

Stonehaven

Aberdeenshire
COUNCIL



Banff

Fraserburgh

Newburgh

Pennan

Planning Performance Framework

Westhill

Inverurie

Ballater

No.12 2022-23

Balmoral

Braemar

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Our Vision.



From mountain to sea

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, 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

Foreword.

I am pleased to introduce the 2022-23 Planning Performance Framework, the 12th in a series of annual reports which celebrates the work of the Aberdeenshire Planning and Economy Service across a number of national performance indicators.

Over the last 12 months planning application numbers and types have remained constant but staffing levels have reduced considerably. Despite these challenges our culture of continuous improvement and drive to enhance our quality of service has been unwavering.

Progress continues streamlining our processes to better suit the needs of our customers and our teams. We continue to invest in the Service through the use of technology, upskilling our teams and through the creation of a new Continuous Improvement Officer and Local Place Plan Project Officer posts. These investments will enable the Service to deliver the ambitions of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 and National Planning Framework 4.

Understanding the needs and experiences of our customers has enabled the Service to forge strong collaborative relationships with our communities, the development industry and investors. In terms of service delivery, the collaborative relationships between the Planning and Economy Service, communities, development industry and investors has facilitated the consenting and delivery of important access, regeneration and development programmes as well as the adoption of the [Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023](#) throughout this PPF period.

Looking ahead Aberdeenshire is poised to lead the energy transition with our Planning team heavily involved in the associated consenting processes. Corporately the Planning and Economy Service will lead the development and delivery of an Aberdeenshire Place Strategy transforming our approach to service delivery and work is already underway in the preparation of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2028.



Alan Wood - Director of Environment and Infrastructure Services

Introduction.

This Planning Performance Framework document should be read in conjunction with and in the context of a suite of high-level documents that exist for Aberdeenshire Council. General information about Aberdeenshire Council is available on the Council's website.

The [Aberdeenshire Council Plan 2022-27](#) describes the Council's priorities for the years ahead. It sets out our strategic approach to supporting Aberdeenshire communities and businesses to thrive, working with our partners to face the challenges of cost of living and the increasing inequalities, continue our recovery from the pandemic and respond positively to climate change, all whilst ensuring that Aberdeenshire is and remains a welcoming place to live, work and visit. The strategic priorities reflect the challenges being faced by the Council and inform our Medium-Term Financial Strategy. It is centred around three pillars – People, Environment and Economy.

Within the three pillars are [6 strategic priorities](#) – Learning for life; Health and well-being; Resilient communities; Climate change; Economic growth; and Infrastructure and public assets.

The Council Plan is supported by a number of other [Plans and Reports](#).

The Planning Service sits within the wider [Planning and Economy Service](#) which in turn sits within the [Environment and Infrastructure Services Directorate](#).

The Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023 sitting alongside National Planning Framework 4 provide the planning policy context for the delivery of Aberdeenshire wide and Planning Service objectives.

Summary of the Local Development Plan Team Year.

2022-23 saw the conclusion of the Scottish Government Examination of the proposed Local Development Plan and its adoption to replace the Local Development Plan 2017. This represents the end-piece of a process that has taken over five years to complete that has seen engagement with communities and stakeholders, on an almost continuous basis since 2017.

The examination took a total of 15 months to complete. It was submitted on 12 March 2021 and Aberdeenshire Council received the “Report to Aberdeenshire Council, proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2020 Examination” on 22 June 2022. 694 modifications were recommended to the Council, all of which were accepted by the Council on 22 September 2022. This was confirmed to the Scottish Ministers and

the [Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023](#) was formally adopted on 13 January 2023.

Engagement continued on the [National Planning Framework 4](#), adopted as part of the Development Plan by the Scottish Parliament on 13 February 2023. On publication of the modified draft of the National Planning Framework 4 analysis was undertaken of potential conflicts with Local Development Plan 2023, and colleagues in Development Management briefed on implementation of both plans. Significant liaison has taken place with other Development Plan teams throughout Scotland on the interpretation of the Framework.

In parallel to the significant work undertaken on the Local Development Plan attention has been placed on preparing for the next Local Development Plan. Under the new

Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 new processes are being introduced to the plan making process. Exploration of new processes to be used in preparing the first outputs in the development plan-making process have been the subject of detailed discussions with stakeholders, and public consultation has been completed on the [Development Plan Scheme 2023](#) for publication in May 2023. Core work has also been undertaken on the topic papers required to support the new Evidence Report, including an update of the Open Space Audit required to inform the Play Space Sufficiency Assessment and the Open Space Strategy for the next Local Development Plan. Review of landscape sensitivity for wind turbines has also been completed.

Summary of Development Management Team Year.

Throughout the PPF reporting year, the development management function has remained focused on ensuring business continuity through its holistic approach to continuous improvement and streamlining of services. As such the Service has always been looking to enhance and improve service delivery and customer care whilst maintaining a good level of performance in terms of average decision-making timescales.

In terms of performance throughout the reporting year, levels of applications received and validated decreased from the previous year, but with significant fluctuations per month, relying on well managed throughput and adherence to targets. Overall, the level of performance has been maintained at a reasonable level in the reporting year. There have been inevitable fluctuations mirroring the significant and on-going challenges of recruitment and vacancy management. As such, to remain consistent in householder decision making, record a marginally slower rate in non-householders and an improvement in major application decision making, has reflected a strong and robust work ethic from the development management staff and support mechanisms whilst ensuring a consistent focus on quality outcomes and service provision for our customers. This, in addition to an increase in the reduction in legacy cases from the last reporting year is considered an achievement for staff working within a pressurised environment. Alongside,

our Enforcement Team retain their customer focus through robust investigation processes bringing reassurance and certainty to our communities and elected members.

The holistic approach to continuous improvement and streamlining has been strengthened throughout the reporting year to respond to the various challenges within development management. This has dovetailed with the corporate approach around workforce planning whereby evolving and adapting our ways of working is key to not only improving customer delivery but resolving our recruitment difficulties by reinforcing our own staffing structure. Most importantly the focus is on staff wellbeing, ensuring all staff are engaged and empowered to shape improvements whilst feeling valued and supported. This remains essential as hybrid working continues throughout the Council.

Staff input to continuous improvement projects has resulted in the completion of the pre application process review and roll out of the masterplan processes, both vital for business continuity and economic growth. Interpretation and implementation of new legislation has had to be carried out both effectively and quickly to allow the processing of decisions to continue. The dual delivery of a new [Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023](#) and [National Planning Framework 4](#) required concerted efforts as did the publication and implementation of new Permitted Development Rights. A more efficient

approach to the process for public representation was also successfully completed. At all times our customers were kept updated. Continuing to deliver digital solutions to our customers from an increasingly digitally confident workforce remains an important focus. A one stop solution to quicker dissemination of information and communication among all development management, enforcement and support staff was successfully implemented in the shape of a digital library using various tools through Office 365.

Throughout the reporting year, a steady mix of economically important applications associated with allocated sites, external funding, regeneration, energy transition and of general importance to our communities were validated and determined. Whilst application numbers were slightly down the fee income increased.

Summary of Environment Team Year.

In July 2022, the former Environment and Specialist Services Teams underwent a 'Reshape' exercise, such that all Historic Environment specialisms were brought under the umbrella of a new 'Historic Environment Team' comprised of built heritage professionals, archaeologists and staff working on regeneration. The new Historic Environment Team sits alongside other planning functions within the Planning and Economy Service.

Those sections of the former Environment Team and Specialists Services dealing with the natural environment, comprising of natural heritage professionals and North East Scotland Biological Record Centre ([NESBReC](#)), became the new Natural Environment Team within the new Environment and Sustainability Service. Both the Planning and Economy and Environment and Sustainability Services sit within the Environment and Infrastructure Services Directorate.

The newly formed Historic and Natural Environment Teams continue to make an important contribution to the quality of design, placemaking, regeneration and environmental and biodiversity agendas through a wide variety of project work, and by providing specialist support to planners and other Council professionals, partners and stakeholders.

In 2022-23:

- Working with other Services, partners and community groups continued to be an important part of our activity.
- We continued to review our processes and seek customer feedback to make sure we add value.
- We continued to work with Economic Development and external funding partners to develop project work to unlock the benefits of our historic and natural heritage.
- Outreach and training remained a core area of the Team's work.

Historic Environment Team

In terms of the different strands of the Historic Environment Teams work the main highlights/focus in 2022-23 were:

Built Heritage

Following the successful drawdown of Historic Environment Scotland, Heritage Lottery and other external funding the [Fraserburgh 2021](#) project was completed, the latter stages including the completion of public realm works at Kirk Brae and Glover Gardens ([see Case Study 7](#)). The Project was awarded overall winner for Planning for Excellence, as well as winning the Best Project category at the Scottish RTPI Planning for Excellence Awards. Elsewhere, work on the Vinery project in Banff was completed in July 2022, and the lease handed over to Aberdeen Foyer for use as a community wellbeing space. Conservation Area appraisals and management plans were progressed in Peterhead,

Pennan and Udney and support and advice to development management continued. [Doors Open Days](#) was once again hosted in partnership with the Scottish Civic Trust, returning in 2022 to a largely in person event with a total of 29 venues being visited; preparation work has also been ongoing for the 2023 [Aberdeenshire Architecture and Landscape Design Awards](#), with a total of 50 submissions received to date.

Historic Asset Management Project (HAMP)

The ongoing repair and maintenance of over 500 non-operational historic assets in the Council's ownership is managed through the [HAMP](#) project. In any one year, a combination of major projects and more routine maintenance work is undertaken, on a budget of under £200,000. During 2022-23, priority project work included stabilisation and repair works to the iconic Macduff Cross; temporary stabilisation works to St. John's Church, Gamrie and engagement of consultants to assess the stability of St. Brandon's, Inverboyndie in advance of proposed stabilisation and repair at this site. The project officer continues to seek external funding, a core part of supporting the HAMP project overall.

Archaeology

The [Archaeology team](#) continues to operate Shared Service Agreements with Aberdeen and Moray Councils respectively and a Service Level Agreement with Angus Council. Customer surveys of these authorities are carried out on a rolling basis, biennially; the survey completed for Aberdeen City in early 2023 revealed a 100% level of satisfaction with the Service provided, all of which was delivered within target timescales.

Acknowledgement of the role of the Historic Environment Record (HER) within NPF4 Policy 7 was welcome, work having been ongoing in this and previous years to upload information on historic assets onto our database to inform advice on development proposals. Archaeologists continued their role in providing advice on planning, utilities and forestry applications for Aberdeenshire and neighbouring authorities, with last year witnessing a particular increase in the number of forestry consultations (78%) in the wake of damage caused by storms and subsequent felling/restocking requirements.

A fourth promotional trail leaflet was completed on Harbours ([See Case Study 9](#)) which, along with those already existing (Stone Circles, Pictish Stones and Historic Churches), has been distributed across tourist outlets across in Northeast and Highlands.

All work is delivered in line with the [Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service Strategy 2020-23](#).

Natural Environment Team

In terms of the different strands of the Natural Environment Teams work the main highlights/focus in 2022-23 were:

Trees and Woodland

2022 was challenging with the advent of further significant storm events across Aberdeenshire. This resulted in further significant loss of tree cover and increased workloads for

the team as emergency works to trees and subsequent assessment of woodland areas and replanting schemes proved challenging. In addition to this Aberdeenshire Council is actively working to deliver solutions to the climate and biodiversity emergency, through increased woodland and tree cover.

Nature Restoration

[Nature](#) – There was an increased focus to work actively across Aberdeenshire’s communities on a range of projects that delivered nature restoration, safeguards wildlife, and tackles the cause of biodiversity loss, especially climate change. The [Aberdeenshire Pollinator Action Plan](#) was developed and agreed.

North East Scotland Biological Record Centre (NESBReC)

[NESBReC](#) – Continued to collate, manage and provide biological information for decision makers, education and conservation bodies, national recording schemes and provide baseline information for land use planning. NESBReC continued to provide services for Aberdeen City through a Shared Service Agreement.

Work across both the Historic Environment and Natural Environment Teams are supported by strategies, action plans and performance indicators, to ensure alignment with national and corporate priorities and that their activities make the best use of resources available, and the teams will continue to educate on, promote, enhance and protect the natural and built environments into 2022-23.



Summary of Planning Information and Delivery Team.

Over the last year the Planning Information and Delivery Team have continued to collectively work towards the Teams' overarching aim to ensure 'Aberdeenshire Council's plans and policies are based on an accurate and reliable evidence base while facilitating their timely delivery to the benefit of the communities we serve'. The Planning Information and Delivery Team has a key role within Aberdeenshire Council and specifically Environment and Infrastructure Services, with many aspects of the Team's remit statutory in nature or essential to enabling other Teams and Services across the Council to meet their own statutory obligation.

As ever the Team produces a number of regular reports, these include key supporting evidence such as the [Housing and Employment Land Audits](#) and the [Delivery Programme](#). The Team also provides information that is useful for multiple audiences, including other Council Services, industry, communities and elected members, such as the [Area Profiles](#), [Economic Bulletins](#), and [Town Centre Health Checks](#). In the last 12 months the Team has undertaken the annual audits and reported on the 9 main towns in the Town Centre Health checks, and in 2022 this was further expanded to include an additional 8 Aberdeenshire academy towns.

The Team has also been involved with preparation of Local Place Plan (LPPs) guidance and the development of a [dedicated LPP webpage](#) that provides communities with the

relevant guidance, an information note and other resources about these new plans and also how communities might go about developing a LPP for their place. In addition to the webpage the Team presented at online Community Forum events focussed on Local Place Plans.

In work that will in due course support communities with LPPs, the Team have begun the process of updating and developing an Aberdeenshire wide Facilities Monitor, which is developed from the Rural Facilities Monitor. Since 1981 [The Rural Facilities Monitor](#) has tracked changes in the provision of services in rural areas of Aberdeenshire, and following a review and in light of emerging place-based approaches and policy, this monitoring has been expanded to include all settlements across Aberdeenshire. Site visits have been undertaken to all (circa 200) settlements across the region and the Team will continue to develop this important and expanded workstream over the coming year.

The Team continues to support and lead projects that contribute to regeneration and place making ambitions in Aberdeenshire. The turn of the year saw the completion of the urban realm improvements at Bridge Street, Banff (see case studies in previous [PPFs](#)). This programme of works saw the delivery of enhanced lighting, cycle parking, electric charging points as well as the use of high-quality traditional materials being incorporated to complement the town centre Conservation Area. In Fraserburgh, there has been Team support for the Beach Masterplan, a project that

aims to capitalise on the town's natural asset and explore how the waterfront could contribute more to the local economy and to overall community and social wellbeing and healthy lifestyles. A Case Study entitled "[Fraserburgh Beach Masterplan](#)" is included in the Quality of Outcomes section. Similarly, in the Peterhead 2040 Project the Team are supporting valuable placemaking and regeneration efforts, with the development of the Visual Framework and Vision for Success for the town. A Case Study entitled "[Peterhead 2040](#)" is included in the Quality of Service and Engagement section.

Overall, it has been a busy and challenging year, that has seen the Planning Information and Delivery Team work right across the Aberdeenshire local authority area and alongside multiple different services, stakeholders, communities, and key agencies. It has also been a year where the Team continues to take a 'One Aberdeenshire' approach in its work to help unlock sites and expedite the delivery of projects across the region, and to continue to use the best quality data to inform strategy, decision-making and delivery.

Performance Markers

Response to 2021-22 Feedback

This section relates to the RAG ratings feedback received from the Scottish Government on the previous PPF 11 (2021-22). In relation to PPF 11, out of the 14 Key Performance Marker Areas, 1 was awarded a red rating (Local Development Plan - less than 5 years since adoption), 3 were awarded an amber rating (Decision-making; Legal Agreements; and Stalled Sites/Legacy Cases) and the remaining 10 were awarded a green rating. These are summarised below and reported back with a response for 2022-23.

