMENT SEMINARS HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN 2015/16.

These are closed sessions aimed at allowing Members to ask open questions and to have frank discussions on a variety of topics. These sessions have been at the request of Elected Members. Example seminars include

refresher sessions for Members for referring applications to Committees in line with the Member referral aspect of the Scheme of Delegation, on the importance of citing appropriate material considerations and on the importance of the pre-application service the Council operates. Members also had a suite of important feedback sessions relating to the 2014/15 PPF.

CASE STUDY 24A – FLOODING REACTIVE-COLLABORATION-ENGAGEMENT



Ranchory Lodge Hotel

10:00 hrs, Thursday 14th January 2016

Agenda

A rapid response was required to address issues faced by riparian owners severely impacted by the flood events in December 2015 and January 2016 particularly along the River Dee and Don. Damage to river banks, fishing huts, footpaths and fishing areas required quick solutions to allow the rivers and associated businesses to get back up and running. The message to be delivered was that "Aberdeenshire rivers are open for business" given the impending fishing season in particular.

A [Seminar](#) was set up through collaboration between the Council, SEPA, SNH and the River Boards.

More than 100 people attended the meeting from all areas of riparian and estate/fishing/agricultural interests.

The aim was to advise and give assistance to enable all associated Riparian/Rural Businesses to carry out repairs/refurbishment/replacement as rapidly as possible. In particular advice was given on where a pragmatic approach and flexibility could be considered to allow immediate works to go ahead.

A specific set of guidance and advice notes and pro-formas to enable a rapid and 'fast track' planning processes were published. (See also *Case Study 24b Flooding*)

[Flood Damage to Rivers Planning Guidance.pdf](#)

This approach demonstrated the ability to be reactive when required and evidence of strong collaboration and engagement with stakeholders and customers respectively.

CASE STUDY 24B - FLOODING

Flood Specific Planning Surgeries Ballater Planning Surgery

As part of the Council's Flood Recovery Plan, and in association with the Flood Repair Planning Advice previously issued (<http://bit.ly/planninginfo>) the Council's Planning Service will provide specific Planning surgery cover for Ballater. The aim is to provide direct planning advice to those facing repairs/replacements/re-development as a result of flood damage and how to use our recent related guidance proforma.

A Planning Officer will be in attendance at the Cairngorms National Park Authority offices at the Albert Hall, Station Square, Ballater on the following days over the next few weeks between 2pm and 4pm:

Wednesday 17th February 2016

Wednesday 24th February 2016

Wednesday 16th March 2016

Wednesday 23rd March 2016

No appointments will be necessary as this will be a drop in surgery.

Aberdeenshire
COUNCIL 

PLANNING ADVICE & SURGERIES

In association with the above flood event immediate action was taken by the Planning Service and it introduced emergency proformas to be used for all types of flood related planning enquiries. The aim of this was to enable a fast track system of advice to allow the Planning Service to agree works which are on a like for like basis and would have no/minimal impact, or indeed if any permissions were required, a priority system was put in place to determine any applications. Furthermore, drop in surgeries were set up in Ballater where people who had flood related planning enquiries could seek advice from Planners Officers directly. These were widely advertised and information shared with the appropriate bodies i.e. SEPA, Council's Flood Team and the relevant Community Councils.

Planning Officers also attended site visits with external consultees such as SEPA and SNH who also had emergency procedures in place. The benefit of this emergency response procedure was that flood enquiries and applications were dealt with efficiently and quickly and there was a clear record of works.

Along with the pro forma, advice and guidance was published and widely circulated. The advice focused on householders in an attempt to enable them to start the process of returning to their homes. Focus was also on the Riparian owners/Estates in an attempt to speed up the necessary repairs/replacement to allow them to resume their businesses (fishing etc.) and to spread the message that Aberdeenshire was 'open for business'

[Flooding Pro Forma.pdf](#)
PDF document (0.07 mb)

[Flood Damage to Rivers Planning Guidance.pdf](#)
PDF document (0.07 mb)

CHAPTER 3 GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3A EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE DECISION-MAKING

DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

Following realignment of the Council's Administration in June 2015 a protocol was introduced requiring all policy matters to be presented to local **Area Committees** before consideration by the Infrastructure Services Committee. This presented the process of the Plan's development with challenges, not least the need for all policy material to be considered by six Committees while still adhering to the timetable set out in **Figure 2 of Planning Circular 6/2013: Development Planning**. In essence, this required revision of the timetable to "front load" work effort to produce draft documents up to 8 weeks earlier than would otherwise have been the case. Again, it has only been through rigorous work programming that the deadlines have been met, clearly prioritising work to achieve our objectives in time.

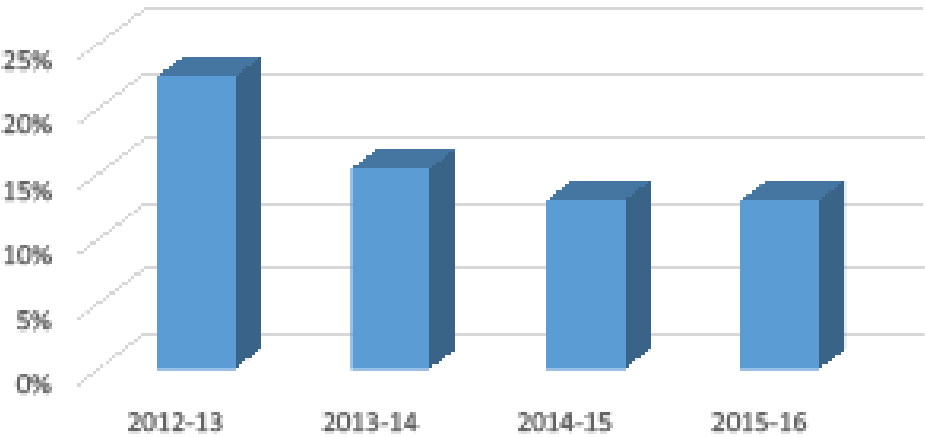
DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

Legacy Strategy *(refer to Performance Priorities in Chapter 2b Certainty)*

PERCENTAGE OF PENDING APPLICATIONS LEGACY CASES (OVER ONE YEAR OLD)

	PENDING	LEGACY CASES	% LEGACY
2012/13	1033	232	22%
2013/14	947	146	15%
2014/15	761	98	13%
2015/16	617	43	13%

% Pending Legacy Cases



LEGACY TEAM

The Legacy Team continues to focus on and progress existing cases which have been pending for over one year. There is also a key focus in the Planning Teams to minimise future applications becoming 'legacy'.

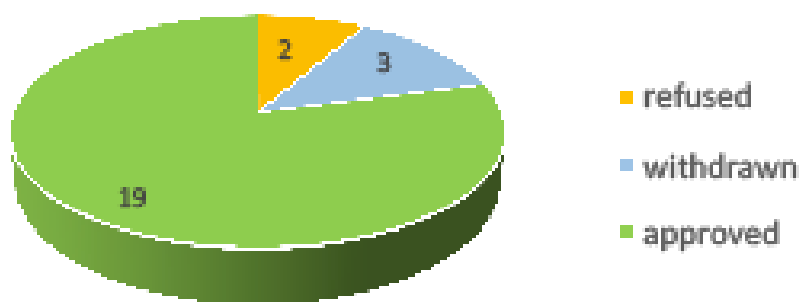
The table below shows how many legacy applications are outstanding as of the end of May 2016.

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	TOTAL
Number of pending legacy cases at 31 May 2016	2	0	1	2	5	7	8	25

When the Legacy Team was originally formed a large number of legacy applications were concluded within a short time and the results showed that the majority - 40% - of these applications were being withdrawn. More recently, it is clear that the majority of applications are being approved – 79% - with only a few being refused or withdrawn

as shown by the chart below. A real effort is being made by the Legal Team with support from the Legacy Coordinator to push forward with S75 Agreements and complex land registry issues in order to conclude these remaining legacy cases. The Legacy Team continues to operate supported by a dedicated solicitor.

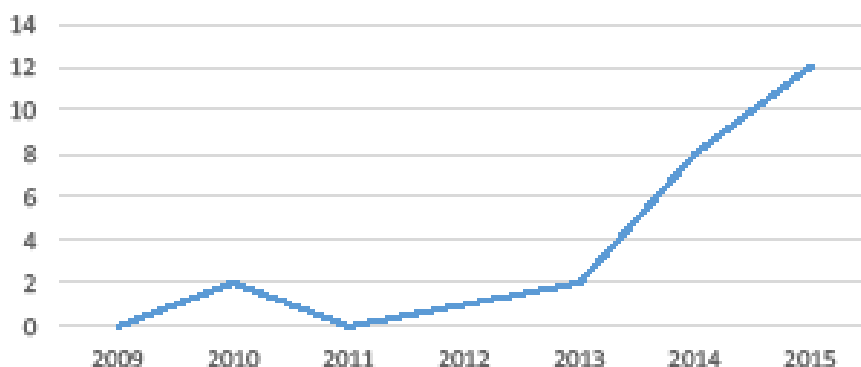
Outcome of legacy applications since Jan 16



The graph below shows that Processing Agreements are being used more frequently for applications that have been pending for one year or longer.

The Legacy Team Coordinator maintains a spreadsheet, which is accessible by all of the team, listing the applications and the most recent update for each case. This enables the prioritisation of cases, and has resulted in a number of the older and simpler legacy cases being concluded quickly.

Number of legacy cases with Processing Agreements



CASE STUDY 25 - LEGACY STRATEGY IN ACTION

An application for a single wind turbine near Banff had been pending since 2014 due to a delay by the applicant supplying additional information to address concerns regarding potential noise emissions raised by Environmental Health. The Agent / Applicant was not willing to withdraw the application and a Processing Agreement had not been agreed to so the Case Officer, who is a member of the Legacy Team, was due to take it to Committee for refusal due to insufficient noise information. However, when progressed to Local Member

consultation and faced with a possible refusal, the Agent requested that the application be withdrawn and it was able to be concluded quickly on this basis.

An example of legacy prevention:

The Legacy Co-ordinator compiles a monthly monitoring email to Planning Team Managers listing the applications that are due to become legacy applications within the following two months. One such application was highlighted recently (APP/2015/1730) and, following the monitoring email, the Case

Officer was prompted to agree a Processing Agreement with the applicant to cover the final stages of the application to agree the Section 75 and registering the title deeds. These case studies demonstrate the growing confidence of the Legacy Team and, as a result, the overall Planning Team in using the tools available to reduce and prevent legacy cases. It also shows how the Planning Teams are beginning to transfer some of the responsibility to the applicant to move forward applications in an appropriate timescale.

LIAISONS AND PROTOCOLS

PLANNING/LEGAL GOVERNANCE

An increase in focus on governance issues was in evidence during the reporting year. The regular programme of liaison meetings to facilitate joint working between the Planning Service and the Governance Team within the Legal and Governance Service continued. This was in addition to the Planning/Legal collaboration on the Corporate Governance Review. In 2015/16 this resulted in the following:-

Bespoke Equalities training being delivered to Development Management staff.

Refer to Chapter 4 Continuous Improvement

A new performance indicator being implemented for 2016/17 onwards in respect of the percentage of planning appeals forwarded to Legal and responded to within 14 days of receipt.

Legacy cases being brought back to Committees recommending refusal where Planning Obligation Agreements have not been completed, with guidance being provided to Elected Members regarding the procedure for doing this.

Refer to Case Study 28

A spreadsheet detailing information on planning appeals to the DPEA being developed to assist with providing further performance information.

The Council amending its List of Delegated Powers to Officers to permit Officers to refuse planning applications for which Planning Obligation Agreements are not completed or Developer Obligations are not paid within a defined timescale.

