

# Planning Performance Framework 2019/20

No. 9



**Aberdeenshire**  
COUNCIL

[aberdeenshire.gov.uk](http://aberdeenshire.gov.uk)



The Faithlie Centre, Fraserburgh

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## 2019/20

**Please note that this is an interactive document allowing you to link to the associated content from the contents page.**

Throughout the document there are also links to other associated documentation specific to text and the case studies. Please click on Aberdeenshire Council in the header of any page to move back to the contents page.

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## 2019/20

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# Aberdeenshire Council Vision.



Aberdeenshire  
COUNCIL



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

## The best area

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

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

## The best council

Aiming to provide excellent services for all by . . .

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



# Foreword.

**The teams have pursued becoming and being regarded as a Service that engages, facilitates, steers and, where appropriate, directs development across Aberdeenshire. An approach of judgement and measure is applied, to encourage development and to ensure that any such investment is in keeping with the aspiration of Aberdeenshire and its communities. The Planning and Environment Service is the point of steer from which much is delivered in our communities. The Service has achieved a status of being fully digitally enabled and this has been of significant benefit as we have looked forward into change in 2020/2021 due to the Pandemic.**

The democratic process has remained strong. The Area Committee structure allows decision-making at the appropriate local level, with potential decisions against Policy being referred to the Infrastructure Services Committee. Matters of national significance are decided at Full Council. The Councillor inputs are strong and informed and allow the right decisions to be

made at that appropriate level. The drive remains to be supportive of applications and development/investment, with that measured review looking at particular circumstance and potential impacts.

The Service has worked to accommodate change in such a way as to maintain and improve service provision, whilst accommodating the challenges of a changing workforce environment. Team working and collaboration within the Planning and Environment Service remain an essential component in Service development with teams learning from cross-service and public/private sector partnership working. This approach continues to facilitate the evolution of a modern, efficient and effective service delivery model that is intrinsic to meeting the needs of our communities and various industries across Aberdeenshire. Both the European and post-pandemic environments have had, and will continue to have, impacts on the Planning and Environment Service and, indeed Aberdeenshire Council as a

## The Planning and Environment Service has continued on a journey of continuous improvement over a number of years.

whole. Efficiency and Service effectiveness are key and these are a real focus for the Service during the continuing cycle of change.

Aberdeenshire as a place represents a diverse mix, from a once buoyant energy sector now in a period of challenge, to urban areas showing high quality design and townscapes, to areas of significant deprivation and in need of collective intervention. Planning has a key role in all such, and also in supporting our heritage and regeneration inputs across some stunning parts of Scotland. During periods of significant change the Service has continued to focus on service delivery, bring a number of stakeholders and services together, and adopt that measured and added value input and influence, to enhance Aberdeenshire. This underpins Aberdeenshire Council's aspiration to represent the very best of Scotland.



**Stephen Archer**  
Director of Infrastructure Services

# Introduction.

This Planning Performance Framework document continues to be read in conjunction with the suite of high-level documents that have been developed by Aberdeenshire Council and its partners.



Den of Finella Nr. St. Cyrus

**The Council Plan gives strategic direction to the wider Council and is used to inform decision-making. The Plan is laid out in full below, all centred around the 11 Council Strategic Priorities.**

[The Council Plan 2017–2022](#) ([Council's Strategic Priorities](#))

The Planning and Environment Service sits within the Infrastructure Services Directorate. It has a [Service Plan 2017–2020](#) which sets out the strategic priorities for Infrastructure Services which also shows how these support the delivery of the Council's Strategic Priorities.

The Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership (CPP) is responsible for delivering positive changes for the communities of Aberdeenshire, with a specific focus on reducing socio-economic inequality, primarily through the priorities identified

in [Aberdeenshire's Local Outcomes Improvement Plan \(LOIP\) 2017–2027](#). This sets out how we work with our main partners and Aberdeenshire's communities, and our overall [vision](#).

Each of the six areas has produced a Local Community Plan for the next four years. These can be found on the [Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership](#) web site. The current [Economic Development Strategy](#) and [Regional Economic Strategy](#) remains valid.

The Aberdeenshire [Local Development Plan](#) and the Aberdeen City and Shire [Strategic Development Plan](#) are similarly significant planning tools which continue to aid the delivery Aberdeenshire-wide and Planning and Environment Service objectives.



# Progress and Improvement in the Planning & Environment Service in 2019–20

## Summaries for the Year

### Summary of the Development Planning Year

**The primary focus of the Local Development Plan Team during the 2019/2020 period was on transitioning from the Main Issues Report stage of the Plan-making process towards preparation of a Proposed Local Development Plan for the Aberdeenshire area.**

Between April and August 2019 almost 1100 responses on the Main Issues Report were summarised by Officers and comments responded to through a series of Issues and Actions Papers. Officers from Development Management were brought into the process and involved in preparing these documents. A Case Study entitled “Cross Team Collaboration to Prepare Issues and Actions Papers” is included in the Quality of Outcomes section. This ensured that

tight timescales could be met, but also allowed Officers from a different arm of the Planning and Environment Service to broaden their professional experience.

The Issues and Actions papers were considered by the Council’s six Area Committees during special meetings held in August and September 2019. Elected Members considered the comments received and the Officers’ responses. A set of recommendations were provided by Officers which Elected Members either agreed, agreed with amendment, or rejected. Additional recommendations were also agreed by some of the Area Committees. Any outstanding matters were subsequently considered by the Council’s [Infrastructure Services Committee in October 2019](#).

The Team also took into account provisions coming through the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 and incorporated changes into the Proposed Local Development Plan, where possible. For example, this included the removal of supplementary guidance.

Due to delay in the publication of a Report of Examination on the Proposed Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan this in turn led to delay in producing the Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan. The Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan was agreed by [Aberdeenshire Council on 5 March 2020](#) with consultation scheduled from late April 2020.



Fraserburgh Beach

## Summary of Development Management Year

**The emphasis continues to remain on maintaining and improving, where possible, performance in relation to planning application determinations and quality of outcomes. The evidence provided shows that overall performance has been relatively consistent with the previous years in terms of Local Development applications but that performance in relation to Major Development applications has improved.**

In line with the general trend over the last few years, the overall number of planning applications received has once again fallen this year. Compared to the numbers received in 2015–16 (3421) there has been a gradual decrease each year with 2019–20 receiving 2602. This shows that the economic climate continues to pose challenges to the development industry. Aberdeenshire though remains one of the busiest Planning Authorities in the country.

Despite the decrease in numbers of planning applications, Development Management staff have remained busy and, as in previous years, in order to provide continued professional development, staff resources have been distributed to aid, where necessary, other areas of planning work.

This includes working with the LDP Planning Policy Team on LDP processes and also being the lead on developing and finalising the Design Guidance which forms part of the Proposed LDP. Other important improvement projects have continued, in particular the work on revising the Pre-application process. This has focused on improving the quality, consistency and speed of the process and its responses to customers. Improvements to ways of working with other Services and resolving operational issues have also continued. Where relevant these projects are the subject of Case Studies.

Operational staffing levels in Development Management have reduced moderately in line with a wider policy of on-going vacancy management and taking account of workloads. However, where the operational need has been justified staffing resources and levels have been adjusted to allow temporary and flexible use of existing staff across the Development Management teams within the Council.

Another significant element of work undertaken by Development Management staff over the reporting year is the move towards achieving Customer Service Excellence Accreditation. This has been an

ongoing commitment for the Development Management Service. The process has been exhaustive and multi-faceted across all aspects of the Service. A final Audit was in place for March 2020 but this had to be postponed for operational reasons. Work continues on this with the aim of another final Audit by the end of 2020. This project is the subject of a Case Study.

Latterly, the Covid -19 Pandemic has presented obvious challenges. As with all Council and Planning functions in Aberdeenshire, there has been a desire to achieve business continuity where possible. The adaptability of the Development Management Service in its working processes has allowed for a quick response with all staff shifting successfully to home working within a very short period of time. Processes have been adapted to meet the restrictions presented by the Pandemic and in line with Scottish Government legislative changes and guidance.

Engagement with customers has been able to continue, and planning applications and enquiries have continued to be administered, assessed and determined through Officer Delegation and Committee processes.





## Summary of Environment/ Specialist Services Year

**The Environment and Specialist Services 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.**

Working with other Services, partners and community groups continues to be an important part of our activity. We continue to review our processes and seek customer feedback to make sure we add value. We plan to do more work on public engagement and how we can best use modern technology to do this. Following the successful drawdown of Historic Environment Scotland, Heritage Lottery and other external funding the [Fraserburgh 2021](#) project is well underway with the restoration and extension of The Faithlie Centre, a major project, now complete. A Case Study on this project entitled *"The Faithlie Centre (Fraserburgh 2021)"* is included in the Quality of Outcomes section. The success of the project was recognised in being short listed for a [RIAS Award](#). It was also featured in the [Architects Journal](#).

We are progressing plans for a major project in Peterhead with consultants appointed to develop a scheme which could attract external funding. Spend across the built and natural environment is better planned by an asset management approach and improved budget monitoring is in place. All of our work is now supported by strategies, action plans and performance indicators, to ensure alignment with national and corporate priorities and that our activities make the best use of resources available. We will be reviewing three of these strategies in 2020 to ensure they reflect new priorities and ways of working and contribute to recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.



## Summary of the Enforcement Year

**This year in Enforcement was predominantly focused on the day to day running of the service alongside progressing commitments identified within the previous reporting period. Many of the completed commitments have instigated new work which essentially looks at ways in which the team can carry out the enforcement service with improved efficiency.**

For example, building on the success of the Enforcement content on the [Council's Website](#) we are now extending this to include guidance on frequently raised issues in Planning Enforcement. This will enhance the transparency of enforcement work and provide justification or the basis for any actions taken when dealing with caseloads. Some of these are now complete and are proposed to be published imminently (Agricultural Drainage, Working from Home and Biomass Guidance).

Benchmarking with adjacent Council areas is continuing. During the period, a Benchmarking event was held at Angus Council's HQ in Forfar which was well attended by neighbouring Councils and Officers within the team found this to be a worthwhile exercise for both sharing and sourcing ideas on tackling particular subject matter. Some of the topics discussed which are prevalent in Aberdeenshire includes commencement of works without discharging of conditions, unauthorised

advertisements, breaches involving built heritage and dealing with amenity issues. It is expected that other Authorities will host future events once the current restrictions associated with the Covid-19 Pandemic allows.

With the underlying aim of improving customer service, measurable targets have now been identified which will be useful for performance management, particularly for those non-breach cases to ensure that they are closed off timeously. Following the implementation of a proforma for the undertaking of consultations with Development Management, this has now been extended to include other Council Services including Roads, Environmental Health and Flood Prevention. It is anticipated that this not only provides firm justification for subsequent action taken by Planning Enforcement, but will also improve efficiency of the service in that it will allow us to track and follow up consultee input to identify problems or difficulties with any potential retrospective planning applications at an early stage.

Officers continue to work towards a position where we are confident and equipped to report cases to the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) via the SRAWEB which is a national system for Specialist Reporting Agencies to effectively communicate the facts and evidence to the COPFS for consideration of disposal. As

part of this, initiatives are in progress such as improving tools for gathering evidence i.e. utilising technology, data share with external agencies and the establishment of a cross-service working group in the Council to share ideas and provide consistency in approach. A process map for direct action is also planned. This will assist Officers to ensure that all necessary precautions and processes are in place for those infrequent cases where direct action is unavoidable and will ensure consistency with process and procedures.



Oldmeldrum Town Centre



# Summary of Planning Information and Delivery Team Year

**The Planning Information and Delivery Team has had another busy year and continues to analyse and present information for Council Services and residents and to facilitate cross-service working across Council Services with particular focus on aiding the progression and delivery of allocated sites identified within the Council's Local Development Plan (LDP).**

As well as working across Council Services and stakeholders, the Team has also been busy working with the development industry and assisting with site search enquiries from potential investors looking at the Aberdeenshire region.

On the information side, as well as the usual reports that are produced on a regular basis, such as the Housing and Employment Land Audits and the Action Programme, the Team continue to publish a range of informative bulletins and analytical reports using data available about the local population and economy for example. Other work includes the continued development of an Aberdeenshire-wide settlement database and the creation of an interactive dashboard making a wide range of data easily accessible and understandable for Officers and residents alike.

The Team has been involved in two projects which were shortlisted for the [Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning 2019](#); The Site Prospectus and the Youth Engagement Pilot Scheme. Case Studies entitled "*Housing Site Prospectus – Update*" and "*School Engagement Exercise*" are included in the Quality of Service and Engagement section. Since the first publication of the Site Prospectus in 2018, the Team has continued to improve on the information contained in the document and how it is utilised. Over the last year, the Team has been preparing to move the information to a digital format which will be more widely available on the website.

Work has continued on various regeneration projects including The Bridge Street Public Realm Improvement Project in Banff. A Case Study entitled "*Bridge Street Banff Regeneration – Update*" is included in the Quality of Outcomes section.

The Planning Information and Delivery Team continues to work to ensure that decisions are made using the best available data and to unlock sites and projects across the Aberdeenshire area and – embracing a '*One Council*' approach – the Team continues to assist the Council in realising its full potential.



Bridge of Feugh Nr. Banchory

# Performance Markers

## Priority Focus Areas/Responses from 2018-2019 Feedback

This section relates to the RAG ratings feedback received from the Scottish Government on the previous PPF 8 (2018-19). In relation to PPF 8, 2 out of the 15 Key Performance Marker areas were awarded amber ratings with the rest awarded green ratings. The 2 amber ratings were **Decision-Making** and **Stalled Sites/Legacy Cases**. These are summarized below and reported back with Priority Focus Areas/Responses for 2019-20.

Performance Marker	RAG Rating – Amber	Priority Focus Area/Response
<b>1. Decision-making:</b> Continuous reduction of average timescales for all development categories (Q1 – Q4)	<b>Major Applications:</b> Your timescales of 35.3 weeks are slower than the previous year and are slower than the Scottish average of 32.5 weeks. <b>RAG = Red</b>  <b>Local (Non-Householder) Applications:</b> Your timescales of 9.2 weeks are slower than the previous year but are faster than the Scottish average of 10.7 weeks. <b>RAG = Amber</b>  <b>Householder Applications:</b> Your timescales of 7.1 weeks are slower than the previous year but are faster than the Scottish average of 7.2 weeks and the statutory timescales of 8 weeks. <b>RAG = Green</b>  <b>Overall RAG = Amber</b>	<p>There was disappointment in the overall rating when analysed in the overall context. 18 major applications were determined but of these only 4 were determined with either no agreed PPA or outwith the agreed PPA period. These are the 4 applications that are considered for PPF reporting purposes and a Case Study was produced which explained the reasons which included a desire to be open-minded, solutions focused for quality outcomes, and transparent in process. For local (Non-Householder) applications the reported timescales were only marginally slower than the previous year.</p> <p>Nevertheless, there has been a continued focus on maintaining and improving performance where possible in 2019-20. For major applications there has been an improvement by an average of over 11 weeks. For others there has been very marginal decreases in average weeks taken.</p>
<b>14. Stalled sites/legacy cases:</b> Conclusion or withdrawal of old planning applications and reducing number of live applications more than one year old.	You have cleared 47 cases during the reporting year, with 35 cases still awaiting conclusion. Based on this and last year's figures, 33 reached legacy status during the reporting year. <b>RAG = Amber</b>	<p>The reporting of these cases is figures based. This year 34 cases have been cleared but despite the continued work and strategies developed by the Legacy Case Team there still remains 39 cases registered. The reasons are complex and often relate to legal matters outwith the control of the Planning and Environment Service.</p> <p>Nevertheless, moving forward, continued efforts will be made by the Legacy Case Team to seek further ways in which to pro-actively determine legacy cases. This may mean more use of powers of delegated refusal.</p>



# Part 1: Qualitative Narrative Case Studies



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Johnshaven



# Quality of Outcomes

## Case Studies

1. Aberdeenshire Council Planning Performance 2019–20
2. Aberdeenshire Council Planning Performance – Major Applications – 2019–20
3. National Development for Electricity Substation St. Fergus Gas Terminal Peterhead
4. Bridge Street Banff Regeneration – Update
5. Cranford Guest House Replacement Cottage Braemar
6. Fraserburgh Shopfront Design Guidance (Fraserburgh 2021)
7. Tullich Church and Carved Symbol Stones Nr. Ballater – Project Management and Update
8. Development Management Design Guidance
9. The Faithlie Centre (Fraserburgh 2021)
10. Cross Team Collaboration to Prepare Issues and Actions Papers
11. 49–53 Bridge Street Banff (Banff Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme)



Aberchirder

# Case Study 1.

## Aberdeenshire Council Planning Performance in Development Management 2019-20

### Location and Dates:

Aberdeenshire Council,  
April 2019 – March 2020

### 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
- Process Improvement
- Project Management

### Stakeholders Involved:

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

### Overview:

As with previous years, throughout the PPF reporting year, there has been an emphasis on retention and where possible improvement in performance in terms of delivery of application decision-making. The feedback on all decision-making from last year's PPF provided an overall amber rating in this key marker category. Major applications showed a marginal dip of 5.8 average weeks in timescales and were slower than the Scottish average by 2.8 weeks. As such a red rating was given. Local (Non-Householder) applications showed even less of a marginal dip in timescales (0.1 of a week) but they were faster than the Scottish average by 1.5 average weeks. An amber rating was therefore given. Householder applications received a green rating. While they were marginally slower (0.3 average weeks) they were faster than the Scottish average and within the statutory 8-week timescale.

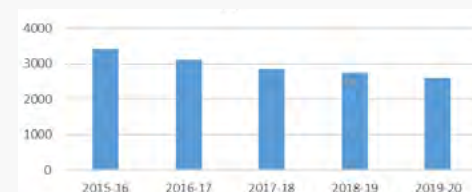
Factors that have affected the economy of Aberdeenshire in recent years continue to have an impact on the numbers and types of planning applications received and consequently this, along with Council efficiencies and staff resources, has affected how the Development Management Service channel its workloads and resources. Priorities remain though with customer care, efficient processes for decision-making,

collaborative working between Services and performance monitoring. There remains a careful balance to be had between performance in decision-making and the outcomes of the decisions taking account of the [Council's priorities](#).

The total number of [planning applications received](#) and made valid reduced by a further 146 (2602) from the number received in 2018-19 (2748). Over the reporting year, including applications that were subject of Planning Processing Agreements, 2266 planning application decisions were made.

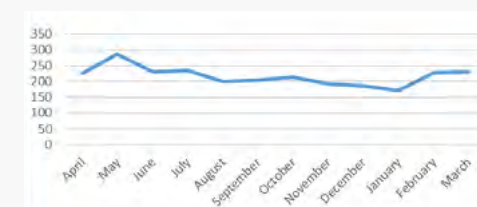
### Number of Planning Applications/ Notifications Received (Valid), includes all types of submission

Year	Applications
2015-16	3421
2016-17	3106
2017-18	2853
2018-19	2748
2019-20	2602



### 2019-20 Breakdown by Month

Year	Applications
APRIL	225
MAY	286
JUNE	231
JULY	234
AUGUST	200
SEPTEMBER	205
OCTOBER	213
NOVEMBER	192
DECEMBER	186
JANUARY	172
FEBRUARY	228
MARCH	230
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2602</b>





**2019-20 Breakdown by Type**

HOUSEHOLD	753
NON HOUSEHOLD	1278
LOCAL + EIA	1
MAJOR	9
NATIONAL	4
ALL OTHER	557
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2602</b>

Performance in Major applications is reported in more detail in Case Study 2. It is noted that for the 3 applications reported there has been an improvement in performance with an average weeks timescale of 23.1 weeks recorded compared to 35.3 weeks last year.

Performance in [non-householder decision-making](#) has also remained a priority but there has been a percentage drop in performance from last year with 74.5% of applications determined in less than 2 months compared to 82%. It should however be noted that there has been only a very marginal increase of 0.1 average weeks taken compared to last year with a figure of 9.3 weeks recorded. This still remains within the National average weeks timescale of 10.7 weeks recorded last year.

Performance in [Householder decision-making](#) has remained a priority and as such has remained high with 91% of applications determined in less than 2 months. While there is a marginal increase of 0.2 in average weeks timescales from those recorded last year, this has not caused any

significant fall in overall service delivery in the determination of this category of development. At 7.3 average weeks this is only marginally outwith the National average weeks timescale of 7.2 weeks reported last year.