2021-22 Performance Marker	Feedback and RAG RATING from 2021-22 - Overall Amber	2022-23 Response
<p>1. Decision-making: continuous reduction of average timescales for all development categories.</p>	<p>Major applications – Your timescales of 49.4 weeks are slower than the previous year and slower than the Scottish average of 44.6. Red</p> <p>Local (Non – Householder) Applications – Your timescales of 12.9 weeks are slower than the previous year but faster than the Scottish average of 13.5. Amber</p> <p>Householder Applications – Your timescales of 7.8 weeks are the same as the previous year but faster than the Scottish average of 8.7 and the statutory timescales. Green</p>	<p>It was explained in Case Study 2 of PPF 11 (2021-22) that the increase in the average timescales for Majors was predominantly down to one complex legacy case. There has been an improvement in timescales this year to 21.4 average weeks - see Case Study 2 (Performance in Development Management – Major Applications).</p> <p>Due to continued issues with recruitment, vacancies and staff capacity, there have been challenges in this category of development. Whilst slower than last year at 14.9 average weeks, it is considered that overall, a reasonable level of performance has still been achieved. Enhanced recruitment tools are being employed. See Case Study 1 (Performance in Development Management).</p> <p>Despite the continued issues with recruitment, vacancies and staff capacity, the level of performance in this category of development has remained constant at 7.8 average weeks and remains within statutory time periods. See Case Study 1 (Performance in Development Management).</p>

2021-22 Performance Marker	Feedback and RAG RATING from 2021-22 - Overall Amber	2022-23 Response
<p>4. Legal Agreements: conclude (or reconsider) applications after resolving to grant permission reducing number of live applications more than 6 months after resolution to grant (from last reporting period).</p>	<p>Amber Your average timescales for determining applications with legal agreements are slower than last year and slower than the Scottish average. This is partially due to an increase in the number of applications with legal agreements, especially with a large timescale for one major application.</p>	<p>See Part 5A Official Statistics of this PPF. Overall timescales for applications with legal agreements has marginally improved from 47.3 average weeks to 44.7 average weeks with the number of agreements (without PPAs - 25) being broadly similar to last year (27).</p>
<p>7. Local Development Plan: less than 5 years since adoption.</p>	<p>Red LDP is more than 5 years old – 5 years 1 month. We note a timetable is in place for the new LDP to be adopted by the end of 2022.</p>	<p>The red rating awarded is disappointing because the delay in adopting LDP 2023 which replaced LDP 2017 was outwith the control of the Planning Authority. The 10 month over-run in the LDP programme can be attributed to the Covid Pandemic (1 month) the length of time taken for the Examination (15 months against a programmed 9 month duration (+6 months)) and the length of time taken for Ministers to advise that we could adopt the Local Development Plan (4 months against programmed 1 month (+3 months)). It was eventually adopted on 13 January 2023. It is not considered that there are any lessons that can be learnt by the Council from this outcome as the anticipated time to be taken for both the Examination and consideration by Ministers is governed by guidance in Circular 6/2013 Development Planning.</p>
<p>14. Stalled sites/legacy cases: conclusion/withdrawal of old planning applications and reducing number of live applications more than one year old.</p>	<p>Amber You have cleared 51 cases during the reporting year; 52 remain which is a slight increase since last year. Report acknowledges that 23 of the remaining cases currently have a PPA in place and since 2015 there is a dedicated legacy case strategy in place.</p>	<p>See Part 4B National Key Outcomes – Development Management of this PPF. Despite the challenges faced by recruitment, vacancies and staff capacity, the number of legacy cases that have been cleared in this reporting year has increased to 66. Last year it was 51. In addition, the number remaining as of the end of March 2023 is 44. This is 8 less than at the same time last year (51). This shows the continued efforts to progress such applications in line with the wider legacy case strategy. Of the 66 cleared, 43 had PPAs in place with 30 issued within the required timescales. Reasons for this vary but some of this is outwith the Councils control with applicants/agents not willing to formally extend PPAs. For the remaining 44 legacy cases at the end of March 2023, 20 are the subject of a PPA.</p>

Part 1:

Qualitative Narrative Case Studies



Quality of Outcomes

Case Studies

1. **Aberdeenshire Council Planning Performance in Development Management 2022-23**
2. **Aberdeenshire Council Planning Performance – Major Applications 2022-23**
3. **APP/2022/2690 – Major Development – Erection of 3 Retail Units (Class 1), Cafe Unit (Class 3) with Associated Drive Thru Lane etc, Land to The North of Tesco Store, Hill Of Banchory, Banchory**
4. **Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023 Examination and Adoption**
5. **Fraserburgh Beach Vision and Masterplan**
6. **APP/2022/2518 & 2519 – Local Development – Alterations and Extension to Dwellinghouse and Erection of 1.4m Wall, 1 West Street, Johnshaven**
7. **Fraserburgh Town Centre – Kirk Brae and Glover Gardens Public Realm**
8. **Huntly Arms Hotel, Aboyne – Amenity Notice and Collaboration**

Case Study 1.

Aberdeenshire Council Planning Performance in Development Management 2022-23

Location and Dates:

Aberdeenshire Council,
April 2022 – March 2023

Elements of a High Quality Planning Service this study relates to:

- Quality of outcomes
- Quality of service and engagement
- Governance

Key Markers:

- 1 – Decision – making
- 12 – Corporate working across services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit

Key Areas of Work:

- Development Management Processes
- Planning Applications
- Interdisciplinary Working
- Collaborative Working
- Performance Monitoring
- Project Management

Stakeholders Involved:

- General Public
- Local Developers
- Key Agencies
- Planning Committee
- Authority Planning Staff
- Authority Other Staff

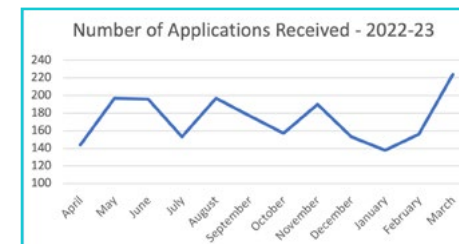
Overview:

Throughout the PPF reporting year, the focus for development management has remained with ensuring business continuity, customer care and maintaining a good level of performance in terms of average decision-making timescales. Development management staff now work in a hybrid pattern with a mix of home and office working. The primary challenge to the performance and delivery of development management during this reporting year has remained recruitment, vacancy management and staffing capacity with a significant number of vacancies arising across the development management teams throughout the year and challenges in filling these posts. However, despite these continuous staffing capacity challenges, overall performance levels in relation to planning application decision timescales have remained at a reasonable level. The use of Planning Processing Agreements (PPAs) and agreed Extension of Time tools have continued to be used to project management cases where delays were occurring due to the various challenges faced by all parties involved in planning application assessment and determination processes.

The feedback on last year’s PPF provided an overall amber rating in the decision – making key marker category. In 2021-22,

Major applications (49.4 average weeks) were slower than the previous year and slower than the Scottish average of 44.6. A red rating was given. Local (non-householder) applications (12.9 average weeks) were marginally slower than the previous year but they were faster than the Scottish average of 13.5. An amber rating was given. Householder applications (7.8 average weeks) were exactly the same as the previous year and were faster than the Scottish average (8.7) and still within the statutory timescale of 8 weeks. A green rating was given.

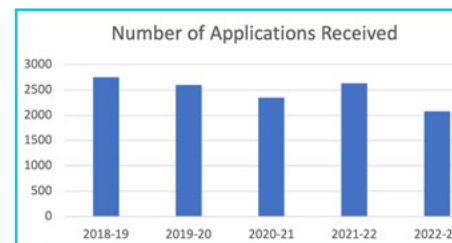
The total number of applications received and validated decreased to 2082 compared to the 2633 received and validated the previous year. The numbers per month fluctuated with the greater numbers received and validated being in the months of May, June, August and November of 2022 and March of 2023. The least amount of applications received and validated were in the months of April 2022 and January 2023.



Over the reporting year, including applications that used a PPA or Extension of Time tool, 1972 planning applications were determined. For 2021-22 this figure was 2329.

Performance in Major applications is reported in more detail in [Case Study 2](#). A total of 22 applications for major development were determined 11 of which were not the subject of a PPA. The average weeks total taken for these 11 applications is 21.4. This is quicker than the 49.4 weeks recorded in 2021-22.

Performance in Local (non-householder) application decision-making is considered to be maintained at a reasonable level taking account of the challenges raised by staff capacity and vacancies. Last year, 61.9% of applications were determined in less than 2 months. This year the percentage figure is 60.2%. In terms of average weeks, the figure last year was 12.9. This year the figure is 14.9 weeks.



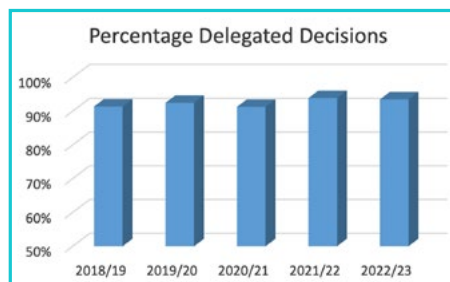
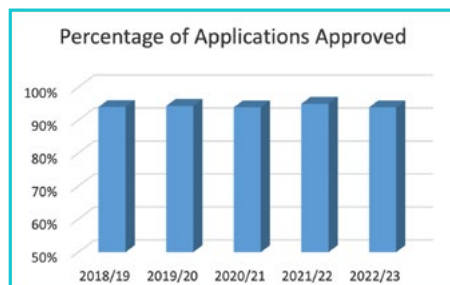
Case Study 1.

Aberdeenshire Council Planning Performance in Development Management 2022-23

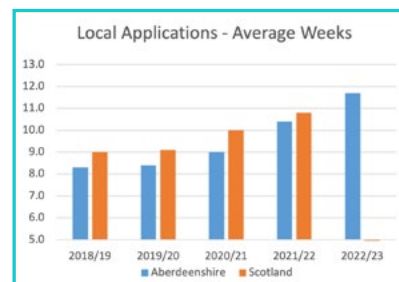
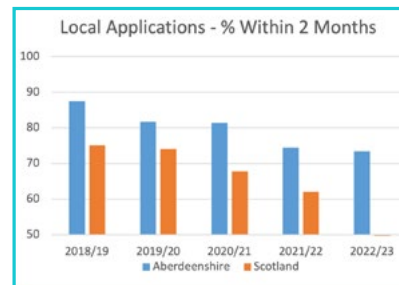
This 14.9 weeks figure is slower than the previous year (by 2 weeks), and is marginally slower than the national average weeks figure of 13.5 recorded for 2021-22.

Performance in Householder application decision-making has stayed overall consistent with the previous year. Last year the percentage figure determined within 2 months was 88.2%. This year the figure is 89.3%. In terms of average weeks taken compared to last year, the figure is exactly the same at 7.8. At 7.8 average weeks this remains quicker than the national average weeks timescale of 8.7 reported in 2021-22 and it remains faster than the statutory timescale of 8 weeks.

Rates of approval and delegation continue to remain consistently high with 93.9% of applications approved and 93.5% of applications decided through delegated powers. This reporting year was the first full year following the review of the Council's Scheme of Governance/Powers of Delegation to Officers for planning applications but there have been no significant changes in terms of the numbers of applications approved/refused or for those determined through delegated powers.



In terms of all local developments, (excluding those on PPAs) in 2021-22, 74.4% were decided in less than 2 months, equating to 10.4 average weeks timescales. In 2022-23, 73.4% of all local development applications (excluding those on PPAs) were decided in less than two months, with the average weeks timescales being 11.7.



Goals:

Due to the continued impact of recruitment, vacancy management and staffing capacity the main focus has remained on achieving business continuity but at the same time maintaining a reasonable level of performance in relation to performance indicators while still seeking quality outcomes and maintaining a quality customer service.

Outcomes:

Taking account of the challenges faced in terms of staffing capacity and resources and acknowledging the lower number of applications received in 2022-23 compared to previous years, the figures achieved, in relation to the decision-making timescales key marker areas are regarded as satisfactory. While the Local (non-householder) development category has been a challenge, the performance has remained at reasonable level and has not dropped significantly. Performance in Major developments has improved and performance in Householder developments has remained at a consistently high level.

Name of key officer:

Neil C Stewart – Team Manager (Development Management)

Case Study 2.

Aberdeenshire Council Planning Performance in Development Management – Major Applications 2022-23

Location and Dates:

Aberdeenshire Council,
April 2022 – March 2023

Elements of a High Quality Planning Service this study relates to:

- Quality of outcomes
- Quality of service and engagement
- Governance

Key Markers:

1 – Decision – making
12 – Corporate working across services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit

Key Areas of Work:

- Development Management Processes
- Planning Applications
- Interdisciplinary Working
- Collaborative Working
- Performance Monitoring
- Project Management

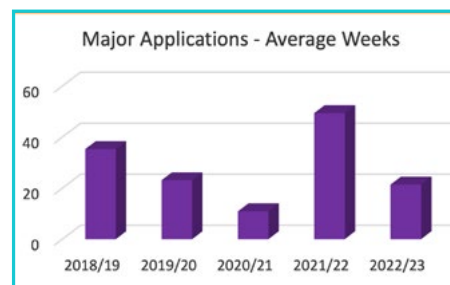
Stakeholders Involved:

- General Public
- Local Developers
- Key Agencies
- Planning Committee
- Authority Planning Staff
- Authority Other Staff

Overview:

[Case Study 1](#) focusses on Aberdeenshire Council’s overall performance primarily on local and other development types.

The Scottish Government Statistics ([Part 5 of this PPF](#)) provides details of the number of Major applications determined in the reporting year but excludes those that were the subject of Planning Processing Agreements (PPAs). While PPAs are promoted for all Major applications of the 22 Major applications determined in this reporting year 11 were the subject of a PPA and 11 were not. Of the 11 applications not on a PPA, 7 applications (64%) were determined within the statutory 4 month determination period. For the 11 applications not on a PPA, the average weeks timescale was recorded at 21.4. This is quicker than the 49.4 weeks figure recorded in 2021-22.



To view any of the applications mentioned in this case study on the public access register

please use [this link](#) and input the application reference number (eg APP/2021/0546) in the search box.

For the 4 applications that had no agreed PPA in place and failed to meet the statutory 4 month time determination period, only 1 was a legacy case. This was refused and was for the formation of a Quarry at Newmachar – APP/2021/0546. It was a complex case and required several reports to various Area Committees due to its geographical location and the Scheme of Governance. The subsequent appeal to the DPEA resulted in a dismissal of the appeal.

For the other 3 applications that had no agreed PPA in place and failed to meet the statutory 4 – month determination time period, these all related to minerals or energy related infrastructure proposals and as such were technical in nature with a number of consultations and Committee processes.

APP/2021/2681 – HVDC Electrical Converter Station etc. Boddam.

APP/2022/1102 – Section 42 application for Continued Extraction of Sand and Gravel, Drumoak.

APP/2022/1988 – Grid Battery Energy Storage Facilities etc. near Fraserburgh

For the 11 Major development applications that did use a PPA, 10 were determined within their agreed PPA timescales. Of the 11 applications that did use a PPA, 3 were legacy cases of a complex nature that needed Committee consideration and/or legal agreements. One dated from 2020 and two dated from 2021.

APP/2020/1713 – 237 Houses etc. Phase 3B, Osprey Heights, Inverurie.

APP/2021/0034 – Grid Stability Facility and Associated Infrastructure – Rothienorman.

APP/2021/1937 – Extension to Quarry etc. King Edward, Banff.

The single application that was the subject of a PPA but where the agreed timescale set out in the PPA for determination was not met related to a Solar Farm near Ellon APP/2022/0838. It was reported to the relevant Area Committee within the agreed PPA time period but due to post Committee procedures the issuing of the decision missed the PPA agreement date by 11 days.

The 7 remaining applications that were not the subject of a PPA but were determined within the 4 – month statutory determination period included proposals for minerals development, windfarm development, and retail development ([see Case Study 3](#)).

Case Study 2.

Aberdeenshire Council Planning Performance in Development Management – Major Applications 2022-23

The use of PPAs is promoted for all major applications and the use of these has continued to prove useful as a project management tool for those where PPAs were agreed.

Summary breakdown of all Major Applications is below:

- 22 – total number issued during the reporting period
- 11 – number project managed with use of a PPA
- 10 – number issued within the agreed PPA timescale
- 11 – number issued with no PPA
- 4 – number issued with no PPA (beyond statutory 4 – month determination period)
- 7 – number issued with no PPA (within statutory 4 – month determination period).

Goals:

There continues to be a commitment to maintaining and improving performance in the quantitative and qualitative elements of the assessment and determination of Major planning applications through the use of project management tools, collaborative working, and improving pre-application discussions.

Outcomes:

The use of PPAs, as a project management tool, for all Major applications continues to be promoted. The number of Major applications determined was greater by 6 than in 2021-22. Of the 22 Major applications determined (with or without a PPA) only 4 were legacy cases. The remaining 18 were all progressed to determination prior to becoming a legacy case. The overall average figure at 21.4 weeks (those not on a PPA) is an improvement on the 2021-22 figure (49.4).

Name of key officer:

Neil C Stewart – Team Manager
(Development Management)



Cairn O'Mount

Case Study 3.

APP/2022/2690 - Major Development – Erection of 3 Retail Units (Class 1), Café Unit (Class 3) with Associated Drive Thru Lane etc, Land to North of Tesco Store, Hill of Banchory, Banchory

Location and Dates:

Banchory – October 2022 to March 2023

Elements of a High Quality Planning

Service this study relates to:

- Quality of outcomes
- Quality of service and engagement

Key Markers:

- 1 – Decision-making
- 3 – Early collaboration with applicants and consultees on planning applications
- 12 – Corporate working across services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit

Key Areas of Work:

- Development Management Processes
- Planning Applications
- Interdisciplinary Working
- Collaborative Working

Stakeholders Involved:

- Local Developers
- Authority Planning Staff
- Authority Other Staff
- Planning Committee

Overview:

An initial introductory pre-application meeting was held on 3 October 2022 with the developer and their agents and Aberdeenshire Council’s Planning Manager, Kincardine & Mearns/Marr Team Manager,

Senior Planner for the area, the Roads Development Manager and Principal Roads Engineer for the area. This was to discuss the proposal and the process for determination. Initial feedback was given on the early draft proposals tabled and the applicants/agents were advised to submit a formal Major development pre-application enquiry. The site is a retail allocation in the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023.

The formal pre-application enquiry was submitted on 7 October 2022, whereupon relevant consultees were engaged. A formal response to the enquiry was provided by the Planning Service on 24 October 2022. This identified all supporting information that would be required, included reference to consultee responses, and suggested amendments to the design and layout. There was also encouragement given to incorporating renewable energy technology and better pedestrian connectivity into the development.

The formal Major application (APP/2022/2690) was submitted on 23 December 2022. To view the application mentioned in this case study on the public access register please use [this link](#) and input the application reference number APP/2022/2690 in the search box. This lacked some key supporting information that was requested in the pre-application

response but took account of the suggested amended layout and connectivity issues. Consultees were engaged again, once relevant supporting information was provided, including an external retail consultant who had been procured in advance of the formal submission. Issues that arose were promptly relayed to the applicant’s agent and addressed accordingly. The application was fully assessed and then reported to the Marr Area Committee on 28 March 2023, with the comprehensive report allowing the Committee to unanimously agree to support the application. The decision notice was issued that same day.

Goals:

The proposal sought to deliver development on the allocated OP5 Retail site within the Banchory Settlement Statement within the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023. The proposal was a Major Development, and was considered to bring significant local economic benefit. It was therefore of importance in terms of the local economy and strategic vision for the growth of Banchory. The aim of the process was to allow for the timely handling of the application within statutory time period for a Major application, so as to help maintain the Council’s delivery of performance in Major developments, and ensure the economic benefits could be delivered efficiently.