Refer to Case Study 28

The Council establishing and implementing the operation of Forums based around membership of the Area Committees to allow formal Pre-application Member Consultation on National and Major Planning Applications.

A new Appeals Protocol for dealing with planning appeal submissions to the DPEA being agreed through the Planning and Legal Governance Group and implemented by Officers.

Refer to Case Study 29

A review of the Planning Scheme of Delegation being progressed as part of a wider review of the Council's Governance Future Governance Working Group.

Refer to Case Study 30

PLANNING & GOVERNANCE

The current Review of Governance within Aberdeenshire is ongoing. As part of this the Planning Service has an appointed 'Governance Champion' who acts as the main contact to input on Planning and Governance issues and gives feedback and disseminates information to staff. This not only stimulates awareness of the responsibilities of Officers and the need for good governance it will also enable ownership and understanding of the associated governance requirements.

GOVERNANCE CHAMPION DAY

All Service Champions were invited to attend a Governance Champion day (one of several) – where the principles of good governance were outlined, the Council's ongoing Review of governance was updated and the role of Governance Service Champions was clarified.

CASE STUDY 26 - GOVERNANCE CHAMPION DAY

BE FIRST POINT OF CONTACT FOR COLLEAGUES WITH QUESTIONS RELATING TO OFFICERS DELEGATED POWERS

- › Be first point of contact for Legal and Governance staff on governance issues.
- › Agree content of changes required to the List of Powers.
- › Delegated to Officers.
- › Assist Legal and Governance in cascading information on.
- › any amendments approved.
- › Assist with ongoing maintenance of the List of Powers Delegated to Officers.



IMPROVED GOVERNANCE – LOCAL REVIEW BODY

ALL IMPROVEMENT MEASURES IDENTIFIED DURING THE 2013/14 LRB REVIEW HAVE BEEN IMPLEMENTED.

The LRB continues to see a high volume of Review applications however this has reduced to 53 new applications in the year to 31 March 2016. This is down from 61 the previous year. Performance has improved from the last reporting period.

		2015-2016	2014-2015
Local Reviews	63	15.3	19.5

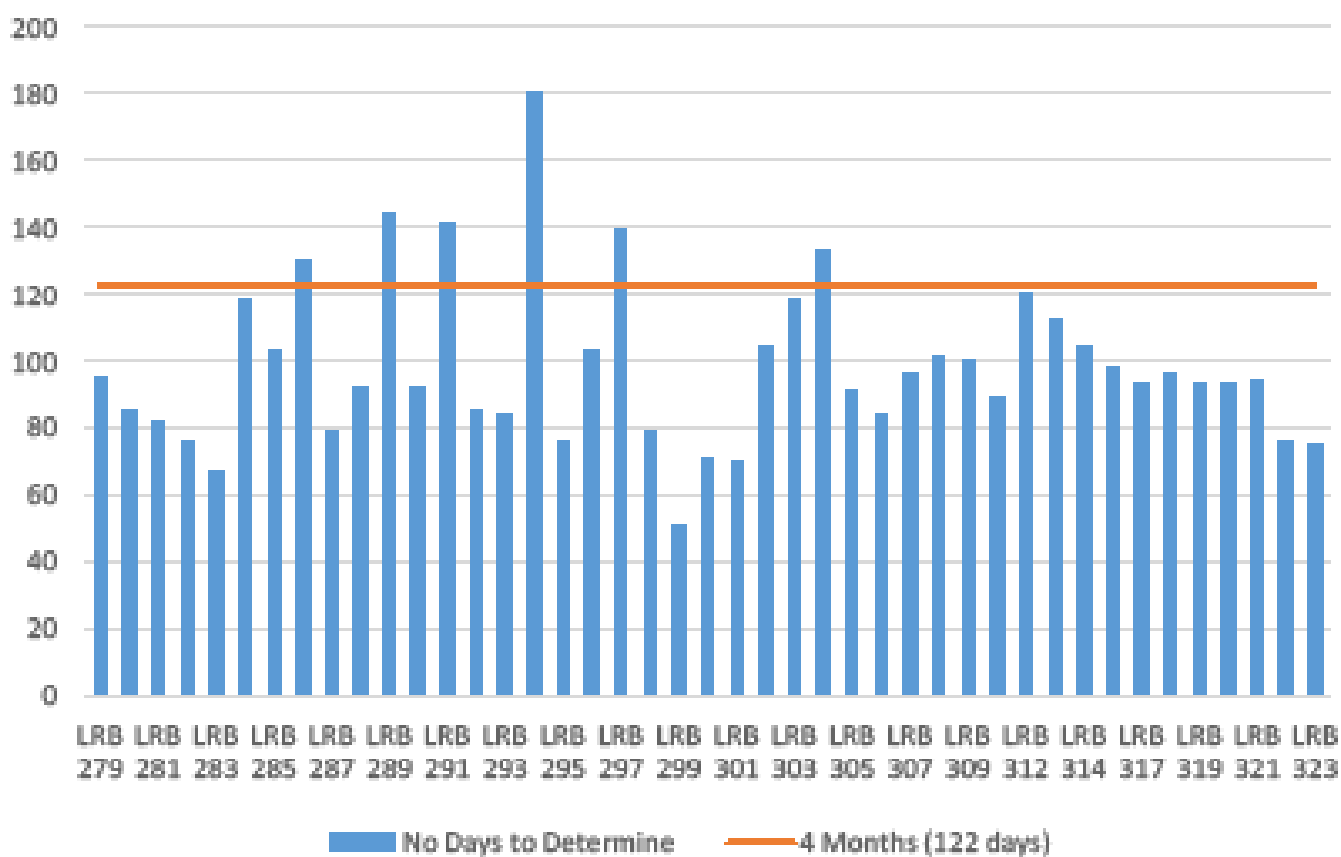
CASE STUDY 27 - ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL – IMPROVING OUTCOMES – THE LOCAL REVIEW BODY (LRB)

The average time taken to determine applications submitted to the LRB continues to improve. The average time has fallen from 141 days in 2013/2014, to 117 days in 2014/2015 and 111 days in 2015/2016 which is an improvement of more than 20%. It can be seen from the graph that 86% of the Reviews were determined under the 122 day target period. The 14% determined in over 122 days represents 6 cases. Of these, 2

cases would have been heard within the 122 day target however the August LRB meeting was cancelled and the business postponed so that Members could attend a colleague Councillor's funeral. Of the others, all were deferred for further procedure by way of a site visit, with 2 additionally having requested further information from third parties out with the Council's control.

Only 1 wind turbine case was delayed in 2015/2016 due to a late response from Environmental Health which is an improvement on the 8 delays for those applications submitted in 2014/2015. Reducing numbers of wind turbine applications (23 submitted in 2015/2016 compared to 9 in 2015/2016) have also had a positive impact on performance.

Reviews April 2015 - March 2016

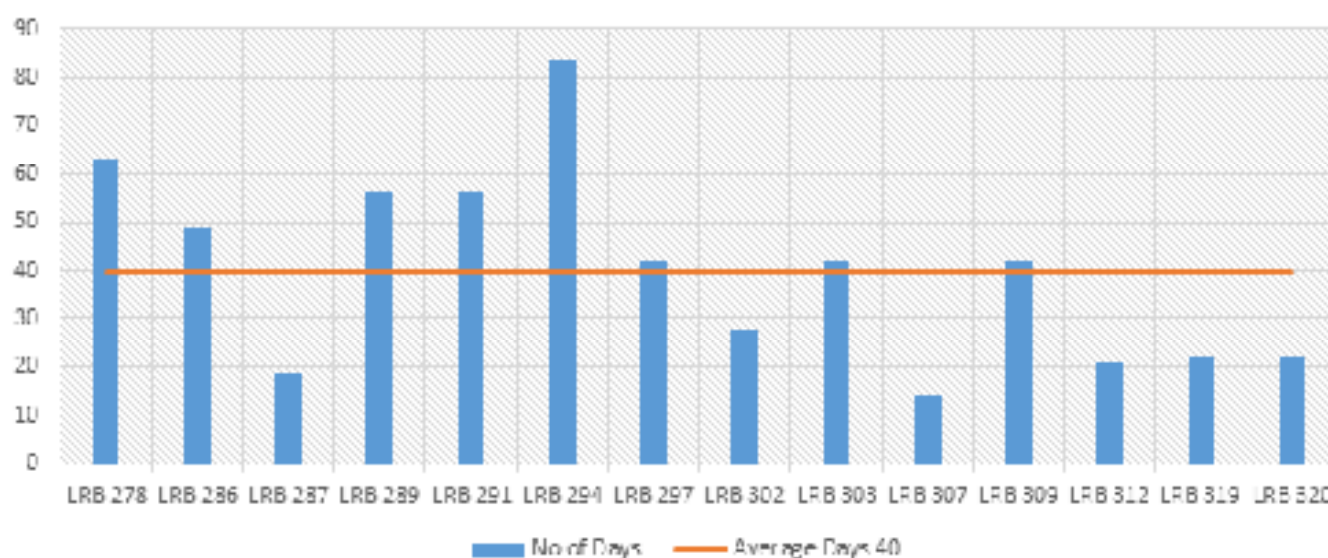


In the 2015/16 period there were 14 Reviews which had a site inspection; a decrease from 20 in 2014/15. The graph below shows the number of days between the meeting and the site visit for these cases. The average number of days to carry out the site visit was 40, an improvement on 53 days in 2014/15. Of the 5 cases which exceeded the 40 days average there is a legitimate explanation for each.

The LRB strives for continual improvement and a paper was considered in April 2016 to identify any specific ongoing concerns or issues with its operation and administration that need to be addressed. This informed a comparative Survey which is currently being undertaken with other Authorities across Scotland. The outcomes of this will be reported in the next PPF reporting period 2016-17.

In order to ensure sound and consistent decision making external expert training was provided to LRB members and staff who advise and support the LRB in January 2016.

LRB Days between formal Meeting and Site Visit 2015/16



Although the Planning Service is part of the ongoing Governance Review they have undertaken their own changes to their

Scheme of Delegation as per their Service Commitments and the focus on improved decision making and performance.

CASE STUDY 28 : LEGACY PREVENTION

The Council amending its List of Delegated Powers to Officers to permit Officers to refuse planning applications for which Planning Obligation Agreements are not completed or Developer Obligations are not paid within a defined timescale:

Section 75 Agreements – 4 months (Non-Major Applications) and 6 months (Major Applications).

A Report had to be considered by two cycles of the Full Council. The recommendation to the Full Council was :

Full Council is recommended to:
1.1 agree a proposed amendment to the List of Powers Delegated to Officers to permit Officers, to refuse planning applications for which Section 75 Agreements are not completed or Developer Obligations are not paid within a defined timescale.

This was agreed with an additional proposal to consult with the Chair and Vice Chair for applications determined by Committee.

This would relate to Section 75 Agreements not signed within 4 months for local applications and 6 months for major applications.