**[Rates of approval and delegation](#)**

continue to remain consistent with 94.3% of applications approved and 92.5% of applications decided through delegated powers. Monitoring of these rates continues in order to provide the Planning and Environment Service with any indicators of change that may result in the need to identify any factors that need to be reviewed or improved. Overall, the effectiveness of processes and collaboration between the Planning and Environment Service and Elected Members continues to provide appropriate levels of outcomes.

**Overall performance** has therefore shown a general degree of consistency with some marginal falls but also improvements. In terms of Local Developments in 2018-19, 88% were decided in less than 2 months, equating to 8.3 average weeks timescales. In 2019-20, 82% of Local Development applications were decided in less than two months, but the average weeks timescales were similar at 8.4.

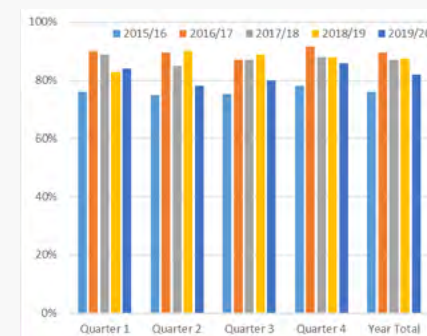
**[National Comparison All Locals.](#)**

Note: At the time of preparation – Scottish Government performance statistics for 2019-20 not published.

2019/20	Quarter 1 % Average	Quarter 2 % Average	Quarter 3 % Average	Quarter 4 % Average	Total 2019/20 % Average
Householder	92 / 7.4	87.5 / 7.3	90 / 7.3	96 / 7.2	91 / 7.3
Non-Householder	77 / 9.9	71 / 9.5	72 / 8.8	79 / 9.0	74.5 / 9.3
2019/20	84 / 8.7	78 / 8.6	80 / 8.2	86 / 8.2	82 / 8.4
2018/19	83 / 9.5	90 / 7.9	89 / 7.8	88 / 8.0	87.5 / 8.3
2017/18	89 / 7.5	85 / 8.3	87 / 8.4	88 / 8.4	87 / 8.2
2016/17	90 / 8.2	90 / 9.9	87 / 8.2	92 / 7.6	90 / 8.6
2015/16	76 / 13.1	75 / 10.4	75 / 10.5	78 / 11.7	76 / 11.4

**All Local Application – Percentage Within 2 Months:**

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year Total
2015/16	76%	75%	75%	78%	76%
2016/17	90%	90%	87%	92%	90%
2017/18	89%	85%	87%	88%	87%
2018/19	83%	90%	89%	88%	88%
2019/20	84%	78%	80%	86%	82%

**Goals:**

Aberdeenshire Council continues with the aim of meeting Scottish Government Statutory Performance Indicators while still seeking quality outcomes and maintaining quality customer service.

**Outcomes:**

Overall Aberdeenshire Council has generally maintained its level of performance across all categories of Local Development

planning applications in particular in relation to average weeks timescales. However, it is noted that there has been a marginal drop in the percentage figures for both Non-householder and Householder categories. Maintaining performance remains a priority in the coming year but it is considered that this needs to be balanced with quality outcomes.

**Name of key officer**

Neil C Stewart – Team Manager

## Case Study 2.

# Aberdeenshire Council – Planning Performance

## – Major Applications 2019–20

### Location and Dates:

Aberdeenshire Council,  
April 2019 – March 2020

### 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
- Process Improvement
- Project Management

### Stakeholders Involved:

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

### Overview:

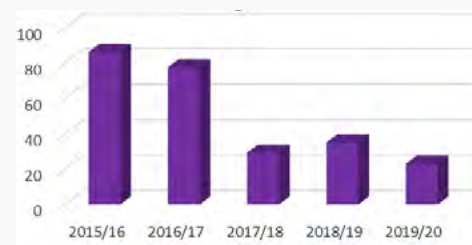
Case Study 1 focuses on Aberdeenshire Council's overall performance mainly on local and other development types. Previous PPFs have reiterated a commitment to improve the timescales for determining Major planning applications. This included working with Legal colleagues on S75 Legal Agreement processes, use of Planning Processing Agreements to foster a more project management approach, and reviewing Pre-application and Masterplan processes. These projects remain on-going. Work continues on some of these projects with a view to formal roll out and implementation. The work involved in some (Pre-Application Review and Masterplans Review) continues to be progressed but not to the extent that they have been completed as yet. This is due to other work pressures and projects, the complexity of the processes, and the need to align and co-ordinate the projects in terms of their process and their outcomes.

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). PPAs are promoted for all Major Applications. As such the overall figure shows that 3 Major Applications were determined without PPAs with the timescale

for decision being recorded at 23.1 average weeks representing an improvement of 12.2 average weeks compared to that achieved last year (35.3 weeks). The 23.1 average weeks figure is quicker than the National figure of 32.5 average weeks reported last year.

### Decision Timescales – Major Applications

Year	Average weeks
2015–16	86.3
2016–17	77.8
2017–18	29.5
2018–19	35.3
2019–20	23.1



**Note:** These are the official figures provided from the Scottish Government and exclude applications where a Processing Agreement was in place.

For the purposes of this Case Study it should be noted that a total of 11 [Major Applications](#)

were determined in the reporting year with 8 being the subject of PPAs. All of these 8 applications were determined within their agreed PPA timescales. Of the 3 applications that were not the subject of PPAs, 1 of these ([APP/2019/0296](#)) was determined within 12 weeks well within the 16 week statutory timescale. This application is the subject of Case Study 26 – Bilbo Farm Solar Farm. Summaries of the 2 other applications that were determined without PPAs and beyond the statutory 16 week timescales are provided below.

The use of PPAs is promoted for all Major Applications and the use of these has proven useful as a project management tool in the 8 other applications, where the evidence shows all were subsequently determined within their agreed PPA timescales.

### Summary breakdown of all Major Applications is below:

11 – total number issued during the reporting period.  
8 – number issued with a PPA in place.  
8 – number issued within the agreed PPA timescale.  
3 – number issued with no PPA.  
1 – number issued with no PPA but within 4 months statutory timescale.

### Major Application 1 – Delay explanation ([APP/2019/0753](#))

This relates to an application for a residential development on an allocated site at Pitmedden. The LDP indicated that the site required a masterplan. Pre-application consultation was undertaken in the first instance prior to submission of a masterplan document. The Formartine Area Committee twice declined to agree the submitted masterplan, against the recommendation of the Planning and Environment Service, due to concerns about the safety of reopening a point of access to the site which was stipulated as a requirement of the Settlement Statement. The applicant submitted the planning application without an agreed masterplan in order to progress to a decision. It was the view of the Planning and Environment Service initially, that in principle such an application, on an allocated site, could be supported subject to all other details being considered satisfactory. Following receipt of consultee comments and review by the Planning and Environment Service, further supporting information was sought. Timescales for determination were discussed between the Service and the applicant. A Processing Agreement was offered to the applicant but not signed. Notwithstanding the expiry of the 16 week period, the Planning and Environment Service considered that the application should be supported, albeit as a departure. It was considered that the outstanding matters were likely to be resolvable, and the application did not warrant a recommendation for refusal. The Formartine Area Committee refused

the application against recommendation, again due to concerns about the safety of reopening the required junction despite Roads Officers being satisfied with the proposals of safety grounds. A decision was issued after the minute was formally agreed at the following Formartine Area Committee.

### Major Application 2 – Delay explanation ([APP/2018/2430](#))

This was an application for residential development on an allocated site with a recent planning history. The amended scheme involved a higher density development and the proposed layout was subject to pre-application discussion to establish acceptance in principle of the scale of housing and changes to open space provision. Following receipt of consultee comments and detailed review by the Case Officer, some layout changes and other amendments were sought to improve the proposal. These were agreed and allowed reporting to the Garioch Area Committee (GAC) within the four month period. The S75 was instructed immediately following GAC and took just over three months as it involved a number of meetings to ensure there was a mechanism for delivery of the school playing field, which comprised part of the approved public open space and a key public benefit of the scheme. The delay was partly due to design changes to satisfy consultees and achieve a high quality layout and partly due to the period to conclude the Legal Agreement. A PPA was discussed during the application process, but there was no agreement recorded.

### Goals:

The Planning and Environment Service continues to try to demonstrate 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 and masterplanning processes.

### Outcomes:

The use of PPAs, as a project management tool, for all Major applications continues to be promoted. The evidence this year shows that 8 out of the 11 applications in this category, met their agreed PPA timescales. Of the 3 remaining applications, 1 was determined within the statutory 16 week period. The other 2 applications are explained above. Factors that are evident in the processes of determination, include complexities of masterplan assessment and related political and democratic decision-making; but also collaborative working to achieve delivery of community facilities and related legal processes. Overall though, there is an improvement in the average weeks in this important category.

### Name of key officer

Neil C Stewart – Team Manager



# Case Study 3.

## National Development for Electricity Substation St. Fergus Gas Terminal Peterhead

### Location and Dates:

St Fergus Peterhead,  
March 2019 – March 2020

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

- Quality of outcomes
- Quality of service and engagement

### Key Markers:

- 1 – Decision-Making
- 2 – Project management – offer of processing agreements
- 3 – Early collaboration with applicants and consultees on planning applications

### Key Areas of Work:

- Planning Applications
- Project Management

### Stakeholders Involved:

- Planning Committee
- Authority Planning Staff

### Overview:

This Case Study relates to pre-application discussions as well as consideration and determination of an application for a National Development (as defined in NPF3) for the erection of an electricity substation at St Fergus, Peterhead ([APP/2019/2300](#))

It covers the Project Management of a large scale, complex, National Development from pre-application stage through to determination. This includes our interactive, open and collaborative approach taken, to the project as a whole, to ensure successful and timeous processing of the application to ensure wider deadlines were met.

### Goals:

This Case Study sought to maintain and improve a high level of performance in determining and project managing large scale National Development projects. Timeous determination of this application would assist in delivering national level infrastructure.

### Outcomes:

The project was successfully managed throughout the pre-application and application processes and successfully approved via local Area Committee and Full Council.

Technical issues including impacts upon nationally important gas infrastructure related to the nearby St. Fergus Gas Terminal were all considered and addressed, assisted by liaison with relevant stakeholders. A fully thought out and coordinated approach was therefore essential to achieving desirable outcomes.



St. Fergus Peterhead

The developers offered the following feedback:

*"The support of our Aberdeenshire Council Case Officer has been critical to the determination of our national development application to the timescales set out in our tight programme.*

*The project benefited hugely from the pre-application meeting and correspondence prior to the submission of an Environmental Impact Assessment screening opinion and Proposal of Application Notice; through to support and guidance in the week running up to the Officer Recommendations being presented to Aberdeenshire Council. Any requests for advice or meetings were promptly provided and all proved valuable in the identification of solutions for challenges encountered in design and consultation.*

*Our Case Officer was proactive in their requests for updates and their guidance on stakeholder discussions and matters and we took their advice on to initiate and try to resolve issues prior to the planning*

*application and prior to Committee reports. I am in no doubt that this engaged approach removed a variety of difficulties we would have encountered with our application if we not had such efficient and effective Case Officer advice.*

*Aberdeenshire Council met all of the milestone dates proposed in the application processing agreement even though some of our own submissions were not provided until after the dates initially agreed. We could not imagine any more of a proactive, responsive and enabling Case Officer to work with."*

From an Aberdeenshire Council perspective, the successful determination of the application, in line with the scheduled and agreed timelines, as covered within the above endorsement from the developer serves as confirmation that the collaborative approach taken to project managing National Developments is the optimal approach to ensuring the successful delivery of national level infrastructure.

### Name of key officer

Stuart Murison – Senior Planner

# Case Study 4.

## Bridge Street Banff Regeneration

### - Update

#### Location and Dates:

Bridge Street, Banff – June 2016 – 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

#### Key Areas of Work:

- Design
- Conservation
- Regeneration
- Environment
- Greenspace
- Town Centres
- Masterplanning
- Interdisciplinary Working
- Collaborative Working
- Community Engagement
- Placemaking

#### Stakeholders Involved:

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

#### Overview:

This Case Study is a follow on from [Case Study 17, Page 41 of PPF 8 \(2018-19\)](#). The Planning Information & Delivery Team (PIDT) is leading a public realm improvement project for Bridge Street and Bridge Street Car Park, Banff.

On 28 March 2017, a Regeneration Options Appraisal for Bridge Street and Deveronside was welcomed by Elected Members at Banff and Buchan Area Committee. The [report](#) looked at opportunities for redeveloping disused and neglected buildings within the study area and also identified areas which would benefit from improved linkages and/or appearance.

Following on from this, the PIDT coordinated the production of a Design Statement with input from relevant colleagues in planning, roads development, roads safety, flood prevention, car parking, lighting and roads policy.

The main issues that were considered for the Street improvements included street lighting, drainage, pedestrian/traffic conflicts and general appearance.

On the 19 September 2018, Members of Banff and Buchan Area Committee agreed that the proposed design would be 'transformational' for Banff Town Centre and



encouraged Officers to progress with public consultation and to find a source of external funding.

Two public consultation events were arranged in December 2018 and January 2019, which supplemented information shared on social media and an online questionnaire. The results of the consultation were presented to Members at Committee on the 11 February 2019 who agreed that the consultation effort had been 'first class'.

#### Goals:

The aim of the project is to regenerate this area of lower Banff which has been identified

as a priority regeneration area. The goal is to improve the environment of Bridge Street and make it more attractive for businesses, visitors and residents. Embracing One Council principles, this project is part of a multi-faceted approach to regeneration involving all relevant Services as well as external Stakeholders.

The PIDT were responsible for identifying potential funding sources and securing funding, progressing through planning, detailed design and tender phases, and finally moving the project forward to construction phase.



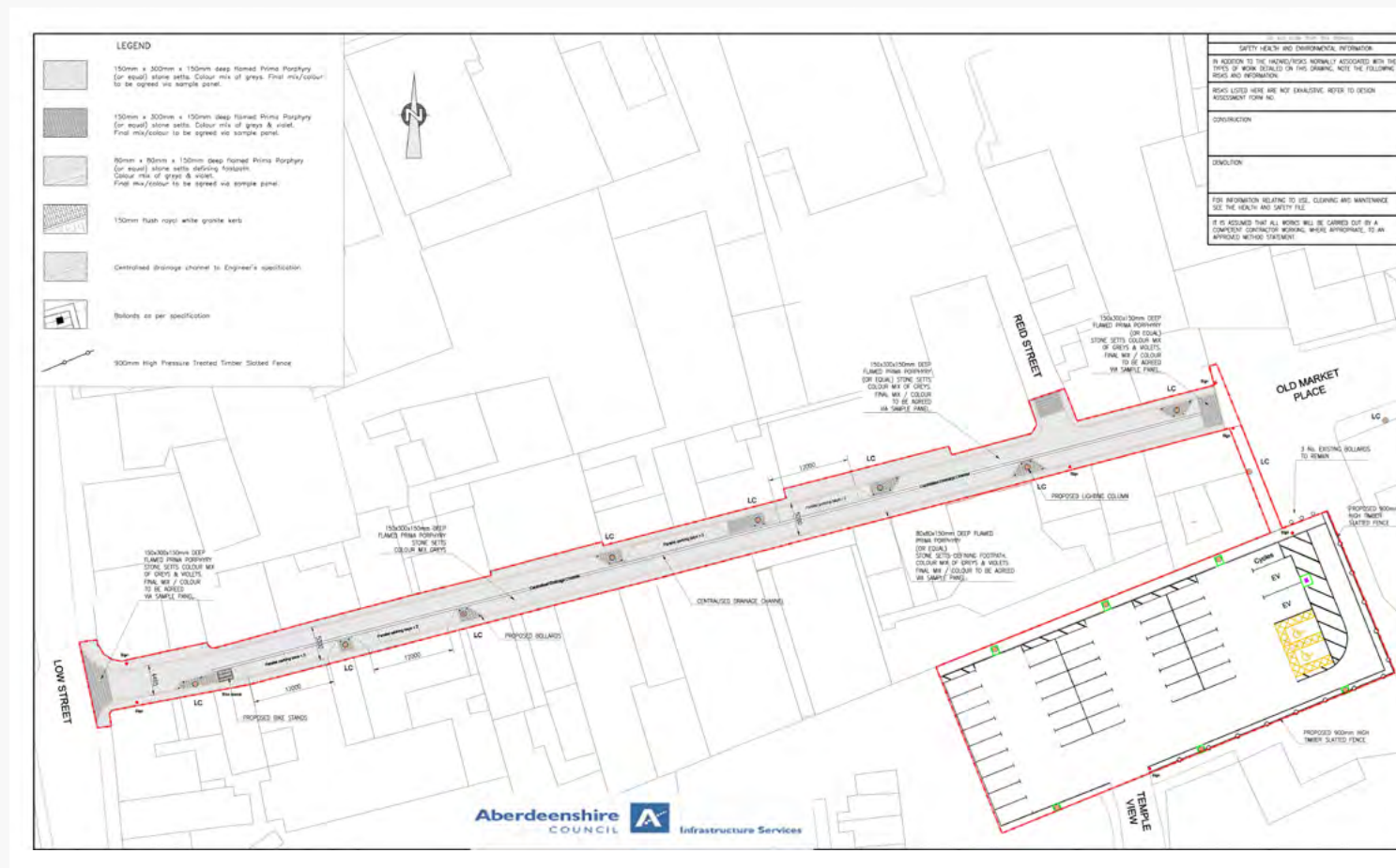
### Outcomes:

In May 2019, following an application process undertaken by the PIDT, the proposed scheme was awarded £709,000 through the Scottish Government Town Centre Regeneration Fund. The PIDT proceeded with submitting a [planning application](#) and coordinated the detailed/technical designs with input from an external consultant and all the relevant Services within Aberdeenshire Council. Excellent communication and problem solving was required to ensure that all the specific requirements were incorporated into the detailed design without any conflicts or compromise to the overall aim of the scheme.

A Stage 2 Road Safety Audit was undertaken on the detailed designs which built on the previous consultation that had been undertaken during the initial design stages. The Road Safety Team welcomed the opportunity to comment on the designs and influence the final layout.

Planning permission was granted in December 2019 although some revisions were required following ground investigations which revealed the underlying ground conditions were unsuitable for the proposed construction.

Final revisions were agreed through the Roads Construction Consent process, coordinated by the PIDT with input from the design consultants and colleagues in Roads. The final design was approved by Members through a Non-Material Variation.



During this period, the PIDT were actively engaged with the general public, regularly communicating updates and managing enquiries either through letters or face to face meetings, which has been welcomed by affected residents and businesses in particular.

The project was put out to tender on Public Contracts Scotland in February 2020. However, an appointment could not be made due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the project is currently on hold until it is an appropriate time to resume.

### Name of key officer

Kirsty Black – Project Co-ordinator

## Case Study 5.

# Cranford Guest House Replacement Cottage Braemar

### Location and Dates:

Braemar, April 2019

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

- Quality of outcomes
- Quality of service and engagement

### Key Markers:

3 – Early collaboration with applicants and consultees on planning applications

### Key Areas of Work:

- Design
- Conservation
- Planning Applications
- Collaborative Working

### Stakeholders Involved:

- Authority Planning Staff
- Authority other staff (Environment)
- Local Developer

### Overview:

Following pre-application advice which supported the principle of redevelopment, this application sought Full Planning Permission ([APP/2019/0169](#)) and Conservation Area Consent ([APP/2019/0194](#)) for demolition and replacement of an ancillary cottage used as a short-term holiday let. The site is located within the Braemar Conservation Area, in the Cairngorms National Park.

The application property was a traditional 'wee house'. Such 'wee houses' are unique to Royal Deeside for their historic, cultural and architectural significance. This property is of individual merit dating from the mid-19th Century and holds a prominent position in the streetscape, with an important relationship to the main house.

Following a site meeting with the applicant, the value of the site and the property were fully appreciated. Initially the proposal sought a large replacement cottage with little justification for its demolition, design and scale. Upon review of this proposal in consultation with the Built Heritage Environment Planner and Historic Environment Scotland 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 surrounding Conservation Area, and the loss of a historic asset. Constructive and detailed feedback was therefore provided by the Planning and Environment Service in consultation with the Environment Planner. This was in the form of written letters and telephone discussions as well as attendance by the agent at drop-in planning surgeries. Through all methods of communication, the key concerns were raised, and revised options appraised.

It was felt that effective engagement with the agent and clear communication were



Cranford Guest House

fundamental to achieving an acceptable proposal on site. The Case Officer clearly set out detailed comments on the size, orientation, openings and material palette to support a replacement cottage at this site.