Outcomes:

Effective pre-application meetings to discuss the process and timescales with the developer led to effective formal pre-application engagement where consultees and the Planning Service were able to outline requirements and provide useful feedback. Whilst the application did not include all identified supporting material upon submission, the constant dialogue between planning staff and the applicant’s agent led to effective handling of the application and efficient resolution of any issues arising following consultation. The thorough submission, assessment and reporting of the application allowed the Marr Area Committee to make a fully informed decision at their meeting, allowing the application to proceed to approval well within the statutory 4-month determination period. It also delivered a quality outcome and development that met with policy requirements and objectives.

Name of key officer:

Neil Mair – Senior Planner

Case Study 3.

APP/2022/2690 - Major Development – Erection of 3 Retail Units (Class 1), Café Unit (Class 3) with Associated Drive Thru Lane etc, Land to North of Tesco Store, Hill of Banchory, Banchory



APP-2022-2690

Case Study 4.

Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023 Examination and Adoption

Location and Dates:

Aberdeenshire – May 2022 to June 2023

Elements of a High Quality Planning

Service this study relates to:

- Quality of outcomes
- Quality of service and engagement

Key Markers:

- 7 – LDP (or LP) less than 5 years since adoption
- 9 – Stakeholders including Elected Members, industry, agencies, the public and Scottish Government engaged appropriately through all key stages of development plan preparation
- 12 – Corporate working across services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit
- 15 – Developer contributions: clear expectations set out in development plan

Key Areas of Work:

- Local Development Plan & Supplementary Guidance
- Project Management
- Interdisciplinary Working
- Collaborative Working
- Community Engagement

Stakeholders Involved:

- General Public
- Local Developers
- Key Agencies

- Elected Members
- Authority Planning Staff
- Authority Other Staff

Overview:

The outcomes from the examination and adoption of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023 provides an opportunity to review the outcomes achieved by the team responsible for the Local Development Plan, both over the last year, and more generally throughout preparation of the Plan itself.

Goals:

Principle goals from this process were to deliver an adopted Local Development Plan within five years of the adoption of the previous plan, that met the Service objective of “*doing what we say we are going to do*” in relation to the engagement activities undertaken, and that the plan contributed to both local and national policy outcomes. These are measures of quality that go beyond technical production of a Local Development Plan.

Outcomes:

The [Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023](#) was adopted on 13 January 2023. While the original work programme anticipated adoption of a new Local Development Plan in March 2022 this deadline was not met. All targets were

achieved up to the point of the publication of the Proposed Local Development Plan, but the Covid Pandemic and the sheer scale of the examination of the plan caused exceptional delays that resulted in Aberdeenshire having an out-of-date LDP for a period of approximately 9 months. This is the first time since the Regulations were published in 2009 that Aberdeenshire Council has been in this position. The last stages of the programme were the result of unanticipated matters out with the Council’s control, these being; the Covid Pandemic; delays in the examination; and delays in the assessment of the Modified Proposed Plan by Scottish Ministers.

A single outcome indicates that we “*did what we said we would do*” in terms of engagement. The Participation Scheme was accepted as competent by Scottish Ministers, reflecting that no false promises were made in the Development Plan Scheme for the Proposed Plan and confirming that the extraordinary measures put in place to engage with all stakeholders had been successful. The means by which we responded to and undertook engagement on the Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2020 – Delivering Digital Engagement During a Pandemic – was commended in the 2021 Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning.

The examination of the Plan demonstrated that the approach that was taken was based on a wide common understanding of the issues that required to be addressed with very few issues being contentious. Discussions on housing land supply demonstrated the agreement between the Council and the development industry, with limited argument on issues relating to the scale of development that should be encouraged.

Rural housing land supply was found to be adequate but, in the Aberdeen Housing Market Area, three new sites were added to the plan to resolve an identified deficit. One new employment land site was also added, and further supplementary guidance was required to clarify matters relating largely to developer funding of improvements to trunk roads.

In the final analysis by Scottish Ministers only one issue within National Policy was felt to have been inadequately addressed. Ministers added emphasis to the policy on the commercial development of peat to the plan. This reflects that the Local Development Plan had adequately reinforced all other National Policy outcomes.

Case Study 4.

Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023 Examination and Adoption

The adoption of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023 provides a clear demonstration that the team involved in its preparation has provided a high-quality outcome for the Planning Service and the communities of Aberdeenshire.

Name of key officer

Piers Blaxter – Team Leader (Planning Policy)



River Dee, Drumoak

Case Study 5.

Fraserburgh Beach Vision and Masterplan

Location and Dates:

Fraserburgh – project started Sept 2022 – ongoing throughout reporting period

Elements of a High Quality Planning Service this study relates to:

- Quality of outcomes
- Quality of service and engagement

Key Markers:

12 – Corporate working across services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit

Key Areas of Work:

- Regeneration
- Environment
- Masterplanning
- Economic Development
- Collaborative Working
- Community Engagement
- Placemaking
- Charrettes

Stakeholders Involved:

- General Public
- Hard to reach groups
- Authority Planning Staff
- Authority Other Staff

Overview:

Fraserburgh is one of Aberdeenshire’s priority regeneration towns and consistently ranks poorly in terms of many indices of

multiple deprivations. The most recent Strategic Needs Assessment (2022) identified some of the key strategic issues which are currently facing Fraserburgh. These include: opportunities for young people; household income disparities and poor health and wellbeing outcomes.

The striking beach in Fraserburgh is one of the town’s greatest assets. Over the past 2 – 3 years there has been a significant increase in people using the beach area on a more regular basis for both formal activities such as organised water sports and informal activities such as dog walking. Much of this can be attributed to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and changes in domestic holiday arrangements due to travel restrictions and more recently to cost of living pressures.

Aberdeenshire Council, working with partners in the town, identified the opportunity to consolidate and build on this interest to explore how the waterfront could contribute more to the local economy and to overall community and social wellbeing and healthy lifestyles, linking back to the strategic drivers for the town. Unlike many recreational assets in the town, the beach is a social leveller as it does not have to cost money to enjoy it. It was felt that a series of sensible and sensitive developments and improvements to the wider beach area



Fraserburgh Front and Beach Area

could result in significant long-term socio-economic and regeneration benefits as has been seen recently in the town centre.

This work actually started back in 2019 when an initial community stakeholder consultation was held and a draft Action Plan was developed but never progressed due to the pandemic. To build upon this previous work, a draft Vision and Masterplan brief was developed which set out to find a multi-disciplinary consultancy to support Aberdeenshire Council and the local

community with the creation of a long-term spatial vision and masterplan for the wider beach esplanade area of Fraserburgh.

In Autumn 2022, Kevin Murray Associates (KMA) were appointed as lead consultants in a consortium along with Rob Thompson Urbanism and Willie Miller Urban Design. Working in partnership with Aberdeenshire Council, the consultants have assisted in designing and running bespoke workshops, created community surveys and organised a series of engagement events and activities.

Case Study 5.

Fraserburgh Beach Vision and Masterplan

An aligned social media campaign has tried to keep the project in the forefront of peoples minds whilst work is ongoing to create a masterplan and vision for Fraserburgh beach with the outcomes of this engagement work at the heart of it.

The project is ongoing at this time, with future community workshops (online and in person) scheduled for summer 2023 to discuss priorities and outcomes and to present, and seek feedback on, options. A finalised Vision and Masterplan document will be published later in the year.

Goals:

The aim of this project is to create a spatial [Vision and Masterplan](#) for the wider Beach Esplanade area in Fraserburgh. The goal is to improve the socio-economic contribution that the waterfront makes to the town and is a key regeneration priority in the settlement.

The Masterplan will set a clear, long-term direction for the appropriate and sensitive improvement of the area to create a destination that retains its natural charm and attractiveness, but also becomes a stronger economic and social asset to the benefit of everyone who lives, works and visits the town. The Masterplan will be based on thorough engagement and participation to ensure that it is reflective of community ambition and stands the test of time. Projects resulting from the plan will be

delivered over many years so it is important that the plan retains its relevance and community ownership in the long-term.

This project is part of a multi-faceted approach to regeneration of the area, bringing together various Council Services, other agencies, and the local community. The end product will be an evidence-based, community driven place strategy and masterplan for the wider Esplanade area. It is anticipated that it can be developed in such a way as to inform future Local Development Plans and be underpinned by leading principles of NPF4. It will identify a pipeline of short, medium and longer-term opportunities that will in turn inform future investment opportunities and funding bids.

Importantly, the Council has sought to learn from the master-planning process, to help inform future work. It was agreed upfront with the consultants' team that the process would be co-designed and co-delivered with the Council, so that we could upskill officers and apply the principles and techniques to other projects in the future. The engagement work is taking place across 3 distinct 'blocks' of activity, with a logical sequence of progression between each. The whole process is expected to take approximately 12 months and has intentionally not been rushed to ensure thorough and considered engagement.

Strategically, the project is being driven by the Fraserburgh Regeneration Partnership, a multi-stakeholder group representing public, business and third sector interests. Aberdeenshire Council are leading on the delivery of the project with the consultants team. Within the Council, officers from Economic Development, Planning and the Banff & Buchan Area team are working collaboratively to ensure that the masterplan has cross-service and corporate visibility. Local Councillors are heavily engaged and involved in the process, with full cross-party support for the initiative.

Outcomes:

At this stage, nine public consultation events have been held with several more planned. Events have ranged from general 'drop-in' consultation formats loosely using charette and planning for real principles to engage, to more intensive focused workshops. This work has led to a huge amount of qualitative input and data from a wide cross-section of the community. Several hundred people have participated in these events.

This has been supplemented by an online survey designed to get volume data on people's priorities and perhaps catch some of those who wouldn't attend a public event. Over 800 people responded to this survey between October and December 2022. A further survey amongst school-age children – supported by the local schools – generated

around 300 replies. Specific work has also been done with users of day care services and residents in sheltered accommodation.

As one of the key strategic issues facing Fraserburgh, opportunities for young people was an important aspect to consider in the engagement process. To do this, events were arranged with Fraserburgh Academy and younger students from feeder schools to create activities to get the students to think about the beach area and what they would like to see at it. One 'challenge session' was held in November 2022 (attended by around 45 learners from the Academy and 8 of the cluster schools). This session was about harnessing the imaginations of youth and resulted in a wide set of ideas, ranging from the achievable to the fanciful. The key aim of these workshops was to involve the children in thinking about the future development and uses of the area. A further session is planned with the schools in June 2023 to focus on 'play and hang-out space'. Participation of the school pupils was considered important as, although not mandatory for this exercise, involving children and young people in the preparation of the Local Development Plan is as set out in the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019.

Case Study 5.

Fraserburgh Beach Vision and Masterplan

Workshops which engaged children were considered a useful tool to not only input into the masterplan project, but also to engage them in a planning related activity and to get them thinking about their place.

One of the striking outcomes of the process so far is the consensus amongst most participants about a) the current shortcomings of the beach area, and b) the opportunities and likely solutions. There is also a strong degree of consistency with the conclusions reached in 2019 from the earlier engagement work that had to be paused due to the pandemic.

The final outcome will be an evidence – led masterplan, recognised and owned by the community that can be used to drive improvements in the future. It is anticipated that a series of short, medium and long – term interventions will be identified for the Council and the community to work together to bring forward.

Name of key officers:

Alastair Rhind - Strategic Regeneration Executive
Jenny Ash - Information and Project Officer



Fraserburgh Harbour

Case Study 6.

APP/2022/2518 & 2519 – Local Development – Alterations and Extension to Dwellinghouse etc, 1 West Street, Johnshaven

Location and Dates:

Johnshaven – July 2022 – February 2023

Elements of a High Quality Planning Service this study relates to:

- Quality of outcomes
- Quality of service and engagement

Key Markers:

- 1 – Decision making
- 3 – Early collaboration with applicants and consultees on planning applications
- 12 – Corporate working across services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit

Key Areas of Work:

- Design
- Conservation
- Development Management Processes
- Planning Applications
- Interdisciplinary Working
- Collaborative Working

Stakeholders Involved:

- Local Developers
- Authority Planning Staff
- Authority Other Staff (Environment – Built Heritage)

Overview:

These applications sought Listed Building Consent and Full Planning Permission for internal and external alterations along with

the erection of a 11/2 storey contemporary extension to a C-listed 2 storey property located within the Conservation Area of Johnshaven. Initially the proposal sought a large mono-pitched side extension to replace a single storey store, which attracted public concern and also concern from the local Community Council. Upon review of this proposal in consultation with the Built Heritage Environment Planner, it was the opinion that this proposal could not be supported due to the visual impact it would have on the character and setting of the listed building and surrounding Conservation Area, as well as amenity issues.

To view any of the applications mentioned in this case study on the public access register please use [this link](#) and input the application reference number (e.g., APP/2022/1909) in the search box.

As such the Development Management Team alongside colleagues in Environment Built Heritage facilitated discussion with the agent and provided constructive and detailed feedback. This resulted in the withdrawal of the original applications (APP/2022/1909 and APP/2022/1912) to allow more time to engage in formal pre – application discussions to scope the nature and extent of a suitable, simplified and more appropriate revised design proposal.

Alternative design proposals were discussed at a productive and positive face-to-face meeting and the agent took on board the feedback provided.

Following the negotiations, a revised design proposal was submitted, which was significantly reduced in scale and design and this was ultimately considered acceptable to the Planning Service (APP/2022/2518 and APP/2022/2519).

The proposed extension is subordinate to the dwellinghouse and allows the original dwellinghouse to remain dominant in the overall context of the site and protects the character and appearance of the listed building being located on a secondary elevation. The proposal also enhances the conservation area in its design and use of high-quality materials. The revised proposals also alleviated previous amenity concerns and consequently there were no issues raised by third parties.

Goals:

- to provide successful engagement with the agent, to achieve a quality design which protected and enhanced the listed building and character and setting of the Johnshaven Conservation Area as well as the amenity of the surrounding neighbouring properties;

- to provide certainty and a positive customer experience through effective communication of advice, information requirements and timescales, and one-stop meetings with relevant Council Officers;

- to ensure collaborative working which allowed for detailed design work to be undertaken without compromising the objectives of the applicant and agent;

- to facilitate early discussion with consultees to minimise delay in the revised application determination process.

Outcomes:

The agent has provided positive feedback to the Planning Service on the amended design. The work undertaken on this development proposal, has demonstrated that site specific and detailed design elements are fundamental to achieving quality developments which contribute to the appearance and character of an important historical area.

It has demonstrated the value of early and effective engagement as well as creating an environment for developing good working relationships with stakeholders.

Case Study 6.

APP/2022/2518 & 2519 – Local Development – Alterations and Extension to Dwellinghouse etc, 1 West Street, Johnshaven

It has also demonstrated the importance of collaborative working and sharing expertise with Built Heritage colleagues in relation to conservation of historic buildings to ensure that a full package of information was submitted and to address and resolve design concerns. This process led to a favourable outcome for all parties.

Name of key officer:

Ann Grant – Planner (Development Management)

Front approach prospective

APP-2022-2518-3D-Perspectives



Rear garden prospective



Johnshaven Harbour

Case Study 7.

Kirk Brae and Glover Gardens Public Realm Project - Fraserburgh

Location and Dates:

Fraserburgh Town Centre – June 2021 to October 2022

Elements of a High Quality Planning Service this study relates to:

- Quality of outcomes
- Quality of service and engagement

Key Areas of Work:

- Regeneration
- Town Centres
- Community Engagement
- Placemaking

Stakeholders Involved:

- General Public
- Business Owners
- Authority Planning Staff
- Authority Economic Development Staff
- Authority Roads Department
- External Contractors

Overview:

[Fraserburgh 2021](#) heritage led regeneration scheme was a 6-year programme funded through Heritage Lottery Fund, Historic Environment Scotland, Aberdeenshire Council, Scottish Government and owners' contributions. During 2022-23 the final public realm improvement schemes were implemented including Kirk Brae and Glover Garden's, both situated in Fraserburgh Town Centre.

Kirk Brae included the complete resurfacing of the roads and pathways running in front of the flagship project the Faithlie Centre, and adjacent another public realm improvement scheme, Saltoun Mausoleum. The project included improvements in accessibility, materials, bike stands, signage, seating and a scheme of planting to bring green space back into the Town Centre. This created a design and pattern of materials that can be rolled out in further streetscape improvements within the town.

Glover Gardens saw the complete transformation of a derelict site into a Japanese memorial garden dedicated to Thomas Blake Glover, one of Fraserburgh's most successful former residents and founder of Mitsubishi. The site was the location of his former home, and the design was based on his garden in Nagasaki, Japan where he spent most of his life. The project created a much-needed public space, a more welcoming environment and included a sculpture by Kenny Hunter who recently exhibited in Aberdeen Art Gallery.

The projects together have created a more welcoming Town Centre in Fraserburgh.



Case Study 7.

Kirk Brae and Glover Gardens Public Realm Project - Fraserburgh

Goals:

The goals of both the environmental improvement schemes were to use the catalyst of heritage led regeneration to identify and utilise the placemaking qualities of the town centre of Fraserburgh. This would be achieved by developing public realm improvements with the aim to stimulate footfall in the town. Prior to the implementation of the projects the town centre was unattractive, scruffy, and unwelcoming. The aims of the projects were to create inviting, attractive, interesting, and accessible places within the town centre that would attract visitors and residents in, and more importantly encourage them to stay within the town centre. The ultimate goal being to boost the economy, support town centre businesses and encourage civic pride within the community.

Outcomes:

Glover Garden was a former derelict site which was the original location of the home of Thomas Blake Glover, an important industrialist and entrepreneur most notable for being a founding member of the Mitsubishi organisation. Aberdeenshire Council collaborated with the owner of the site to develop the derelict land into a publicly accessible memorial garden. The overall project cost £136,590 and was funded through the owner, Economic Development (Regeneration Funding),

Scottish Government, Aberdeenshire Council, Heritage Lottery Fund and Historic Environment Scotland. Rankin Fraser, Landscape Architects were appointed and designed a Japanese themed space based on the home Thomas Blake Glover would have enjoyed in Nagasaki. The site also includes places to sit, interpretation and a sculpture by Kenny Hunter of Thomas Blake Glover as a young boy. The site has now been handed back to the owner who opens the site to the public daily and maintains the property. This has resulted in an attractive civic space that celebrates one of Fraserburgh's most famous and influential residents.