[\(05\) Proposed Amendment to Delegated Powers.pdf](#)

(Also refer to Case Study 25 - Legacy Strategy in Action)

PROTOCOLS - APPEAL PROTOCOL

CASE STUDY 29 - A NEW APPEALS PROTOCOL FOR DEALING WITH PLANNING APPEAL SUBMISSIONS TO THE DPEA BEING AGREED THROUGH THE PLANNING AND LEGAL GOVERNANCE GROUP AND IMPLEMENTED BY OFFICERS

In terms of good governance, striving for consistency in decision making, ensuring the best defence of appeals and to ensure full cognisance is given to all appeal decisions, it was decided that a better and more consistent approach to the defence of appeals and the dissemination and assessment of appeal decisions was required. As the Planning Teams are based throughout the 6 areas in Aberdeenshire, the element of consistency in carrying out not only due process and procedures is important, but also consistency in the giving of planning advice and the interpretation and application of policy in the defence of appeals and ensuring the best interpretation and meaningful outcomes from appeal decisions. Two areas of need were identified:

Appeal Submissions

How we respond to appeal submissions. The remit:

To address concerns around firstly how we deal with DPEA appeals submitted in terms of consistency between all the areas and how we actually respond to these appeals. The content of an appeal submission should be carefully assessed and a decision made on the best way to respond. Quite often we have merely forwarded a copy of the Committee Report and perhaps not paid enough attention to specific issues being made that require further comment, statement or input from consultees and as a result we have had some decisions which have had the potential to be problematic. We should be responding to appeals in the best and most robust way to ensure the best outcome possible.

Appeal Decisions

How we respond to and use appeal outcomes. The remit:

At the moment the reporting of these appeals vary across the areas, but most importantly is what we can learn and take from these appeal decisions in terms of materiality or in some areas where we need to review or re-assess elements of what we do and/or views on the policies we use. Highlighting the salient and material points raised in any appeal decision we feel will be beneficial not just for Officers but also for Members and the public. It is also a good way for Development Management to record and monitor appeal decisions.

Committee Appeal Template (extract) this forms part of the relevant Area Committee Agenda.

Benefits of this new protocol have resulted in a greater awareness by Officers of the importance of the appeal process and to secure consistency in the format used by Development Management when responding to planning appeals. The standard approach to reporting appeal decisions to Area Committee and sharing information between the Area Teams allows the Service to record and monitor appeal decisions in a more effective manner.

[Appeal Template](#)



APPEAL DECISION (DPEA)
Appeal Reference - PPA-110-2292
Planning Reference - APP/2015/0964
Planning Proposal - Full Planning Permission For Change of Use From Incidental Office Space Within the Approved Heritage Centre (Class 10) to Overnight Sleeping Accommodation (Class 7) at Old Loco Works, Harlaw Road, Inverurie, Aberdeenshire, AB51 4FH
Summary of Decision – The appeal was dismissed and planning permission refused. The application was refused by Aberdeenshire Council for the following reason: <i>"The proposal is considered to have a significantly detrimental impact on the amenity of the area and its residents and will have a detrimental cumulative impact when taken alongside the previously approved accommodation nearby. The planning application therefore does not comply with Policy 1 Business Development and SGBus4 of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2012."</i> This was the proposal that involved creation of 20 bedrooms over two floors of the building, this was determined between the application for 37 bedrooms that was refused in February 2015 and 11 bedrooms that was granted in September 2015. The 20 bedroom facility at the former canteen building was granted in February 2015. The Reporter highlighted concerns about the potential number of overnight

CASE STUDY 30 - SCHEME OF DELEGATION REVIEW

As part of a wider Council-wide Governance Review, the Planning Service, working with colleagues from the Legal and Governance Service, has undertaken the formation of a standalone planning document entitled "Who Makes Planning Decisions in Aberdeenshire?" This is a review of the current List of Delegated Powers to Officers and has been designed, not to change existing powers, but to provide up to date information and further clarity, aid consistency, remove current ambiguity, and provide a live flexible working

document that can be easily understood by all users and be readily updated as appropriate. Users include all internal Council staff and Councillors who contribute to the planning application and enforcement decision-making process, as well as all customers of the Planning Service. Once finalised through formal Full Council approval processes in the late summer of 2016, the document will be publicly available on the Council's Website.

The process of review has been carried out via regular collaborative meetings and a workshop, between relevant Planning and Legal staff. The result is a document that provides an improved tool for transparent, efficient and effective decision-making in planning decisions.

The document is also accompanied by easy to read/quick reference flow charts.



As a result of uncertainty and customer and staff concerns, the Service undertook a review of their Prior Notification process. If there is any process/procedure that is not working or is becoming less fit for purpose then it is the responsibility of the Service to recognise this, assess the need and ultimately address. An example of this is below.

CASE STUDY 31 - PRIOR NOTIFICATION PROCESS

The Council established there was an opportunity to improve its procedures around how it dealt with Prior Notifications. The publication of Circular 2/2015 (Consolidated Circular on non-domestic permitted development rights) published in November 2015 assisted with this.

A short life team was assigned to examine current procedures, investigate appeal decisions, consider SPSO cases and review legislation and the Circular. An exercise in benchmarking with similar Rural Authorities was also undertaken.

The conclusion was that there was the need to clarify procedures for Planning Staff, to ensure correct levels of information are submitted and to make appropriate use of the [Prior Approval Process](#).

The recommendations of the Working Group were considered by Managers and implemented through a detailed guidance note for staff, training sessions and changes to the Uniform system. The document is being finalised for publication and will thereafter be put onto the Council's website.



**ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL
DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT**

**PRIOR NOTIFICATION AND PRIOR
APPROVAL PROCESS FOR AGRICULTURAL
OR FORESTRY DEVELOPMENT**

STAFF GUIDANCE NOTE

The close working relationship and regular liaison between the Planning Service and Environmental Health Service as a main stakeholder/consultee has continued with the finalising of a Protocol of best practice and effective working.

CASE STUDY 32A - ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH LIAISON

An Improvement Project was undertaken in early 2015 with a view to improving liaison arrangements between the Environmental Health and Planning Services. This has resulted in improved response times from Environmental Health in respect of consultation responses and a better understanding of each Service's role and requirements. Regular liaison meetings are held to discuss general and specific issues.

The Environmental Health Service, working with the Planning Service, have produced guidance relating to water supplies and livestock units, clarifying Environmental Health's policy and information requirements, and improving consistency.

A standard response format is followed by Environmental Health. Response times have improved.

The Environmental Health Service and Planning Service have produced a Protocol stating respective roles and responsibilities, clarifying applications requiring an Environmental Health response, and specifying response timescales.

[Protocol](#)

PROTOCOL/LIAISON GROUP- TRANSPORTATION/ROADS:

Collaboration and liaison continues with the Roads/Transportation Service to enhance close working relationships via regular meetings. This continues to improve the commitment to the implementation of Designing Streets with its widespread approach to both local as well as major developments and the use of SCOTS National Roads Development Guide. Work also remains ongoing to ensure a consistent approach is applied by Area Teams when dealing with roads and transportation related matters.

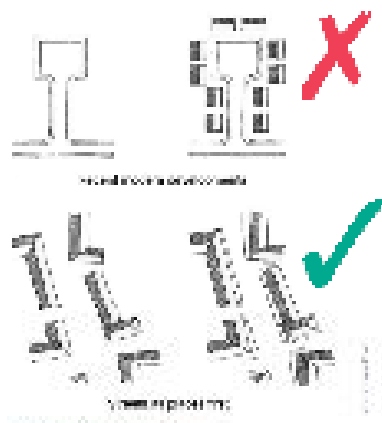
This liaison group continues to provide both Services with a viable forum to discuss issues and agree a coordinated approach to deal with matters. A recent outcome of the liaison group meetings, has been the identification of matters which will require to be reviewed and progressed via the development of protocols, one such matter relates to how both Services can develop best practice to establish and agree a process to allow the Roads Construction Consent check list into 2 parts to identify which technical elements are needed both pre and post Planning

consent to ensure that the scheme can be successfully delivered in accordance with Designing Streets. A Review has commenced with regards to this matters and further liaison meetings are arranged for the coming months with the aim of progressing towards the implementation of agreed protocols.

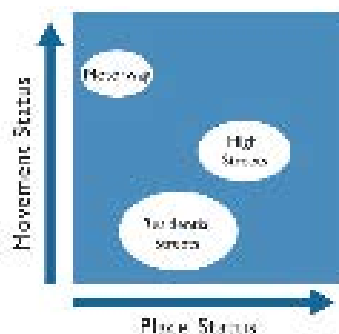
CASE STUDY 32B - ROADS LIAISON

IMPROVED PERFORMANCE AND BETTER DECISION MAKING

Roads and Planning Teams' Liaison Meetings – The Roads Development and Planning Development Management Teams routinely met over the period to discuss individual applications and ensure a co-ordinated approach to providing advice and issuing approvals. This was supported by a more formal meeting between Senior Roads and Planning Team members where any recurring issues or opportunities could be discussed and solutions or improvements found. (Refer to Case Study 35).



DO ARRANGE THE BUILDINGS FOR MAXIMUM EFFECT, AND ONLY THEN WORK IN THE TRACKING AND THE CARRIAGEWAYS. DON'T START FROM A ROAD LAYOUT AND THEN ADD BUILDINGS.



CONSIDER WHEN SETTING

- > objectives
- > design criteria
- > design speed
- > form of development and street pattern
- > type of development

Designing Streets – 60 Seconds summary – Aberdeenshire Council



ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL CHAMBER

CNPA LIAISON AND ENGAGEMENT

- › Liaison continues with the Cairngorm National Park Authority. The annual Protocol meeting took place in October 2015 to review the adopted CNPA/Council's Protocol.
- › An opportunity was taken to benchmark on Hill Track Guidance.
- › CNPA's Head of Planning visited the Aberdeenshire Planning Team to discuss the CNPA Local Plan.
- › Liaison and joint working in respect of the flood event in the Aberdeenshire part of the Park.

SNH

Collaboration continues in various ways with an SNH/Planning Service liaison meeting being held in January 2016 to review practices and procedures.

Evidence of effective collaboration was in evidence during the flood events that besieged Aberdeenshire in early 2016. (See Chapter 2c -Case Studies 24a & 24b)

SEPA – SEPA liaison continues through presence at the respective Area Team meetings/Development Management Training Days and in respect of the flood events collaboration.

European Protected Species - BAT LIAISON

Communication with the Scottish Government regarding potential changes to the Bat Legislation, to better allow more flexibility regarding the carrying out of Bat Surveys in relation to developments, has still not been confirmed. In the absence of any change by the Government, Aberdeenshire Council continue best practice in the protection of bats to endeavour to accommodate flexibility and scope into the Regulations and **Guidance** to prevent any delays to development as far as possible. Until any changes are forthcoming this best practice will continue to be carried forward and reviewed regularly. As such this commitment has been removed from the Committed Improvement table (Part 4b) in the knowledge that the continuation of best practice by Aberdeenshire Council provides the requisite certainty and confidence in dealing with bat related developments.