Following a series of negotiations, a revised design proposal was submitted, and this was considered acceptable to the Planning and Environment Service. This reduced the scheme from a 1.5 storey development to a single storey T-shaped proposal. Although featuring a front gable forward of the original building line, it appears subservient and secondary to the main dwellinghouse, which upholds the 'wee house' character of the site. The proposal seeks to utilise a

modest palette of high-quality materials which is reflective of the wider context and traditional style of such ancillary units. Overall, the architectural, environmental and historic value of the Conservation Area would be upheld as the replacement building would be unobtrusive and would suitably complement the visual appearance of the guest house and fit comfortably in the streetscene.

In this case the Planning and Environment Service needed to balance economic growth and conservation as the replacement property would support the tourist accommodation business at this location. However, its replacement



would result in the loss of an original asset. The proposed replacement therefore had to be of a high-quality design in order to be accepted in line with built heritage policies and national historic guidance. Following submission of a structural survey this demonstrated the building was in a dilapidated state beyond economic repair, and the revised proposal as outlined above was an acceptable improvement upon the original proposal.

A testimony from the agent states:

*"Following discussions and collaboration with all parties, a revised design with a much-reduced scheme and improved material palette [which still achieved the applicant's aims] was prepared. The revised design proposal was found acceptable, formally presented and subsequently received planning approval."*

*From an applicant perspective, it was obviously frustrating that following positive feedback at pre-application stage, that the design and layout had to change so significantly following the formal submission. However, in retrospect, and more so now that the cottage has been erected, I have no doubt in my mind that both HES and the Planning*

*Officer were correct in their initial assessment of the original proposal and correct in pursuing a radical redesign. A successful end result has been achieved by all parties being prepared to work together."*

Gerry Robb,  
Gerry Robb Architectural Design Services, 1st May 2020.

A subsequent NMV drawing was submitted in September 2019 which sought a minor amendment to the window colouring. This was accepted as it was considered to fit successfully within the site and streetscene.

#### Goals:

Through successful engagement with the agent, which involved detailed feedback and negotiation, a quality design proposal was achieved which supported the economic viability and protected and enhanced the character and setting of the Braemar Conservation Area.

Collaborative working allowed for technical and detailed design to be sought without compromising the objectives of the applicant and agent.

#### Outcomes:

Development has commenced on site and is almost complete. The agent had provided positive feedback to the Planning and Environment Service on the amended design. This Case Study has demonstrated that site specific and detailed design elements are fundamental to achieving quality developments which contribute to the appearance and character of an area.

This Case Study demonstrated the value of early and effective engagement as well as developing good working relationships with local developers. This Case Study also demonstrated the importance of collaborative working and sharing expertise with built heritage colleagues in relation to conservation 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

Jane Weir – Senior Planner



## Case Study 6.

### Fraserburgh Shopfront Design Guidance (Fraserburgh 2021)

#### Location and Dates:

Fraserburgh Town Centre Conservation Area and other town centres in Aberdeenshire (guidance adopted March 2019 and used throughout reporting period)

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

- Quality of outcomes

#### Key Markers:

- 2 – Project Management
- 3 – Early collaboration with applicants and consultees on planning applications
- 11 – Production of regular and proportionate policy advice

#### Key Areas of Work:

- Design
- Conservation
- Town Centres
- Collaborative Working
- Planning Applications

#### Stakeholders Involved:

- General Public
- Authority Planning Staff

#### Overview:

[Fraserburgh 2021](#) is a heritage-led regeneration scheme which is coordinated by the Planning and Environment Service. The scheme's objective is to socially and economically regenerate Fraserburgh

Town Centre through the repair and re-use of key historic buildings and to set an example for the future treatment of the historic building stock throughout the Conservation Area.

The production of a Shopfronts Design Guidance is a specific outcome for Fraserburgh 2021. As Fraserburgh Town Centre Conservation Area is only recently designated, there is a very low number of surviving traditional shopfronts. One of the main aims of the regeneration scheme is to re-introduce high quality material choice and design principles into the Conservation Area. Guidance on the replacement of shopfronts for both the general public and Development Management Planners was therefore required in order to ensure that further loss of surviving historic shopfronts is avoided and shopfronts being replaced in the future meet the high standards expected in a Conservation Area.

#### Goals:

The production of Shopfronts Design Guidance are in line with the Historic Environment Policies as set out in the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2017.

Policy HE1 Protecting historic buildings, sites and monuments – Historic shopfronts in town centres and Conservation Areas across Aberdeenshire are at risk from insensitive



Fraserburgh Shopfront

repairs and replacement. The guide seeks to address this problem along with providing guidance around how the replacement of modern shopfronts in traditional buildings should be approached in order to enhance their parent buildings and streetscapes.

Policy HE2 Protecting historic and cultural areas – Replacement of poorly designed and proportioned modern

shopfronts in unsympathetic materials with sympathetically designed, properly proportioned and carefully considered high quality materials will certainly improve historic town centres such as Fraserburgh. The same can be said for the retention and careful repair of surviving historic shopfronts.



**Outcomes:**

The [document](#) was adopted for Planning Advice in March 2019 and will be used alongside the Conservation Area Management Plan going forward to inform design and material choice for future replacement shopfronts and the repair of surviving historic shopfronts in Aberdeenshire Conservation Areas. The draft guide had already been used in making design choices for the replacement of a low quality shopfront at 43 Cross Street ([Ref. No: APP/2017/3111](#)) and at the restoration of Fraserburgh's last surviving double-Victorian shopfront at 97-101 High Street, both funded through Fraserburgh 2021. In addition, Fraserburgh 2021 is working towards grant funding the repair or replacement of a further 19 shopfronts by the end of the scheme, all of which will take design guidance from the document.

As Development Management did not previously have a guidance document for dealing with shopfronts in historic buildings or Conservation Areas, the Design Guidance should inform decisions going forward.

In order to promote the launch of the Fraserburgh Shopfronts Design Guidance, Fraserburgh 2021 borrowed the [Historic Environment Scotland exhibition Talking Shops- A History of Scotland's Shopfronts](#), hosted at 97-101 High Street which was at that time still under repair. Talking Shops was curated by Dr Lindsay Lennie, the foremost authority on historic shopfronts in Scotland and also the author of the Fraserburgh Shopfronts Design Guidance document. As such, Dr Lennie was invited to speak at a launch event for both the design guide and the exhibition as well as give a guided tour of the Conservation Area, discussing interesting surviving historic shopfronts and features of such.

All shops in the Conservation Area were given both a hard copy of the new design guide and a personal invite to the launch and exhibition. These were also advertised publicly. Both the launch event and the exhibition were well received and well attended.

**Name of key officer**

Ross McCleary – Fraserburgh 2021  
Co-ordinator



Fraserburgh Shopfront



## Case Study 7.

### Tullich Church and Carved Symbol Stones Nr Ballater – Project Management and Update

#### Location and Dates:

Tullich Ballater 2017 – 2019

#### 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:

- Interdisciplinary Working
- Community Engagement
- Project Management

#### Stakeholders Involved:

- Authority Other Staff
- Community Groups
- Funding bodies

#### Overview:

Tullich Church forms a Scheduled Ancient Monument in the care of the Planning and Environment Service and is an important site historically to the local community. The project ensured the consolidation and repair of Tullich Church which was in imminent danger of collapse and conservation of the important collection of carved Pictish symbol

stones, returning them to site in a bespoke shelter, which not only puts them back on display to the public but also ensures their protection from the elements for future generations.

The project aims to demonstrate how strong project management and engagement with community groups, external funders, stakeholders and cross-service working can lead to enhancements in project outcomes. This includes, excellence in the use of Prince 2 principles to manage the scope and delivery of the project, informed collaborative decision-making, efficient delivery and considered long term management of our historic sites.

#### Goals:

The Planning and Environment Service leads on the Council's commitment to conservation, management, enhancement and promotion of built heritage. The project highlights the Service's commitment to improved conservation and management of Scheduled Monuments in its care. The project is a demonstration of how effective project management undertaken in accordance with Prince 2 principles, combined with strong collaboration with external funders, can deliver a project above and beyond the Service's basic obligations,



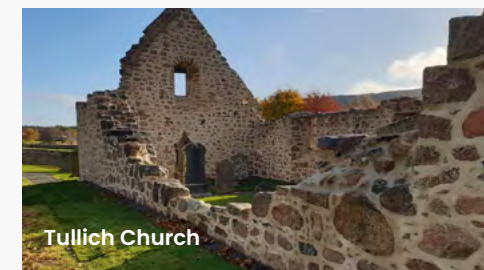
Tullich Shelter

in terms of the heritage asset. In this instance, to develop the site as a cultural, tourist destination with links back to Ballater and a well-considered and agreed future management plan.

#### Outcomes:

The project, which was split into two phases, is now complete and has successfully demonstrated the benefits of strong project management and collaborative working with the local community, Councillors, cross-service teams and external funders. This has successfully ensured that the Service conserved a Scheduled Monument in imminent danger of collapse, undertaken detailed recording and laser scanning to inform future management of the site, enhanced the tourism offering in Ballater through a permanent exhibition in Ballater Station and created a bespoke display on site. Additionally, the project has promoted greater awareness of Aberdeenshire's

cultural heritage through training and outreach opportunities and improved access and interpretation provision.



Tullich Church

Importantly the enhancement project has been delivered within the agreed budget and scope, and through cross-service working, has also delivered a long-term management plan for the future of the site.

#### Name of key officer

Cheryl Roberts – Environment Planner

# Case Study 8.

## Development Management

### Design Guidance

#### Location and Dates:

Aberdeenshire Council: April 2019 – present

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

- Quality of outcomes
- Culture of Continuous Improvement

#### Key Markers:

7 – LDP

11 – Production of regular and proportionate policy advice

12 – Corporate working across-services to improve outputs and services

#### Key Areas of Work:

- Design
- Local Development Plan & Supplementary Guidance
- Development Management Processes
- Interdisciplinary working
- Collaborative working
- Placemaking
- Place standards

#### Stakeholders Involved:

- Authority Planning Staff

#### Overview:

A working group consisting of Development Management Team Managers, Senior Planners and Project Officers from a design background was established to assist the Planning Policy Team in preparation for the

Local Development Plan 2021. The aim of the group was to prepare design guidance to be included as appendices in the Proposed LDP in line with Scottish Planning Policy's six qualities of a successful place.

The working group undertook a review of draft appendix documents previously prepared by the Policy Team, as well as a review of the Aberdeenshire Design Quality Audit tool and SWOT analysis. A benchmarking exercise, which involved a review of guidance from other Local Authorities, was also carried out in order to gain a full understanding of LDP and supplementary guidance content and identify key design criteria to be contained in the future appendices.

Following this research and the sharing of knowledge and expertise among group members, the group collectively prepared two design guidance documents to be attached as appendices to the Proposed LDP. The two documents prepared are as follows:

**Appendix 8 – Successful Placemaking Design Guidance:** intended to be used for major applications/allocated sites.

**Appendix 9 – Building Design Guidance:** intended to be used for single buildings/small scale developments (residential

and commercial), with reference back to Appendix 8. It should also be used where relevant for householder proposals.

These documents were the subject of peer review with the Development Management team prior to completion. As part of the peer review process planners were asked to apply the guidance to planning applications and feedback on the content and how they used the documents. Generally, feedback was positive, with teams considering that the guidance enabled them to assess design more thoroughly in terms of the policy requirements, and ensure all the criteria are considered, therefore leading to an improved development proposal.

The overall aim of this guidance is to achieve better design proposals in terms of SPP criteria in line with LDP policies. The guidance documents have been agreed by the Policy Team and included in the Proposed Local Development Plan.

#### Goals:

To promote early engagement and the positive collaborative working practices between Development Management and the Planning Policy Team on the Proposed LDP and associated guidance.

To develop meaningful design guidance documents to be included in the Proposed

LDP to assist Development Management assessment of proposed developments in order to promote and achieve high quality design and placemaking.

#### Outcomes:

The appendices developed have been agreed by the Policy Team and included in the Proposed LDP.

The guidance was prepared through collaborative working and engagement between planners and project Officers. Such engagement allowed for DM planners to gain an understanding of the LDP process by assisting the Policy Team, and sharing skills, knowledge and experience. It also allowed DM planners to take ownership of this important aspect of guidance.

Seeking feedback through consultation was important to assessing the usability of the guidance and recognising any issues prior to submitting as part of the Proposed LDP.

The ultimate outcome is improved design solutions and the promotion of the Design Review Process and Design Quality Audit tools.

#### Name of key officer

Jane Weir – Senior Planner



## Case Study 9.

### The Faithlie Centre (Fraserburgh 2021)

#### Location and Dates:

1 Saltoun Square, Fraserburgh  
May 2017 – Feb 2020

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

- Quality of outcomes

#### Key Markers:

2 – Project management  
12 – Corporate working across-services

#### Key Areas of Work:

- Conservation
- Collaborative working
- Town Centres
- Regeneration

#### Stakeholders Involved:

- Planning Committee
- Authority Planning Staff

#### Overview:

[Fraserburgh 2021](#) is a heritage-led regeneration scheme which is coordinated by the Planning and Environment Service. The scheme's objective is to socially and economically regenerate Fraserburgh Town Centre through the repair and re-use of key historic buildings and to set an example for the future treatment of the historic building stock throughout the Conservation Area.

Fraserburgh Town House was in use as Council Offices and housed the Town's Council Chamber. The building was under-used and in poor condition.

The neighbouring former police station had been derelict for many years and featured on the Buildings at Risk Register. The restoration of these buildings and their conversion into a multi-use facility for Council Staff and community use along with the housing of the refurbished Council Chamber and an Enterprise Hub for the nurturing of start-up businesses was seen as an opportunity.

As the refurbishment of the buildings was the first of the Fraserburgh 2021 projects to start, and particularly as it was a Council project, it was important that the work carried out would promote high conservation standards, correct material choice and quality design that would serve as an example of good practice for other projects going forward.

#### Goals:

The work carried out at The Faithlie Centre was in line with the Historic Environment Policies as set out in the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2017.



Faithlie Centre Before



Faithlie Centre Before

Policy HE1 Protecting historic buildings, sites and monuments – The Town House and former Police Station were both in poor condition and needed substantial investment in order to make a positive impact on the Conservation Area again. As such, a sensitive scheme of repairs and restoration was developed with a carefully selected and forward-thinking architectural practice. This would ensure that the existing historic buildings were repaired to the highest standard and showcased against the strikingly modern newbuild extension to the rear.

Policy HE2 Protecting historic and cultural areas – the development of The Faithlie Centre enhances both the character and the appearance of Fraserburgh Town Centre Conservation Area. The highest standards of conservation practice and quality design were used in order to set standards for future development in Fraserburgh.

Policy HE3 Helping to reuse listed buildings at risk – The former Police Station had been on the Buildings at Risk register and in a derelict condition for many years. Repair and reuse of the building by a commercial developer was unlikely due to a large conservation deficit. Grant funded schemes such as Historic Environment Scotland's Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme and National Lottery Heritage Fund's Townscape Heritage (both main funders of Fraserburgh 2021) are usually the only way that buildings such as this can be appropriately redeveloped.

### Outcomes:

All specifications, materials and working methods were drawn up or authorised by a conservation accredited architect in order to ensure that the correct materials were used and up to date conservation practice was observed in the careful restoration of the historic buildings. This would include details such as the repair, upgrading and retention of all historic windows, analysis of surviving mortar samples in order to select a matching lime mortar and matching of sandstone for stone repairs at the Town House in order that stone of the correct density and colour was selected.

The new build extension to the rear of the existing buildings was necessary in order to address differing floor levels in the Town House and former Police Station. The extension would facilitate a simpler circulation route around the two buildings and allow for a lift to be constructed without causing damage to the historic buildings. The striking modern design reflects both the sculptural forms of the North Braeheads housing scheme it faces and the industrial heritage of Fraserburgh in its weathered steel rain screen cladding.

As little of the historic interiors remained, the architects chose to fit out the buildings in a modern but complementary style, carefully restoring surviving historic features such as staircases and leaving exposed stone walls in office spaces. The Council Chamber was preserved as far as possible, with a contemporary colour scheme, lighting and furniture specified to make it suitable for current use.

The Fraserburgh 2021 team are satisfied that the work carried out at The Faithlie Centre is of high enough quality to serve as a yardstick for other grant funded projects in Fraserburgh. The Faithlie Centre was shortlisted for the 'Future Building or Project' category in the Scottish Design Awards and the 'Future Projects-Civic' category in the World Architecture News Awards 2017 and is currently shortlisted for the RIBA/RIAS award 2020.

### Name of key officer

Ross McCleary – Fraserburgh 2021  
Co-ordinator



Faithlie Centre After



Faithlie Centre After



# Case Study 10.

## Cross Team Collaboration to Prepare Issues and Actions Papers

### Location and Dates:

Aberdeenshire Council – Woodhill House  
May to August 2019

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

- Quality of outcomes

### Key Markers:

- 7 – LDP
- 8 – Development Plan Scheme
- 10 – Cross-sector stakeholders engaged early in development plan preparation
- 12 – Corporate working across-services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit

### Key Areas of Work:

- Local Development Plan and Supplementary Guidance
- Interdisciplinary Working
- Collaborative Working
- Skills Sharing
- Process Improvement

### Stakeholders Involved:

- Authority Planning Staff

### Overview:

Officers from Development Management worked alongside the Policy Team to summarise and respond to comments received during public consultation on the Main Issues Report.

As part of wider cross team collaboration, five members of the Development Management Team provided assistance in preparing Issues and Actions papers. These papers made Officers' recommendations on the content of the Proposed Local Development Plan and were considered by Elected Members during late August and September 2019.

Officers were able to broaden their skills in Plan-making through consideration of a number of individual responses raising a wide range of issues. Working together, Officers from both Teams were able to provide recommendations based on their experience and knowledge of individual sites and policies. This allowed for a more holistic approach to Plan-making to be achieved at a particularly important stage in the development planning process.

### Goals:

Bringing in staff from other parts of the Planning and Environment Service allowed for assessment of approximately 1,085 responses to the Main Issues Report to be made in a timely manner. Skills were shared amongst Officers depending on their planning background. This allowed for a rounded approach to preparation of the Issues and Actions papers. Through involvement in Plan-making, it is hoped that there is greater sense of ownership and

understanding of the Local Development Plan by Development Management Officers as they use the Local Development Plan policies in decision-making.

### Outcomes:

Ongoing liaison between Development Management and the Policy Team continues to bring benefits in terms of Plan preparation, but also in providing opportunities for Officers to gain continuous professional development through building skills and knowledge in different functions of the Planning and Environment Service. Collaborative working in this way allows the Policy Team to ensure that statutory timescales are met and allows them to also address the peaks in a cyclical planning process. It also facilitates agile working practices to address areas of pressure where resources can be directed when required.

Moving forward, Development Management will continue to be involved in the Local Development Plan process, supporting the Policy Team in preparing the Proposed Local Development Plan for examination, including the preparation of Schedule 4 documents.

### Name of key officer

Ailsa Anderson – Senior Policy Planner

## Case Study 11.

### 49 – 53 Bridge Street Banff (Banff Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme)

#### Location and Dates:

49 – 53 Bridge Street, Banff  
April 2019 – Jan 2020

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

- Quality of outcomes

#### Key Markers:

2 – Project management  
12 – Corporate working across-services

#### Key Areas of Work:

- Conservation
- Town Centres
- Collaborative Working
- Regeneration

#### Stakeholders Involved:

- Authority Planning Staff
- Authority Other Staff

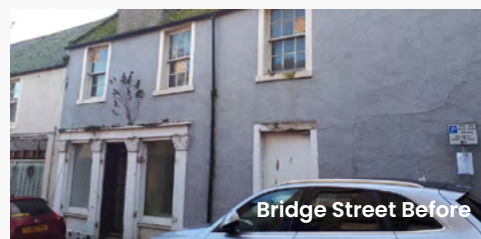
#### Overview:

49 – 53 Bridge Street was a building which had been in a poor and uninhabitable condition for a number of years. Situated within the town centre of Banff, within the town's Conservation Area, and placed on the Buildings at Risk Register of Scotland, this Category B listed building was identified as a Priority Project as part of the [Banff Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme \(CARS\)](#) which was coordinated by the

Planning and Environment Service. The scheme has created a positive change to the appearance of the Bridge Street/Low Street area of Banff. The CARS scheme has also been a catalyst to new business starts in the areas and providing public realm improvements for Bridge Street which are hoped to further encourage investment to the area.

With the support of the Council the North East Scotland Preservation Trust acquired the building and set up a collaboration with Vanilla Ink at the Smiddy (silversmithing workshop) to provide accommodation for students and those visiting their workshop, also situated on Bridge Street, through the creation of three townhouses.