Kirk Brae was part of the wider public realm improvements which also included the restoration and relocation of the Temperance Fountain dated to 1889 and the conservation, restoration, and interpretation of the category 'B' Saltoun Mausoleum. The full scheme seeing a spend of £648,794 funded through Aberdeenshire Council, Scottish Government, Heritage Lottery Fund and Historic Environment Scotland. The scheme included the complete re-surfacing of the pavement and road area down Kirk Brae and in front of the Mausoleum. The scheme included an attractive material palette which complimented the existing local vernacular. It incorporated areas of planting, seating, bike stands and signage.

This has created a more attractive, accessible, and welcoming space with key historic monuments preserved and interpreted to create interest in the town. This project has now created a template of materials and planting schemes that can be utilised in other parts of the town as funding becomes available.

From surveys conducted as part of the wider Fraserburgh 2021 scheme respondents felt that the town centre had improved since the projects had been undertaken. 80% of the community surveyed thought the town centre was more attractive. 43% of businesses surveyed confirmed they felt there had been a positive impact on trading performance in the town and they were optimistic this would continue.

The wider Fraserburgh 2021 heritage led regeneration scheme was successful at the RTPi Excellence in Planning Awards 2022 and awarded best category and overall winner at the Scottish National Awards in Edinburgh.

Name of key officer:

Cheryl Roberts, Historic Environment Team Leader

Case Study 8.

Huntly Arms Hotel Aboyne – Amenity Notice and Collaboration

Location and Dates:

Huntly Arms Hotel, Aboyne – June 2022– March 2023

Elements of a High Quality Planning Service this study relates to:

- Quality of outcomes
- Culture of continuous improvement

Key Markers:

3 – Early collaboration with applicants and consultees on planning applications
6 – Continuous improvements - progress ambitious and relevant service improvement commitments

Key Areas of Work:

- Conservation
- Enforcement
- Collaborative Working

Stakeholders Involved:

- Authority Planning Staff
- Authority Enforcement Staff
- Authority Economic Development Staff
- Local Developers

Overview:

Huntly Arms Hotel is a category 'C' listed building ([Historic Environment Scotland Reference LB44959](#)) and located within the Aboyne Conservation Area. The hotel closed in 2019 and following the purchase of the hotel in December 2020 and numerous

ownership changes, its visual appearance was progressively deteriorating which had an adverse impact on the amenity of the listed building and the conservation area.

Following numerous letters to the Owners which outlined their responsibilities under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Area) (Scotland) Act 1997 and queries regarding their long-term ambitions for the building, it was considered that serving an Amenity Notice would be the best course of action as all other communication had been exhausted.

The Amenity Notice under Section 179 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 was successfully served by Planning Enforcement in November 2022, to take effect at the end of December 2022. The notice outlined various works to be undertaken to the exterior of the building including the painting of boarded up windows, the removal of redundant wiring and signage, and the removal of vegetation. Works to be completed by the end of March 2023.

Goals:

As part of the [Built Heritage Strategy 2021-2024](#) a key priority for action is to ensure historic buildings which are afforded statutory protection do not deteriorate and are maintained in a reasonable state of

repair. Following the initial site visit to the hotel in June 2022, both the Huntly Arms Hotel and the adjacent 'B' listed gazebo ([Historic Environment Scotland Reference LB44960](#)) were added to the [Buildings at Risk Register](#).

The main goal was to find the most effective way to work with the owner to ensure that the appearance of the building was improved and to begin the conversation around longer term plans at the site.

Outcomes:

The required works were successfully completed to the required standard by the end of February 2023. This has seen an improvement in the overall appearance of the building and its presence in the Aboyne Conservation Area. As a direct result of the Amenity Notice, the redevelopment of the hotel has become a priority for the owners and has opened up the lines of communication between the agent, owner and Historic Environment staff with a site meeting taking place. The submission of a full planning application and listed building consent for proposed works to the hotel's exterior and interior is imminent.

Collaborative working with Economic Development and Planning Enforcement has proved highly successful and although the use of an Amenity Notice is quite rare,

this is a good example of how they can be utilised in future to stimulate development on other dilapidated sites within conservation areas in Aberdeenshire. The Amenity Notice has proven to be an effective tool and the Historic Environment Team are now working more proactively with Planning Enforcement to prevent the deterioration of buildings within conservation areas.



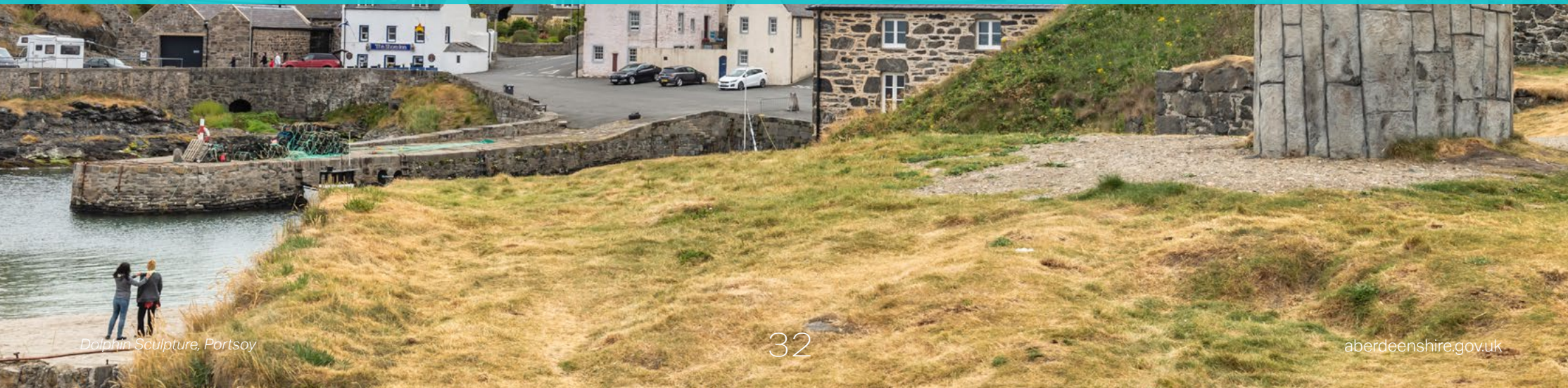
Huntly Arms Hotel

Name of key officer:

Victoria Grant - Built Heritage Environment Planner

Quality of Service and Engagement Case Studies

9. **Historic Harbours Trail Leaflet**
10. **Peterhead 2040**
11. **Institute of Historic Building Conservation Annual Conference**



Dolphin Sculpture, Portsoy

Case Study 9.

Historic Harbours Trail Leaflet

Location and Dates:

Aberdeenshire – 2022 – 23

Elements of a High Quality Planning Service this study relates to:

- Quality of service and engagement
- Quality of outcomes
- Culture of continuous improvement

Key Markers:

- 12 – Corporate working across services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit
- 13 – Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge between authorities/partners

Key Areas of Work:

- Conservation
- Environment
- Economic Development
- Community Engagement

Stakeholders Involved:

- General Public
- Authority Planning Staff

Overview:

Postponed from the Year of Coasts & Waters (2020-21), the Historic Harbours Trail is the fourth in a series of heritage trail leaflets designed and produced by the Archaeology Service. As a guide to 12 of Aberdeenshire’s Historic Harbours, it offers an insight into the region’s maritime heritage for locals and visitors alike. The leaflet is designed

to be accessibility-friendly, easy to use, engaging, and, for the first time in one of the trails leaflets, includes a section on wildlife with links to the [Scottish Marine Wildlife Watching Code](#) and [North East Scotland Biological Record’s Centre](#).

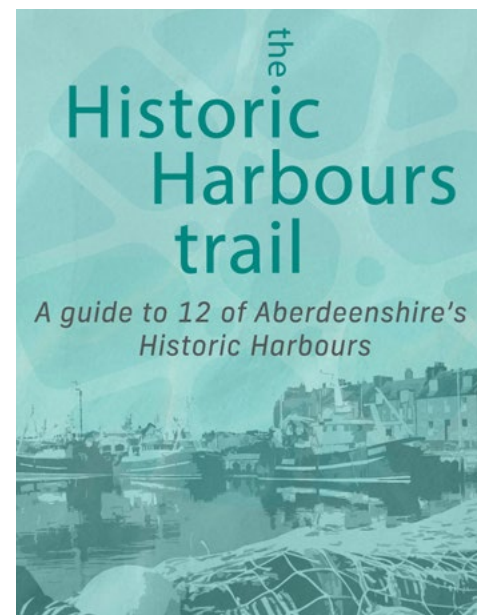
Goals:

The primary purpose of the Trails leaflet series is to showcase the historic environment of Aberdeenshire and to encourage the public (locals and visitors alike) to visit and engage with Aberdeenshire’s heritage. The Historic Harbours theme has opened up the Banff & Buchan and Buchan areas of Aberdeenshire, which have not featured as heavily in previous trail leaflets (simply due to the nature and location of subject matter of previous leaflets). It is also a more relatable subject matter to many, being a more familiar site type, and is a subject with which many Aberdeenshire residents have a personal family connection, now or historically. The Historic Harbours Trail also offers an opportunity to link the historic with the natural environment, with harbours being such a haven for wildlife.

Outcomes:

The design was completed in February 2023, sent for printing in March 2023, and immediately on to our distributors. 10,000 copies of the Historic Harbours Trail Leaflet have been printed, along with 10,000 copies

of each of the Service’s other three Trail leaflets. Printing is on FSC MIX-certified paper, which means that the paper used is made with a mixture of materials from FSC-certified forests, recycled materials, and/or FSC-controlled wood. The printing is also carbon offset and uses vegetable-based inks. All the leaflets were transported direct from the printer in Glasgow to Direct Distribution, also in Glasgow, who are distributing these to a wide range of attractions and venues across the northeast of Scotland (from Dundee to the Highlands). Distribution has already commenced and will continue throughout the year.



The [Historic Harbours Trail](#) leaflet can also be viewed and downloaded from our website (along with an [accessible version](#)). Our other three trail leaflets can be found via our [Sites to Visit](#) page.

Name of key officers:

- Claire Herbert - Archaeologist
- Caroline Palmer - Archaeologist

Case Study 10.

Peterhead 2040

Location and Dates:

Peterhead – April 2021 ongoing

Elements of a High Quality Planning Service this study relates to:

- Quality of service and engagement
- Quality of outcomes

Key Markers:

12 – Corporate working across services to improve outputs and services for customers benefit

Key Areas of Work:

- Regeneration
- Town Centres
- Masterplanning
- Economic Development
- Interdisciplinary Working
- Collaborative Working
- Community Engagement
- Placemaking
- Process Improvement

Stakeholders Involved:

- General Public
- Hard to reach groups
- Key Agencies
- Authority Planning Staff
- Authority Other Staff

Overview:

Peterhead is Aberdeenshire’s largest settlement. It is recognised for its important role within Aberdeenshire both locally and

regionally but also on the national and international stage. Currently Peterhead is experiencing a period of transition and change and there are a number of significant projects that are planned and are underway in the community, private and public sectors.

In April 2021 Aberdeenshire Council confirmed multimillion pound investment for the Peterhead Community Campus, a multi-site project which will provide early years primary, secondary and ASN learning facilities as well as community facilities including sport, culture and heritage, and wet and dry leisure facilities and be delivered between 2025 and 2027. This significant investment is sitting alongside continued and proposed investment by the commercial sector including significant carbon capture programmes, clean energy technology, energy transition infrastructure, housing development, and the potential for an Investment Zone. Additionally there has been the successful bid to the UK Government Levelling Up Fund, with the development of cultural projects to deliver social and economic regeneration.

By taking a long-term holistic view Peterhead 2040 will ensure that this transformative investment and activity investment in the town can have maximum impact and positively influence the socio-economic landscape, stimulate regeneration, build local capacity, deliver on net zero ambitions and

fundamentally have a positive impact on the place itself. The ambition is to develop a visual framework for success that identifies current, planned, proposed and aspirational investment, infrastructure, assets, and social capital within the town and the surrounding area.

This vision will be a shared one, that is recognised as having meaning by people who live in, work in and visit this unique place. The Framework should allow for a Peterhead 2040 vision to be confirmed and highlight where there may be gaps over the period that may require specific activity. The Framework will be visual and allow for easy identification of council, public sector, commercial/private sector, third sector and community investments, assets and activity and the timelines for delivery.

Project inception included the establishment of a pilot project, recognising the need for place-based vision/framework to 2040 for Peterhead, this also included defining terms of reference and establishing a core steering group membership.

Stage 1, saw a research phase where data, statistical needs assessment, investment and existing engagement in the round was analysed. This was coupled with understanding of the strategic context, service need and extensive asset and project mapping. The research phase also

included benchmarking exercises and precedent studies. The project is currently in Stage 2 ‘stakeholder engagement; building a shared vision’ this has included hosting service and stakeholder workshops and the development of a dedicated virtual teams space.

Goals:

The overarching goal of the Peterhead 2040 workstream is to harness the potential of investment, new development and existing assets within Peterhead and maximise the output and benefits for the settlement, in an open and collaborative way. This will be underpinned by embedding place – based approaches in the day-to-day work and culture of the organisation, and by doing so this will improve both collaborative and interdisciplinary working. Moreover, it is also expected that the Peterhead 2040 project will result in improved processes, such as effective, considered and coordinated engagement as well as improving efficiencies and maximising outputs from limited resources. Lastly, the project also acts as a driver for the development of skills and continuous improvement within the service and wider organisation.

Outcomes:

Although still at a relatively early stage there have been a number of ‘quick wins’ that have been secured by Peterhead 2040 processes and place based work.

Case Study 10.

Peterhead 2040

For example the detailed research and analysis work undertaken in Stage 1, formed a key part of the evidence base that was required for the (successful) Levelling-up bid. Another example is the asset mapping exercise which made opportunities for a joint project between services colleagues and the private sector apparent.

Most notably the process to date has also resulted in the development of a coordinated multiservice engagement arrangement, across the piece for Peterhead. There are regular meetings, and a coordinated approach to all engagement that is related to the settlement and currently work is being progressed on a bespoke engagement hub.

Name of key officers:

Lucy Styles - Planning Information and Delivery Team Leader
Eleanor Morris - Area Project Officer



Case Study 11.

Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC) Annual Conference

Location and Dates:

Aberdeen – 15th to 18th June 2022

Elements of a High Quality Planning Service this study relates to:

- Quality of service and engagement

Key Markers:

12 – Corporate working across services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit

13 – Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge between authorities

Key Areas of Work:

- Conservation
- Regeneration
- Collaborative working
- Skills Sharing

Stakeholders Involved:

- Authority Planning Staff
- Key Agencies
- Private Sector Professionals

Overview:

The [Institute of Historic Building Conservation \(IHBC\) Annual Conference](#) was a 3 – day event including practical site visits and a full day conference, including talks from people across the building conservation sector. A cross – organisation team including representation from Aberdeenshire Council, Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeen City Heritage Trust,

Historic England, National Trust for Scotland, Birse Community Trust, Dumfries and Galloway Council and IHBC worked together to bring the conference to Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire to demonstrate the work organisations do across the area.

Goals:

The goal was to promote Aberdeenshire as an area and to showcase the projects being delivered, largely by the local authorities, in the field of conservation and regeneration. This included (but not exclusively) the regeneration work in the north including [Fraserburgh 2021](#), [Banff and Portsoy Conservation Area Regeneration Schemes](#), but also included the flood alleviation works in Stonehaven. The goal was to bring people together who work in the heritage sector to share good working practice from across the UK and further afield and to foster stronger cross – organisation relationships, locally and across the UK, to ultimately support future projects and improvement work. This goal is important in the context of challenges in obtaining continuous professional development (CPD) working in a more remote part of Scotland.

Outcomes:

The conference attracted 100+ delegates to Aberdeenshire with a further 200+ attending online. The mix of attendees were members of the public, heritage professionals and non – heritage professionals both private

and public sector. It included keynote speaker Angus Robertson MSP and talks from Historic Environment Scotland, Historic England, The Circular Way, Norwegian Petroleum Museum in Stavanger, Aberdeenshire Council’s Economic Development Team, Government of South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands, amongst others. There were also trips to the regeneration projects in the north, the Stonehaven flood alleviation scheme as well as those focused in Aberdeen.

This has resulted in a network of local heritage professionals, who have gone on to deliver a networking session and CPD visit to Craigievar Castle and Finzean Bucket Mills. The networking session included representatives from IHBC, RTPI, Aberdeen Society of Architects, Historic Environment Scotland, the Local Authorities, and several local heritage professionals. This is already leading to shared working practices and proposed improvements and the team intend to continue this into the future.

Name of key officer:

Cheryl Roberts, Historic Environment Team Leader



Craigievar Castle

Governance

Case Studies

12. Administration-Development Management Working Group – Review of Representations Process

Case Study 12.

Administration - Development Management Working Group – Review of Representations Process

Location and Dates:

Aberdeenshire – April 2022 to October 2022

Elements of a High Quality Planning Service this study relates to:

- Governance
- Culture of continuous improvement

Key Markers:

6 – Continuous improvements – progress ambitious and relevant service improvements
 12 – Corporate working across services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit

Key Areas of Work:

- Development Management Processes
- Collaborative Working
- Process Improvement
- Staff training

Stakeholders Involved:

- Authority Planning Staff

Overview:

The Development Management service in liaison with its Embedded Administration team became aware of issues in relation to some potential inconsistencies and delays in how public comments received on planning applications were being managed. As part of an established Administration/Development Management Working Group consisting of

Administration and Planning Staff, a priority task was identified to review how public representations associated with planning applications are administered, published, assessed and reported through the planning application determination process.