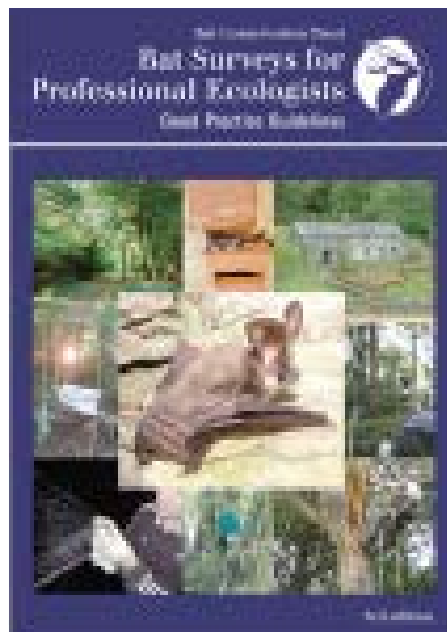
Species	Legislation and Protection	Further information on surveys	Triggers for Surveys (Aberdeenshire Council for further advice)
Bats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bat Conservation Act 2002 Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Amendment) Regulations 2002 Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Amendment) Regulations 2002 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aberdeenshire Council Planning Service Bat Survey Programme Bats in Buildings – SHH leaflet Bat Conservation Unit Survey Guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing records Proposals affecting certain types of buildings and those close to suitable habitat Aberdeenshire Council Bat and Development Guidance Document 2012
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Amendment) Regulations 2002 Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Amendment) Regulations 2002 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other Other Other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing records Proposals affecting certain types of buildings and those close to suitable habitat
Fresh Water Pearl Mussel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Amendment) Regulations 2002 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Amendment) Regulations 2002 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing records Proposals affecting certain types of buildings and those close to suitable habitat
Water Voles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Amendment) Regulations 2002 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Amendment) Regulations 2002 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing records Proposals affecting certain types of buildings and those close to suitable habitat
Reptiles and Amphibians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Amendment) Regulations 2002 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Amendment) Regulations 2002 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing records Proposals affecting certain types of buildings and those close to suitable habitat

CASE STUDY 32C - MEETING WITH BAT SURVEYORS

ANNUAL MEETING FOR INFORMATION SHARING - ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL, SNH, ABERDEENSHIRE BAT SURVEYORS

In March this year Aberdeenshire Council once again held a meeting for Protected Species Licencing staff from SNH to meet with Bat Surveyors working in Aberdeenshire. This meeting is facilitated and attended by Aberdeenshire Council Environment Planners and a Development Management representative. In total 3 SNH staff and 9 local Bat Surveyors attended. Key to the discussion this year was the introduction of the revised Bat Conservation Trust Guidelines (2016) which SNH use as the standard required for bat surveys. This meeting is well received by both SNH staff and Bat Surveyors and Aberdeenshire Council has made a commitment to hold such a meeting annually prior to the start of the activity survey season for bats.

Pursuit of changes to Bat Survey requirements have not come forward to date following communication with the Scottish Government. Aberdeenshire Council continue however to engage with the bat surveying fraternity and applicant/agents to ensure flexibility, proportionality and pragmatism in the requests for surveys, ensuring at all times there is adequate protection for bats in development.



SNH/DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT LIAISON- EUROPEAN PROTECTED SPECIES (EPS) LICENSE MONITORING:

An example of the good working relations between the Planning Service and consultees and the types of issue that can be identified during regular engagement with consultees is demonstrated by a recent protocol which has been agreed in partnership with SNH.

As part of a Planning Service/ SNH working group meeting SNH highlighted concerns that a number of planning permissions had been implemented prior to EPS licenses being sought and granted. Lack of monitoring and sharing of information between the Planning Service and SNH

was noted with the result that the Planning Service and SNH have agreed a joint approach to cover the monitoring of EPS licenses.

The approach, as agreed, requires the Planning Service to assist SNH by notifying the agency when planning permission is granted for a development requiring an EPS license. SNH will then follow this up with a letter to the applicant highlighting the required terms of the EPS license. An internal process has been set up by the Development Management Section to ensure that the relevant notification is passed to SNH at the

decision issuing stage and this will continue to be monitored and reviewed in liaison with SNH.

The following two Case Studies demonstrate the inclusion of lean processes into everyday working practices in order to achieve greater efficiency into our decision making processes and effectiveness in our working structures, both aiming towards improvement in speed and delivery.

EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE DECISION-MAKING - LEAN PROCESSES IN ACTION

Speed of decision making relies on the whole process from the day of submission to the day of determination. Two Case Studies included within Chapter 2b – Certainty (Case Studies 15a&15b) reflect the continuing improvements in the validation of planning applications. These Case Studies have been included under the heading of Certainty to demonstrate the impact on the process and who benefits in terms of certainty in

the system. By association the study below (Case Study 33a) demonstrates how the ePlanning Team has made a difference from their inception in 2014, how the number of e planning users have increased and the positive outcomes in terms of customer service and where lean processes have resulted in increased efficiency.

CASE STUDY 33A – ePLANNING TEAM PROGRESSION – OBSERVATIONS OF THE SUPERVISOR OF THE ePLANNING TEAM

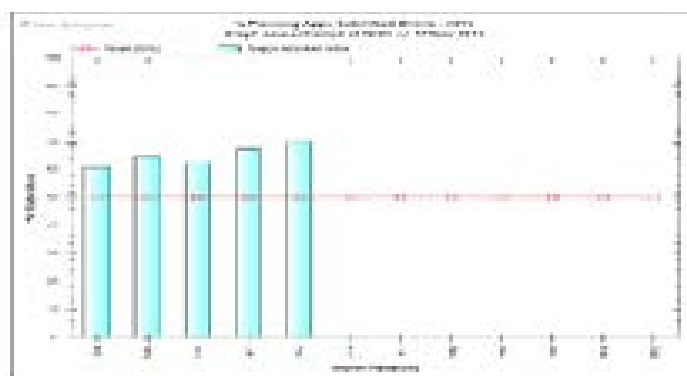
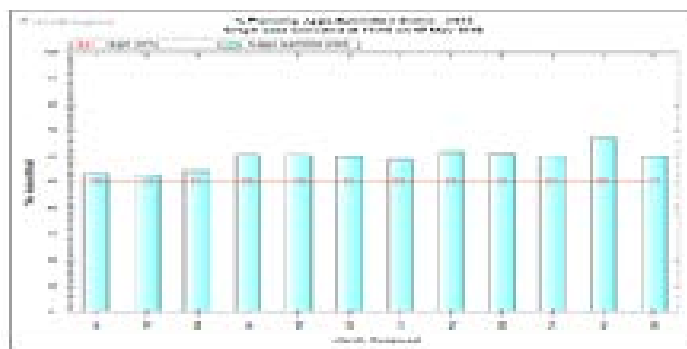
The ePlanning Team is responsible for the registration and scanning of all planning applications for each of the area Development Management Teams within Aberdeenshire Council. Our role is to produce every document/drawing in an electronic format and upload them to our Document Management System (DMS). The DMS is available to all Planning staff and most documents (unless those of a sensitive nature) are also made available to members of the public to view on our Public Access System (PA). As we are the first point of contact for all planning applications whether electronic or paper submissions (central feeding station) our aim is to keep timescales to a minimum and prevent any backlogs. As there is both large volumes and variety of information we need to have robust skills in prioritisation to keep workloads flowing within our Planning Teams.

Since the launch date of the ePlanning Team (April 2014) we have successfully seen the submission of Electronic Planning Applications increase to approximately **65%**. Our aim continues to promote the increase in this percentage and importantly to focus on those not using the E Planning Portal.

It has been evidenced that the use of the ePlanning Portal encourages performance by saving time and costs to the architect/ developer/applicant and the Authority.

The application is submitted by the customer electronically through the Portal, it is allocated to the relevant Council, is then picked up by our Connector and a unique application reference number is created and the documents are uploaded to our Document Management System. Money is saved as the customer is no longer required

to provide 4 paper copies of drawings, they also save on postage costs. There is also the facility available to pay the required planning fee online at the same time. Staff time and resource has been streamlined and the timescales for considering applications have significantly reduced.



EFFECTIVE WORKING STRUCTURES BY LEAN METHODS OF WORKING - WORKSMART

“maximize customer value while minimizing waste”

CASE STUDY 33B – WORKSMART



HELPING TEAMS TO WORKSMART-ER

Many teams across the council are already working flexibly, using the Worksmart principles to reduce business mileage, help employees enjoy a better work/life balance and improve service delivery by revisiting processes and making these more flexible and efficient.

Now, Chief Executive Jim Savege wants to encourage more teams to see the benefits, saying “This is more than simply adopting a new work pattern, it’s a real shift in thinking to move away from the idea of ‘my desk’ to ‘my work space’. It helps teams to look at their business information and how they access it, to use technologies to improve processes and to help the organisation to be more agile and efficient.”

In Planning they have been able to use Worksmart to improve their performance as a team. Planning Manager Mairi Stewart explained: “The recruitment and retention of staff has been a challenge for us, particularly in the more remote areas of the Shire, so becoming more flexible as a team has been really beneficial. We now have team members based in Edinburgh and Tayside

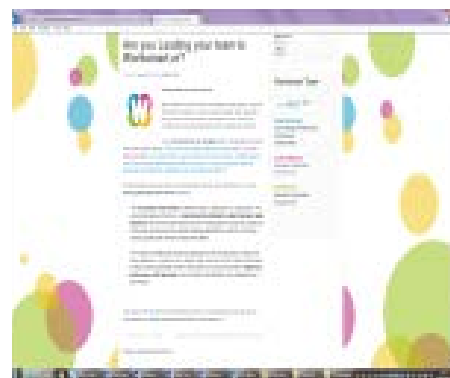
who spend part of their week in the areas they look after planning applications for and part of the week catching up with admin from their bases further afield.

“We’re also now dealing with all planning applications electronically and as a team we’re almost paperless. As planners we’re always under pressure from the Scottish Government to improve turnaround times and we’ve been able to go a step beyond that in improving performance with Worksmart – we’re working more efficiently, more sustainably and more flexibly.”

The Planning Service continues to lead the way in terms of the above and the use of innovative and lean methods of working. This is of particular importance given the geographical spread of work areas and Area Teams and the availability of resources and budget monitoring. (Refer to Case Study 34 – Efficient use of Staff Resources to Maintain Performance)

Development Management have been recognised within the Council as successfully embracing the Worksmart ethic. This was highlighted with the following feature on the Council’s Worksmart website :

Are you Leading your team to Worksmart-er?



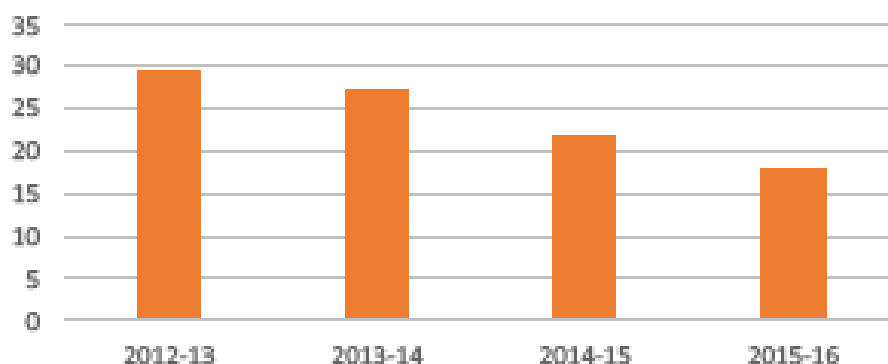
ENSURING BALANCED AND SUSTAINABLE WORKLOADS

The use of the Uniform System has enabled a more balanced and sustainable allocation of casework throughout all of the Area Teams, dependent on staff resources and the focus of any specific pressures. The target set to ensure equitable and effective working toward improved performance was an average caseload of between 20-30 applications per Planning Officer. Whilst numbers of applications received have reduced, the average now achieved of 19 per planner is proving to be manageable and sustainable in terms of allowing quality time to be spent on applications in addition to achieving the statutory timescales.

(Also refer to Chapter 2b and Case Study 18 – Change Benefits)

Current No. Planners	35			32
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
No. Pending (End)	1028	943	761	617
Average per Planner	29	27	22	19

Average Caseload per Planner



AN EXAMPLE OF SUCCESSFUL CROSS WORKING BY MEANS OF ELECTRONIC WORKFLOW ETHODS IS DEMONSTRATED :

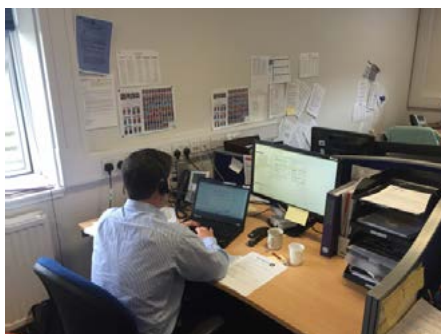
CASE STUDY 34 – EFFICIENT USE OF STAFF RESOURCES TO MAINTAIN PERFORMANCE

The three Development Management Team Managers monitor workload and output. The Garioch Team based in Inverurie has had staff changes, which has impacted on their ability to effectively cover new cases.