Funding was sought from the Banff CARS, along with further funding from LEADER, Aberdeenshire Council, Heritage Lottery Fund, Pilgrim Trust and Architectural Heritage Fund to bring the building back into use with the use of traditional materials and methods of working.



Bridge Street Before



Bridge Street After

#### Goals:

The work carried out at 49 – 53 Bridge Street was in line with the Historic Environment Policies as set out in the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2017.

Policy HE1 Protecting historic buildings, sites and monuments – the work carried out to the listed building was to the highest quality and respected the original design and materials of the building.

Policy HE2 Protecting historic and cultural areas – the change of use has enhanced both the character and the appearance of the Conservation Area. The materials used are all those which you would want to see in a Conservation Area and respects those commonly found in the Banff Conservation Area.

Policy HE3 Helping to reuse listed building at risk – this building was on the Building at Risk Register, which it has subsequently been removed from and the works have saved the building from being lost due to its unstable condition.

#### Outcomes:

The works carried out at 49 – 53 Bridge Street have contributed significantly to the Bridge Street area of the town centre in Banff. The building is in a prominent position at the top of the street and was in a very poor condition for a number of years. The works being carried out here led to neighbouring properties having works carried out to them which has also led to improvements to the appearance of the streetscape and the Conservation Area.

The restoration of this building will allow for a social enterprise (Vanilla Ink at the Smiddy) to expand, allowing them to provide accommodation to those who are visiting their workshop for long term residencies and students who they will be training.

#### Name of key officer

Yvonne Clark – Banff CARS Project Officer/  
Environment Planner



# Quality of Service & Engagement

## Case Studies

12. Putting the Customer First: Customer Service Excellence (CSE) Accreditation – Commitment
13. Update on Use of the Draft Proposed Local Development Plan
14. Engagement with Building Standards – A Move Towards an Integrated Approach
15. The Vinery Priority Project Banff
16. School Engagement Exercise
17. Garioch Sports Centre Inverurie
18. Housing Site Prospectus – Update
19. A Balanced Approach to Economic Development in the Coastal Zone
20. Scottish Civic Trust Doors Open Days
21. Collaborative Working to Find Cross-Service/Agency Solutions through Planning Applications – Udney Nr. Ellon
22. Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology/Development Management Consultation Protocol
23. Grampian Biomass Working Group
24. Public Engagement on Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plan
25. Invest in Peterhead
26. Bilbo Farm Solar Farm Crimond – Major Development
27. Erection of 20 Dwellinghouses – Milton of Kemnay

Aboyne Green



## Case Study 12.

# Putting the Customer First: Customer Service Excellence (CSE) Accreditation – Commitment

### Location and Dates:

2018, 2019 and ongoing  
CSE pre-assessment with Auditor:  
18 March 2019, Viewmount, Stonehaven

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

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

### Key Markers:

6 – Continuous improvement

### Key Areas of Work:

- Collaborative Working
- Process Improvement
- Community Engagement

### Stakeholders Involved:

- General Public
- Hard to reach groups
- Local Developers
- Key Agencies
- Planning Committee
- Authority Planning Staff
- Authority Other Staff
- Private Sector Agents

### Overview:

This Case Study follows on from Case Study 21 (Page 46) of [PPF 2018-19](#). It relates to the development of the Customer Service Excellence (CSE) service improvement model that has been progressing since the pre audit for Development Management on

18 March 2019. During the pre-assessment, the key elements of customer service were reviewed based on the delivery and timeliness of services delivered; the quality and accessibility of information provided; the professionalism of staff and the review and implementation of customer feedback. In short, ensuring that the customer is placed at the heart of the decision-making process, driving change and service improvements through feedback, resulting in service delivery and improvements that meets the needs of the customer.

A key element of CSE has been the development of the Customer Charter which was launched for consultation at the [Agent Forum](#) on the 1 November 2019. After customer feedback the service standards were reviewed and the Charter was launched and adopted online: [Development Management Charter](#). The adoption of agreed service standards between Development Management and our key customers ensures that we have agreed parameters in place ensuring that the customer understands what to expect when they interact with our organisation. The Charter also provides a reference point for information on how to provide customer feedback, suggest improvements or complain if they are dissatisfied with the service they have received. Setting service standards also provides Development Management with a mechanism for measuring performance and mystery

shopping is conducted on a yearly basis to review the standards that have been set.

CSE enables an organisation to develop a model for customer consultation to ensure that mechanisms and forums are in place to gather feedback to develop customer focused service improvements and delivery. The [Customer Consultation Strategy](#) is now reviewed on an annual basis and includes an agreed timetable for consultation along with how we analyse the results and use the feedback to prioritise service improvements. Internal liaison and partnership working are also important elements of CSE, and this has been progressed through a review of updating protocols with services that we work with in order to ensure an efficient joined up approach. New opportunities have also been explored with a view to streamlining processes with Development Management and Building Standards to ensure a better outcome for customers. This is specifically the subject of a separate Case Study in this PPF report.

External customer liaison is carried out via our annual Agent Forum which was held jointly with Development Management and Building Standards along with our annual customer satisfaction survey, Community Council liaison / presentations and our online compliments comments and complaints system, [‘have your say.’](#)

### Goals:

To use the Customer Service Excellence Standard not only as an independent validation of achievement, but also as a skills development tool and driver for continuous improvement and culture change – ensuring that the customer is always at the heart of the decision-making process when the Development Management Service considers changes and improvements.

### Outcomes:

The work for the Pre-assessment and beyond has developed a Customer Charter which now sets out the service standards that a customer can expect when they interact with the Planning and Environment Service. It also ensures a uniform approach for staff as they understand the guidelines that they are working to achieve.

The Customer Consultation Strategy has set out an annual framework as to who and when we consult and most importantly, how we use the feedback to drive customer focused service improvements.

The CSE accreditation assessment has been scheduled for December 2020 therefore further work continues to ensure all the criteria will be met and accreditation achieved.

### Name of key officer

Kathleen Fraser – Project Officer



# Case Study 13.

## Update on Use of the Draft Proposed Local Development Plan

### Location and Dates:

Aberdeenshire Council Headquarters –  
Woodhill House  
Autumn 2017 to January 2020

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

- Quality of service and engagement
- Quality of outcomes

### Key Markers:

6 – Continuous improvements  
7 – LDP  
8 – Development Plan Scheme  
9 – Elected members engaged early in  
development plan preparation  
12 – Corporate working across-services to  
improve outputs and services for customer  
benefit

### Key Areas of Work:

- Local Development Plan & Supplementary  
Guidance
- Community Engagement

### Stakeholders Involved:

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

### Overview:

This Case Study updates progress made in  
preparing the Proposed Local Development  
Plan for the Aberdeenshire area. It focuses  
on the use, and evolution, of a Draft  
Proposed Local Development prepared to  
support the Main Issues Report consultation.

A Draft Proposed Local Development Plan  
was published in January 2019 to aid in the  
interpretation of the Main Issues Report  
by outlining how preferred options could  
be translated into draft policy wording  
and through updates to the Settlement  
Statements. Its publication allowed  
Aberdeenshire Council to consider how it  
might adapt to changes proposed via the  
planning review and subsequently brought  
forward via the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019,  
that will remove the requirement for a Main  
Issues Report.

Following consultation on the Main Issues  
Report, Elected Members considered a  
series of [Issues and Actions papers during  
Autumn 2019](#). Issues and Actions papers  
were prepared by Officers who provided a  
summary of responses received and made  
recommendations as to what the content  
of the Proposed Local Development Plan  
should be.

### [The Draft Proposed Local Development Plan](#)

was updated to reflect the  
recommendations as agreed by Elected  
Members via the Issues and Actions papers.

Many of the proposals presented in the  
Main Issues Report were supported and  
this allowed the Draft Proposed Local  
Development Plan to be easily updated  
through the acceptance of tracked  
changes used in the Draft Proposed Local  
Development Plan to identify where changes  
could be made. Similarly, where a change  
suggested by Officers was amended or not  
accepted then the Draft Proposed Local  
Development Plan could be easily amended.  
Engagement was undertaken with other  
Services in the Council with an interest in the  
Local Development Plan, i.e. Transportation,  
Education, Waste, Flooding and Housing, to  
ensure that statements in the Draft and the  
eventual Proposed Local Development Plan  
were accurate and up to date.

Preparation and subsequent update of the  
Draft Proposed Local Development Plan  
allowed for efficient preparation of the  
Proposed Local Development Plan in early  
2020. Front loading of updates to include  
factual information provided time saving  
later in the Plan-making process. Greater  
transparency was provided as to what the  
Proposed Local Development Plan might look  
like and what the requirements of policies

and proposals might be. This allowed for  
better understanding of the Proposed Local  
Development Plan and enabled discussion  
on its content to be more productive with  
better outcomes achieved as a result. This  
was beneficial to all stakeholders, Elected  
Members, the public and consultees in  
being able to visualise the future shape and  
content of the final Plan.

### Goals:

To allow for transparency in preparation of  
the Proposed Local Development Plan and  
to provide efficient transition from the Main  
Issues Report to the Proposed Plan stage of  
the Plan-making process.

### Outcomes:

The Draft Proposed Local Development  
Plan was largely welcomed as a tool to aid  
interpretation of the Main Issues Report.  
Its preparation and subsequent update  
allowed for time-savings to be made by the  
Planning and Environment Service in moving  
towards preparation of a Proposed Local  
Development Plan. A number of lessons  
were learnt in preparing a Draft Proposed  
Local Development Plan that can be taken  
forward in preparing future development  
plans.

### Name of key officer

Ailsa Anderson – Senior Policy Planner

# Case Study 14.

## Engagement with Building Standards – a Move Towards an Integrated Approach

### Location and Dates:

Inverurie Town Hall 2 July 2019 (Development Management presentation to Building Standards staff);

Woodhill House 26 September 2019 (joint Development Management and Building Standards Management Team Meeting);

Woodhill House 1 November 2019 (Joint Development Management and Building Standards Agent Forum);

Skype meeting 6 April 2020 (Joint Development Management and Building Standards Liaison Group)

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

- Quality of service and engagement
- Culture of continuous improvement

### Key Markers:

6 – Continuous improvement  
12 – Corporate working across-services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit

### Key Areas of Work:

- Collaborative Working
- Development Management Processes
- Staff Training

### Stakeholders Involved:

- Authority Planning Staff
- Authority Other Staff

### Overview:

Following an internal restructure in 2019 which resulted in the separation of Development Management and Building Standards into different Services a conscious effort was made to create a joined-up approach to ensure a more streamlined process for staff and the customer. In short, it was agreed that the location of Services would not affect delivery and instead this was seen as an opportunity to develop more effective partnership working. Initially, a member of the Development Management team held a [staff training session](#) with Building Standards staff, introducing the Planning System, processes and areas of joint working. Following this a joint management team was held to explore partnership working and this initiated a joint liaison group to progress improved partnership working and streamlining of processes.



Staff Training



Agent Forum

### Goals:

The objective of the joint training sessions is firstly to ensure that both sets of professional staff have a wider appreciation of each discipline and are able to give a more joined up approach to customer service. The joint management team meeting provided an opportunity to examine the similar processes and areas of work that both disciplines undertake and a presentation of the [collaboration of knowledge](#) was produced. In terms of customer service, the goal is to ensure that planning permissions are not granted in the knowledge that these cannot be implemented due to non-compliance with Building Regulations and vice versa. A further goal is to develop a more consistent approach to pre-application advice, to ensuring that fundamental concerns are raised as early in the process as possible and also create a [working protocol](#) for involvement of Building Standards in Development Management matters and vice versa.

### Outcomes:

The initial outcome of this collaboration was to host a joint Development Management

and Building Standards [Agents Forum](#).

This built on previous years Forums which were Development Management led only. The 2019 Forum had a wider range of participants and a more varied range of topics on the agenda. The Forum was also trialled on a virtual platform allowing, for the first time, attendees to call in by Skype to save on business miles and time for the customer.

A further outcome of the process is that a working protocol has been developed, various processes have been devised and the dissemination of information to agents. Part of this protocol involves ensuring that Senior Building Standards Surveyors are copied into the relevant Area Weekly List of planning applications to allow for early intervention and collaboration where possible to allow a 'One Stop Shop' approach to dealing with many applications.

### Name of key officer

Darren Ross – Team Manager  
Sally Wood – Senior Planner

## Case Study 15.

### The Vinery Priority Project Banff

#### Location and Dates:

The Vinery Priority Project, Banff  
June 2019 – present

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

- Quality of service and engagement

#### Key Markers:

- 1 – Decision-making
- 2 – Project Management
- 3 – Early collaboration with applicants and consultees
- 12 – Corporate working across-services

#### Key Areas of Work:

- Design
- Conservation
- Regeneration
- Environment
- Planning Applications
- Collaborative Working
- Project Management

#### Stakeholders Involved:

- Authority Planning Staff
- Local Developer
- Key agencies

#### Overview:

These applications relate to a Category B-listed building The Vinery & Bothy, associated with Duff House Walled Garden set within the Banff Conservation Area and Banff

Regeneration Priority Area. The redevelopment of the listed building is part of a regeneration initiative which focuses on repair, preservation and re-use of the historic building. Using Scottish Government Regeneration Capital Grant, Town Centre and Regeneration funding, the Council seeks to restore this building and change the use into a community facility and café for use by a charity.

From the outset, it was agreed that one Planner would project manage the proposal and be the key contact for all enquiries and formal applications. An initial pre-application enquiry was submitted to establish the main planning considerations and level of supporting information required for a change of use and associated listed building application. Following timeous and favourable feedback which detailed the key issues to be assessed, the Planner was approached by the agent as it was apparent that the building was in a further state of disrepair than initially thought, and as such emergency works were required to be carried out in order to preserve the roof of the building.

Working collaboratively with Built Heritage Environment colleagues, knowledge of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 was applied. It was considered that the works required to protect the roof went beyond what reasonably constitutes 'minimum necessary'



The Vinery, Banff

emergency works, thus requiring planning and listed building consent.

Taking a proactive approach however, through thorough proactive engagement with the developer, a phased approach to the works was established. This covered the emergency works under Phase 1. It was considered pragmatic in the interests of conservation to allow the assessment of the initial FPP & LBC applications [APP/2019/2611](#) and [APP/2019/2612](#) to run concurrently with the emergency works being carried out, subject to satisfactory justification and methodology. This approach was fully appreciated by the agent and was dealt with efficiently by the Planning and Environment Service as a delegated matter within statutory timescales.

The second phase also involved restoration of the building in order to maintain its structural and internal fabric as supported under planning applications [APP/2019/2767](#) and [APP/2019/2769](#). This involved a site meeting with the agent, builder, Planner, Project officer and Built Heritage Environment Planner to ascertain an understanding of elements of the building worthy of retention and/or repair. This was a beneficial process which allowed stakeholders to discuss design issues and technical matters on site. This was worthwhile to gain a full appreciation of the site specific concerns and the phasing of works, and was ultimately granted.



Finally, concurrent FPP & LBC applications [APP/2020/0615](#) and [APP/2020/0614](#) sought the formal change of use to form a community facility and café as well as further alterations to the building. This was looked upon favourably by the Planning and Environment Service as a suitable regeneration project which would allow for the continued use of the building and restore much of its original appearance and function.

### Goals:

To support the redevelopment of a dilapidated listed building as part of the wider Town Centre regeneration projects.

To ensure the proposal is of a high-quality design conserving and enhancing the historical, architectural and cultural significance of the listed building and the wider Banff Conservation Area.

**Outcomes:**

Phase 1 and 2 of the works have been successfully granted, with Phase 1 complete prior to winter 2019/20. Phase 2 works are anticipated to start autumn 2020. The most recent applications have been determined within their statutory timescales.

The historic fabric and structural integrity of the building was retained through the pragmatic approach taken to allow the emergency works to be initiated on site.

Clear communication of legislative and planning processes meant the proposed works were assessed and delivered in an efficient manner. This was helped by

managing the several projects efficiently and maintaining regular contact with the agent. The site meeting proved to be extremely beneficial to the overall assessment. Overall a positive working relationship has been established with the agent, which has been beneficial throughout all stages of the handling of

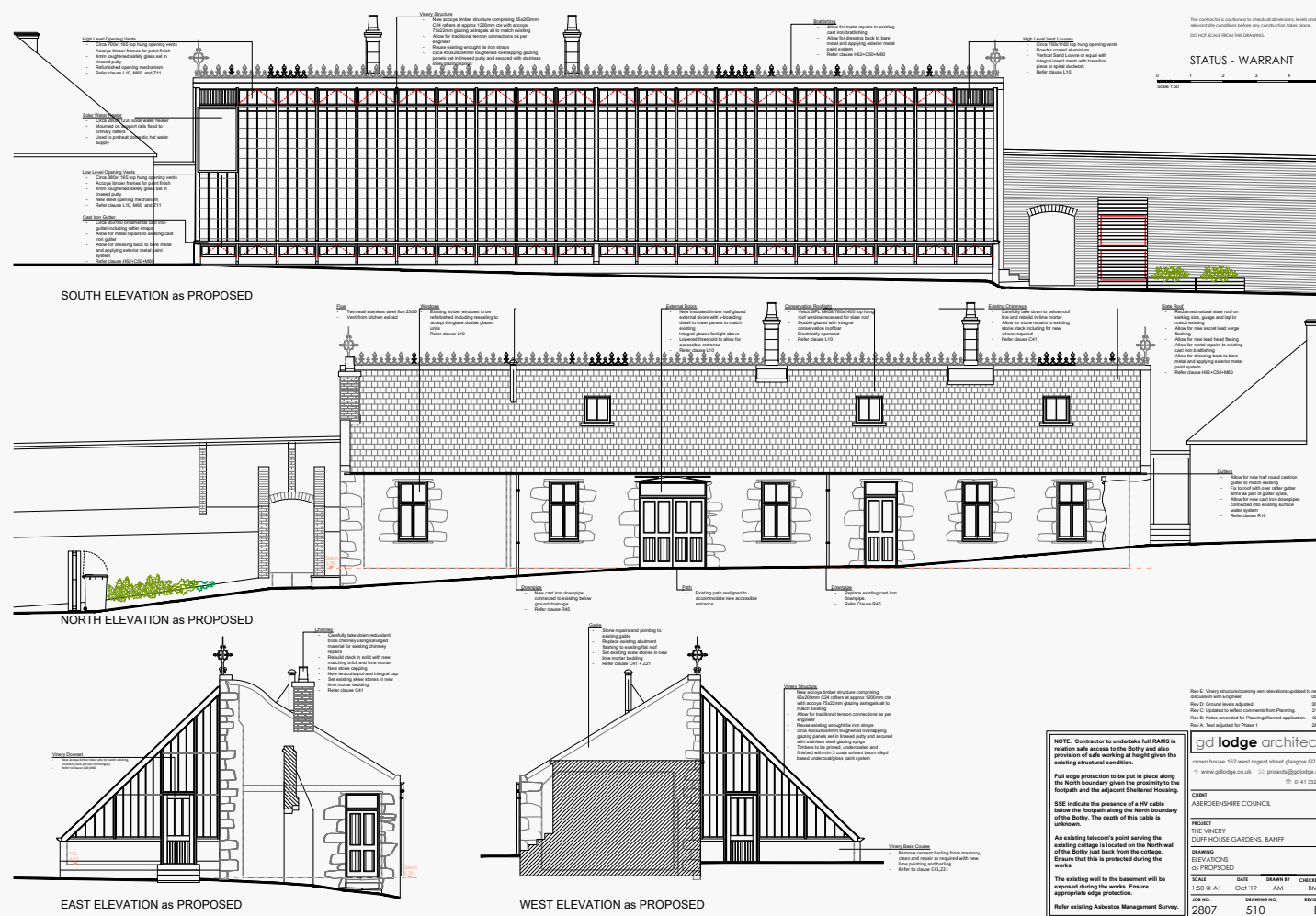
each application.

While the change of use has not commenced, once delivered this will provide a community facility which will support the economic and social regeneration of the Banff Conservation Area and town centre. The proposal would bring a derelict building back into use which is welcomed as a

priority for the regeneration scheme.