An initial meeting to set out the scope of the project was held in April 2022 followed by individual tasks being set to the team, with a subsequent meeting to assess the existing situation and look at potential solutions, held in May 2022. This was followed by the finalisation of a revised process agreed in June 2022. Following further refinement, testing and peer review, and the issuing of [staff guidance](#), the new process was implemented in October 2022.

Goals:

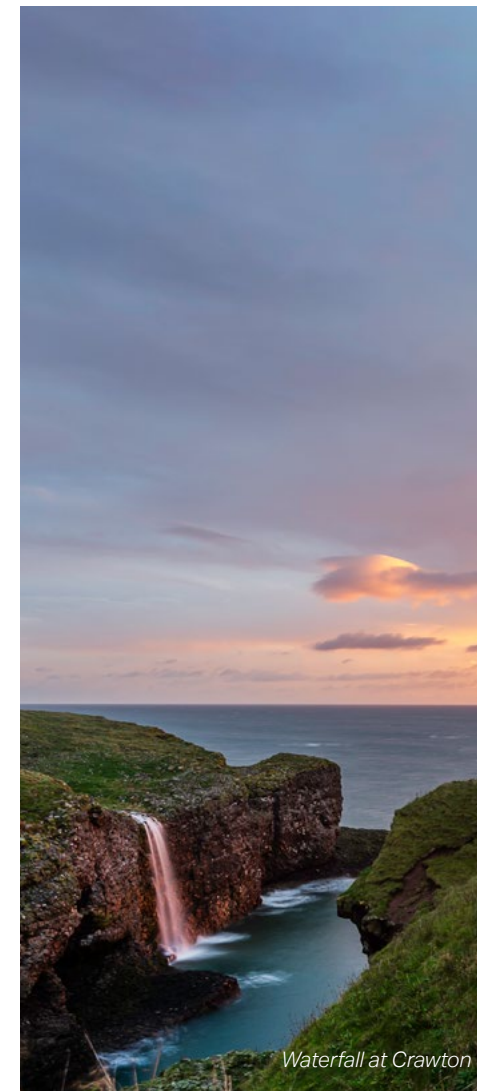
The focus of the project was to ensure that public representations are being efficiently and consistently dealt with, to allow for greater certainty for the public, applicants, agents and elected Members. It also set out to ensure that only those representations that were valid and raised material issues were being made public and at the appropriate time in the process. It was also to aid the administration of representations when reporting relevant applications to Committee.

Outcomes:

The revised process now puts the responsibility for the timely publication of valid representations onto Planning Staff, who carry the expertise to separate non – material matters from relevant planning considerations, which in turn lifts the burden of responsibility from Administration Staff to allow them to focus on other key tasks to support the wider function of the Planning Service. The process has been a success since its implementation, with no complaints recorded and a streamlining of governance processes that has created more certainty for all parties.

Name of key officers:

Audrey Smith – Senior Administration Officer
 Neil Mair – Senior Planner



Waterfall at Crawton

Culture of Continuous Improvement

Case Studies

13. **Development Management Team Library**
14. **Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan – Development Plan Scheme 2023**
15. **New Guidance on Delivering Public Benefit for NPF4 through Archaeology**

Case Study 13.

Development Management Teams Library

Location and Dates:

Aberdeenshire – Internal Microsoft Teams System Throughout 2022 – current

Elements of a High Quality Planning Service this study relates to:

- Culture of continuous improvement

Key Markers:

6 – Continuous improvements – progress ambitious and relevant service improvements

Key Areas of Work:

- Development Management Processes
- Collaborative Working
- Skills Sharing

Stakeholders Involved:

- Authority Planning Staff

Overview:

This project initially commenced in February 2020 but due to staffing pressures, Covid –19 pandemic, and other priorities, it is only during this reporting year that progress has been made on the development of an electronic Development Management Team Library of information for all Development Management Staff. This has been a combined staff effort but lead primarily by a Planning Technician.

Goals:

The aim of the Development Management Team Library is to have a one – stop – shop for all Development Management information. The electronic library allows staff to know where the most up to date information is and ensures everyone is working with the same documents thus always ensuring version control and also making the processes more efficient with a central place to hold all information. It also allows for communicating quickly and efficiently with all Development Management staff, using posts and notifications.

Outcomes:

The project looks at all our files, how they are stored and when they are destroyed.

The project has been split into 4 phases:

- Review all current documents on our network drives and move them into a bespoke “Microsoft Teams” Library.
- Identify and reduce other “Microsoft Teams”, merging them into the single new “Teams” Library.
- Create a retention and review policy for all document control.
- Monitor and review the project.

The first phase has been completed and all information has been reviewed/ destroyed where required and a file plan was created. The remaining information

was then transferred to the new “Teams” Library. This includes a working files section; a knowledge hub; a projects section; and a historical records section. The aim is that all information not held in the Uniform system will be held here. At the time of writing, we have just started Phase 2 where we have identified all our “Teams” and have started putting this information into the file plan.

The holding page also includes quick links to other Council pages that may be required such as IT pages, Human Resources pages etc. It also holds a link to the Environment and Infrastructure Yammer feed, which allows for information to be shared wider than the Development Management Team.

The knowledge hub section holds all our Best Practice guidance and includes copies of all legislation and circulars. It also has a quick link section which takes you to documents which need to be considered during the process of an application.

This allows us to save documents in one location and post a link, thus reducing email traffic. It also means that old documents are not stored unless in the historic section for reference and that staff cannot accidentally use old guidance. This is a more efficient streamlined way of storing information.

The project is an ongoing one and the Library will continue to be developed in line

with the phases set out.

A Development Management Staff member has said *“this makes things easier to have a one – stop – shop so you know where all your tools you need are – everything you need is there together”*.

Name of key officer:

Elaine Dixon – Planning Technician

Case Study 14.

Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan - Development Plan Scheme 2023

Location and Dates:

Aberdeenshire – May 2022 to June 2023

Elements of a High Quality Planning Service this study relates to:

- Culture of continuous improvement

Key Markers:

9 – Stakeholders including Elected Members, industry, agencies, the public and Scottish Government engaged appropriately through all key stages of development plan preparation

Key Areas of Work:

- Local Development Plan & Supplementary Guidance
- Process improvement
- Online systems
- Community Engagement

Stakeholders Involved:

- General Public
- Hard to reach groups
- Local Developers
- Key Agencies
- Authority Planning Staff

Overview:

A Development Plan Scheme (DPS) has been developed using online engagement with a wide range of stakeholders in advance of this becoming a legal requirement.

Goals:

The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 introduced a requirement for local planning authorities to conduct consultation on a draft Development Plan Scheme. As the first Development Plan Scheme for a modern style of plan, being developed in a new way, it was decided that full engagement should be undertaken before this statutory obligation comes into force in May 2023.

In undertaking this consultation, use was made of an online [“EngageAberdeenshire LDP Hub”](#) to explore the use of this medium for engagement on future LDP matters, including the Call for Ideas and the Evidence Report stages.

Outcomes:

In previous years, the DPS has been produced as an operational document, following guidance and best practice to set out those documents that make up the current development plan, provide a timeline for the Local Development Plan and set out a “Participation Statement” proposing how engagement on the plan would be undertaken.

Due to the significant changes proposed to the process of preparing a development plan introduced by the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, it was agreed that a comprehensive DPS should be prepared to outline the changes that were introduced, based on the

draft guidance published in early 2022.

Early, exploratory, engagement took place with Community Councils, the development industry and youth groups, to help crystallise our ideas before a draft DPS was presented to Committee and published for public consultation.

The public consultation was focused on the [“EngageAberdeenshire LDP Hub”](#), a digital engagement tool that facilitates the online presentation of information and collection of views. It also provides much-needed back-office functions that make the collation and analysis of the information collected efficiently.

The draft DPS was circulated directly to over 700 recipients and featured both in the Local Development Plan e-newsletter and the LDP Hub. It resulted in a number of invitations to Community Council meetings where it was possible to engage directly with stakeholders on the new proposed system. Only 25 responses were received to the online survey but there were 789 unique visits to the [“EngageAberdeenshire LDP Hub”](#) and of these 257 customers downloaded the draft document. This demonstrates that awareness of the consultation was high, and a substantial number of people looked at the draft DPS but chose not to give their views.

The consultation cast light on issues with the draft DPS, and revisions were made to improve the clarity of the document and provide more information on the scope of the Participation Statement for the forthcoming year. These are improvements, which would not have been made without the consultation. They clearly demonstrate that engagement at this stage in the production of the DPS has delivered improvements on processes previously undertaken. It has significantly broadened awareness of the DPS. It has resulted in a method by which subsequent [Development Plan Schemes](#) can be improved, and this is a worthwhile action to take.



Name of key officer:

Piers Blaxter – Team Leader, Planning Policy

Case Study 15.

New Guidance on Delivering Public Benefit for NPF4 through Archaeology

Location and Dates:

Aberdeenshire and then Scotland – wide, launched 14th February 2023

Elements of a High Quality Planning Service this study relates to:

- Culture of continuous improvement
- Quality of service and engagement

Key Markers:

3 – Early collaboration with applicants and consultees on planning applications
 12 – Corporate working across services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit
 13 – Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge between authorities

Key Areas of Work:

- Local Development Plan & Supplementary Guidance
- Conservation
- Collaborative Working
- Community Engagement
- Skills Sharing

Stakeholders Involved:

- General Public
- Local Developers
- Key Agencies
- Authority Planning Staff

Overview:

Stakeholder workshops between representatives of the historic environment

sector and Scottish Government in 2021 indicated a wish for more public benefit and added social value to be realised from archaeological mitigation works within the planning process. This led to '[National Planning Framework 4](#)' introducing new wording which more clearly describes the expected outcomes where impacts on the historic environment by development cannot be avoided. No longer limited to meaning solely activities of public benefit such as excavation, recording, analysis, archiving and publication, it now also includes other "activities" as well.

To prepare for this change, and to clarify what the new requirements may mean for a potential planning application, a draft guidance document for developers and their contractors in Aberdeenshire was developed between April and October 2022. The guidance was tested in selected real-world planning applications with the Applicant's approval.

The positive feedback led to a revised document being issued for a national consultation to local authorities and key stakeholder groups between November 2022 and January 2023, with the intention of using the Aberdeenshire document as the standard national guidance in this matter.

Following the responses from the national consultation, and follow-up targeted

interviews with key individuals, a final version of the new guidance was agreed at the start of February 2023.

Goals:

The principal goals of this project are:

- To achieve better public engagement and benefits from archaeological works undertaken as part of the planning process and maximise the positive contribution development is making to local communities.
- To provide clear and concise guidance for developers and their archaeological contractors in how to achieve the public benefit requirements as laid out within Policy 7 'Historic Assets and Places' within National Planning Framework 4.
- To provide a standardised methodology and guidance for use across all local authorities in Scotland to ensure consistency for Council staff, developers, contractors, and other relevant stakeholders.

Outcomes:

Aberdeenshire Council successfully launched the new guidance document, entitled '[Delivery of Public Benefit and Social Value for Archaeology in the Planning Process](#)' on the 14th February, with the document being formally adopted as the national guidance for Scotland by the [Association of Local Government](#)

[Archaeological Officers \(Scotland\)](#) (ALGAO).

Kenneth Aitchison, CEO FAME: [Federation of Archaeological Managers and Employers](#), said, "FAME welcomes this new Guidance for the delivery of Public Benefit and Social Value. ALGAO Scotland are the gatekeepers and guardians of Scotland's archaeology in the planning process, and FAME members – as the contractors and consultants that deliver the planning-led archaeological fieldwork that ALGAO Scotland members facilitate - greatly appreciate this guidance, which will support our ability to provide social value opportunities and benefits for the Scottish public."

Kate Geary, Head of Professional Development and Practice at the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, said, "CIfA welcomes this new guidance for the delivery of Public Benefit and Social Value, which closely aligns with our professional practice paper on Delivering Public Benefit. It's fantastic to see ALGAO Scotland providing guidance on how to secure and maximise public benefit within the planning system, a requirement from the new National Planning Framework for Scotland. We look forward to working with ALGAO Scotland to disseminate the guidance throughout Scotland and beyond."

Case Study 15.

New Guidance on Delivering Public Benefit for NPF4 through Archaeology

The guidance is now being used across all the Local Authorities in Scotland. A twelve-month review, to be undertaken in February 2024, will provide a future opportunity to reflect on the success of the document, and develop it further if required.

Name of key officer:

Bruce Mann - Archaeologist



Part 2: Supporting Evidence



All supporting evidence for this Planning Performance Framework has been integrated within the body of the text by use of hyperlinks to relevant documents, websites or other information.

A variety of resources are at the heart of the work and include:

- Statistical information;
- Customer feedback and inputs from various events and engagement exercises;
- Testimonials;
- Evidence of collaborative partnership working with internal and external parties;
- Process improvement projects including customer and staff based initiatives;
- Relevant Council and Service specific documents.

Checklist for Part 1 Case Studies

Qualitative Narrative Case Studies			
Case Study Topics	Issue covered by case study	Case Study Topics	Issue covered by case study
Design	6	Interdisciplinary Working	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 10
Conservation	6, 8, 9, 11, 15	Collaborative Working	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 13, 15
Regeneration	5, 7, 10, 11	Community Engagement	4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 14, 15
Environment	5, 9	Placemaking	5, 7, 10
Greenspace		Charrettes	5
Town Centres	7, 10	Place Standards	
Masterplanning	5, 10	Performance Monitoring	1, 2
LDP & Supplementary Guidance	4, 14, 15	Process Improvement	10, 12, 14
Housing Supply		Project Management	1, 2, 4
Affordable Housing		Skills Sharing	11, 13, 15
Economic Development	5, 9, 10	Staff Training	12
Enforcement	8	Online Systems	14
Development Management Processes	1, 2, 3, 6, 12, 13	Transport	
Planning Applications	1, 2, 3, 6	Active Travel	
Other			

Part 3:

Service Improvements 2022-23



3A. In the Coming Year

Local Development Plan Team

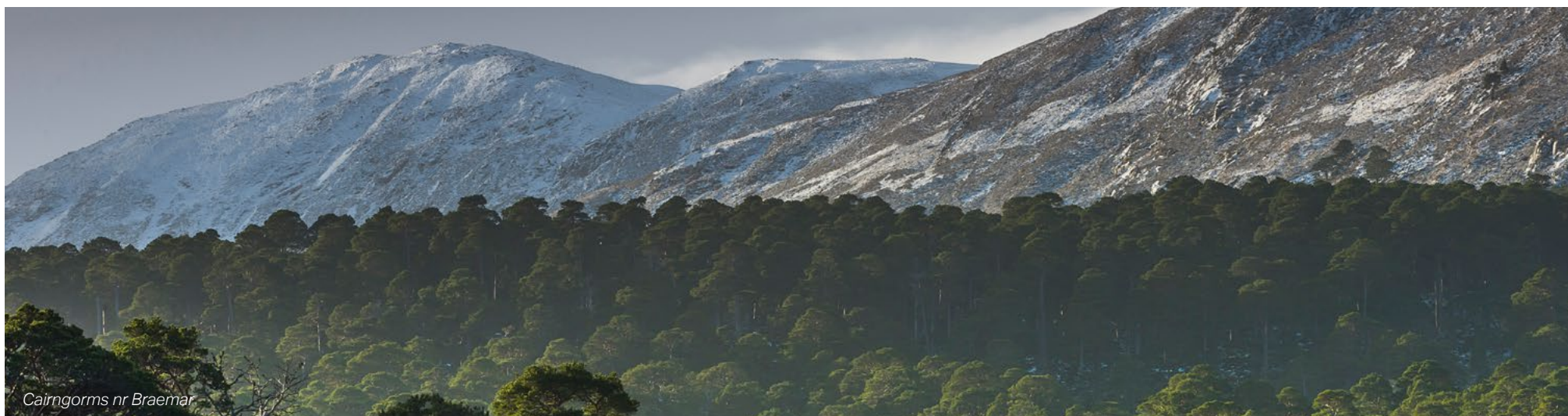
In the coming year we will:

- **Publish Supplementary guidance on “Developer Obligations and Affordable Housing”** to meet an outstanding recommendation from the Local Development Plan examination recommendations. This will be prepared jointly with colleagues in Roads Development, Housing, and Developer Obligations teams.
- **Gain approval of the Development Plan Scheme 2023** by the Infrastructure Services Committee to mark the formal start of the process that will deliver the next generation of Local Development Plans. Engage with community and development stakeholders on the

Development Plan Scheme 2024 to reach a consensus on the form and nature of the next step in the Development Plan process, which is the Call for Ideas.

- **Complete the Evidence Report for the Local Development Plan** through a process of internal research and stakeholder engagement on a total of 32 topic papers. Present the findings of the Evidence Report to Aberdeenshire Council in March 2024, prior to submitting it for gate-check examination by the Scottish Ministers.

- **Complete specific data collection projects** associated with the information required for the Evidence Report: A Derelict and Vacant Land Survey; an Open Space Survey; a Play Space Sufficiency Assessment; and an Infrastructure Audit.
- **Complete a Strategic Environmental Assessment Scoping Report** for the forthcoming Local Development Plan.



Cairngorms nr Braemar

3A. In the Coming Year

Development Management Team

In the coming year we will:

Local and Major Development

Pre-Application Review – taking into account the recruitment, vacancies and staffing capacity and resource challenges faced, further review of the Local Development pre-application processes will be undertaken. This will include the capacity to continue with accepting the same type and number of pre-application submissions, and further review of processes and advice provided to see whether further streamlining is necessary and can be achieved. The Major development pre-application process as implemented in 2022-23 will be monitored with a view to developing it further in terms of the Uniform system process and staff, customer and consultee feedback.

The proposal for introducing a fee-charging regime for pre-application enquiries will be developed as part of a wider project which is developing a Discretionary Charging Structure for other Development Management services (see below for separate commitment).

Review of Masterplan Process – following the adoption of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023 and the subsequent

implementation of the Masterplan process during this reporting year, further review and monitoring of the process will be undertaken. This will include further engagement with stakeholders who have used the process and also Planning Service staff. This may result in a need for modification of existing guidance. The review will also include consideration for fee-charging as part of the wider project which is developing a Discretionary Charging Structure for other Development Management services (see below for separate commitment).