In order to maintain good performance within the Garioch Team which is based in Inverurie, a small number of applications had to be allocated to the Kincardine & Mearns/ Marr Team based in Stonehaven to determine. These applications were allocated to Officers which already operated in parts of the Marr area of Aberdeenshire which borders onto the Garioch area and who already had working relationships with some of the application agents. This was beneficial two fold in that issues with applications were resolved quickly due to the good ongoing working relations between the Officers and Agents, plus the proximity of application sites to the Officer's normal geographical area.

In terms of managing Case Officer's progress with Garioch applications, use of Skype for Business software has successfully enabled

Senior Planners in the Garioch Team to communicate from different working bases with Planning Case Officers in the Kincardine and Mearns/Marr Team and efficiently manage these caseloads. For example, the Senior Planner based in the Inverurie Office has been able to have 1-2-1 face-to-face Skype conversations, as well as visually share files, with Planning Case Officers in the Stonehaven office. This technology and flexibility in the use of staff resources has enabled applications to progress efficiently to maintain performance, and without additional travel.



CASE STUDY 35 - ROADS COLLABORATION TOWARDS CORPORATE WORKING

PROTOCOL/LIAISON GROUP- TRANSPORTATION/ROADS:

Collaboration and liaison continues with the Roads/Transportation Service to enhance close working relationships via regular meetings. This continues to improve the commitment to the implementation of Designing Streets with its widespread approach to both local as well as major developments and the use of SCOTS National Roads Development Guide. Work also remains ongoing to ensure a consistent approach is applied by Area Teams when

dealing with roads and transportation related matters.

This liaison group continues to provide both Services with a viable forum to discuss issues and agree a coordinated approach to deal with matters. A recent outcome of the liaison group meetings, has been the identification of matters which will require to be reviewed and progressed via the development of protocols, one such matter relates to how both Services can develop best practice to establish and agree a process to allow the Roads Construction Consent check list to be

split into 2 parts to identify which technical elements are needed both pre and post Planning consent to ensure that the scheme can be successfully delivered in accordance with Designing Streets. A Review has commenced with regards to this matter and further liaison meetings are arranged for the coming months with the aim of progressing towards the implementation of agreed protocols.

This is a new Committed Improvement for 2016-17.

ENVIRONMENT PLANNING EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE DECISION MAKING

- › Review of Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs): working with colleagues in Legal Services in accordance with an agreed programme to review a total of 120 TPOs.
- › Conservation Area Reviews: as described under Quality of Outcomes (Chapter 1a).
- › A review of Council owned and managed historic assets – (See Case Study No 43 - HAMP).
- › A review of Council owned and managed paths; (See Chapter 4- Continuous Improvement).

- › Aberdeenshire Council was one of two Local Authorities in Scotland to undertake a *Land Use Strategy Pilot* (LUS) project 2013-2015. Following on from this, a Forest and Woodland Strategy has been developed as Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Local Development Plan, drawing on the work of the Pilot. (See Case Study 5c)
- › In context of the LUS Pilot, Aberdeenshire Council also continues to consider how an 'ecosystems approach' might be incorporated into Main Issues reporting for strategic planning, increasing understanding and valuation of the natural environment for a more effective spatial planning process over the long term.

Taken together, the above are designed to lend credibility and robustness to decision making in Development Management and/or improve customer service and contribute to the transparent targeting of budgets in the context of longer term rationalisation. Each individual project is critical in this respect, but each is ambitious, requiring considerable staff input.

PRE MEMBER CONSULTATION

This has now been agreed and training has to be undertaken by both Members and Staff.

CHAPTER 3B EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

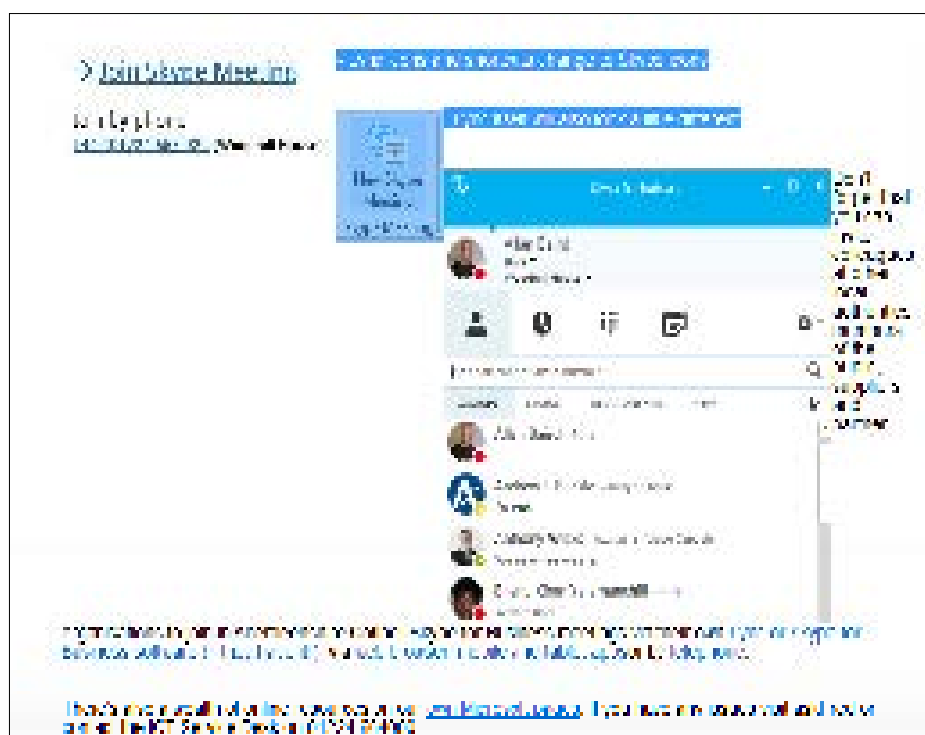
Continues to improve process/procedure and consistency. In the reporting year (and reported through the PPF document) are examples of improvement and innovation.

SUMMARY

- › Section 42 further review and guidance (Refer to Chapter 4 Continuous Improvement – Case Study 39)
- › Roll out of Appeal Protocol (Refer to Case Study 29)
- › Manager training – Dealing with Difficult Staff
- › Manager attended 2 day Performance Management course
- › Use of Communication tools to seek efficiencies (Refer to Case Study 36 below)

CASE STUDY 36 - EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT COMMUNICATION

As part of the management structure within the Planning Service, teams are split across more than one office. In terms of the Formartine and Buchan Team regular team meetings are held. Traditionally these would have been held in both offices resulting in duplication from the Team Manager or alternate locations resulting in staff travel. Utilising Skype for Business has meant that staff do not need to physically leave their office to attend a team meeting. This has resulted in efficiencies, reduced travel time and reduced cost to the Council.



CASE STUDY 37 – SHARING PRACTICES – PROVIDING A SERVICE

The Archaeology Team currently provides specialist archaeology advice and assistance to Moray and Angus Councils through Service Level Agreements and a Shared Service Agreement with Aberdeen City Council. This sharing of service provides an opportunity to develop a resilient specialist team which is beneficial to all Councils and ensures consistent archaeological advice is provided across the north east of Scotland to the development industry.



INVERAVON KIRK

The [North East Scotland Biological Records Centre](#) (NESBReC) works with a number of partners to collate, manage and disseminate biological records through Aberdeenshire, providing similar services to Moray and Angus Councils.

Continued development of cross team working groups on topical issues promotes consistency of advice, interpretation of policy and legislation, and procedures across the Local Authority area.



AIKIE BRAE



BROOMEND OF CRICHIE PICTISH STONE

CHAPTER 3C

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT & LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Our financial performance is monitored on a monthly basis by the Head of Planning and Building Standards, who reviews income and spend budget lines. Each Planning Manager similarly monitors their own budget lines and has regular liaison with their dedicated Service Accountant.

EXAMPLE

In terms of Local Governance, performance is monitored through the Council's Covalent system. Subsequently performance is reported to the Elected Members through Area Committees and the Infrastructure Services Committee. Managers and Team Managers input to the Covalent system and this and Enterprise Uniform is used to monitor performance.

INDICATORS THROUGH THE SERVICE PLAN ARE:

6.4.2 The percentage of household planning applications dealt with within two months (Quarterly Measure).	85%
6.4.3 The average time taken to deal with a household planning application (Quarterly Measure)	6 weeks
6.4.4 The percentage of non-householder planning applications dealt with within two months (Quarterly Measure)	11 weeks
6.4.6 The percentage of the total number of planning applications dealt with within two months (Quarterly Measure)	70%
6.4.7 Other types of planning applications – the percentage dealt with within two months (Quarterly Measure)	55%
6.4.8 Other types of planning applications – average time taken to deal with application (Quarterly Measure)	11 weeks
6.4.9 Major Planning Applications – total number of decisions and the average time to decision in weeks (Quarterly Measure).	35 weeks
6.4.10 Number of Processing Agreements signed and the percentage of applications dealt with within agreed timescales (Quarterly Measure).	100%
6.4.11 Applications with Legal Agreements – average time to conclude (Quarterly Measure).	32 weeks
6.4.12 National Development Applications – number of applications dealt with within 4 months or within timescales agreed in a Processing Agreement (Quarterly Measure).	100% within target
6.4.13 The percentage of applications for Works to TPO Protected Trees dealt with within 8 weeks (Quarterly Measure).	80%

Indicators are reported quarterly to the Area Committees. Team Managers taking ownership of their team performance attend Committee and explain the quarterly performance and if necessary why targets have not been met. This makes the Area Team Managers very accountable for their Team's performance directly to their Members, but also can assist Members in understanding where specific circumstance are impacting on performance, both positively and negatively.

PLANNING FEES

Planning fees have reduced this year, however last year's fee total finished at a significantly high level. This is in some ways associated with the reduction in application numbers but also a reflection of a number of large scale repeat applications that have attracted a nil fee.

2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
2,628,409.36	2,942,711.01	2,515,000

BUILDING WARRANT FEES

2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
2,286,973.50	2,242,552.24	2,894,000

RESPONSIBLE BUDGETING

Managers are closely involved in budget setting meetings and the run up to the 2015-16 budget were involved with Director run working groups to look at and consider all budgetary areas and consider saving proposals in respect of each part of their Service. This allows further robust insight into the Council's budget and how it impacts corporately and individually on each service and increases the Manager's role in responsible budgeting throughout the year.

Regular briefings on the use of the Financial Regulations take place. A video is available for staff to view which outlines the regulations and the responsibilities of Officers to adhere to such.



Responsible Budgeting

CASE STUDY 38 - RESPONSIBLE BUDGETING EAR MARKED RESERVE

In response to the ability to bid for end of year flexibility within the budget a request has been made to consider an Ear Marked Reserve fund to deal with unexpected costs accrued from a variety of claims associated with planning applications.

It is commonplace for certain planning appeal decisions to incur costs when the Department of Planning and Environmental Appeals (DPEA) agree with an appellant who have submitted corresponding claims for costs in association with a planning appeal. This also applies to the enforcement function where claims for costs are also associated with the appeal process. In rarer circumstances the Council are obliged to pay out costs in respect of legal challenges and judicial reviews in terms of planning decisions and in some instances as a result of an SPSO decision in terms of planning process. Legal advice and Counsel are also necessary added costs in some of these situations outlined above.