## Name of key officer

Jane Weir – Senior Planner



# Case Study 16.

## School Engagement Exercise

### Location and Dates:

Aberdeenshire Wide, November 2018 – ongoing throughout the reporting period

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

- Quality of service and engagement
- Quality of outcomes

### Key Markers:

10 – Cross-sector stakeholders engaged early in development plan preparations

### Key Areas of Work:

- Masterplanning
- Local Develop Plan & Supplementary Guidance
- Collaborative Working
- Community Engagement
- Placemaking
- Process Improvement
- Project Management

### Stakeholders Involved:

- Authority Planning Staff
- General Public (Youth)
- Authority Other Staff

### Overview:

As a development of the Youth Engagement Pilot Project ([Case Study 28, Page 53, of PPF 8 \(2018–19\)](#)) and in order to link in with the preparation of the Local Development Plan (LDP), a pilot programme was developed

to specifically target young people through engagement within schools, both Primary and Secondary. Aberdeenshire Council are committed to providing a transparent and efficient preparation process for the LDP. This means that there is a strong commitment to public engagement. It has been recognised though, that the youth of the community while not a protected group, have been under represented from the standard community engagement previously conducted by the Council.

The pilot project was designed in a way that would match with the educational development of the pupils and provided slightly different outcomes for each group. The main aim for the Primary aged children was to try and increase the young people's awareness of the planning process, particularly the LDP.

Whilst the main aim for the Secondary aged pupils contained more detail as it was to give the young people the tools to be able to discuss and explain how they think their area should be planned and input in the LDP process.

Methodology for the pilot project was created and it was important to link the work to the experiences and outcomes within the Curriculum for Excellence, applicable to both Primary and Secondary pupils to show the

school how this would benefit the pupils and not just the planners. The Primary pupils were asked to design their own small housing development which required the children to think about a number of different planning concepts including developments require open space and a mix of house types. For Secondary pupils, the first part of the session took the form of an interactive opening activity to set the scene for the pupils followed by two map-based activities to get the pupils thinking about their town.

The pilot project was shortlisted for a Scottish Award for Quality in Planning 2019 (SAQP). Being involved in this process allowed an independent critique/assessment of the project. From the analysis/feedback, a Report was produced noting the key findings of the project. This is to ensure that the process can be followed again in the future and so Officers can learn from the pilot to allow for continuous improvement.

### Goals:

The aim of the pilot project was to:

Raise awareness of the planning process to the young people throughout Aberdeenshire, through sessions within Primary and Secondary schools.

Introduce the concept of planning to children of Primary age and then to further develop this

for the Secondary pupils by providing them with the opportunity to discuss and explain how their area should be planned in the future, linking in with the preparation of the Local Development Plan.

### Outcomes:

The pilot project was received well by the schools that participated in the pilot project, both at Primary and Secondary stages. The level of understanding that was gained by Primary pupils was notable as the pupils were able to explain their understanding through the questions that were being asked. A number of the schools also followed on the work and thinking by then looking at if all of the small developments were joined together what new facilities would be required by the people living in the houses, for example community facilities and shops.

Similarly, through the activities completed with the Secondary pupils you could see their knowledge and confidence with the subject improving through the activities. This resulted in the information which was collected being summarised with other responses received through the wider consultation and proposed changes to the Proposed Plan. A mapping exercise was completed for each of the Secondary Schools, an example is shown overleaf.



The pilot project was well received through the [SAQP awards process](#) with the judging panel being positive about the work undertaken. Through this process a video was created highlighting all the different aspects of the project including supporting comments from one of the Secondary teachers involved in the project. The teacher highlighted how much the pupils had benefited from the project and that she hoped that this would be a link made for the future.

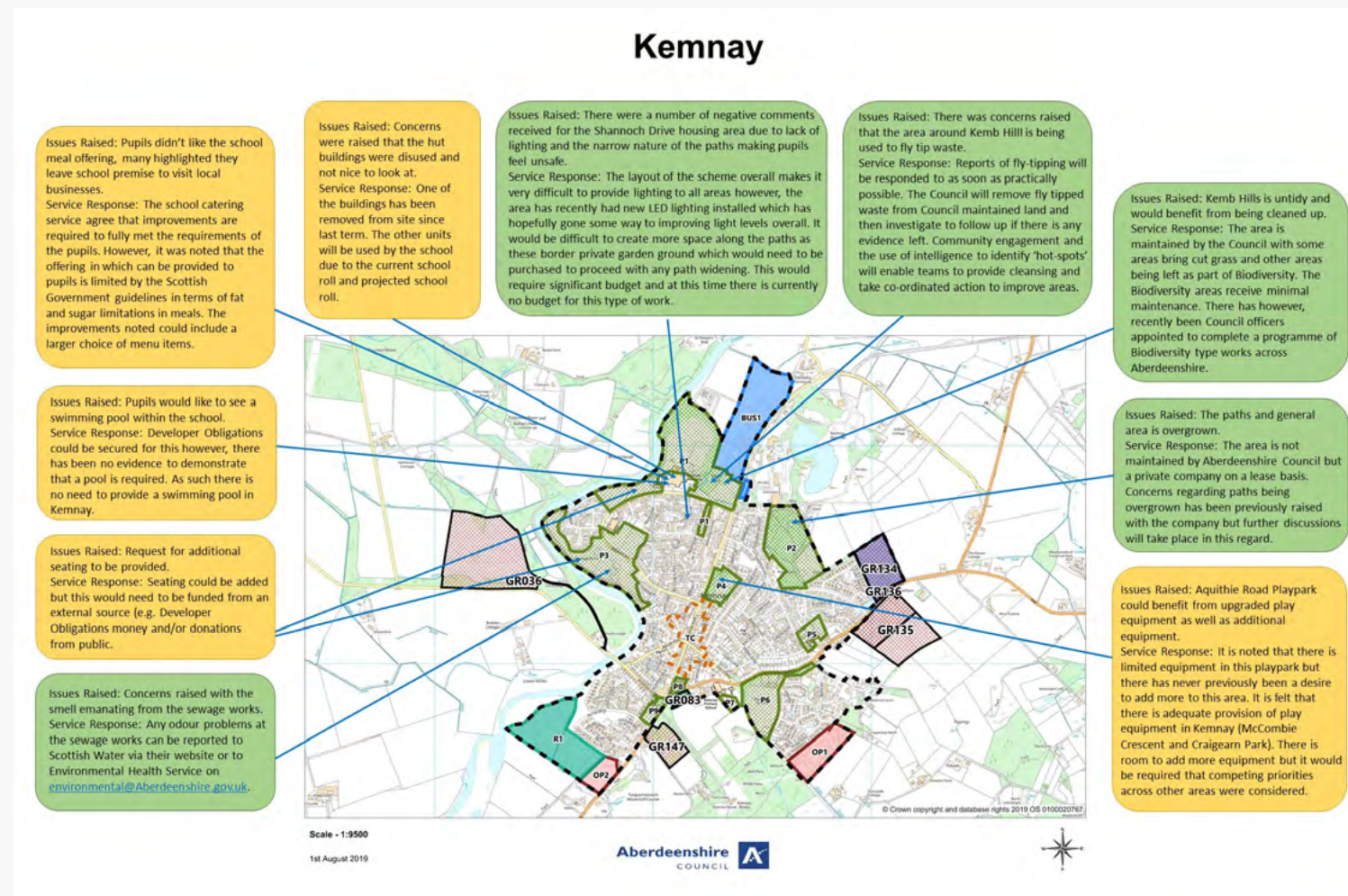
As the pilot project was seen as a success in terms of achieving the aims that were set out at the beginning, work has been completed to move this project forward. It is considered that the work carried out with the Secondary pupils is best kept in line with the preparation of the LDP so pupils can have a meaningful input into the process. However, with the Primary pupil's general awareness increasing this can happen at any point. With this being said Officers have continued to visit schools.

In February, Officers from the Planning Information Delivery Team visited a Primary School to give the pupils an introduction to planning and architecture before acting as a sounding board for the pupils to ask questions. The pupils have been tasked with designing their own towns.

#### Name of key officer

Fiona Thompson – Project Officer

### Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2021 – Youth Engagement Project Outcomes



## Case Study 17.

### Garioch Sports Centre Inverurie

#### Location and Dates:

Garioch Sports Centre, Burghmuir Drive, Inverurie. July 2018 – September 2019

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

- Quality of service and engagement
- Quality of outcomes

#### Key Markers:

- 1 – Decision-making
- 2 – Project management
- 3 – Early collaboration with applicants and consultees on planning applications

#### Key Areas of Work:

- Design
- Collaborative Working
- Project Management
- Planning Applications

#### Stakeholders Involved:

- Local Developers
- Authority Planning Staff

#### Overview:

Planning permission was granted for a significant extension to this sports facility and a relocated stadium for the local Highland League football team. In July 2018, the original Case Officer was approached for pre-application advice on a smaller, phased project that would include improved facilities, tennis courts backed by the Judy Murray Foundation and the expansion of early years

nursery provision to meet commitments for the 1140 hours provision of childcare. The applicant was very keen to ensure that any new planning application would continue to be acceptable to the local community and to the Planning and Environment Service.

The application [APP/2019/1567](#) was lodged in July 2019 and attracted only one letter of representation from an immediate neighbour. Some minor revisions were necessary, but the application progressed fairly quickly through the system, allowing the decision to be issued in September 2019.

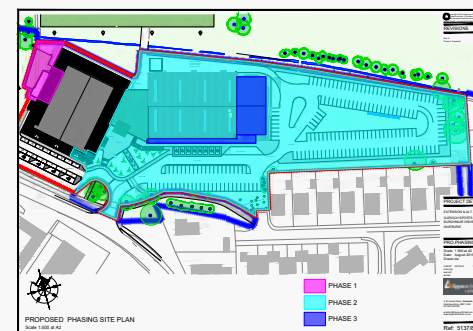
#### Goals:

This Case Study is considered to be an example of collaborative working and project management to provide pre-application advice on a substantial and high profile local development. Despite there being no statutory requirement for public consultation, the applicant was encouraged to hold an event for the local community to raise awareness of the new project.

The Decision Notice was structured in such a way to facilitate the phased nature of the project and relevant conditions have now been purified to allow work on the early years element of the scheme to be built. Dialogue continues between the agent and the Case Officer on details to allow other conditions to be purified in due course.



View from car park – Garioch Sports Centre



#### Outcomes:

The ability to front-load the process, provide a single point of contact within the Planning Service and understand how the project was intended to be implemented in a phased manner allowed consistent advice to be given, any issues to be resolved quickly and the suspensive conditions to be discussed with the applicant before the decision was issued. Working with key consultees to purify the Phase 1 conditions will allow the first element of the project to be delivered as envisaged. Purifying the remaining conditions will require input from Planning and Environment and Roads Services as the project progresses.

#### Name of key officer

Bruce Strachan – Senior Planner

This project is seen as complementary to a new community campus being delivered by the Council to serve the recreation and leisure needs of the growing town. The project also contributes to the Garioch Community Plan 2016-2019 and the 'healthy communities' priority in terms of improving physical and mental well-being and children and young people having the best start in life.



# Case Study 18. Housing Site Prospectus – Update

## Location and Dates:

Aberdeenshire Wide: March 2018-ongoing

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

- Quality of service and engagement
- Quality of outcomes

## Key Markers:

- 3 – Early collaboration
- 10 – Cross-service stakeholders
- 12 – Corporate working across-services
- 14 – Stalled sites/legacy cases

## Key Areas of Work:

- Masterplanning
- Local Develop Plan & Supplementary Guidance
- Housing Supply
- Affordable Housing
- Development Management Processes
- Planning Applications
- Collaborative Working
- Community Engagement
- Placemaking
- Process Improvement
- Project Management

## Stakeholders Involved:

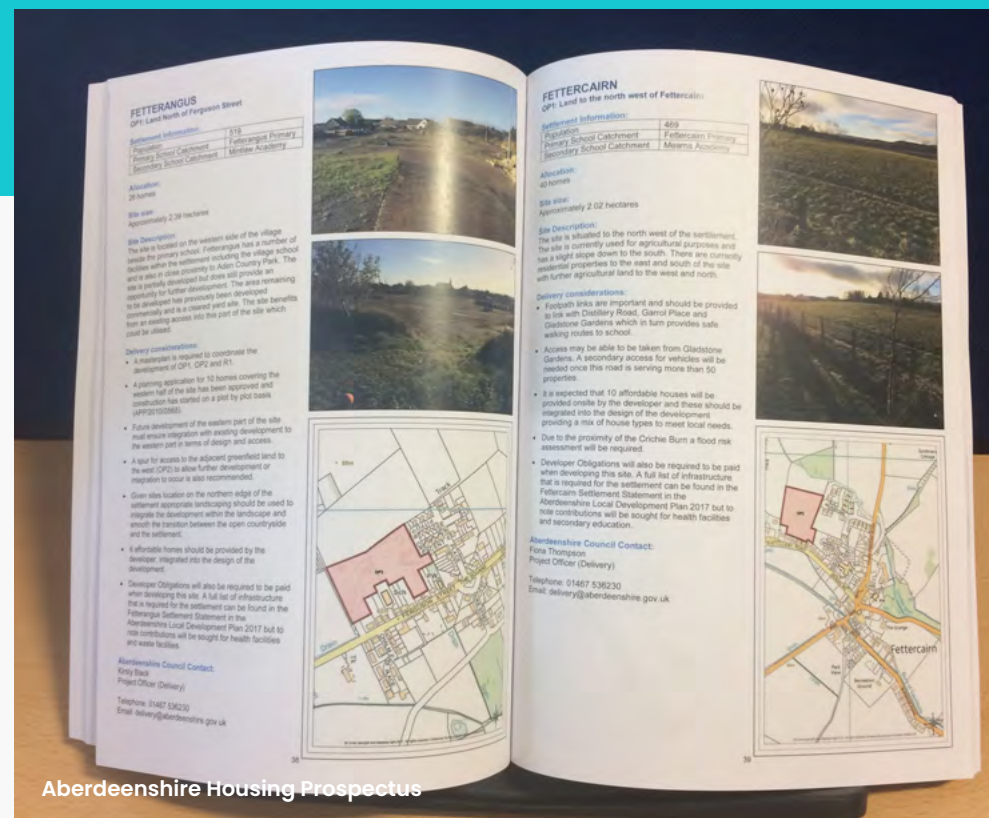
- General Public
- Local Developers
- Authority Planning Staff
- Authority Other Staff

## Overview:

The Planning Information and Delivery Team (PIDT) have been undertaking work in association with the [Housing Site Prospectus](#) since the first publication in March 2018. This document links with the [Action Programme](#) and provides a proactive resource which identifies the sites where there is currently no developer interest but landowners are keen to see developed. This is in order to try and improve the awareness to developers/ local builders that these sites are available for development.

The document contains information on each of the sites including what it is allocated for, a brief description of the site and also information on the delivery considerations which will need to be addressed in order to bring the site forward. The document also provides a contact name for a member of the Delivery Team who will act as the first point of contact between the interested party and the landowner in the first instance. The Delivery Team can then also facilitate any meetings between the interested party and the landowner should this be required.

For the first two years of publication, the document was published as a PDF on the Council's website and distributed to the landowners who have sites included in the document along with housebuilders (national and local), joiners, planning agents and RSL's. This was to try and increase the awareness



that these sites are available to be developed. The publication was well received and was successful in highlighting a number of sites to developers of which they were not previously aware. The lack of awareness was partly due to the size of Aberdeenshire and the number of sites allocated through the Local Development Plan (LDP).

As noted in previous PPFs, there was a desire to continually improve the document which resulted in greater work being carried out with the landowners whose sites are included during the preparation of the second edition. The Delivery Team set up Landowner Drop-

In meetings. These events took the format of Officers going out to locations within Aberdeenshire which were more central to -where the landowners were located. The events allowed for people to drop-in at any point throughout the day and each discussion was tailored to each individual site and landowners requirements.

The discussions generally covered topics including information relating to different marketing techniques that could be used along with general information relating to the planning system and how the landowner could progress the site. In order to ensure that

the drop-in sessions were as informative as possible it was arranged that a Development Management officer was also in attendance in order to discuss, where required, the planning application process with the landowner.

Work has commenced on the third edition of the Site Prospectus which has taken account of feedback gained from internal conversations and information learned from being shortlisted for a Scottish Award for Quality in Planning 2019. The document has evolved over the years and the next publication (third) will be through an online digital platform. The online platform retains the different scale of projects distinguishable by the use of colours. One of the reasons for changing to the digital platform was to increase the user's experience and in turn hopefully deliver more allocated sites.

#### Goals:

The aim of the Site Prospectus is to try and raise awareness of allocated sites within the Local Development Plan that have no developers currently associated with them.

#### Outcomes:

The Site Prospectus is an ongoing project which is evolving from its first annual edition in March 2018, however the document has increased the awareness of several different sites located in a number of locations across Aberdeenshire.

From the second edition of the Site Prospectus the landowner's drop-in sessions were received very well with a number of different landowners emailing Officers to thank them for an informative session. One comment stating

*'that the opportunity was gratefully received and was constructive in terms of simplifying the planning process which allowed them to understand the process required to move the site forward'*. Since these meetings a number of the landowners have followed up on the discussions that took place. It is also worth noting that since these meetings one landowner has acted upon the advice given and now has an interested developer for their site which previously had very limited progress.

These meetings are proposed to become a continued approach to reviewing the Site Prospectus on a biannual basis.

#### Name of key officer

Fiona Thompson – Project Officer





# Case Study 19.

## A Balanced Approach to Economic Development in the Coastal Zone

### Location and Dates:

Land to the North East of The Byre,  
Waterside, Newburgh

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

- Quality of Service and Engagement
- Quality of Outcomes

### Key Markers:

3 – Early collaboration with applicants and consultees

### Key Areas of Work:

- Design
- Planning Applications
- Economic Development

### Stakeholders Involved:

- Key Agencies (SNH)
- Authority Planning Staff

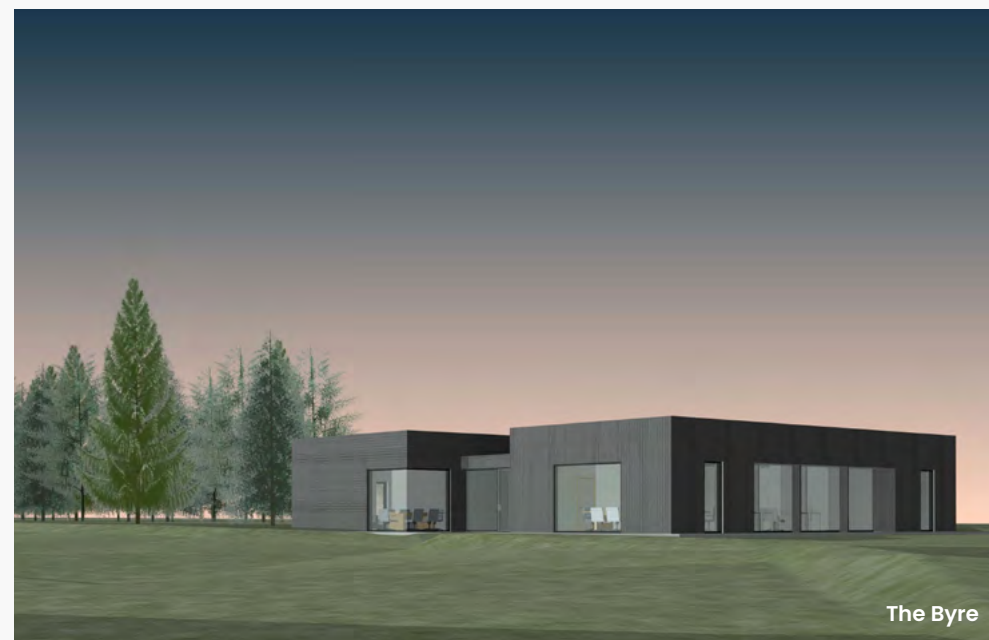
### Overview:

The proposal was for the erection of a farm estate office and associated access and parking. The site is within the Coastal Zone which is an area where development is normally restricted unless it has been demonstrated that a coastal location is necessary and natural processes will not be adversely affected. A previous application ([APP/2019/0347](#)) had been refused for a nearby site as it was considered that the office

had not been demonstrated as requiring a coastal location and the site in question was not considered redundant. Afterwards the applicant engaged in discussions with the Planning and Environment Service with regards to a suitable alternative site and the information required to present a robust business case to allow the development to occur in this area. It was explained that the business operations are focused upon research and development of high-quality crops for brewing and distilling markets with an aim to attract significant public investment into other areas of agricultural production. Onsite production of goods from specialist crops was also planned. The applicant was able to demonstrate the benefit and need for the office to be located onsite at the farm and therefore register compliance with policy. The Economic Development Service expressed support for the application. Scottish Natural Heritage confirmed that the development would have no effect upon adjacent protected sites and coastal processes and consequently the Council was able to support the application ([APP/2019/2291](#)) and approve the development.

### Goals:

By taking a pro-active approach to engagement with the applicant after the initial refusal of the previous application the Planning and Environment Service was



able to ensure that the required information was received in order to deliver a decision processed timeously which would benefit the local economy without adversely affecting the natural environment.