Discretionary Charging Project – a charging project commenced in 2023 with the aim of introducing discretionary fees and charges for a range of Development Management services. A benchmarking exercise was undertaken with all Planning Authorities which was followed by a review of well-established discretionary charging regimes in several Authorities. Charging is to be introduced in phases, with Phase 1 focusing on energy, infrastructure and transmission development only. This is due, in part, to the volume of work in this sector, the need to support the continued delivery of the service, and the need to

meet customer demand for accelerated consenting. Phase 1 is well advanced and will put in place charging for pre-application advice, non-material variations and satisfaction of conditions in accordance with the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Fees)(Scotland) Regulations 2022, along with some priority services related to planning applications and applications under the Electricity Acts. Phases 2 and 3 will follow in due course which will cover a wide range of other Development Management services.

Development of Staff Recruitment and Retention Framework – as a result of the on-going recruitment, and staff vacancy and capacity issues, during the next reporting year, work will continue to be developed on a Staff Recruitment and Retention Framework. This work has already commenced but will continue in terms of looking at ways to improve recruitment processes and staff retention. Main focus areas relate to further developing workplace enhancement and well-being; potential payment of RTP1 fees; revisions to the Professional Development Scheme to aid career development and salaries; new ways of gaining feedback from

staff exit interviews; further advancement of training and development, and personal performance plans; enhanced media packages when job advertising and promotion of Aberdeenshire Council as a place to work and live; further and closer liaison with Universities and career departments including schools; recruitment fairs; student and school leavers summer placements; and expansion of job profiles to graduates from relevant disciplines and experience, with offers of advanced further educational learning opportunities for career development.

Customer Service Excellence (CSE) – this will remain as an on – going commitment with an Audit for re accreditation scheduled for the end of August 2023.

Extension of Permitted Development Rights Group – having responded to, the changes brought forward through Phase 2 of the Extension of Permitted Development Rights in 2022–2023, and provided staff guidance, the established group will continue to respond to further Scottish Government consultations (current and forthcoming) on proposals for further extensions of permitted development rights and develop processes for implementation on new legislation as appropriate. This will include providing up-to-date guidance for staff.

Review Retention/Publication of Documents Policy – this review will remain as an ongoing commitment and will take account of GDPR, corporate objectives, and Heads of Planning Guidance. It will form part of the ongoing work on the Continuous Improvement Framework (see below for a separate commitment).

Continuous Improvement Framework – while the development of the Framework was completed, following the resignation of the part-time Continuous Improvement Officer and the new appointment of the full-time Continuous Improvement Officer, there will be a review of the continuous improvement activities, projects and priorities identified in the Framework and the use of the Project Tracker Tool, with a focus on dealing with the challenges around dealing with recruitment, vacancy management, and creating staffing capacity in Development Management processes and services.



Average timescales targets - Major applications – 35 weeks – maintain

Average timescales targets - Local applications - 11 weeks – maintain

Average timescales targets - Householder applications - 6 weeks – maintain

Average timescales targets - Other applications – 8 weeks – maintain

Planning Online Submissions – target 95% – maintain

Percentage timescales within 2 months – all Local Development planning applications – 75% – maintain

Percentage timescales within 2 months – Non-householder applications – 65% – maintain

Percentage timescales within 2 months – Householder applications – 95% – maintain

Developments determined within timescale of Processing Agreement/ Agreed Extension of Time Tool – 100% – adjusted commitment to include Extension of Time Tool

Legal Agreements – average weeks target – 32 weeks – maintain

Legacy applications – continue to reduce the overall number of legacy case applications and prevent new cases occurring by monitoring and implementing the Legacy Case Strategy which is focussed on the prioritisation and categorisation of applications for developments that are deliverable and in line with social and economic objectives.



Blairs College

3A. In the Coming Year

Historic Environment Team (Note – Natural Environment Team has moved to a different Directorate)

In the coming year we will:

- Continue to progress heritage – led regeneration scheme in Peterhead which will include taking Peterhead Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan out to public consultation.
- Develop a new model for outreach in relation to carbon reduction and energy efficiency of historic buildings to support conservation area reviews.
- Work with Development Management to update the Built Heritage DM Protocol to reflect the re-shaped structure of the Planning and Economy service. Develop Archaeology DM Protocol's for Moray and Angus.
- Deliver Doors Open Days.
- Support community groups both financially and in terms of professional advice to deliver projects based around Archaeology.
- Take a more active role in the condition monitoring of designated assets and develop an Enforcement Protocol.
- Progress maintenance projects within HAMP and develop larger – scale projects including seeking external funding.
- Deliver at least one training event aimed at Councillors and/or Development Management focused around the net zero/ circular economy agendas.
- Deliver a virtual Aberdeenshire Architectural and Landscape Design Awards through sponsorship.
- Update the Historic Environment Record with the SCAPE Community Coastal Zone Assessment Survey data to support climate impact assessment work.
- Work more closely with Historic Environment Scotland to develop stronger relationships with the national body.
- Update the Historic Environment Record with World War II features provided by the Pillbox Study Group.



Tolquhon Castle, Pitmedden

3B. Delivery of our Actions and Improvements Committed in 2021-22

Local Development Plan Team

Committed Improvements and Actions	Complete?
<p>Take the Reporters recommendations from the Examination into the Proposed Local Development Plan 2020 and assess whether they are fit for purpose or there are grounds for not accepting their content. This conclusion will be presented to Aberdeenshire Council and a decision made whether to adopt the Local Development Plan 2022 (as modified). We will ensure that all those who assisted us with the production of the plan, even those who ultimately made no objections, are advised of the Council’s intent to adopt the plan. Statutory processes will be followed to secure adoption of the plan within four months of receiving the Reporters Recommendations, this also allowing 4 weeks for the Scottish Government to issue a direction to us if they are unhappy with this conclusion.</p>	<p>A recommendation was made to Aberdeenshire Council within 3 months of the receipt of the Reporter Recommendations, and a decision was taken to adopt the Local Development Plan.</p> <p>All those whom we engaged with on the LDP were informed of this outcome.</p> <p>The Local Development plan was not adopted within 4 months of receipt of the Reporter’s Recommendations, as the Scottish Government required three months to evaluate it against National Policy. Three directions were received delaying adoption of the Local Development Plan.</p>
<p>We will confirm and publish at least 25 non – statutory Planning Advice papers to support the implementation of the Proposed Plan.</p>	<p>Twenty elements of Planning advice were published. Two remain outstanding. In the interests of efficiency two were amalgamated with other advice, and one was abandoned as no longer being worthwhile.</p>
<p>We will prepare and publish a Post – Adoption Statement for the Environmental Report for the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Local Development Plan 2022.</p>	<p>A post adoption statement was prepared and has been published.</p>
<p>Following a period of engagement with Community Councillors, young people and the development industry we will publish a Development Plan Scheme that sets out the general programme for the production of the Local Development Plan 2027. We will make a formal start to the preparation of the Local Development Plan 2027.</p>	<p>A draft development plan scheme was prepared following informal consultation in June and July 2022. This was then delayed for full public consultation in February and March 2023, and will be published in May 2023. This will also form the formal start of preparation of the next Local Development plan.</p>
<p>Engaging with relevant stakeholders we will start to collect the information that is necessary for the Evidence Report of the Local Development Plan 2027 and to seek endorsement of the conclusions that can be drawn from this evidence.</p>	<p>Preparatory work has started on the Evidence Report with actions being undertaken to progress an Infrastructure Audit, an Open Space audit a Brownfield land audit, and complete a pilot paper on digital infrastructure.</p>

3B. Delivery of our Actions and Improvements Committed in 2021-22

Development Management Team

Committed Improvements and Actions	Status
Local and Major Application Pre-application Review	<p>Complete – During the reporting year the review of the Local and Major Application Pre-application processes was completed. For Local Developments this included reviewing staff, customer and consultee feedback, monitoring performance levels in relation to timescales, numbers and types of pre-application submissions, and thereafter implementing some changes. Taking account also of work capacity, the changes included a shortened pre-application response template, a change to the target timescale for responses from 25 to 30 working days, some changes to validation requirements to reflect the type of customers and nature of proposals coming forward, and a review of the website information including removal of the PDF submission form to encourage and promote online submissions only in line with the Service paperless ethos.</p> <p>For Major pre-applications the process was developed and implemented with a focus on timescales, consultee involvement, updated templates on Uniform, improvements to website information, and consideration of need for workshop/meetings with stakeholders. Work on developing a fee structure for pre-applications has not yet been implemented as that now forms part of larger project developing a strategy for Discretionary Fee Charging across the various Development Management processes, and not just pre-application work.</p>
Review of Masterplan Process	<p>Complete – Work continued throughout the reporting year to review and refine the Masterplan Process. As per the previous PPF submission for 2021-22, the formal implementation of the Masterplan process was scheduled to coincide with the adoption of the new Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023 which did not take place until January 2023. In the reporting year, the Masterplan group undertook work for the finalisation of staff guidance and Planning Advice and worked with a small number of developers to test and refine the process for a newly allocated site in the ALDP 2023. Other review work included the creation of an Enquiry Form and Elected Member Training.</p>
Customer Service Excellence Accreditation (CSE)	<p>Complete – Accreditation for CSE remains an ongoing commitment. At the end of the reporting period, the Development Management Service remained accredited and continues to undertake actions to address areas for improvement and partial compliance identified in line with the CSE assessment criteria where capacity allows. The scheduled re-certification Audit (a new CSE assessor has been appointed) was initially scheduled to be undertaken in March 2023 but due to availability and other priority work areas around recruitment, staff capacity and the need to streamline some processes accordingly, the date for Audit is now scheduled for end of August 2023.</p>

Committed Improvements and Actions	Status
Extension of Permitted Development Rights Group	Complete – The group continued work with the compilation of a detailed response to the consultation on Phase 2 of the Extension of Permitted Development Rights that included Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure; Changes of Use in Town Centres; and Port Development. Staff guidance was also produced in time for the implementation of the new Regulations on 31 March 2023.
Review Retention/Publication of Documents	Not Complete – Due to recruitment, vacancies and staffing capacity/resource pressures, which also included the resignation of the part-time Continuous Improvement Officer during the reporting period, this commitment has not progressed. There has been a recognition of the importance of continuous improvement and as such a new full-time Continuous Improvement Officer has now been appointed. This will help the delivery of improvement projects. Depending on capacity, it is hoped the review of the retention/publication of documents will remain as a delivery commitment for 2023–24.
Continuous Improvement Framework	On-going – Following the resignation of the postholder for the part-time Continuous Improvement Officer during the reporting year, a new full-time Continuous Improvement Officer has been appointed (April 2023). The Continuous Improvement Framework and the Project Tracker Tool remain in place but will be reviewed following the new officer appointment with priority areas identified. The actions identified in the Framework will be continuous.
Average timescales targets – Major applications – 35 weeks	Yes – 21.4 weeks
Average timescales targets – Local applications – 11 weeks	No – 14.9 week
Average timescales targets – Householder applications – 6 weeks	No – 7.8 weeks
Average timescales targets – Other applications – 8 weeks	No – 9.1 weeks
E:planning Online Submissions – target 95%	Yes – 95%
Percentage timescales within 2 months – all LD planning applications – 75%	No – 73%
Percentage timescales within 2 months – non-householder applications – 65%	No – 60.2%
Percentage timescales within 2 months – householder applications – 95%	No – 89.3%
Developments Determined Within Timescale of Processing Agreement/ Agreed Extension of Time – 100%	No – 81%
Legal Agreements – average weeks target – 32 weeks	No – 44.7%
Legacy applications – reduce the overall number of legacy case applications and prevent new cases occurring by monitoring and implementing the Legacy Case Strategy which is focussed on the prioritisation and categorisation of applications for developments that are deliverable and in line with social and economic objectives.	Yes – 44 remain (decrease of 8 from end of March 2022) and 66 have been cleared during the reporting year which is an increase of 14 from the number cleared during 2021-22. The legacy case strategy remains in place.

3B. Delivery of our Actions and Improvements Committed in 2021-22 Environment Teams

Committed Improvements and Actions		Percentage Complete
<p>Progress necessary changes in working arrangements for reshaped service delivery following service reshape.</p>	<p>Historic Environment Team – The Strategies have been reviewed in light of two teams coming together with a view to combine the strategies together into a single Historic Environment Strategy over the next 18 months. The budgets have been split and the new team structure has been implemented within Planning and Economy.</p>	<p>40%</p>
	<p>Natural Environment Team – New team structure for service delivery has been implemented. Budgets have been split. Strategy documents have been reviewed and team action plans updated.</p>	<p>70%</p>
	<p>Specialist Services – New team structure for service delivery has been implemented and a new team name has been chosen which is more reflective of the work which the new make up of the team delivers – Outdoor Access & Countryside Team. The budget has been split and the number of different lines has been reduced. Early work has started to develop an overarching strategy for the team which encompasses all functions within it and their existing strategies.</p>	<p>50%</p>
<p>Complete F2021 & Vinery heritage projects in Fraserburgh and Banff town centres.</p>	<p>Historic Environment Team – The F2021 was £5.8 million pound heritage regeneration project and was completed in December 2022 with the final public realm projects completed and the John Trail re-opened and re-branded as the 'Stag and Thistle'. The Vinery project was also completed in 2022 and the tenant Aberdeen Foyer has taken over the site as a community wellbeing facility.</p>	<p>100%</p>
<p>Progress new heritage scheme in Peterhead and Huntly town centres and review funding opportunities.</p>	<p>Historic Environment Team - An Expression of Interest (EOI) was submitted to the NHLF and HES for a heritage led regeneration scheme in June 2022 which was successful, and we were invited to submit a Development Phase application in November – December 2022. The cost of the proposed bid was far in excess of the original EOI, although funders were very positive about the scheme and encouraged us to revise the bid and resubmit. We plan to resubmit in 2023.</p>	<p>75%</p>

Committed Improvements and Actions		Percentage Complete
Implement charging scheme for Ranger activities.	Specialist Services – Approval of this scheme for commercial (profit making) organisations to help them access, understand and enjoy our natural and cultural heritage was granted at the meeting of Aberdeenshire Council’s Infrastructure Services Committee Meeting on 10 March 2022. The charge is £30 per hour. This is promoted on the Aberdeenshire Council Ranger Service website Ranger Service - Aberdeenshire Council .	100%
Agree protocol for inspections, management, and maintenance of non-motorised bridges across the path network.	Specialist Services – a protocol for this has been developed and shared between the relevant services but not finalised yet. Following the service reshape and changes in personnel within the team, this has not managed to be finalised. This is looking to be picked up and finalised in the coming year.	80%
Implement new record management and document management systems.	Historic Environment Team – The team reviewed their file storage systems and exported the data from shared folders into MS Teams/SharePoint or ARC. They are currently in the process of moving the team’s documentation into a new Document Management System (DMS) and hope to have this consolidated and completed in 2023 along with the realignment of MS Teams/SharePoint sites to align with the new team structures following the service reshape.	80%
	Natural Environment Team – The team reviewed their file storage systems and exported the data from shared folders into MS Teams/SharePoint or ARC. They are currently in the process of moving the team’s documentation in to a new Document Management System (DMS) and hope to have this consolidated and completed in 2023 along with the realignment of MS Teams/SharePoint sites to align with the new team structures following the service reshape.	80%
	Specialist Services – The team reviewed their file storage systems and exported the data from shared folders into MS Teams/SharePoint or ARC. They are currently in the process of moving the team’s documentation into a new Document Management System (DMS) and hope to have this consolidated and completed in 2023 along with the realignment of MS Teams/SharePoint sites to align with the new team structures following the service reshape.	80%
Complete improvement works at the Aikey. Brae Stone Circle Scheduled Monument which leads to improved accessibility, interpretation, understanding and biodiversity at the site.	Historic Environment Team – The project is now completed and saw the removal of organic debris and root structures from the immediate vicinity of the site. More considered tree planting was implemented, and a path network created to improve accessibility to the historic asset. The site was also enhanced with interpretation to aid understanding on its importance and the biodiversity of the location.	100%

Committed Improvements and Actions		Percentage Complete
<p>Deliver at least 2 specialist training/information sessions to Development Management staff and elected members to help raise awareness of the environment and improve decision making.</p>	<p>Historic Environment Team – The team has delivered a number of training sessions throughout the year including a presentation to the Agents Forum, RTPI Annual Conference and Conservation Officers Working Group. They are also progressing the delivery of a Councillor training session specifically on windows in 2023. The team further attended 4 Development Management team meetings and continue to maintain the online Understanding Heritage ALDO (internal online learning site) page.</p>	<p>100%</p>
	<p>Natural Environment – Delivered 2 lunchtime training sessions on biodiversity and North East Scotland Record Centre (NESBReC) to Development Management and other Planning and Economy staff. 3 sessions with Housing colleagues providing training on bat and bird on council properties. 2 natural heritage newsletters (SWAY) provided specifically for Development Management staff. Attendance at Development Management team meetings. Councillor training session specifically on natural heritage issues prepared and to be delivered in 2023.</p>	<p>100%</p>
<p>Review and prepare Natural Heritage Strategy.</p>	<p>Natural Environment – Work has commenced to create a new visionary Aberdeenshire Council Natural Heritage Strategy which is a new visionary corporate document which provides nature-based solutions to tackle the biodiversity and climate change crises.</p>	<p>40%</p>
<p>Review and prepare Pollinator Action Plan 2022-27.</p>	<p>Natural Environment – Pollinator Plan reviewed, and new Pollinator Action Plan 2022-27 approved.</p>	<p>100%</p>
<p>Introduce new project prioritisation and tracking for path projects.</p>	<p>Specialist Services – new excel spreadsheet developed and in use by the team to prioritise and track path projects.</p>	<p>100%</p>
<p>Explore opportunities to introduce a community grant scheme for tree planting and path development.</p>	<p>Natural Environment – Opportunities for a tree planting scheme have been explored and currently being developed. Working with partner agencies a project proposal for a potential short lived small grants scheme is being developed potentially as part of the Kings Coronation and 75th Birthday celebrations.</p>	<p>50%</p>
	<p>Specialist Services – initial background work has been undertaken in relation to this – what it would need to align with in terms of the Council’s Scheme of Governance. The intention is for this work to be progressed in the coming year.</p>	<p>30%</p>
<p>Establish a cross-service working group to maximise external funding opportunities to deliver natural heritage projects.</p>	<p>Natural Environment - A cross service Nature Restoration Fund Working Group has been established and is now delivering nature restoration projects.</p>	<p>100%</p>