The difficulty incurred is the uncertainty associated with these types of costs. These are largely outwith the control of the Service as to firstly whether an appeal or challenge/ judicial review comes forward with an associated claim for expenses or a complaint is made to the SPSO. Secondly the outcomes of any expense claims and the costs afforded to these or whether a successful complaint is upheld by the SPSO with associated costs. 2015-16 brought several of these 'unexpected costs' with an outlay recorded in lieu of planning and enforcement appeal costs, one judicial review, one legal challenge and associated legal advice and counsel. This is a cost which would not have been foreseen or specifically budgeted for.

If agreed, this reserve will be available to cope with these costs to enable responsible budgeting.



ENVIRONMENT PLANNING - FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE

A Framework Agreement for procurement of goods and services in relation to the historic environment is currently being developed. This should promote reliability and consistency of the supply chain, as well as promote the value of accreditation among suppliers of goods and services for work within the historic context.

The prioritisation of budgets for paths and historic assets (see below) makes an essential contribution towards transparency and justification of spend on local facilities and assets. This is part of a culture of continuous improvement within the Council, *(as detailed below in Chapter Continuous Improvement.)*

CHAPTER 4 - CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

PERFORMANCE

DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

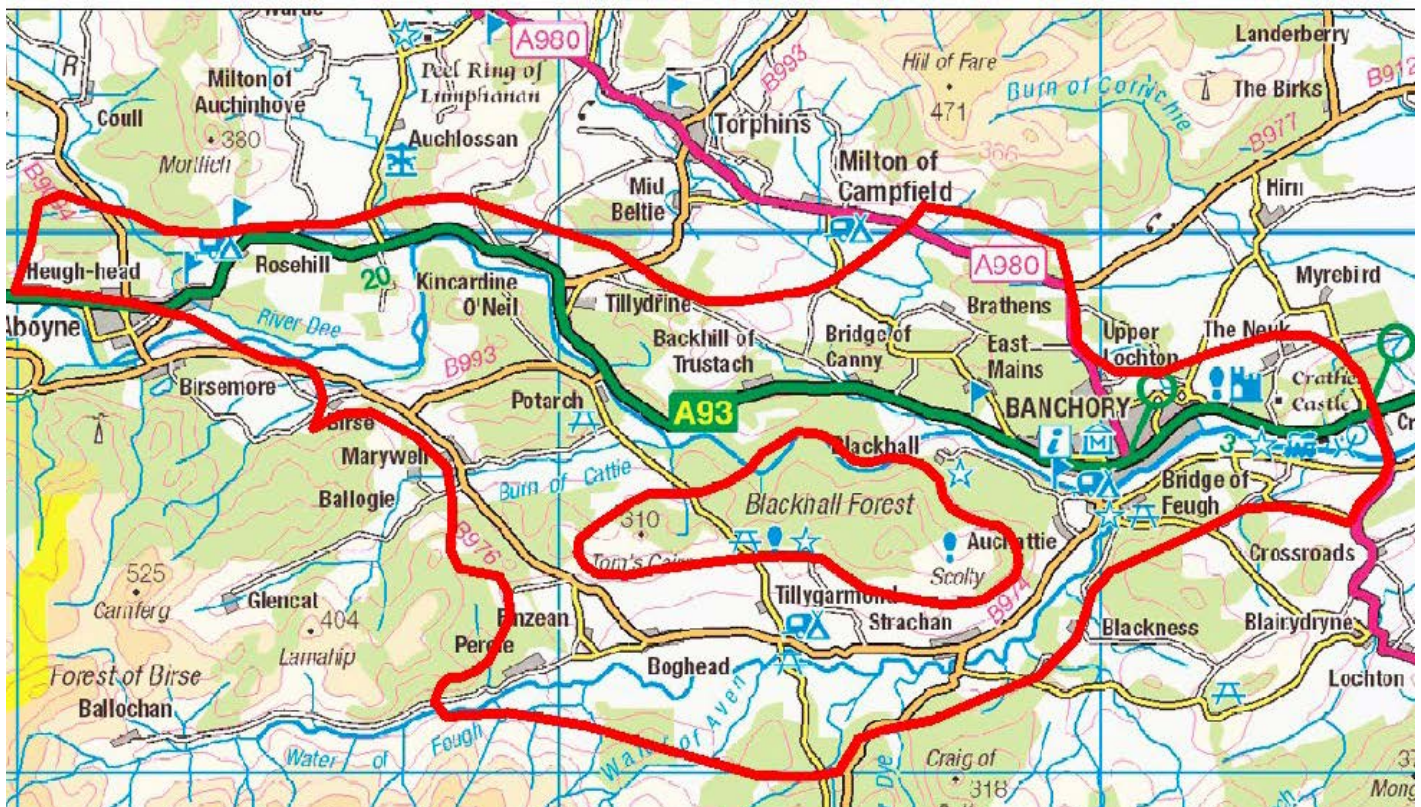
A commitment has been given to produce revised Planning Advice to support the new Local Development Plan and provide reliable and consistent advice. This process is ongoing and it will result in Planning Advice being created for adoption within the Local Development Plan.

CASE STUDY 39 - DEVELOPMENT OF PLANNING ADVICE

Comprehensive Planning Advice on all topics within the Plan is currently being developed. A standard model for the Planning Advice has been developed that includes assessment of the terms of Scottish Planning Policy and the Strategic Development Plan to provide

appropriate guidance. Close engagement has taken place with Development Management to identify the issues that are likely to arise with the new policies, to ensure that appropriate guidance can be given to enable consistency in the advice given to customers.

The Draft Planning Advice is being formally reviewed by an "arms-length" practitioner for consistency and understanding.



Landscape Character Area: Deeside

Landscape Character Type: Straths and Rivers Valley's; a diverse character type where rivers are the most crucial influence on landscape character. This type is dominated by a river

CASE STUDY 40 - SECTION 42 CASE STUDY

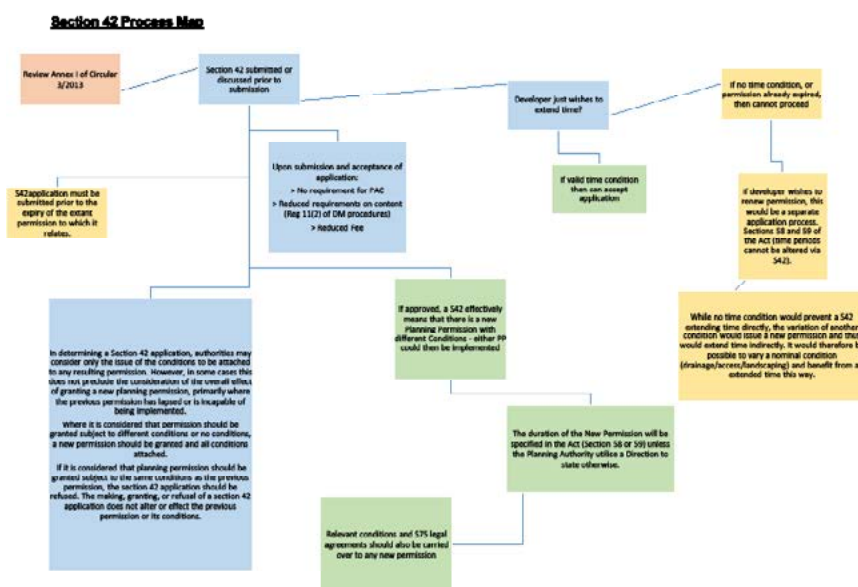
The process of Section 42 applications has caused elements of debate and confusion. One of the Team Managers became involved in Government workshops on the Section 42

process, the outcome of which was Guidance on the process. Aberdeenshire Council's response to the Guidance was as follows :

" The guidance is very welcome. This in an area that causes planning authorities and developers uncertainty due to difficulty in interpreting and applying the legislation. As a result it is apparent that different practices have emerged in different parts of the country. The guidance should help to ensure that a consistent approach is taken in future which will be to the advantage of all stakeholders."

As a result of the [Guidance](#) and using its approach Aberdeenshire Council decided to compile its own guidance for both Officer and public use. This was initially discussed with representatives from Aberdeen City with a view to producing guidance which was

consistent between the two neighbouring Authorities. The guidance and accompanying [process map](#) has been produced and shared with Aberdeen City Council to ensure a best practice approach.



The use of short life working groups has proven very successful where a piece of work is required in a relatively short space of time, either by way of a review or creating new advice/guidance or reacting to particular issues.

Examples of short life working groups with this reporting period are :

- › Model Conditions Group (refer to Case Study 19a)
- › Prior Notification Review Group (refer to Case Study 31)
- › Section 42 Group (refer to Case Study 40)
- › Regulation 24 letter/correspondence Group (see below)

CASE STUDY 41 : SHORT TERM WORKING GROUPS - REGULATION 24

In order to work towards improving performance and ensuring consistency of approach the Planning Service has reviewed its suite of model letters. These include those issued under Regulation 24 of the Development Management Regulations. These letters, now reviewed, are fit for purpose and are in use.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Staff development is monitored closely by the Service and by Team Managers in particular. The annual reviews through EARS highlights individual training needs. (See below - EARS) Other training and development is often dependent on current legislative and operational requirements and reacting to particular areas of need.

Two Development Management training days took place within the reporting period in [September](#) 2015 and [March](#) 2016. A variety of topics, discussions, talks and workshops were facilitated. Below is a study of the second event. Prior to that the [September event](#) included a talk on affordable housing – an overview of affordable housing in terms of the tenures, delivery and funding mechanisms

and the challenges, the current regeneration priorities, town centre opportunities, and national developments and SEPA gave an overview of SEPA standing advice; Waste Water Drainage Consultation Areas, tests and procedures; and flood risk remit. An update on [High Hedges legislation](#) and the [Historic Environment Scotland \(HES\) changes](#) also were given by Officers.

CASE STUDY 42 : DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT TRAINING DAY MARCH

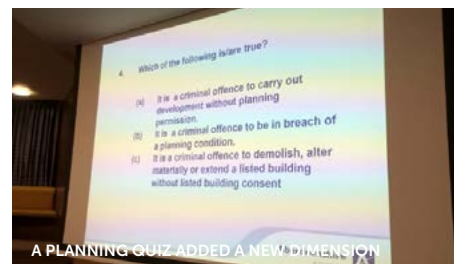
The aim was to provide a variety of relevant training topics and to encourage learning through interaction and participation. An additional element was to give staff experience of preparing topics and presenting to their peers.

Presentations were given by one of the Council's Employee Development Officers who highlighted the work his Service did in respect of employee courses and bespoke training, whilst using interactive exercises to involve the audience. The next topic covered the Planning Advice and how this would be created as part of the next LDP and its use by DM Planners. Young Planners who attended the recent Young Planners Conference provided an insight and what they learnt from their experience. This was followed by the Conditions Group who have compiled an update set of [Model Conditions](#). This session was integrated into the enforcement presentation in respect of the use of conditions and the 6 tests, this session was in a workshop format that ensured a better understanding using practical examples. An all-encompassing planning quiz ended the day.

Not only is this type of forum for learning purposes but it also allows all the Planners from the Area Teams to get together, share experiences and interact.

AGENDA

1015 - 1115	Employee Development David McCulloch - Employee Development Officer HR and Organisational Development
1120 – 1230	"The Future Shape of Planning Advice" Piers Blaxter – Policy Team Leader Interactive session, Questions and Discussion
1330 - 1400	Young Planners Conference Feedback Ailsa Anderson – Policy Planner Aoife Murphy – DM Planner Fiona Thompson – Policy Planner Jenny Ash – DM Planner
1410 – 1600 Chamber/ Committee Room 3	Planning Conditions – Malcolm White & Gregor Spence – DM Planners Enforcement of Conditions – Wendy Forbes - Team Manager Conditions workshops – Wendy Forbes and Vicky Moore – Senior Planner Interactive Session
1600- 1620	Planning Quiz



ALDO

Compulsory courses in Equalities and Diversity continue for all staff.