### Outcomes:

Through the early receipt of key information relating to the activities proposed at the site the Planning and Environment Service were able to confirm that in principle it could support the application. A high-quality

design was put forward which aimed to reduce the impact of the proposed building upon the sensitive landscape. The research undertaken at the office and the additional jobs that could be created are considered positive and the development is consistent with the aspiration for the North East to remain a market leader in the food and drink industries in line with wider objectives.

### Name of key officer

John Todd – Planner

## Case Study 20.

### Scottish Civic Trust Doors Open Days

#### Location and Dates:

Aberdeenshire wide, 14–15 September 2019

#### 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

#### Key Areas of Work:

- Conservation
- Economic Development
- Community Engagement
- Collaborative Working

#### Stakeholders Involved:

- General Public
- Key Agencies
- Authority Planning Staff

#### Overview:

The project sought to open as many of Aberdeenshire's unique and interesting sites of built and cultural heritage for free to residents and visitors over a two-day period as part of the Scottish Civic Trust Doors Open Days Programme.

This event was managed and delivered with an increased emphasis from previous years on early and sustained engagement with the participating properties and enhanced promotion through a revamped and targeted communication and promotional plan. The project was delivered in accordance with the principles and documentation of Prince2 and with continuous improvement embedded in the whole process.

#### Goals:

Principal goals of this project were:

- To open as many of Aberdeenshire's unique and interesting sites of built and cultural heritage, (new and old) for free for two days in September involving open engagement with the local communities of Aberdeenshire.
- To increase the number of visitors and locals taking part in Doors Open Days through delivering early and sustained engagement with property owners.
- To promote and clearly communicate the value and benefits of built and cultural heritage, through the delivery of the Doors Open Days programme, to all stakeholders across Aberdeenshire.



#### Outcomes:

A successful [Aberdeenshire Doors Open Days Programme 2019](#) was delivered which showcased the variety of interesting buildings and architecture that can be found in Aberdeenshire.

There was a considerable increase in the number of properties participating in the event in 2019 compared to 2018, with 63 properties participating in 2019 as opposed to 42 in 2018. This considerable increase in property uptake is a direct reflection of early, sustained and local engagement with the properties to clearly convey the benefits of being part of the event and also streamlining processes to ensure that is as easy as possible for participants to engage effectively and efficiently. As part of continuous improvement, feedback from the participants was sought and was very positive.

Visitor numbers for the event more than doubled from 4000 visits in 2018 to 9850 visits in 2019. This is a reflection of the sustained and targeted communication and promotional campaign. This involved regular press articles and an increased use of social media platforms to target participating properties local to their area. Feedback from visitors was again very positive.

As part of ongoing continuous improvement, new measurements were introduced to monitor the success of the event. In addition to the standard feedback forms, a measurement of volunteer numbers and volunteer hours was gathered. 334 volunteers contributed to the event with 1495 hours of time being donated.

#### Name of key officer

Clare Tierney – Environment Planner

# Case Study 21.

## Collaborative Working to Find Cross-Service/Agency Solutions through Planning Applications – Udney Nr. Ellon

### Location and Dates:

Ellon Office, 11 December 2019

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

- Quality of Service and Engagement
- Culture of Continuous Improvement

### Key Markers:

3 – Early Collaboration with applicants and consultees on planning applications  
6 – Continuous improvement  
12 – Corporate working across-services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit

### Key Areas of Work:

- Collaborative working
- Develop management processes
- Planning applications
- Skills sharing
- Interdisciplinary Working

### Stakeholders Involved:

- Authority other staff (Environmental Health)
- Other (SEPA)

### Overview:

A well-established pig farming enterprise applied for Full Planning Permission for the Erection of a Finishing Shed at Udney near Ellon [APP/2019/0813](#). Environmental

Health objected, given sensitive receptors are within 400m of the site. This was in accordance with the [Code of Good Practice for the Prevention of Environmental Pollution from Agricultural Activity](#). The concern was that the intensification of the pig farm could increase odour emissions, leading to complaints resulting from decreased air quality and consequent loss of nearby residential amenity. SEPA advised that the pig farm was regulated by a Pollution Prevention and Control Permit (PPC). Notwithstanding, the objection from Environmental Health remained. The Planning Authority supported the application both in principle and also because the PPC was considered sufficient, with SEPA accountable for the odour and waste management of the site. Ultimately, the Formartine Area Committee upheld the Case Officer's recommendation to grant permission.

A further three applications were later received (Farrowing Shed [APP/2019/2537](#), Nursery Shed [APP/2019/2538](#) and Finishing Shed [APP/2019/2540](#)). Environmental Health objected as before, owing to a lack of shared knowledge of the PPC remit. The Planning Officer invited Environmental Health and SEPA to a meeting to discuss concerns and share information. SEPA provided an

overview of the PPC remit and highlighted that complaints relating to the odour and waste emissions, are managed by SEPA under the PPC. This satisfied Environmental Health's concern, such that SEPA would deal with these type of complaints. Pre-emptive control of increased odour emissions was also agreed with mitigation measures (i.e. the inclusion of a slurry cap and shelter belt) to be conditioned. Consequently, the consultee objection was resolved and the Planning Authority was able to approve the development.

### Goals:

By taking a pro-active approach to engagement with the consultees and the applicant, the Planning and Environment Service was able to ensure that new knowledge and information was shared and acted upon, in order to deliver a timeous decision. Going forward this shared knowledge should be used to deliver more efficient decision-making and to protect amenity.

### Outcomes:

Cross-discipline and cross-sector collaboration and knowledge sharing has allowed an established local business to extend its premises, thus supporting local economic development. Increased

collaboration has expanded Planning and Environmental Health's knowledge of SEPA PPC remits and alternative control and mitigation solutions to potential environmental impacts. Further applications at this site are expected during 2020–2021 and all parties have agreed to continue collaboration to streamline Council processes, leading to a [DM Good Practice Note](#) which was reviewed and agreed by the [Environmental Health/Development Management Operational Improvement Group](#) as part of the interdisciplinary working and continuous improvement work this group aims to achieve.

### Name of key officer

Roslyn Purdie – Planner



## Case Study 22.

# Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology/Development Management Consultation Protocol

### Location and Dates:

Aberdeenshire Council, April 2019 – ongoing

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

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

### Key Markers:

6 – Continuous improvement  
12 – Corporate working across-services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit

### Key Areas of Work:

- Development Management Processes
- Process Improvement
- Collaborative Working
- Environment

### Stakeholders Involved:

- Authority Planning Staff
- Authority Other Staff

### Overview:

The creation of a consultation protocol between the Archaeology Team and Development Management Teams within the Planning & Environment Service which outlines how the teams should interact between each other throughout the planning process.

The document sets out how the Archaeology Team comment on planning applications, and how Development Management can seek their comments on pre-application enquiries and post application matters, such as compliance with conditions. It sets out the circumstances under which the Archaeology Team should be consulted at the validation stage of an application, and when Development Management should expect a response from Archaeology through the review of the planning application weekly lists. The timescales expected for a response on the different types of applications is also set out (14 days for planning applications, 7 days for Prior Notifications). It gives an explanation as to why Archaeology will request certain mitigation measures and conditions to be applied to any grant of permission or consent. It also outlines when and why Archaeology might advise that a proposal does not comply with the relevant policies. It sets out in detail the process to be followed by both teams to ensure the discharging of conditions is undertaken correctly, allowing an appropriate record of any impact on the historic environment as a result of the development to be made.

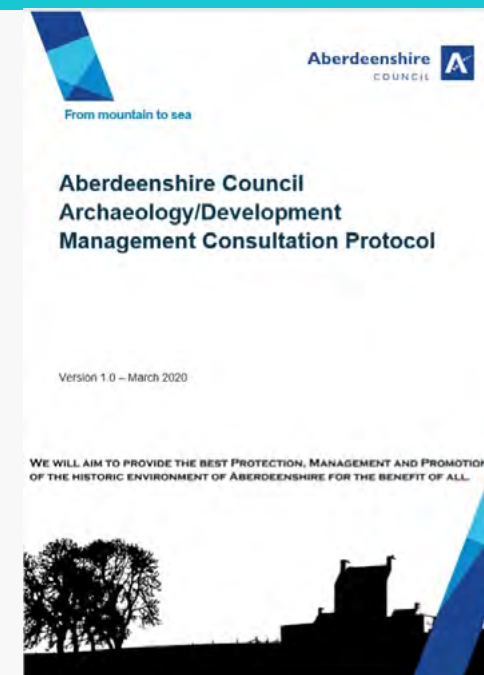
The document sets out the determination process which is to be followed in terms of the Council's Scheme of Governance in the

rare circumstances when the teams reach different professional views on proposals. This gives clarity as to how these situations are to be dealt with. It has previously been contentious as it has not been set out how these instances are to be dealt with.

A theme throughout the document is the importance of communication between the teams. This is to try and help guarantee consultations are not missed and conditions are applied, where appropriate, to ensure any development which impacts on the historic environment is appropriately mitigated. It also clarifies for the Archaeology Team which types of applications where mitigation measures can be applied. The document ensures any requests are made in accordance with national and local planning policy, while all conditions requested meet the 6 tests as set out within Planning Circular 4/1998: the use of conditions in planning permissions.

### Goals:

The development and implementation of a consultation protocol between the Archaeology Team and Development Management Teams was an identified service improvement for the Planning Environment and Specialist Services part of the Service in 2019–20. The intention was to clarify how the two teams should interact



with one another throughout the planning process. It will help ensure the overall service delivered to customers and members of the public is of the highest quality, and is as streamlined and efficient as possible. This is in accordance with the Council's Priorities to 'support a strong, sustainable, diverse and successful economy' and 'protect our special environment, including tackling climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions'.

**Outcomes:**

The consultation protocol was finalised and agreed by the Archaeology and Development Management Teams in March 2020. It will help provide clarity between the teams on matters which could previously slow down the consultation process between them, while also increasing the knowledge and understanding of what both teams do during the planning process. This will assist both teams in improving their response times to consultations and customers, while also ensuring higher quality decisions are made. These improvements will increase opportunities for the unique and special character of Aberdeenshire's historic environment to be protected and promoted through new development. The protocol will continue to be monitored and updated where required as processes evolve over time.

**Name of key officer**

Claire Herbert – Archaeologist &  
Malcolm White – Team Leader (Specialist Services).



Dunecht House and Estate

## Case Study 23.

### Grampian Biomass Working Group

#### Location and Dates:

Ritchie Hall Strichen, 19 June 2019

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

- 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

#### Key Areas of Work:

- Planning Applications
- Community engagement
- Collaborative Working

#### Stakeholders Involved:

- Authority Planning Staff
- Other – agents; biomass providers/ installers; applicants

#### Overview:

The Planning Authority faced issues in connection with unauthorised biomass boiler installation, which caused concern from the community and industry. As a result, the Planning Authority welcomed the opportunity to attend a meeting of the Grampian Biomass Working Group ([agenda](#)). The meeting enabled a wider understanding of the concerns of developers and also share

the concerns of the Planning Authority. This opportunity has built on relationships and provided a vehicle to convey to the Group that the Planning Authority is open for business and able to assist.

Members of the Grampian Biomass Working Group have found the planning system difficult to navigate at times. The range of applications and issues of expediency required in retrospective applications owing to OFGEM (specific feed in tariffs) has financial implications. A representative from the Development Management Service, along with Environmental Health, attended a meeting of the Grampian Biomass Working Group. Collaborative working by the Planning Authority between Development Management and the Environmental Health Team, along with input from the Planning Policy and the Enforcement Teams.

#### Goals:

- Disseminate information about the planning system
- Promote pre-application advice
- Identify requisite information for planning applications
- Identify enforcement related issues
- Collaborative and partnership working

#### Outcomes:

- Increase in number of planning applications related to biomass with requisite information.
- Increased understanding of the range of planning applications.
- Opportunities to further participate in meetings of the Group.
- Collaborative working across-services and with developers and agents.

Feedback was that the presentation from the Planning and Environment Service was well received. Attendees felt they had a connection with the Service, and recognised that we are there to help.

Written feedback included:

*“Many thanks for taking the time to talk to the group.”* and *“the responses it was obviously very welcome and answered a lot of questions”*

Source: Eric Wells, Sustainable Development Officer.

#### Name of key officer

Sally Wood – Senior Planner



Grampian Biomass Working Group



# Case Study 24.

## Public Engagement on Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plan

### Location and Dates:

Pennan (November 2019– January 2020)  
Huntly (February 2019 – November 2019)

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

- Quality of service and engagement

### Key Markers:

11 – Production of regular and proportionate policy advice, for example through supplementary guidance, on information required to support applications

### Key Areas of Work:

- Conservation
- Community Engagement

### Stakeholders Involved:

- General Public
- Authority Planning Staff

### Overview:

The project sought to pilot different approaches to public engagement on Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans moving away from solely the traditional public meeting. This was a result of Councillor feedback on the Built Heritage Strategy and a request that local communities should have the opportunity to be more involved in this area of work.

Following discussion with colleagues in Community Planning on how to improve engagement in our differing communities, two settlements (Pennan and Huntly) were chosen and different approaches were taken in each, involving online surveys, postcard surveys and a stand at a Farmers Market.

### Goals:

To pilot different techniques for public engagement on Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans.

To reach different audiences and increase the number of people who are able to make comments in relation to Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans.

To promote more widely the value of built and cultural heritage to the public.

To gain valuable feedback allowing us to shape the document/s to reflect the community's comments and ensuring they feel engaged in the process.

### Outcomes:

In Pennan, which has a high proportion of holiday homes (estimate is 12 full time residents) the following methods were utilised:

- [a postcard drop](#) was used to advertise the consultation. These were delivered to all properties and copies left in the Pennan Inn.
- each owner was written to with information about the survey links to documents and contact details.
- a local Community Council meeting was attended.
- the survey was advertised on social media and in the local press.

As a result of this, 17 responses were received to the online survey along with a further 8 written responses.

In [Huntly](#) (population 4,800), there was already an active Huntly Town Team, who were consulted on the best means of engaging the residents and business owners of Huntly. The following were implemented in response to their recommendation:

- attended the Huntly Farmers Market to raise awareness of the consultation.
- wrote to every building owner in Huntly, but also included a simplified sheet to explain what a Conservation Area is, to try and reach out to wider audience.
- used the Huntly Town Team and the Community Council as a focus group prior to the document going out to public consultation.

- produced a leaflet to be used during the consultations and supplied copies to key public buildings.



There were 14 written responses, 1 resident visited, 33 survey monkey responses, 11 requests for hard copies and 4 meetings attended in Huntly.

For both settlements, a questionnaire was produced which could be completed by someone who had never heard of the consultation before. To gain a better understanding of how people felt about the Conservation Area and to not exclude anyone from responding we: Utilised social media, as well as more traditional press, to try and promote the consultation, using a dedicated Facebook page and Twitter

account managed by the Environment Team and tagging in local group pages as well as Aberdeenshire Council pages. Ensured people could respond by email, in writing or through a survey monkey. Made sure the document was available on-line with hard copies available on request, left hard copies in key public buildings.

From our experience in both Pennan and Huntly we have updated our Conservation Area Review/Designations Process Map to ensure that for each new consultation we have a clear consultation and promotional plan which is tailored to the specific

settlement, rather than taking a one size fits all approach, always including the following elements:

- mixed methods of communication and promotion;
- mixed opportunities and methods for people to respond;
- mixed outreach opportunities to facilitate communication i.e. attending local events, creating events of interest for locals.

Whilst small in its scale, the addition of an alternate means of consultation tailored to the specific location helped to increase the

amount and range of public involvement in the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan process beyond what normally would be expected and also generally raised awareness of the value of Aberdeenshire's built heritage.

#### **Name of key officer**

Deborah Burroughs – Team Leader  
Environment (North)



Huntly Town Centre



## Case Study 25.

### Invest in Peterhead

#### Location and Dates:

Peterhead, January 2019 – ongoing throughout reporting period

#### 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 customer benefit  
13 – Sharing good practice across, skills and knowledge across authorities

#### Key Areas of Work:

- Regeneration
- Town Centres
- Economic Development
- Collaborative Working

#### Stakeholders Involved:

- Authority Planning Staff
- Key Agencies
- External Groups
- Authority Other Staff

#### Overview:

'Invest in Peterhead' is a proactive two-year campaign to market Peterhead's town centre investment opportunities both locally and nationally. The campaign aims to be a catalyst for a major perception change of Aberdeenshire's largest settlement.

Peterhead is well known for its fishing industry, harbour, new and old prisons and economic challenges however, this view clouds a vibrant entrepreneurial business community and the many opportunities for tourist, cultural, industrial and business investment that exist.

Initiated by colleagues in Economic Development, the IIP group has currently 17 stakeholders who meet quarterly, made up of Estate Agents, a variety of property owners and investors, construction consultants, Rediscover Peterhead (the local BID team), and Invest in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Council. The work on Invest in Peterhead started, following on from a piece of work gathering and analysing the town centre business data and identifying market gaps.

There is an overarching programme of actions and events which the Project Delivery Officers in the PID team are actively supporting. Within the programme, 6 prominent vacant town centre properties have been identified and 'ghost planning' of these properties is being undertaken to help stimulate investment. Ghost planning is a process of analysing the properties in light of the Council knowledge to explore how the property could be redeveloped and brought back in to use in the absence of an end user/developer. The ghost planning also brings together other information, the identified market gaps, and incentives available to potential investors as well as potential needs for consents.



Peterhead Town Centre is currently exempt from developer obligations as part of the regeneration programme and financial grant/loan support to unlock developments in the town centre is available via the Property Investment Fund. The team are now exploring taking this one step forward and formally seeking consent.

#### Goals:

The aim of this collaborative group is not only to fill the vacant units of Peterhead. The overall campaign intends to be the catalyst to change perceptions and will be used as a communication tool, to showcase Peterhead, highlighting the opportunities for investment and highlighting all that is going on in Peterhead.

The ghost planning work aims to showcase

the potential of the currently vacant units, to provide clarity and set out a clear route map through the statutory processes with the aim of good conclusions.

By identifying the opportunities and barriers upfront it is hoped that this will save time and help inform decision-making ahead of any investment. Also by offering one point of contact it is hoped that Council services and processes can be more effectively and efficiently delivered.



## Outcomes:

The outcomes of the project to date include the establishment of a proactive stakeholder group. The stakeholder group are working together proactively to both market Peterhead and change perceptions. An enquiry system has been developed and piloted, also the marketing and presentation of some of the vacant properties has already been improved.

A clear identity and branding have been developed for the project and a marketing brochure has been produced ready to be launched. The marketing materials also include the 6 properties benefitting from ghost planning.

An example is included apposite:

## Name of key officer

Lucy Styles – Project Officer

David MacLennan – Team Manager

## INVEST IN PETERHEAD

The building is located within the coastal town of Peterhead, which stands around 33 miles north of Aberdeen and represents one of Aberdeenshire's principle service and employment centres.

The town has a varied economic base with major employment opportunities being in fishing, onshore support for the oil industry, manufacturing, food processing, textiles and the service industries. There are a wide range of services available within the town including five primary schools located close to residential areas, a secondary school, a sports and community centre, which includes a purpose built theatre and swimming pool, a library, museum and two hospitals. Peterhead is the largest town in Aberdeenshire with a population of 18,450.

The building is situated within the pedestrianised zone of the busy town centre immediately adjacent to 'Drummers Corner', a popular meeting space which is set to receive a modern transformation as part of ongoing

regeneration efforts. The revamp of Drummers Corner will support the town to prosper as a key town centre destination.

Ample car parking is available within close proximity of the property and the town centre is served by local buses.



INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITY

## INVEST IN PETERHEAD

Aberdeenshire Council support a Town Centre First Principle and have policies in place within the Local Development Plan (LDP) that highlight which Use Classes are suitable in town centre locations: Policy B2 Town Centres and Office Developments.

This property is currently defined under the Use Class Order (1997) as Class 1, for retailing purposes. Under the Use Class Order there are no permitted development rights allowing a change of use without a planning application. Therefore, should the potential developer wish to change the use of the building from retailing to a restaurant/ café, for example, then there will be a requirement for a planning application to be submitted. In such an application, consideration should be given to environmental health concerns such as noise and ventilation.

There is a Council-wide desire to see this property brought back into use and a considered proposal is likely to receive positive

support and advice during the planning and statutory processes in order to ensure that the application can secure a favourable outcome.

It is understood alterations were undertaken to combine two units into a single larger property. It is possible that the units could be altered to form two separate properties again, if this is desirable, subject to relevant planning approvals.