3B. Delivery of our Actions and Improvements Committed in 2021-22 Enforcement Teams

Committed Improvements and Actions	Completed
Enhance tools for gathering evidence	<p>To be continued - The ability to carry out site visits has now returned to pre-covid position and officers are able to meet face to face with subjects and complainants when required. All officers are working from home, so sharing of equipment is limited and improvements in relation to enhanced evidence gathering tools were delayed. New hand-held devices are to be trialled in Q2 of 2023-24, this will allow immediate uploading of photos, notes, statements, and video footage whilst on site enabling real time sharing of information with the Senior Enforcement Planners within the team. These devices will also allow annotation of plans and confirmation of approved measurements whilst on site to reflect works carried out thereby allowing officers to identify any breach more easily. If the trial is successful, all Officers will be issued with a device to enhance their ability to collect and store evidence securely.</p>
Monitoring of Conditions on major developments	<p>To be continued - A new process will require to be developed for monitoring planning conditions on major developments. This improvement action remains on hold until guidance is issued by Scottish Government. Thereafter the Council will implement the requirements in line with Legislation and guidance.</p>
Develop a process for more collaborative working in relation to tackling unauthorised works in Town Centre Conservation Areas	<p>Complete - The Enforcement Team continue to work collaboratively with colleagues in the Environment Team and Development Management Team to address the proliferation of unauthorised works in Town Centre Conservation Areas. A Regulation 11 direction was issued in 2022 covering the Fraserburgh Conservation Area in addition to the pre-existing Article 4 direction. This was put into place to remove deemed consent rights for advertisements within the conservation area to enhance the visual amenity of the town centre. The Enforcement Team worked closely with the Environment Team to deliver this project. Moving forward this will enable the Planning Enforcement Team to serve formal Enforcement Notices if required, however, we continue to work together with the affected premises to negotiate a resolution. Whilst the project was specific to Fraserburgh the lessons learned are being taken forward in reviews of other Conservation Areas within Aberdeenshire.</p>

Part 4:

National Headline Indicators (NHI)

4A. NHI Key Outcomes

Development Planning

Development Planning	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Age of local development plan(s) at end of reporting period Requirement: less than 5 years	3 years 1 Month	5 years 1 Month	3 months
Will the local development plan(s) be replaced by their 5 th anniversary according to the current development plan scheme?	Yes	No	Yes
Has the expected date of submission of the plan to Scottish Ministers in the development plan scheme changed over the past year?	Yes – the 2020 development plan scheme indicated submission of the Proposed LDP for examination in December 2020. Due to delay in starting the formal consultation on the Proposed LDP, and the scale of submissions received the plan was not submitted for examination until 12 March 2021	No. The plan was submitted for examination on 12 March 2021	Yes – the draft Development Plan Scheme anticipates submission to Ministers in early 2028
Were development plan scheme engagement / consultation commitments met during the year?	Yes – all commitments were met	Yes – all commitments were met	No – Proposals for a second DPS in December 2022 were replaced by a period of public consultation and a revised DPS presented for adoption in May 2023

Key Outcomes	2021-22	2022-23	Notes
Housing Approvals and Completions, Employment Land Supply			
Housing Approvals	1,852 units	816 units	Note 1
Housing Completions in last 5yrs	4,916 units	4,732 units	Note 2
Marketable Employment Land Supply	237 ha	237 ha	Note 3
Employment take-up during reporting year	Unavailable	Unavailable	Note 3

Note 1

The number of housing approvals for 2022-23 (816 units) is down 55% compared to 2022-23 (1,852 units). The number of applications is 14% lower and there is only one large approval (above 100 units) amounting to 237 units, compared to three large approvals last year totalling 1,015 units. A number of larger sites allocated in the 2023 Local Development Plan are yet to come forward and the overall housing market has been adversely affected by local and national economic factors.

Source: Uniform Housing Approvals April 2022 – March 2023.

Note 2

The last 5 – year housing completions are for 2017-21. There were 971 housing completions in Aberdeenshire in 2021, slightly above the five year average, with numbers increasing as the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions eased. Over the last 5 years, 50% of units built in Aberdeenshire were in the Aberdeen HMA, 49% in the Rural HMA and 1% in the Aberdeenshire part of the Cairngorms National Park.

Source: Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Housing Land Audit 2022. Figures correct as at 1 January 2022.

Note 3

The Employment Land Audit 2020-21 remains the latest source available and shows a marketable employment land supply of 237 ha in Aberdeenshire over a wide selection of sites. An Employment Land Audit was not carried out for 2021-22 due to reduced staff resources and work is currently being carried out on the 2022-23 Audit. Employment land take-up figures for 2021-22 and 2022-23 are not yet available.

Source: Employment Land Audit 2020-21. Figures correct as at 1 April 2021.



4B. NHI Key Outcomes

Development Management

Development Management	2022-23	2021-22
Project Planning		
Percentage and number of applications subject to pre-application advice	213 – 10%	245 – 14%
Percentage and number of major applications subject to processing agreement	11 – 50%	9 – 100%
Decision Making		
Application approval rate	93.9%	95.0%
Delegation rate	93.5%	93.9%
Validation	17%	23%
Decision-making Timescales (weeks)		
Major Developments	21.4	49.4
Local developments (non-householder)	14.9	12.9
Householder developments	7.8	7.8
Legacy Case		
Number cleared during reporting period	*66	51
Number remaining	**44	52

*43 had PPAs in place, 30 of these were issued within the required timescale.

**20 of these currently have a PPA in place.

In relation to performance, the reasons, factors and influences of any increase or decrease are largely embodied in the various sections of this PPF document. In particular, reference should be made to Case Studies [1](#) and [2](#) relating to Aberdeenshire Council Performance for Local and Major Developments (Quality of Outcomes).

4C. NHI Key Outcomes

Enforcement Activity

Enforcement Activity	2022-23	2021-22
Time since enforcement charter published / reviewed Requirement: review every 2 years	Still current	July 2021
Complaints lodged and investigated	297	420
Breaches identified	181	149
Cases closed	339	359
Notices served	31	23
Direct Action	0	0
Reports to Procurator Fiscal	0	0
Prosecutions	0	0

There has been a reduction of 29% in the number of complaints lodged and investigated compared to the previous reporting period. However, this is mainly because of robust screening which is reflected in the higher proportion of actual breaches being identified (21% increase in breaches identified).

As the Government Covid restrictions relaxed, the Enforcement Team have been able to progress cases which were previously identified as **breaches** but were “on hold” due to the mitigating factors of the pandemic. As a result, there has been a 35% increase in the number of Enforcement Notices served where negotiations failed to deliver a resolution timeously. Whilst the number of notices has increased this remains a low percentage of the overall breaches identified and reflects the ability of the team to successfully resolve these through negotiation and informal discussion. Formal action remains a last resort with any potential direct action being costly to the Council, notwithstanding that the legislation allows cost recovery.

The number of cases closed remains similar to the previous period reflecting the workload of the Enforcement Team. The team has focused on closing older cases, many of which the subject could now action as materials and contractors’ capacity increased to resolve the breach.

Temporary breaches of planning control at licensed premises which were allowed on a temporary basis Scottish Governments Covid Exemptions Legislation were put in place to assist with business continuity during the pandemic. This relaxation period has now expired and there are several licenced premises across Aberdeenshire Council which now require to either secure Planning Permission or to remove the temporary structures.

Part 5: Scottish Government Official Statistics

5A: Scottish Government Official Statistics

Decision-making timescales

Timescales	2022-23	2022-23	2021-22
Overall	Weeks		
Major developments	11	21.4	49.4
Local developments (non-householder)	676	14.9	12.9
• Local: less than 2 months	60.2%	7.4	7.4
• Local: more than 2 months	39.8%	26.3	21.7
Householder developments	561	7.8	7.8
• Local: less than 2 months	89.3%	7.0	7.1
• Local: more than 2 months	10.7%	14.3	12.8
Housing Developments	Weeks		
Major	1	17.0	38.4
Local housing developments	312	17.7	15.5
• Local: less than 2 months	50.6%	7.4	7.5
• Local: more than 2 months	49.4%	28.2	23.8

Timescales	2022-23	2022-23	2021-22
Business and Industry	Weeks		
Major	1	11.7	26.1
Local business and industry developments	81	14.2	11.4
• Local: less than 2 months	65.4%	7.5	7.3
• Local: more than 2 months	34.6%	27.0	20.1
EIA Developments	-	-	-
Other Consents	168	9.1	8.7
• Listed Building/Conservation Area Consents	91	10.7	10.2
• Advertisements	49	7.2	7.3
• Hazardous Substances Consents	0	-	-
• Other Consents and Certificates	28	7.2	8.0
Planning/legal agreements	25	44.7	47.3
• Major: average time	0	-	177.7
• Local: average time	25	44.7	42.2

5B: Scottish Government Official Statistics

Decision-making: Local Reviews and Appeals

Type	Total number of decisions	Original decision upheld			
		2022-23		2021-22	
		No.	%	No.	%
Local reviews	29	21	72.4%	22	84.6%
Appeals to Scottish Ministers	17	10	58.8%	7	43.8%



Ballater Station



Fraserburgh Fish Sculpture

5C: Official Statistics

Context

In relation to decision-making figures and performance generally, the reasons, factors and influences are embodied throughout this PPF document. In particular, reference should be made to Case Studies 1 and 2 which outline the performance levels achieved this year in relation to Development Management Local and Major Development planning applications. Reference should also be made to the section in this PPF on Performance Markers – Response to 2021-22 Feedback.

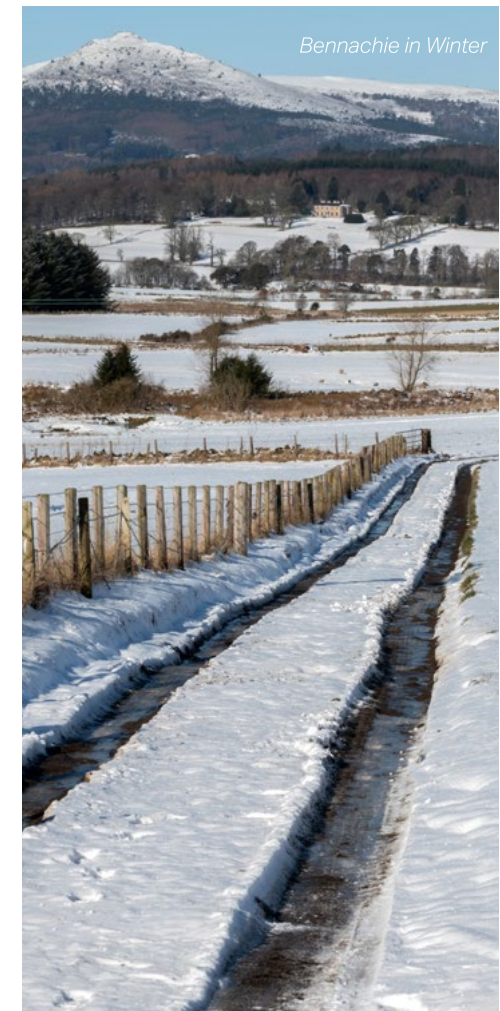
The primary challenge to performance in Development Management has been around recruitment, vacancies and staff capacity which has, throughout the reporting year and continues to be, the main factor in the ability of teams to meet performance objectives. However, with considerable efforts by existing staff it has been possible to maintain a reasonable level of performance which also takes account of customer care objectives. It should be noted that in the Major applications category there has been an overall improvement in average determination timescales for applications that have not been the subject of a PPA. It is also the case that in the Householder category, the performance level has been

maintained and the average determination timescale meets the statutory 8 – week period. It is only in the Local Development (Non-Householder) category where timescales have averaged longer but only by two weeks. There has also been a decrease in the number of planning applications received and made valid.

Specifically in relation to Major Developments there has been increase in activity with more determined than last year.

The number of applications that have been the subject of a Notice for Local Review decision with the Local Review Body (LRB) increased marginally by 3 from last year to 29 with a lower percentage of the original decisions being upheld (72.4% compared to 84.6% in 2021-22). One of the reasons for this could be related to the uncertainty created by the delay in the adoption of the new LDP 2023 (see reasons for this in sections in this PPF relating to [Summary of the LDP Team Year; Performance Markers – Response to 2021-22 Feedback](#); and [Part 3A Delivery of Actions and Improvements – LDP Team](#)), which technically left the LDP 2017 out of date for the majority of the reporting period.

Scottish Government appeals and decisions also marginally increased in number by 1 (17 compared to 16 in 2021-22). The percentage of decisions where the original decision was upheld by the DPEA though increased by 15% to 58.8% compared to 43.8% in 2021-22.



Bennachie in Winter

Part 6: Workforce Information



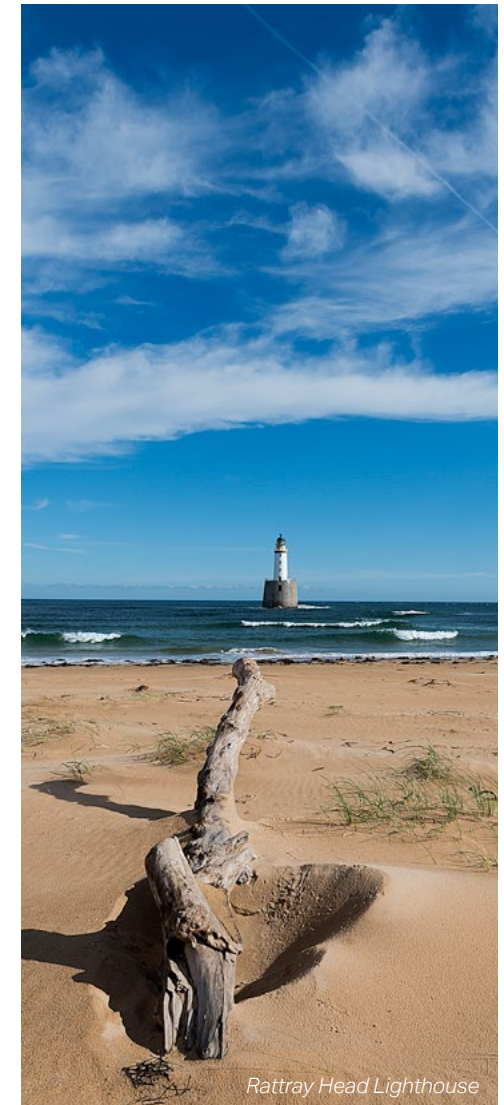
Workforce Information

	Tier 1 Chief Executive	Tier 2 Director	Tier 3 Head of Service	Tier 4 Manager
Relating to the Planning Service (within Planning and Economy Service) which sits within the Environment & Infrastructure Services Directorate	1	1	1	10 (Planning Managers/Team Managers and Team Leaders)

Staff Age Profile	Headcount
Under 30	7
30-39	29
40-49	36
50 and over	42

RTPI Chartered Staff	Headcount
Chartered staff	40

NB. Collated information relates to the entire Planning Service (within the Planning and Economy Service) which also includes the E: planning and Embedded Administration Teams.