LEGAL TRAINING

Training in liaison with our Legal Service continues. (refer to Chapter 2b - Certainty and 'Legal Timescales')

Staff attended the launch of the revised Section 75 template

BENCHMARKING

Benchmarking work has continued in various guises and covering a variety of topics.

Attendance at HoPS has continued, as has communication and attendance, at the various HoPS Family events which prove to be very useful in sharing information and input to various projects e.g. – national validation, Section 75 usage, and agricultural occupancy issues.

Liaison with Moray Council – input to proposed wind turbine notification process by Moray Council as a neighbouring Authority.

Aberdeen City Council – Discussion/ Access to Aberdeenshire Uniform System/data information on system set up and exchange of experiences continues to assist Aberdeen City in their system transformations. Benchmarking on Section 42 process.

Benchmarking on the major application processes of other Authorities has been carried out to input into the review of the Major application process now being undertaken.

EARS

EMPLOYEE ANNUAL REVIEW

Continuous improvement for staff continues to be embodied within personal training plans through annual EARS Reviews (*Employee Annual Review*).

This is carried out for each staff member by respective Area Team Managers. Training needs and requirements are discussed and identified for the year ahead to ensure all areas are addressed to enable the officer to work effectively and also to progress in their profession. The Performance Development Scheme operates to enable officers to progress within the salary scales dependent on their adequately evidencing their experience.

ENVIRONMENT PLANNING

- › Continuous improvement project ongoing in respect of Council owned historic assets – (see *Case Study 43 below*.)
- › Implementation of Phase 2 of Silver 'KDI' (improvement project) in respect of Council owned and managed paths.
- › Implementation of Council's Archaeology Strategy, Ranger Strategy and related Action Plans e.g. Pollinator Action Plan.
- › Online applications in respect of Works to protected Trees applications has enabled easier tracking of application progress and the introduction of an internal performance indicator for 2015/16: Percentage of applications for Works to TPO Protected Trees dealt with within 8 weeks - 80%.
- › Pre-application collaboration: ongoing revision of process for efficiency and integration with new e-planning software
- › Access Strategy - being updated.

CASE STUDY 43- HISTORIC ASSETS MANAGEMENT PROJECT (HAMP)

- › Ongoing review and prioritisation of management of Listed and Scheduled Council owned non-operational buildings and structures.
- › Collating data on assets: first stage surveys completed March 2016 (totalling 524 assets). Rolling programme of maintenance established, based on a system of weightings and prioritisation agreed across Council Services and with Elected Members.
- › Full time post and match funding secured to progress project till October 2016, and thereafter on a year by year basis.

ONGOING HAMP FUNDED PROJECTS INCLUDE, FOR EXAMPLE:

- › Macduff Cross, Macduff: stabilisation and possible relocation in light of structural reports.
- › Tarlair Pool, Macduff: ongoing consideration of possible renovation and re-use with 'Friends of Tarlair' and others, following structural survey.
- › Bellcote, Tarland: dismantling and repair following destabilisation.
- › Duff House Gates (Fife Gates) and Mausoleum Gates: off-site repair and reinstatement. (Refer to Case Study 2)

PART 3: SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

Part 2 of this Report was compiled, drawing on evidence from the following sources:
All supporting evidence has been integrated within the body of the text by use of hyperlinks to relevant documents, websites and information.



HARLAW MONUMENT, INVERURIE

PART 4A: SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS 2015-16

IN THE COMING YEAR WE WILL:

DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS IN THE COMING YEAR

Core work will be undertaken on the evaluation of the engagement processes undertaken in the preparation of the Local Development Plan 2016, and specifically asking the question "how was it for you" of Community Councils, Developers, Stakeholders and Elected Members. This will inform the 2017 Development Plan Scheme.

Further review of the on-line Local Development Plan provision will be made, considering other packages and means of delivery.

ENVIRONMENT PLANNING

SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS 2016-17

In the coming year we will:

- › Paths KDI – continue implementation, investigating opportunities to work with community groups to take maintenance responsibility.
- › Access Strategy – to be finalised.
- › Complete Historic Assets Management Project and embark on agreed programme of maintenance and repair of council owned structures.
- › Complete Phase 2 of TPO Review and commence Phase 3.
- › Complete at least three Conservation Area reviews/designations (Buchanhaven, Ardmere Distillery and Kennethmont, Stonehaven).
- › Fraserburgh – CARS/TH to begin July 2016, delivering restoration projects for key historic properties in the town centre, including conservation and renovation work to 1 Saltoun Square.
- › Banff CARS – Silversmith Centre to be completed;; other priority projects to be developed and further small grants to be delivered.
- › Portsoy CARS – project to be completed June 2016.
- › Complete review of key Strategies for Historic and Natural environments.

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

In the coming year we will:

OPEN FOR BUSINESS	HIGH QUALITY DEVELOPMENT ON THE GROUND
<p>Continue to focus on significantly Improving the performance of Major Applications *</p> <p>Continue to work with Legal Services through implementation of their Programme of Actions to significantly improve Section 75 delivery timescales*</p>	
CERTAINTY	COMMUNICATIONS, ENGAGEMENT AND CUSTOMER SERVICE
<p>Enforcement</p> <p>Prepare a Member and Area Committee Briefing Protocol for Enforcement</p> <p>Finalise Enforcement Policy</p> <p>Prepare Enforcement Priority System</p> <p>Target and promote ePlanning to 40% customers not currently using ePlanning</p> <p>Review Major Application Process</p>	<p>Carry out further Customer Surveys once yearly</p> <p>Targeted engagement with Consultees – Flooding & Coastal Protection/ Waste Service</p>
EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE DECISION-MAKING	EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES
<p>Joint Review of RCC Checklist Planning/ Roads Service</p> <p>Review of use of Stop the Clock</p>	
FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE	CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT
	<p>Continue to Benchmark other Authorities.</p>
PLANNING PERFORMANCE TARGETS	PLANNING PERFORMANCE TARGETS
<p>Average Timescales:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major Applications – Achieve an average of 35 weeks Local Applications - Achieve an average of 11 weeks Household Applications - Achieve an average of 6 weeks Other Applications – Achieve an average of 8 weeks Measurement of outputs and measurable targets for Customer Surveys to be applied**** ePlanning Online Submission – 65% of customers submitting on line applications. 	<p>% Within 2 Months:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Planning Applications – Determine 70% within 2 months Non Householder Applications - Determine 65% within 2 months Householder Applications - Determine 95%within 2 months Processing Agreements – 100% major applications subject to a Processing Agreement **Legal Agreements – Achieve an average of 32 weeks Legacy Applications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce pre 2009 to 0 Reduce Overall (post 2009) by 50%

*Subject to Target

**Based on Benchmarking Performance

*** Carry forward from 2015/16 TO 2016/17

**** Measurable Targets and Outputs to Target

**Based on Benchmarking Performance

*** Carry forward from 2015/16 TO 2016/17

**** Measurable Targets and Outputs

Key:

Continuing (further improvement)

Continued (not completed)

New

PART 4B: DELIVERY OF OUR SERVICE IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS IN 2015-16:

DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

DELIVERY OF OUR SERVICE IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS IN 2015-16:

DEVELOPMENT PLANNING	COMPLETE	
› Review and anticipate information requirements for the Examination of the Local Development Plan 2016 to minimise delay from information requests during the Examination itself.	Yes	Comprehensive information provided to the DPEA alongside the statutory "Schedule 4" documents. Low number of information requests received to date.
› Trial the Uniform Local Development Plan Module as a means of standardising consultation processes associated with the Development Plan.	Yes	Uniform module trialled but found to be no better and in some cases worse, than the system developed in-house.
› Review the effectiveness of the Online Local Development Plan (OLDP) as a tool for placing the Local Development Plan on-line.	Yes	No realistic alternative identified to replace the OLDLP at this time. More in-depth analysis of options is required.
› Seek greater involvement with the Strategic Development Plan Authority on the identification of issues for the SDP Main Issues Report August 2016.	Yes	The SDPA have had discussions with the Planning Policy Team and Senior Managers regarding identifying the relevant Main Issues for the SDP.

ENVIRONMENT PLANNING

DELIVERY OF OUR SERVICE IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS COMMITTED FOR 2015-16:

COMMITTED IMPROVEMENTS AND ACTIONS	COMPLETE?
Complete and implement 2 Silver KDI projects in respect of Countryside Paths and Sites and Historic Asset Management	
› With respect to Silver KDI on Council owned and managed paths, the overall approach has been agreed. Now in implementation phase	YES
› With respect to Historic Assets, the project (i.e.: initial survey and agreement of approach to prioritising spend) due to complete in October 2016. Thereafter repairs and maintenance will be progressed on an annual basis in accordance with the agreed approach.	NO
Finalise Self-Assessment Improvement Action Plan for the Environment Team	YES
Complete and implement outcomes of ongoing Benchmarking activities in 4 areas of built and natural environment	
› Benchmarking completed in respect of approach to Design Awards.	YES
› Further benchmarking suspended in view of setting aside findings of initial benchmarking work in favour of political preferences.	NO
Complete 3 Conservation Area Reviews/designations	
› Reviews at Port Errol, Old Deer and Fraserburgh	YES
› http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/built_heritage/conservation_areas.asp	
Complete Phases 1 and 2 of the Review of TPOs	
› Phase 1 completed	YES
› Phase 2 underway, due for completion October 2016	NO
Review Key Strategies for the historic and natural environments.	NO

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

DELIVERY OF OUR SERVICE IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS COMMITTED FOR 2014-15:

OPEN FOR BUSINESS	COMPLETE	HIGH QUALITY DEVELOPMENT ON THE GROUND	COMPLETE
Continue to Increase the use of Processing Agreements. All Major Applications will be subject to a Processing Agreement. *	YES	Work with Robert Gordon's University to set up design training and seminar for planners and developers. ***	YES – through Design Awards – report next PPF
All Section 75 applications will be subject to a Processing Agreement	YES		
Continue to focus on significantly improving the performance of Major Applications *	PARTIAL –Improved but still need for improvement		
Deliver a developer focused Major Applications/Processing Agreements and Major Pre Application 'buy in'	YES – continue to promote		
Set up workshops for developers to assist delivery of the improvements to use of Processing Agreements and the Section 75 process.	YES DONE –report next PPF		
Continue to work with Legal Services through implementation of their Programme of Actions significantly to improve Section 75 delivery timescales	YES work continues. PARTIAL -Mechanisms in place to prevent delays and improve timescales.		
CERTAINTY		COMMUNICATIONS, ENGAGEMENT AND CUSTOMER SERVICE	
Improve overall performance in all types of applications *	YES	Carry out further Customer Surveys once yearly	YES
Meet with/continue liaison with Historic Scotland to finalise the Joint Working Agreement (JWA) ***	LIAISON CONTNUES – HES DEPENDENT	Carry out a Community Council Survey ***	Alternative process of liaison
Await response from with Scottish Government on potential changes to bat legislation	No response but continue Best Practise	Carry out a Consultee review through Survey usage.	Alternative process of liaison
Finalise and Publish: Best Practice Manual	YES	Work with iCE (Corporate Improving Customer Experience) to improve web pages. ***	YES
Standard templates for: Non material variations, Condition Approvals.	YES		
Enforcement Enforcement Complaints Template Prepare a Member and Area Committee Briefing Protocol for Enforcement ***	YES Continue to 2016-17		
Finalise the on line Enforcement Register	YES		
Develop and improve the Enforcement website	YES		

EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE DECISION-MAKING	COMPLETE	EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES	COMPLETE
Review Scheme of Delegation outwith Corporate project by end of 2015	YES	Ensure Senior Planners have tailored supervisory and leadership training put in place.	YES
Reduce Legacy Cases further by implementing Legacy Strategy including use of Legacy Team*	YES		
Introduce a Legacy Preventative strategy to ensure Legacy backlog does not reoccur.	YES		
Fully implement Enforcement module within Uniform/accurately record breach of development	YES		
FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE		CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT	
Make use of Costing the Planning Service outcomes in continuous Improvement Programme.	YES	Continue to Benchmark other Authorities.	YES
PLANNING PERFORMANCE TARGETS		PLANNING PERFORMANCE TARGETS	
Average Timescales:		% Within 2 Months:	
Major Applications – Achieve an average of 35 weeks	86.3 (Improvement)	All Planning Applications – Determine 70% within 2 months	76% (Improvement)
Local Applications - Achieve an average of 11 weeks	14.1(Improvement)	Non Householder Applications - Determine 65% within 2 months	65.7% (Improvement)
Household Applications - Achieve an average of 6 weeks	6.8 (Improvement)	Householder Applications - Determine 95% within 2 months	95%(Improvement)
Other Applications – Achieve an average of 8 weeks	8.3 (Improvement)	Processing Agreements – 100% major applications subject to a Processing Agreement	57%* (Reduction) (Refer to Document : Use of Processing Agreements)
Measurement of outputs and measurable targets for Customer Surveys to be applied****	YES	**Legal Agreements – Achieve an average of 32 weeks	No – increase (160.2/55.7)
E Planning Online Submission – 65% of customers submitting on line applications.	65%+(Improvement)	Legacy Applications > Reduce pre 2009 to 0 > Reduce Overall (post 2009) by 50%	2 41 remaining

*Subject to Target

**Based on Benchmarking Performance

*** Carry forward from 2014/15 TO 2015/16

**** Measurable Targets and Outputs

PART 5:

OFFICIAL STATISTICS

A: DECISION-MAKING TIMESCALES (BASED ON 'ALL APPLICATIONS' TIMESCALES)

CATEGORY	TOTAL NUMBER OF DECISIONS 2015-2016	AVERAGE TIMESCALE (WEEKS)	
		2015-2016	2014-2015
Major developments	15	86.3	107.8
Local developments (non-householder)			
› Local: less than 2 months	1115 (66%)	7.2	7.3
› Local: more than 2 months	583 (34%)	27.4	24.9
Householder developments			
› Local: less than 2 months	929 (94%)	6.3	6.4
› Local: more than 2 months	63 (6%)	14.4	13.0
Housing developments			
Major	7	142.2	185.0
Local housing developments			
› Local: less than 2 months	502 (57%)	7.4	7.5
› Local: more than 2 months	382 (43%)	26.0	24.2
Business and industry			
Major	2	62.6	113.4
Local business and industry			
› Local: less than 2 months	107 (66.5%)	7.0	7.3
› Local: more than 2 months	54 (33.5%)	30.2	24.4
EIA developments	18	55.5	68.2
Other consents*	403	8.3	8.4
Planning/legal agreements**			
› Major: average time	5	160.2	76.2
› Local: average time	49	55.7	46.2
Local reviews	63	15.3	19.5

* Consents and certificates: Listed buildings and Conservation area consents, Control of Advertisement consents, Hazardous Substances consents, Established Use Certificates, certificates of lawfulness of existing use or development, notification on overhead electricity lines, notifications and directions under GPDO Parts 6 & 8 relating to agricultural and forestry development and applications for prior approval by Coal Authority or licensed operator under classes 60 & 62 of the GPDO.

** Legal obligations associated with a planning permission;; concluded under section 75 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 or section 69 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973

B: DECISION-MAKING: LOCAL REVIEWS AND APPEALS

TYPE	TOTAL NUMBER OF DECISIONS	ORIGINAL DECISION UPHELD			
		2015-2016		2014-2015	
		No.	%	No.	%
Local reviews	63	51	81%	46	77%
Appeals to Scottish Ministers	50	23	46%	24	44%

C: ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITY

	2015-2016	2014-2015
Cases taken up****	674	408
Breaches identified		
Cases resolved*****	1050	297
Notices served***	53	10
Reports to Procurator Fiscal	0	0
Prosecutions	0	0

*** Enforcement notices;; breach of condition notices;; planning contravention notices;; stop notices;; temporary stop notices; fixed penalty notices, and Section 33 notices.

**** Cases taken up are the number of cases investigated in the period. These are not the number of breaches.

***** In the 2015/16 period the Enforcement Team cleared a backlog of work resulting in a large volume of cases being resolved and closed. The Total Number of Cases Resolved in 2015/16 (1050) per period submitted is explained in the table below:

PERIOD SUBMITTED	2015-2016	2014-2015	PRE-2014
No. of Cases Resolved in 2015/2016	422	297	331

D: CONTEXT

Performance, the reasons, factors and influences for increase/decrease is embodied and is identified throughout the PPF 2015-16.



PART 6: WORKFORCE AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION

	TIER 1	TIER 2	TIER 3	TIER 4
Head of Planning Service	1	1	1	2.6 + 7

Note: Tier 1= Chief Executive, Tier 2= Directors, Tier 3= Heads of Service, Tier 4= Managers

		DM	DP	ENFORCEMENT	OTHER
Managers	No. Posts	1 + 3	1 + 1	1	2.6
	Vacant				
Main Grade Posts	No. Posts	37.8	15	5.7	20
	Vacant				
Technician	No. Posts	17.6	1		
	Vacant				
Office Support / Clerical	No. Posts	23.3	3	2	2.7
	Vacant				
TOTAL		82.7	18	8.7	25.3

Note: Managers are those staff responsible for the operational management of a team/division. They are not necessarily line managers.

STAFF AGE PROFILE	NUMBER	COMMITTEE & SITE VISITS*	NUMBER PER YEAR
Under 30	31	Full council meetings	10
30-39	29	Infrastructure Services Committee*	7
40-49	34	Area Committees (where relevant)**	82 +1 Special Committees for LDP
50 and over	35	Committee Site Visits***	64
		Pre-Determination Hearings (PDH)	8
		LRB****	17
		LRB Site Visits	22

Notes: * Aberdeenshire Council have an Infrastructure Service Committee which deals with matters of policy. Some planning applications (significant departures from policy) are considered at that committee.
 **Aberdeenshire Council have 6 Area Committees. These deal with area business including planning matters.
 *** Committee site visits also include visits associated with Pre Determination Hearings
 ****this relates to the number of meetings of the LRB. The numbers of applications going to LRB are reported elsewhere.

	TOTAL BUDGET	COSTS		INCOME***
		DIRECT*	INDIRECT**	
Development Management	3,304	2,398	906	2,515
Development Planning	796	578	218	
Enforcement	226	164	62	
	4,326	3,140	1,186	2,515

Notes:

* Direct staff costs covers gross pay (including overtime, national insurance and superannuation contribution). The appropriate proportion of the direct cost of any staff member within the planning authority spending 30% or more of their time on planning should be included in costs, irrespective of what department they are allocated to (for example, legal advice, administration, typing). Exclude staff spending less than 30% of their time on planning.

** Indirect costs include all other costs attributable to the planning service. Examples (not exhaustive) include accommodation, IT, stationery, office equipment, telephone charges, printing, advertising, travel & subsistence, apportionment of support service costs.

*** Include fees from planning applications and deemed applications, and recharges for advertising costs etc. Exclude income from property and planning searches.

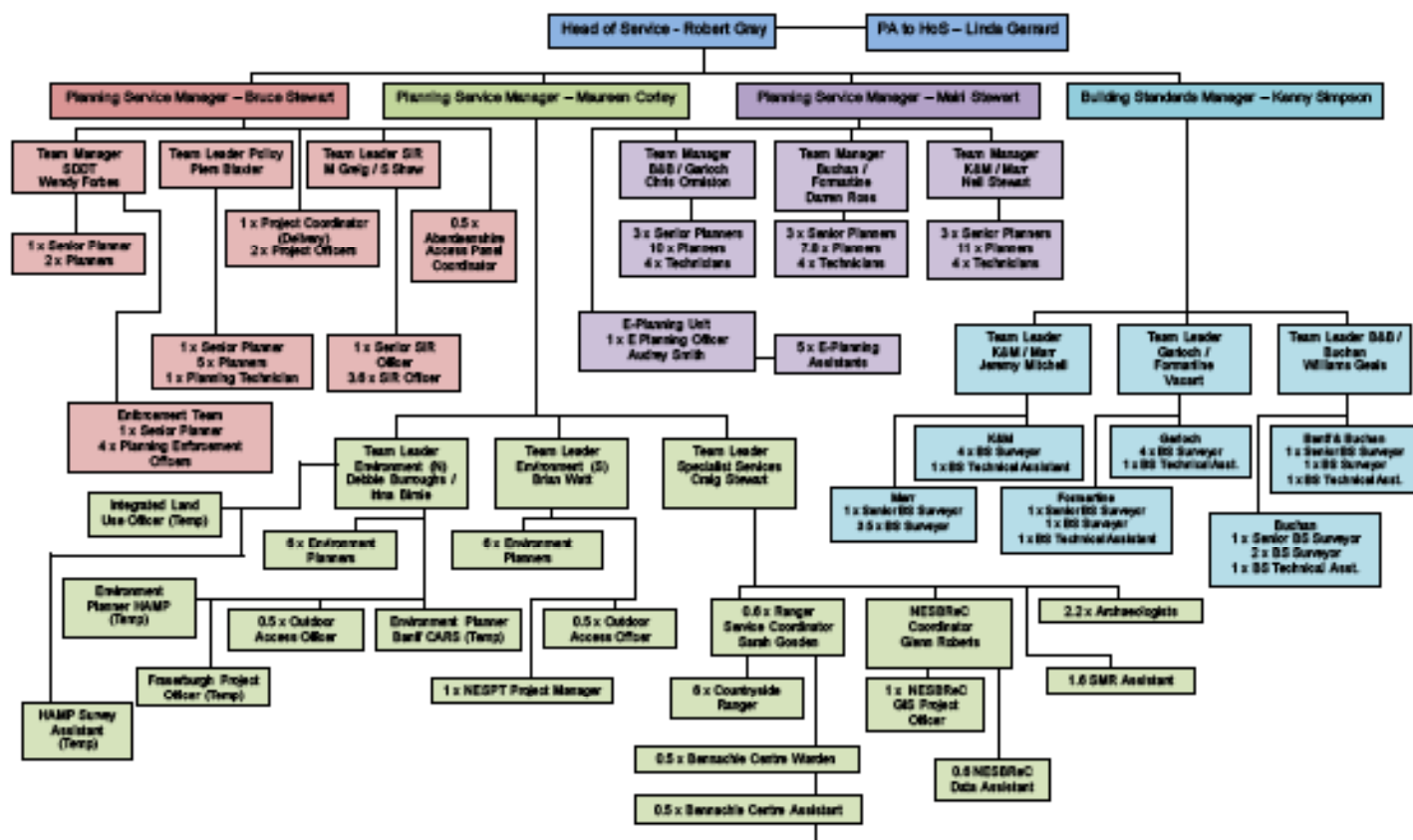


BANFF AND MACDUFF

APPENDIX 1: ORGANOGRAM ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL – PLANNING & BUILDING STANDARDS

Planning & Building Standards Organogram

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