	Low Risk	Medium Risk	High Risk
Option 1 Retail	✓		
Option 2 Family restaurant		✓	
Option 3 Office space		✓	
Option 4 Other			✓

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITY

## INVEST IN PETERHEAD

The building is on the corner of Thistle Street and Marischal Street and as such benefits from a handsome traditional frontage with many windows to the street to attract passing trade. It comprises the entire ground floor unit of a larger three storey building with offices and accommodation on the upper floors.

The internal space is currently configured for retail purposes, however it is also thought that alternative uses such as a café/ restaurant may be desirable in this area, and acceptable subject to relevant planning agreements. The property is estimated to have an internal ground floor space of 340 sqm<sup>2</sup>.



Existing floor plan



## INVEST IN PETERHEAD



# Case Study 26.

## Bilbo Farm Solar Farm Crimond – Major Development

### Location and Dates:

Bilbo Farm Solar Farm, Crimond,  
Aberdeenshire  
Determined Sept 2019

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

- Quality of Service and Engagement
- Quality of Outcomes

### Key Markers:

- 1 – Decision-making
  - 2 – Project management
  - 3 – Early collaboration with applicants and consultees on planning applications.
- Corporate working across-services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit (joint pre-application advice)

### Key Areas of Work:

- Planning Applications
- Environment
- Collaborative Working
- Project Management

### Stakeholders Involved:

- Developer
- Key Agencies
- Authority Planning Staff

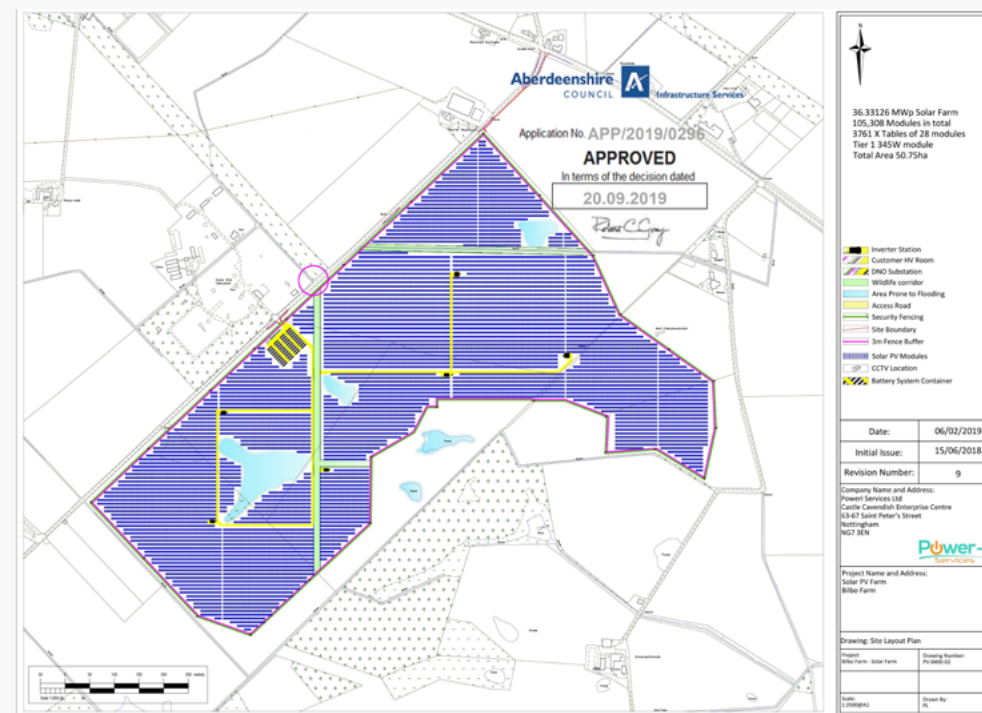
### Overview:

This Case Study concerns quality of service and engagement in relation to a large scale Solar development (37MW) in Aberdeenshire which represented a Major development ([APP/2019/0296](#)). This involved guiding the applicant through the pre-application process, undertaking an interdisciplinary major application meeting, screening under the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations, an appropriate assessment under the Habitats Regulations and determining the subsequent Planning Application.

The development site presented complex challenges, primarily in respect of ornithology and ecology as the site is adjacent to the Loch of Strathbeg (SSSI, RAMSAR, SPA). This required the developer to undertake a significant amount of survey work in order to understand the impact of the development upon the qualifying interests of the designations. In order to scope the assessment work, focused dialogue was required between the developer, SNH, RSPB and the Council which was facilitated through the pre-application Major Application Meeting process as managed by the Case Officer.

### Goals:

This Case Study seeks to successfully demonstrate the value of meaningful early engagement, and the role of the Planning



and Environment Service in facilitating such dialogue.

The pre-app Major Application Meeting process seeks to provide developers with the opportunity to present their proposal to relevant consultees at an early stage and make contact with key Officers for each consultee. It also provides consultees with the opportunity to coordinate and

discuss information requirements, therefore avoiding duplication for the developer when undertaking survey work.

In effect the process seeks to streamline the eventual submission of a planning application and therefore shorten the timescale for determination by the Planning and Environment Service.

**Outcomes:**

The pre-app Major Application Meeting was attended by key consultees, with much of the discussion focused upon ecology and ornithology. It was apparent that the Council's Environment Team, RSPB and SNH all had a role to play in assessing the impact of the development upon the Loch of Strathbeg. The Major Application Meeting allowed a joined-up approach to be taken when scoping ecological survey work, which provided clear direction for the developer. This subsequently ensured that the supporting information for the planning application was of a suitable standard and scope, and allowed the application to be progressed at a rapid pace. The planning application was ultimately approved in September 2019, subject to appropriate conditions in 12 weeks which was well within the statutory 16 weeks determination period for a Major development.

Feedback has been sought from the developer (Green Energy International), which highlighted the important role pre-application engagement and interdisciplinary working. An extract of the feedback is shown opposite:

*"From the first point of contact with the Strategic Development Delivery Team we have been immensely impressed with the professional aptitude of everyone involved. The free cost of pre-application advice combined with planning officers who take the proposals seriously and work to assist developers is a rare pleasure. In the earliest stages of the proposals for the solar farm at Bilbo Farm, the team arranged a round table meeting where we met with consultees from various specialisms to present the proposals, discuss potential issues and create a level of understanding of what the LPA expects from us as developers and what our needs are from them right, helping create a smooth process throughout."*

The comments from the Applicant demonstrate that Aberdeenshire Council is providing a high quality, customer focused pre-application service for Major Applications, which adds value to the application process and clearly sets out our expectations in terms of submission detail. This in turn allows for high quality decision-making to be undertaken in a timely manner with quality outcomes.

**Name of key officer**

James Hewitt – Planner

Offshore Wind Farm





# Case Study 27.

## Erection of 20 Dwellinghouses – Milton of Kemnay

### Location and Dates:

Kemnay, June 2019 – present

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

- Quality of Service and Engagement

### Key Markers:

- 1 – Decision-making
- 2 – Project Management
- 3 – Early collaboration with applicants and consultees
- 15 – Developer Contributions

### Key Areas of Work:

- Design
- Placemaking
- Housing Supply
- Development Management Processes
- Planning Applications
- Project Management

### Stakeholders Involved:

- Authority Planning Staff
- Authority Other staff
- Local Developer
- Planning Committee

### Overview:

This planning application [APP/2019/0490](#) seeks full planning permission for the erection of 20 dwellinghouses on an allocated site in Kemnay. Due to staffing changes the

application was reallocated throughout the course of the application in June 2019. As such the new Planner made early contact with the agent to introduce themselves and gain an understanding of the outstanding issues to be resolved.

Following this, the Planning and Environment Service engaged with relevant consultees in order to progress the application. Regular contact was made with the agent to provide updates and seek further information as requested. It was identified early that the application required to progress to Area Committee and was subject to a Section 75 Legal Agreement. Therefore, the Planner discussed with the agent the benefits of entering into a Planning Processing Agreement (PPA) early to cover such information requests, Committee deadlines, and Section 75 processes.

This required good organisational skills and engagement with the local developer and other Authority staff. The Planner coordinated several consultee responses and passed these onto the agent in a manageable way, keeping the file up to date and satisfying technical matters.

Working closely with the agent allowed for amendments to be made to the proposal to ensure a high-quality development was



secured, and to ensure target dates for submission requirements, deadlines and conclusion of the S75 Legal Agreement were achieved.

### Goals:

Effective communication and collaboration between the agent and the Planner supported the successful handling of this

application and led to an improved design and positive recommendation.

The granting of this consent will lead to the delivery of an effective housing land supply, designed to a high standard, satisfying technical concerns and to agreed timescales.

**Outcomes:**

The application was granted Full Planning Permission at Garioch Area Committee on 4 February 2020 subject to conditions. The application is pending completion of the Section 75 Legal Agreement and is on track for determination by 30 June 2020 in line with the PPA.

Despite delays due to a change of Planner and resolution of consultee concerns, the close engagement between the agent and Planner allowed for matters to be addressed swiftly and on target within the PPA. Such collaboration resulted in an improved design proposal which addresses technical matters.

A testimony from the local developer demonstrates that the case was managed effectively, and that early and regular collaboration with the agent was valuable, resulting in a positive performance by the Planning and Environment Service:

*"I attended the Garioch Area Committee meeting last week, as I often do, to hear the report and discussion around our proposed development at Kemnay. I was particularly impressed by the verbal report that Jane Weir gave to committee members, it was comprehensive, well presented and addressed all of the issues in a way that was clearly understood by the elected members. The development is one of our smallest projects but nevertheless it is relatively complicated with concerns on flood risk and technical difficulties around the roads design.*

*Michael at Norman P. Lawrie is the agent for this application, he and I appreciate the proactive approach that Jane has taken throughout the consideration of this application, regardless of the eventual outcome. Michael suggested that we write to acknowledge that effort and I am happy to do so. Too often developers have reason to criticise the performance of the Planning Service and that performance is put down to a lack of resources but in this instance I am pleased to say that the experience has been positive."*

Colin Wood, Operations Manager, Malcolm Allan Housebuilders Ltd, 12 February 2020.

**Name of key officer**

Jane Weir – Senior Planner

Queens View Tarland





# Governance Case Studies

28. Aberdeenshire Council Legacy Team – Update

29. Service Improvement: Implementation of Administration Review – Infrastructure Services Embedded Admin Team

Peterhead Harbour





# Case Study 28.

## Aberdeenshire Council Legacy Team – Update

### Location and Dates:

Various locations, March 2015 – ongoing throughout reporting period

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

- Governance
- Culture of continuous improvement

### Key Markers:

14 – Stalled sites/legacy cases

### Key Areas of Work:

- Development Management Processes
- Planning Applications
- Collaborative Working
- Process Improvement
- Skills Sharing

### Stakeholders Involved:

- Local Developers
- Authority Planning Staff
- Authority Other Staff

### Overview:

The Legacy Team, which has been in place since March 2015, continues to focus on planning applications which have been pending for over one year with a view to concluding them as quickly as possible. Improved internal communication and knowledge of the unique issues for individual applications, has led to an increase in confidence to liaise with applicants and use the processes and techniques available to

conclude legacy cases.

There is also a continued focus in the planning teams to minimise future applications becoming 'legacy'. Planners are more aware of the issue of legacy applications and Processing Agreements are sought as a matter of course for more complex applications. Better liaison between the Planning and Legal Teams has ascertained where it is appropriate to instruct a S75 earlier in the process which has reduced overall timescales for some applications.

Within each of the area planning offices, a Legacy Officer has been nominated to act as a local advisor to other planning colleagues and co-ordinate updates to the Legacy Co-ordinator. These representatives attend the regular meetings with the Legal team which aids communication and further enhances their understanding of legacy issues, enabling them to share this knowledge more directly within their planning teams.

The Legacy Co-ordinator continues to issue monthly 'Legacy Monitoring' emails to Team Leaders, Legacy Officers and Legal colleagues which forecasts the cases that are at risk of becoming legacy within the following two month period. This prompts Planning and/or Legal colleagues to raise any outstanding issues and a more focused effort by those involved to allow these to be resolved in time.

### Goals:

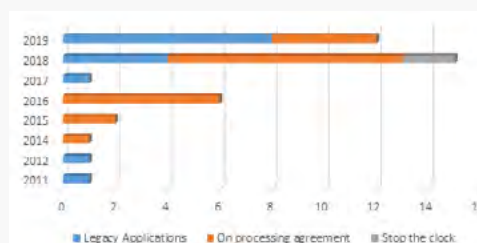
The Legacy Team continues to focus on existing cases which have been pending for over one year with a view to concluding them as quickly as possible. Regular meetings, improved communication between the legal and planning teams, and lessons learned have increased the efficiency of concluding applications. By having improved communication and Team members located in each of the planning offices, it is hoped that sharing information and lessons learned will prevent future applications becoming legacy cases.

### Outcomes:

During the period March 2019 – March 2020 a total of 34 legacy applications were decided, 29 of which were on Processing Agreements.

The chart below shows the breakdown of pending applications, including those that are on Processing Agreements and 'Stop the Clock'.

### No. of Legacy Applications at 31st March 2020



The use of the 'Stop the Clock' function has increased within the Planning Teams which more accurately reflects the timescales without any periods of inactivity on an application which has been outwith our control. In general, the use of Processing Agreements has also increased and are sought for as a matter of course on more complex applications.

The overall number of applications pending has increased slightly since last year, and this is mainly due to the number of S75 Agreements being prepared. Out of the total 39 pending legacy applications, 23 are awaiting S75 Agreements. Additional discussions are being held with the Legal Team to identify where Planning Officers could assist in order to reach a conclusion as soon as possible.

The Legacy Team is an excellent example of different Services working together and we will continue to strive to achieve further positive outcomes.

### Name of key officer

Kirsty Black – Senior Project Co-ordinator

## Case Study 29.

# Service Improvement: Implementation of Administration Review – Infrastructure Services Embedded Planning Admin Team

### Location and Dates:

IS Embedded Admin – 30 April 2019 – ongoing throughout the reporting period

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

- Governance
- 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

### Key Areas of Work:

- Process Improvement
- Development Management Processes
- Collaborative Working
- Skills Sharing
- Staff Training
- Online Systems

### Stakeholders Involved:

- General Public
- Agents/Local Developers
- Authority Planning Staff
- Authority Other Staff

### Overview:

This Case Study refers to a complete restructure of the Administrative Support Staff

function for the Planning and Environment Service (also including Building Standards) to form the Infrastructure Services Embedded Planning Admin Team.

This consisted of 6 Administration Area Teams across Aberdeenshire merging to work from mainly 2 Offices, based at Inverurie and Stonehaven, with one member supporting the Management Team at Woodhill House in Aberdeen and one member supporting the Environment Team at Banff. This structure included the EPlanning Team who already supported the whole of Aberdeenshire from one office. This newly formed IS Embedded Planning Admin Team now has the specialist experience to administer aspects of the Planning and Environment Service, (and Building Standards) from the logging and scanning of new applications, administering Committee Reports, and through to the issuing of decision documents. It also includes finance and budgeting work for various projects. Four Admin Hubs were also formed separately to deal with generic Admin Tasks for all Infrastructure Services such as paying of invoices, providing generic staffing support, timekeeping, leave requests and ordering of stationary. Some existing staff were re-allocated to these Hubs.

This meant that Administrators within the Embedded Admin Team could concentrate on the specialist tasks and procedures required to be undertaken in issuing decisions and other disciplines relating to Development Management, Building Standards and Environment Team functions. The Team overcame many hurdles, from familiarising themselves with other Areas within Aberdeenshire and getting to know the names of professional colleagues who were working from other offices rather than just their usual local office. One of the biggest hurdles was condensing eight telephone numbers into one central number. This was to simplify the customer experience.

The benefits of this re-structure were more efficient and resource saving teams and the ability to seek consistency in Admin processes throughout the Service. This has been achieved by forming working groups and taking best practices forward collaboratively. This has helped the teams work in a consistent way regardless of what part of Aberdeenshire the work is for. This has also helped staff feel like they are part of a team and appreciate how much their input is valued. Following on with the established electronic uniform way of working and streamlining, staff now work from one task list regardless of the area. Managers can clearly see what is presently being worked on and what is outstanding.

### Goals:

The main goals were to provide consistency and good quality service and support to both managers, team leaders, Officers and customers in line with the Customer Service Protocol. In addition, it has resulted in Admin staff drawing on their experience in certain areas but also the development of staff with all gaining experience in all disciplines within the Planning and Environment Service (and Building Standards). This allows for flexibility in working to cover shortages if and when they arise.

### Outcomes:

After a short period of difficulty in adjusting to the new structure, the Embedded Admin Team is now working very efficiently with tasks being prioritised, undertaken and completed quickly. Work continues to achieve best practice in processes and staff development but much has been achieved by way of improvement in performance and customer care in little over a year.

### Name of key officer

Audrey Smith – Senior Admin Officer

# Culture of Continuous Improvement

## Case Studies

- 30. Environment and Specialist Services Strategies and Action Plans
- 31. Affordable Housing Hub – Update
- 32. Service Improvement: Pre-Application and Major Application Review – Update
- 33. Environmental Health/Development Management Operational Improvement Group
- 34. Historic Asset Survey – Data Management Project
- 35. Tree Preservation Order Review
- 36. Adapting to Planning Reform in Development Planning
- 37. Development and Function of Icons to Assist the Delivery of Local Development Plan Policy Outcomes
- 38. Engaging with Evidence
- 39. Planning Processing Agreements (PPAs) – Update

Ballater Station





# Case Study 30.

## Environment and Specialist Services Strategies and Action Plans

### Location and Dates:

Various – throughout reporting period

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

- Culture of continuous improvement

### Key Markers:

6 – Continuous improvements – through service improvement commitments

### Key Areas of Work:

- Environment
- Performance Monitoring

### Stakeholders Involved:

- Authority Planning Staff
- Planning Committee

### Overview:

Completion of a full suite of 6 strategies, with supporting annual action plans, for all functions and activities delivered by the Environment and Specialist Services teams in the Service, including Archaeology, Rangers, North East of Scotland Biodiversity Records Centre, Outdoor Access and Built Heritage. The final Strategy for [Aberdeenshire's Natural Heritage](#) was approved in November 2019.

### Goals:

The strategies provide a structured approach to service delivery for a 3-year period. They set out service objectives and how these link to Scottish Government and [Aberdeenshire Council priorities](#). The strategies provide a mechanism for improving efficiency, collaboration, participation and embedding best practice in service delivery. They define the performance indicators. The strategies are supported by Annual Action Plans which set out detailed actions to ensure delivery of the Strategy and how these will be measured. The teams use the strategies and action plans to develop individual annual work programmes. Progress is reported annually through [Bulletin reports](#) to the [Infrastructure Services Committee](#). At the end of the 3-year Strategy period a review takes place and this together with other factors informs the development of a new Strategy for the next 3-year period. As part of the next review and development process we intend to undertake more engagement with stakeholders to help inform identification of priorities.

### Outcomes:

The strategies have provided a useful mechanism for identifying Service priorities and objectives, and areas for improvement. The process has been helpful in raising the profile of the work the Service does, how it links with other activities and, engaging with Elected Members. Performance measures have been identified for all activities and the collection of data to inform these has identified areas for further improvement. The Annual Action Plans provide a degree of flexibility to respond to interim changes in national and local policies.

### Name of key officer

Maureen Corley – Planning Service Manager



Burn O Vat Visitor Centre Muir of Dinnet

# Case Study 31.

## Affordable Housing Hub – Update

### Location and Dates:

Aberdeenshire, January 2019 – Ongoing

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

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

### Key Markers:

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

13 – Sharing good practice across, skills and knowledge across authorities

14 – Stalled sites/legacy cases

15 – Developer contributions

### Key Areas of Work:

- Affordable Housing
- Collaborative Working

### Stakeholders Involved:

- Registered Social Landowners (RSL's) and agents
- Authority Other Staff

### Overview:

This is an update from the [Planning Performance Framework 8 \(2018–19\)](#) Case Study 40 page 71. The Affordable Housing Hub continues to provide a platform for interdisciplinary working to support the delivery of affordable housing in Aberdeenshire. The Planning Information

and Delivery Team continues to support colleagues in the Housing Service with the affordable housing hub with an interdisciplinary approach, in line with the 'One Aberdeenshire Principles'.

Meetings continue to be held regularly at fortnightly intervals or more frequently if the need arises, the meetings are well established and use the Council IT infrastructure to provide a virtual meeting space. The established use of the virtual meeting space means it is very efficient and easy to access Officers or key agencies when their expertise and input is required.