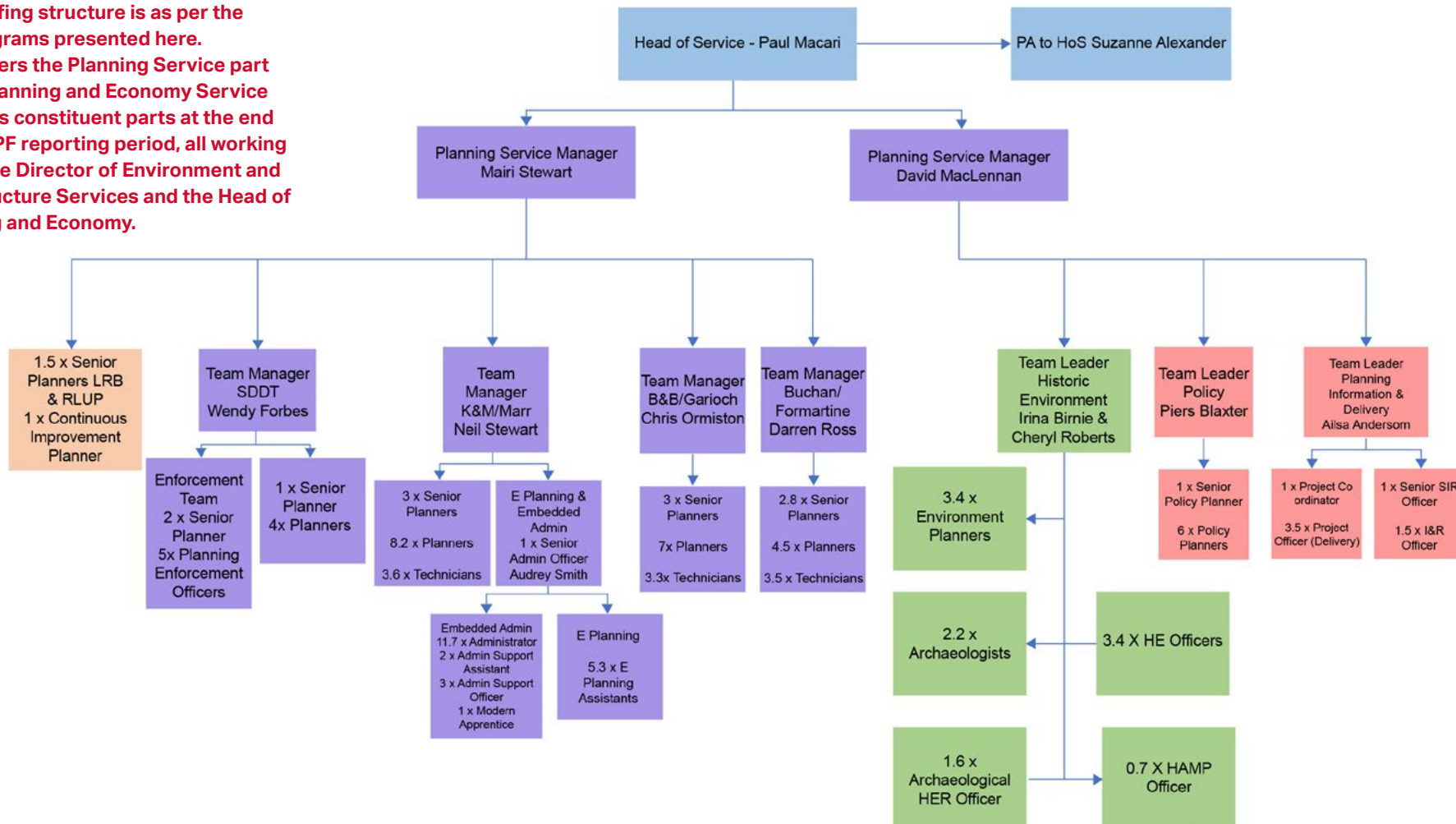
Rattray Head Lighthouse

Organograms

Overall Planning Service

Updated 29 May 2023

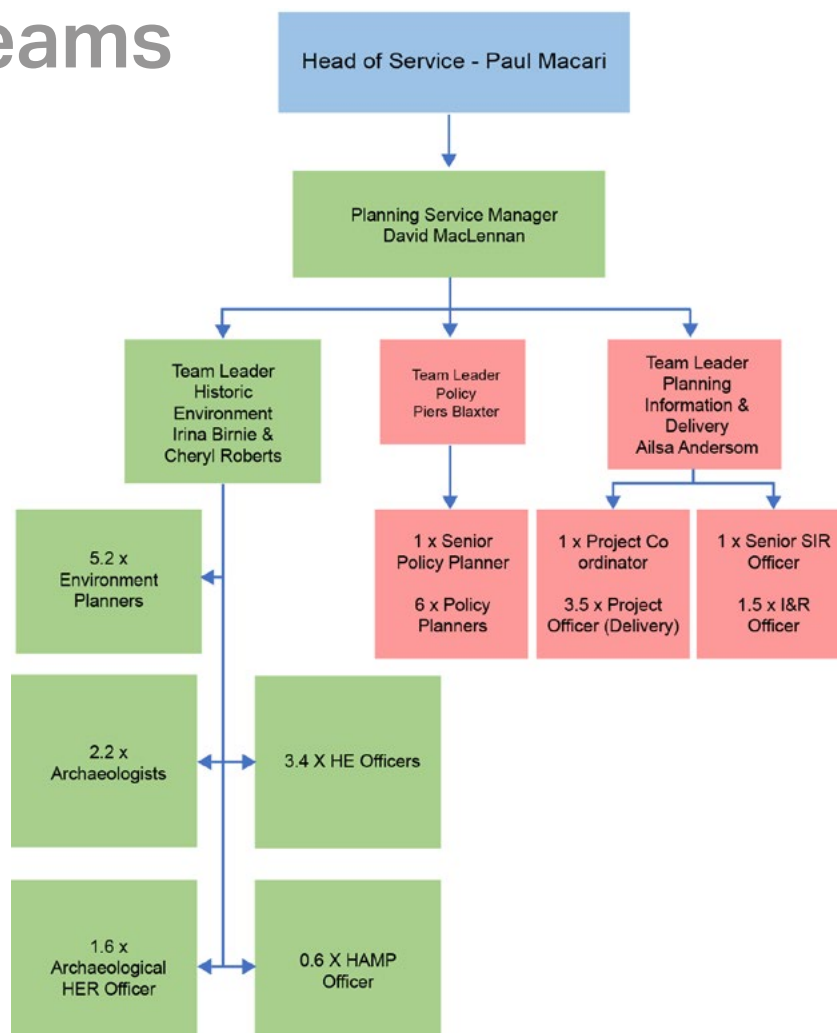
The staffing structure is as per the Organograms presented here. This covers the Planning Service part of the Planning and Economy Service and all its constituent parts at the end of the PPF reporting period, all working under the Director of Environment and Infrastructure Services and the Head of Planning and Economy.



Organograms

Planning Policy; Information and Delivery; Historic Environment Teams

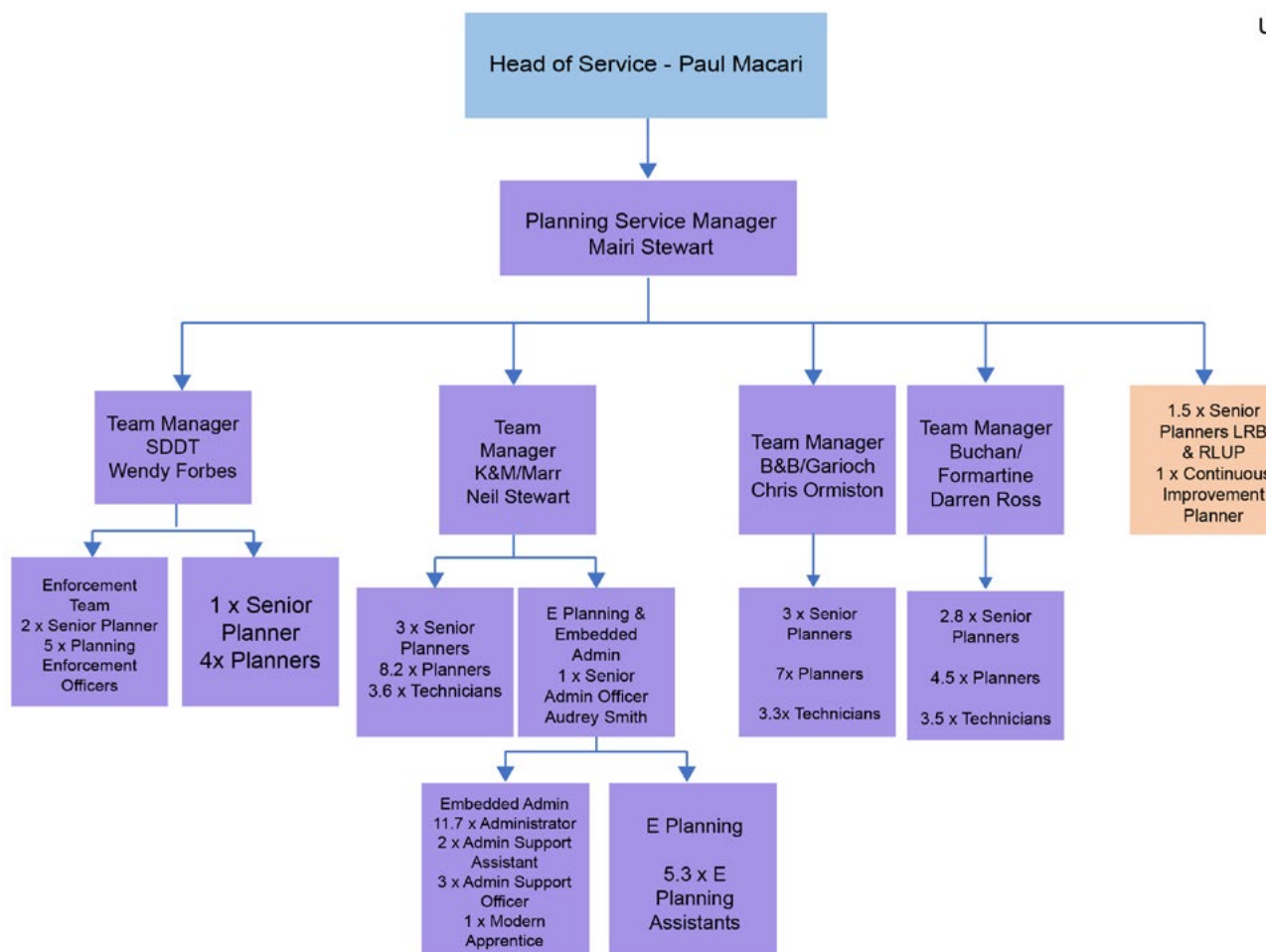
Updated 29 May 2023



Organograms

Development Management; Strategic Development and Delivery; Enforcement Teams

Updated 29 May 2023



Part 7:

Planning Committee Information



Planning Committee Information

Committee & Site Visits	Number per Year
Full Council Meetings – Note 1	9
Infrastructure Services Committee – Note 2	7
Area Committees – Note 3	70
Committee Site Visits – Note 4	21
Pre-Determination Hearings	0
Local Review Body (LRB) – Note 5	11
LRB Site Visits	5



Newmachar Primary School Nursery

Note 1

Aberdeenshire’s Full Council considers a very limited number of planning applications in line with its Scheme of Governance. In the reporting year 2 planning applications were reported to and decided by Full Council.

Note 2

Aberdeenshire Council has an Infrastructure Services Committee which deals with matters of policy. Some planning applications under the Scheme of Governance are considered at this Committee. In the reporting year 4 planning applications and 2 Section 36 consultations were reported to and decided by this Committee.

Note 3

Aberdeenshire Council has 6 Area Committees. These deal with area business, including most planning applications that are required to be reported to Committee under the Scheme of Governance. It should be noted that 93.5% of all planning applications determined during the reporting period were done so under delegated powers ie. not at Committee.

Note 4

Committee Site Visits include visits associated with Committee planning applications and Pre-Determination Hearing site visits by Area Committees.

Note 5

This relates to the number of meetings of the LRB. The number of Appeals for Review that were determined by the LRB during the reporting year was 29.

Part 8: Summary



Summary

Key Performance Markers 2022-23

No.	Performance Marker	Evidence
Driving Improved performance		
1	Decision-making: authorities demonstrating continuous evidence of reducing average timescales for all development types.	<p>Statistics and data on timescales for decision-making on planning applications and other related planning application information are provided in Part 4B. NHI Key Outcomes – Development Management and Part 5A. Official Statistics – Decision – Making timescales of the PPF.</p> <p>Case Study 1 and Case Study 2 of the PPF provide more detailed analysis of decision-making in relation to Local and Major Development planning applications.</p> <p>Other general evidence of processes related to decision-making over the reporting year can be found in PPF Case Study 3 and Case Study 6.</p>
2	Project Management: offer of processing agreements (or other agreed project plan) made to prospective applicants in advance of all major applications and availability publicised on planning authority website.	<p>General evidence of use of Processing Agreements can be found in PPF Case Study 1 and Case Study 2 and also reference is made in Part 3A. Service Improvements – In the coming year (Development Management Team) and Part 3B Delivery of our Actions and Improvements Committed in 2021-22 (Development Management Team); and Part 4B. NHI Key Outcomes – Development Management.</p> <p>PPAs are offered to all prospective applicants for national and major developments and for many local developments but are not always agreed. The use of PPAs has been reviewed with alternative tools, in particular agreed Extension of Time letters, being used more often for Local Development applications.</p> <p>Information on Processing Agreements and encouragement for their use for National and Major applications is published on the website.</p>

No.	Performance Marker	Evidence
3	<p>Early collaboration with applicants and consultees on planning applications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • availability and promotion of pre-application discussions for all prospective applications; and • clear and proportionate requests for supporting information. 	<p>General evidence of early and successful collaboration can be found in PPF Case Study 3 and Case Study 6.</p> <p>An update on the work of the Pre – application group can be found in Part 3A. Service Improvements – In the Coming Year (Development Management) and Part 3B. Delivery of our Actions and Improvements Committed in 2021-22 (Development Management).</p> <p>Part 4B. NHI Key Outcomes – Development Management indicates the number of applications that were the subject of Pre – application advice during 2022-23 (213).</p>
4	<p>Legal agreements: conclude (or reconsider) applications within 6 months of ‘resolving to grant’:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reducing number of live applications more than 6 months after resolution to grant (from same time as last year). 	<p>Statistics on the number of legal agreements and timescales are provided in Part 5A - Official Statistics – Decision-Making Timescales of the PPF.</p> <p>These show that there has been a decrease in the average timescales taken during 2022-23 for applications that have been the subject of a legal agreement.</p> <p>The Development Management and Legal Services continue to collaborate to monitor and improve working arrangements in relation to the early instructing and efficient progression of legal agreements. The Legacy Case Strategy remains in place to try and prevent and minimise the number of legacy case applications and reduce their timescales for conclusion, including those on legal agreements.</p> <p>There remains in place a process in the Scheme of Governance that allows for delegation of refusals to Officers of applications where there is clear evidence that a legal agreement is not being progressed for reasons out with the control of the Council. Timescales set out are 4 months for Local Developments and 6 months for Major Developments from the point of determination.</p>
5	<p>Enforcement charter updated / re-published.</p>	<p>Part 4C. NHI Key Outcomes – Enforcement Activity of the PPF identifies that the Council’s Enforcement Charter was updated in July 2021 and as such by the end of the reporting year (March 2023) it remains less than two years old. It is publicly available on the website.</p>
6	<p>Continuous improvements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • progress ambitious and relevant service improvement commitments identified through the PPF report. 	<p>Information on delivery of Continuous Improvement through Improvement Commitments across all aspects of the Planning Service are found in Part 3B. – Delivery of our Actions and Improvements Committed in 2021-22. Commitments for the coming year are outlined in Part 3A. – Service Improvements – In the coming year.</p> <p>A key commitment for 2023-24 remains the continuation of the implementation and operation of the Continuous Improvement Framework and also the implementation of the Staff Recruitment and Retention Strategy. Also there are improvement projects across the Service outlined in Case Studies 12, 13, 14 and 15.</p>

No.	Performance Marker	Evidence
Promoting the plan - led system		
7	LDP (or LP) less than 5 years since adoption.	<p>The Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023 was adopted in January 2023, following a lengthy examination period. Part 4A: NHI Key Outcomes for Development Planning and the Summary of the Local Development Plan Team Year provide relevant information and clarification.</p> <p>Part 3B.- Delivery of our Actions and Improvements Committed in 2021-22 – Local Development Plan Team also provides information in relation to the LDP adoption process throughout the reporting year.</p> <p>In addition, Case Study 4 provides a detailed summary of how the Council delivered the adoption of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023 and the high – quality outcomes achieved.</p>
8	<p>Development plan scheme: demonstrates next LDP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • on course for adoption within 5-year cycle; • project planned and expected to be delivered to planned timescale. 	<p>See Key Performance Marker 7 above and Part 3A. In the Coming Year (Local Development Plan Team) for information on the Development Plan Scheme and progress on the next Local Development Plan.</p> <p>The Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan Scheme 2028-2038 is publicly available.</p> <p>In addition, Case Study 14 sets out some specific information about innovative online engagement tools being used in the development of the next Local Development Plan.</p>
9	Stakeholders including Elected Members, industry, agencies, the public and Scottish Government engaged appropriately through all key stages of development plan preparation.	<p>See Key Performance Markers 7 and 8 above. All stakeholders are being engaged fully through all key stages of the next Local Development Plan preparation.</p> <p>In particular, evidence can be found in Case Study 14.</p>
10	No longer applicable – gap kept for data continuity.	
11	Production of relevant and up to date policy advice.	<p>Regular and proportionate policy advice continues to be given through the Pre-application process with detailed information publicly available on the website and responses given in terms of upfront advice and requirements for submissions. See Case Studies 3 and 6 of the PPF.</p> <p>A wide range of Planning Advice continues to be publicly available on the website.</p>

No.	Performance Marker	Evidence
Simplifying and streamlining		
12	Corporate working across services: to improve outputs and services for customer benefit (e.g. protocols; joined-up services; single contact; joint pre-application advice).	Evidence of corporate working across services can be found throughout the PPF and is evidenced as Key Areas of Work in 11 out of the 15 Case Studies presented (Collaborative Working). These Case Studies are 1 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6 , 8 , 10 , 11 , 13 , and 15 .
13	Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge between authorities.	Evidence of sharing good practice, skills and knowledge both internally and externally can be found in PPF Case Studies 11 , 13 and 15 .
Delivering development		
14	Stalled sites / legacy cases: conclusion/ withdrawal of planning applications more than one-year old.	<p>Information on numbers of legacy cases can be found at Part 4B. NHI Key Outcomes – Development Management of the PPF.</p> <p>There has been a decrease in the number of legacy cases remaining at the end of the reporting period compared to the same time last year (a reduction of 8 overall). There has also been a greater number of legacy cases cleared (by 14) compared to the same time last year.</p> <p>In addition, Part 3A. –In the coming year – Development Management Team of the PPF advises that there remains a commitment to focus on Legacy Case prevention and reduction through the Legacy Case Strategy.</p>
15	Developer contributions: clear expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set out in development plan (and/or emerging plan); and • in pre-application discussions. 	<p>In the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023, Section 14 – The Responsibilities of Developers – Policy RD2 Developer Obligations - Pages 92 and 93 - sets out the policy requirements for contributions to the provision of necessary infrastructure and services.</p> <p>There remains detailed information, including FAQs, Youtube video, customer charter, information bulletins and contact details, all publicly available on the website on Developer Obligations.</p> <p>There is also publicly available Draft Planning Advice on Developer Obligations and Affordable Housing in relation to the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan.</p> <p>Levels of developer contributions can be discussed at the Pre-application stage and the Developer Obligations Team are consulted on Pre-application submissions where appropriate.</p>

Stonehaven

Banff

Fraserburgh

Newburgh

Pennan

Westhill

Inverurie

Ballater

Balmoral

Braemar

Aberdeenshire

COUNCIL