The overall Aberdeenshire affordable housing programme continues to be reviewed and monitored through the Hub. Aberdeenshire relies on partner organisations to deliver up to 70% of affordable housing requirement through Section 75 Legal Agreements. As the Hub has evolved it more recently has been used as a platform to focus on particular projects, issues affecting a project, and delivery partners specific build programmes.

One of the main delivery partners in Aberdeenshire; Grampian Housing Association, have been invited to join the Hub for regular meetings to review their programme and focus in on specific projects when required. Through the Hub the overall programme has been interrogated

using Scottish Government drawdowns for benchmarking and individual projects have been reviewed and supported where required. Part of this has been to reach out to other Council Services when required. This has included Development Management, Property, Legal and Developer Obligations.

### Goals:

Through utilising the Hub as a platform and continuing to work collaboratively, openly and by developing good working relationships and networks, it is hoped that affordable sites will keep coming forward and delivery will be increased as targets are met.

Through best practice, improved relationships and transparency unnecessary delay and expense will be avoided.

It is anticipated that the Hub will become a recognised platform for Officers and partners concerning affordable housing delivery matters.

Trends and issues adversely affecting affordable housing delivery across Aberdeenshire will be identified at an early stage.

### Outcomes:

There continues to be improvements in cross-service and stakeholder communication, joint and partnership

working. Good working relationships have been formed with noticeable openness and transparency between attendees.

A further development is that the Hub is now recognised by partner RSL organisations as a mechanism to assist struggling projects, with RSLs asking to take problems to the Hub for assistance.

*"Grampian Housing Association have found the Affordable Housing Hub at Aberdeenshire Council very helpful. It allows us to meet with colleagues in different departments which helps to identify and resolve potential problems before they arise in the planning process. It has also provided a great basis for networking allowing us to get to know the right people to contact within the Council for different issues."*



The Hub has been used to react to concerns as they arise but also to horizon scan and anticipate future issues and trends.

### Name of key officer

David MacLennan – Team Manager  
Alexander MacLeod – Housing Manager  
Lucy Styles – Project Officer  
Elaine Reid – Team Leader Housing

## Case Study 32.

# Service Improvement: Pre-Application and Major Application Review-Update

### Location and Dates:

Aberdeenshire – throughout 2019-20 and ongoing

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

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

### Key Markers:

3 – Early collaboration with applicants and consultees on planning applications  
 6 – Continuous Improvements- show progress/improvements in relation to PPF National Headline indicators  
 12 – Corporate working across-services to improve outputs and services for Customer benefit  
 15 – Developer contributions – clear expectations set out in development plan and in pre-application discussions

### Key Areas of Work:

- Development Management Processes
- Planning Applications
- Interdisciplinary Working
- Collaborative Working
- Performance Monitoring
- Process Improvement
- Project Management
- Online Systems

### Stakeholders Involved:

- Authority Planning Staff
- Developers/Agents
- Authority Other Staff
- Key Agencies

### Overview:

This Case Study relates back to Case Study 33 in [PPF 8 \(2018-19\)](#). The review of the pre-application process remains a committed Service improvement and demonstrates the continuous approach to improvement the Council aims towards. The remit of the review includes all pre-application work and continues to be undertaken in conjunction with the review of the Master Planning process and the Design Review.

Having previously identified common issues and experiences with the current pre-application service delivery the group has been focusing on developing an updated and improved pre-application process that can be integrated with the Uniform system along with providing feedback on the proposed process to agents, consultees and staff during this PPF reporting period.

A decision on the introduction of a charging structure remains on hold and will be revisited once the outcome of the Planning (Scotland) Bill and any revised fee restructuring has been clarified.

### Goals:

The aim of this project remains to eliminate the variation that exists between teams in Aberdeenshire in the governance and processing of pre-application enquiries by streamlining the process and providing a clear and concise process map; and in doing so, this will provide an improved service to the customer in terms of efficiency, and achieve better outcomes on the ground.

### Outcomes:

During this PPF reporting period, the group has focused on the development of the pre-application process (local development), which integrates with the Uniform system to allow the Service to record enquiries and share information between Services. The group has been working with ICT and other Council Services as the process has been developed and has undertaken a series of demonstrations of the Uniform system to promote roll out of the Uniform consultation module. It is unlikely that all Council Services will have signed up as users of the consultation module by the time that the pre-application process is rolled out, however the group will continue to work with and assist the Services during this next PPF reporting period once they start utilising the Uniform consultation module.

The group has now completed staff and customer guidance, including updates to the website, in conjunction with the introduction of an online enquiry form. Feedback and updates to agents, consultees and staff on this new process has been completed and the group are in the process of finalising the process and website guidance in advance of formal roll out. The process will be monitored post roll out and reviewed during the initial 12-month period.

Work continues with the review of the major application enquiry process, in conjunction with the review of the Master Planning process. From initial review and benchmarking it is envisaged that the general principles agreed under the remit of the local development process can be applied. It is anticipated that this part of the project will be completed during this next PPF reporting period.

### Name of key officer

Chris Ormiston – Team Manager



## Case Study 33.

# Environmental Health/Development Management Operational Improvement Group

### Location and Dates:

Aberdeenshire, September 2019- present

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

- Culture of Continuous Improvement
- Quality of service and engagement

### Key Markers:

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

### Key Areas of Work:

- Development Management processes
- Collaborative working
- Interdisciplinary working
- Process improvement
- Skills sharing

### Stakeholders Involved:

- Authority Planning Staff
- Environmental Health staff

### Overview:

This working group, which consists of 2 DM Planners and 2 Environmental Health Officers led by a Senior Planner and Team Manager, was initially established as a short-term group set up to review existing practices and improve working protocols in order to achieve consistency when consulting and liaising with the Environmental Health Service.

This group began with DM members reviewing current processes in relation to consultation procedures and responses, enforcement, and use of conditions. The key objective at this initial stage was to achieve a better mutual understanding between Services as part of a service improvement project.

As part of this the DM members carried out a benchmarking exercise with other Local Authorities. This involved sending out questionnaire surveys to ascertain how other Planning Authorities liaise with EH in terms of consultation protocols and responses, conditions, complaints and guidance. An internal survey was also passed around DM planning teams to establish key areas which worked well and others which required improvements. The survey was used to assess how our procedures compare with other Councils' approaches and examine opportunities for change through benchmarking.

Following review of the survey findings and regular meetings with EH Officers the [Environmental Health and Planning Services' Liaison Protocol](#) was updated and has been recently finalised in May 2020. Collectively the group felt this was an appropriate starting point to achieve consistency by streamlining and updating processes. As part of this both Services have a useful up to date document to refer to when consulting

and liaising. One example of a key outcome from this is that consultation response forms have been made clearer, and thus this has led to more efficiency throughout the application process.

This process involved collaborative working to ensure the interests of both Services were included, and the processes followed legislation and guidance. It allowed for shared knowledge to deliver a more integrated and improved service.

Having successfully updated and implemented the protocol, the group turned to reviewing model conditions. This is an ongoing task, and to date matters surrounding acoustic fencing, biomass and noise are in the process of being reviewed. This involves working jointly across the Service with the DM Model Conditions Group to ensure any amendments are thoroughly considered.

From the survey results it is apparent that Aberdeenshire Council's Planning and Environment Service work efficiently and collaboratively with Environmental Health at present. While this is recognised, and the initial outcome of achieving a more consistent process has been achieved with the updated protocol, the group identified further opportunities for improvement. This involves preparing guidance notes on the following topics:

- Air quality and biomass
- Amenity v nuisance

The aim of the working group going forward is to draft and implement guidance which shares skills from both Services in relation to these issues to be included in the Planning Service Best Practice Manual. Working together with EH representatives recognises such technical and interdisciplinary issues and allows for agreed practices and shared knowledge. Skype and Team meetings are ongoing, and this working group is not halted by the current Covid-19 restrictions.

Comments from an EH Officer group member on the benefits of this working group states:

*"Environmental Health have found that the working group provides a known contact point for officers to raise queries and issues, with the group then able to provide guidance to enable a consistent approach across Aberdeenshire, in particular in updating the joint protocol and working together to improve and develop model planning conditions. We are hoping that we can build on this early work and form good working relationships between the two Services that will lead to more collaborative working on guidance documents and building consensus around discussion of new issues."*

**Goals:**

The group was set up to analyse existing working practices and identify at the appropriate Officer level potential operational improvements between the DM and EH Services leading to a more consistent approach and a better understanding for working relationships.

**Outcomes:**

The Environmental Health and Planning Services' Liaison Protocol has been updated, which includes consultation and response processes, among other things.

Ongoing improvements include preparing and implementing technical guidance and updating model conditions. For example, a [Good Practice Note for Development Management](#) planners in relation to Pollution Prevention and Control Permits (PPC) was reviewed and agreed by this working group demonstrating a successful working relationship and benefits of sharing skills. This is following collaborative working with consultees including Environmental Health as outlined in the Quality of Service and Engagement Case Study entitled [Collaborative Working to Find Cross - Service and Agency Solutions through Planning Applications Udhny nr Ellon](#)

**Name of key officer**

Jane Weir – Senior Planner



Monymusk



# Case Study 34.

## Historic Asset Survey – Data Management Project

### Location and Dates:

Aberdeenshire Council offices and 500 onsite surveys across Aberdeenshire May 2018 – March 2020

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

- Culture of continuous improvement
- Quality of outcomes

### Key Markers:

- 6 – Continuous improvement
- 12 – Corporate working across-services
- 13 – Sharing good practice

### Key Areas of Work:

- Collaborative Working
- Process Improvement
- Conservation
- Online Systems

### Stakeholders Involved:

- Authority Planning Staff
- Authority Other Staff

### Overview:

The Historic Asset Management Project (HAMP) was set up in 2013 with three main aims:

1. to identify all non-operational historic assets in Council ownership
2. to survey the condition of all assets, and
3. to implement a prioritised programme of repair works based on need.

Just over 500 historic assets were identified, and initial surveys carried out over two summers (2014 and 2015) using a hand-held tablet and the Edina Fieldtrip application.

In 2018, the HAMP Board agreed a programme of quinquennial resurveys, to commence in 2019/20. The Edina Fieldtrip app used for the original 2014/15 surveys was no longer supported, prompting staff to look at alternatives. Furthermore, there were some limitations with data gathered in the first survey, which might now be overcome. The quality of the data was satisfactory, but there were limitations as to how it was stored, how it was to be accessed and how the data could be used for producing reports to assist in delivering individual repairs projects.

The data from the first survey was held in Excel spreadsheets on the Council's network drives, with separate folders for photographs. Accessing this information involved looking up the asset number, then identifying the survey file – based on whether the asset was categorised as a monument, churchyard or building. In order to locate any corresponding photographs, it was necessary to know the date that the survey was taken. There was no single application to find the information relating to each asset in one place. The data could not be viewed holistically and was not GIS linked.

The HAMP Project Board were keen to get more use from the survey data: as well as being able to produce a list of prioritised works and to be able to run reports. The data management project sought to address these objectives, as well as add historic assets as a layer on the Council GIS MapHub, which would then be accessible to other teams.

**Phase 1** of the Project was to explore options for setting up HAMP surveys through the Confirm asset management system already in place within the Council, used by Roads, Landscape & Waste Services and Property & Facilities Management.

**Phase 2** of the project was to carry out HAMP surveys through Confirm (onsite survey using hand-held tablet) over the summer of 2019 by a surveying student employed for 4 months. The surveyor was able to complete the surveys over one summer, rather than two, as required for the first set of surveys. This time saving was largely down to having all the assets accessible on GIS. The surveyor was able to plan site visits using the tablet which guided the surveyor to precise locations. The original surveyors of 2014/15 did not have the benefit of this. The new system effectively halved the amount of time spent carrying out surveys.

**Phase 3** of the project commenced in December 2019 and is on-going as of April



St. John's Church, Gardenstown



2020. It involves the analysis, use and manipulation of data collected by the surveys to produce an updated, prioritised list of projects to inform the management of historic assets for the next 5 years.

### Goals:

The overriding goal of the Project was to design a new survey system on the Council's existing Confirm Asset Management application that would allow easier collation, access, storage and processing of historic asset survey data to inform a programme



of repairs for the Historic Asset Management Project. This involved collaborative working between the HAMP Officer and the Senior Business Systems Officer, meeting the wider goals of corporate working across-services and adopting an approach of continuous improvement.

### Outcomes:

There have been a number of outcomes achieved by this project through collaborative working and seeking continuous improvement in the way HAMP delivers repair projects, which is applicable as best practice for other Local Authorities.

All data from the 500+ historic asset surveys are now on Confirm. This includes all photographs taken in 2019 and links back to the original survey information from 2014. Confirm allows other relevant documents to be stored against each asset, such as management plans relating to that site, title deeds, leases, etc.

The tablet can be used by the Project Officer at any time to update survey information, should a site's condition change, for example, through a wall collapse or damage caused by extreme weather. Therefore, at any one time the Council can get an up to date picture. This was not possible with the data collected in 2014, as the information remained static.

By using the Confirm system to survey assets, the process for surveying assets has become more streamlined, more efficient and more user-friendly. The primary outcome is that all survey data is held in,

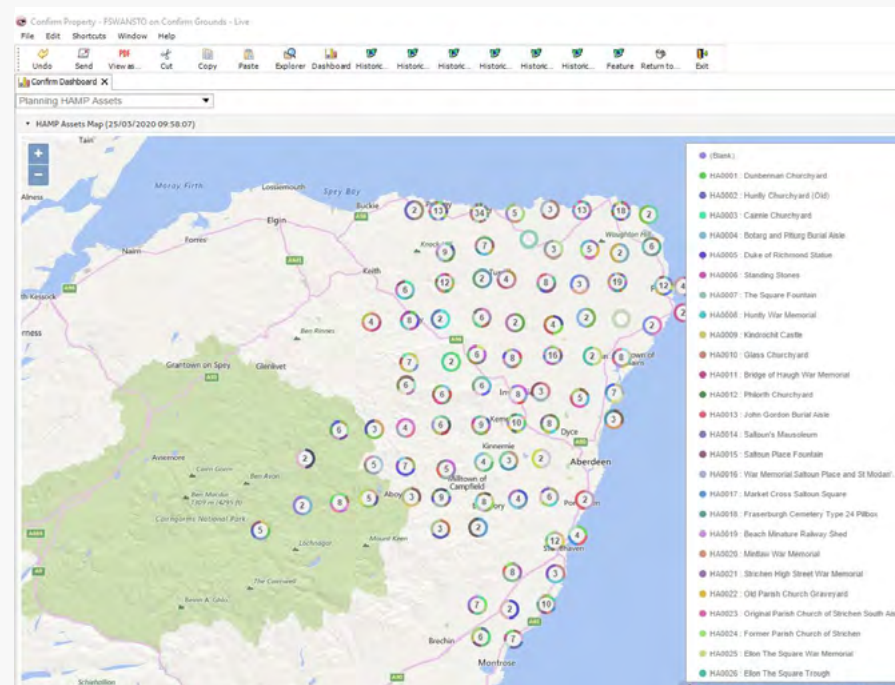
and can be accessed from, one central location. This information is available for Landscape Services and Property to assist in their work planning, e.g. for the management of historic churchyards, where there is significant overlap of responsibilities.

A further outcome is the ability to be able to run specific reports from the survey data: for example, on all historic assets in each Council area, or groups of assets by type e.g. all war memorials, church ruins, monuments, stone circles or fountains.

Follow up work includes using Confirm to automatically create and maintain a historic assets layer on the Council's corporate MapHub GIS, allowing other teams to access this information and check whether particular assets may be affected by developments. This should be in place by June 2020 and maximises collaboratively sharing data with no duplication of effort. The HAMP Project in general has been recognised by HES as a model for good practice in historic asset management and is referred to in the HES Managing Change in the Historic Environment – Asset Management Guidance Note as an exemplar:

[www.historicenvironment.scot/archives-and-research/publications/publication/?publicationId=4b5eb60b-5bfc-414e-af9e-aa24010798b4](http://www.historicenvironment.scot/archives-and-research/publications/publication/?publicationId=4b5eb60b-5bfc-414e-af9e-aa24010798b4)

*"Historic Environment Scotland (HES) very much welcome the proactive approach that Aberdeenshire Council are taking in*



*identifying the non-operational historic assets they own through the Historic Asset Management Project (HAMP). A number of the sites identified from this project are scheduled monuments which are designated sites of national importance, and HES are working closely with Aberdeenshire Council to support the management, conservation and promotion of these historic assets."*

HES, Senior Case worker.

Further information about the HAMP project including the full list of historic assets and repair project case studies can be found at: <https://aberdeenshire.gov.uk/planning/built-heritage/hamp-project/>

### Name of key officer

Frances Swanston – Project Officer  
Andrew Mackenzie – Senior Business Systems Officer

## Case Study 35.

### Tree Preservation Order Review

#### Location and Dates:

Aberdeenshire, from 2014 and throughout 2019–2020

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

- Culture of continuous improvement
- Quality of service & engagement

#### Key Markers:

6 – Continuous improvements: progress ambitious and relevant service improvement commitments identified through PPF report 12 – Corporate working across-services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit

#### Key Areas of Work:

- Environment
- Process Improvement

#### Stakeholders Involved:

- General Public
- Authority Planning Staff

#### Overview:

Since 2014 Environment Planners have been engaged in reviewing all Tree Preservation Orders in place across Aberdeenshire, a project initiated following changes to the Planning Act where a requirement for Local Authorities to review their TPOs was introduced. The TPO review project had two distinct phases: the preparation phase investigated the status of existing Orders,

mapped out all the relevant statutory processes and prepared standard model documents for each stage. The delivery phase reviewed, re-assessed and where appropriate re-served, all existing TPOs. On completion of both phases a rolling programme for review will be prepared.

#### Goals:

The goals of the project were to develop a **consistent** and **efficient** process to ensure all Aberdeenshire's Tree Preservation Orders are **accurate** and **defensible**.

A consistent and efficient process of identifying and assessing valuable and at-risk trees across Aberdeenshire was achieved by creating a standardised and transparent approach for undertaking amenity and expediency assessments, ensuring clear communication between stakeholders and improving the speed of decision-making.

The improvement of the assessment and site survey procedure and the streamlining of the preparation, serving, confirmation and registration processes ensure the accuracy of new Orders, which in turn delivers robust and defensible long-term legal protection.

#### Outcomes:

The project has successfully delivered the following wide range of outcomes which have achieved the main goals of



consistency, efficiency, accuracy and defensibility.

- **A complete set of process maps produced for all stages;** both for handling requests for Orders and all steps in the process for making, serving, confirming and registering Orders and Revocation Orders. These process maps will enable a consistent delivery of new Orders, in terms of selection of appropriate trees; ensuring all relevant steps are undertaken to notify and allow for representation from interested parties; and in the legal process of registration onto title.
- **Legal documentation updated in line with national guidance.** Due to past administrative changes, the portfolio of existing Orders had been made by seven different Councils in at least ten different

formats. Several existing Orders had been in existence for more than 50 years, of which at least a third had been made utilising the out-dated 'area' order format. Revisions to the deed (Order document & associated Schedules) in line with legislative changes mean that all Aberdeenshire Council Orders now have a consistent format which is both accurate and defensible in the long term.

- **Model documents prepared.** In addition to the updated Order document and associated Schedules, a suite of model documents have been drafted to cover all stages in the process. These ensure consistency in serving a TPO, as well as improving the efficiency and accuracy of service delivery. The project highlighted the complexity of administering Orders and showed the necessity of completing all



steps in the process to ensure a TPO can be registered onto title and remain defensible when challenged.

- **All existing TPOs reviewed and assessed.**

A total of 128 existing TPOs were assessed as part of the review project. The TPOs ranged in age and scope, the oldest dating from 1958. Some Orders covered only one tree, others included a large number of woodlands and individual trees. The TPO made to cover trees on the Daviot and Glack Estates relates to 146 individual trees, 5 groupings of trees and 13 areas of woodland.

- **New updated TPOs served, confirmed and registered.**

Review of the existing Orders resulted in some being amalgamated into extended Orders and others reduced or split into multiple more relevant Orders.

- **Revocation Orders served and confirmed.**

Over the course of the project a total of 26 Orders were no longer considered necessary and as a result were revoked. Removal of unnecessary TPOs improves efficiency within the Service, removing the workload involved with administering these Orders.

- **Mapping of all TPOs made available to view online.**

This public facing, easy to navigate, map layer is first and foremost a customer service improvement enabling this information to be continuously available. The mapping service also improves service efficiency and will result in a marked reduction in time spent by Officers handling queries for basic information.

- The final stage of the project will **develop a process of re-assessment and review.**

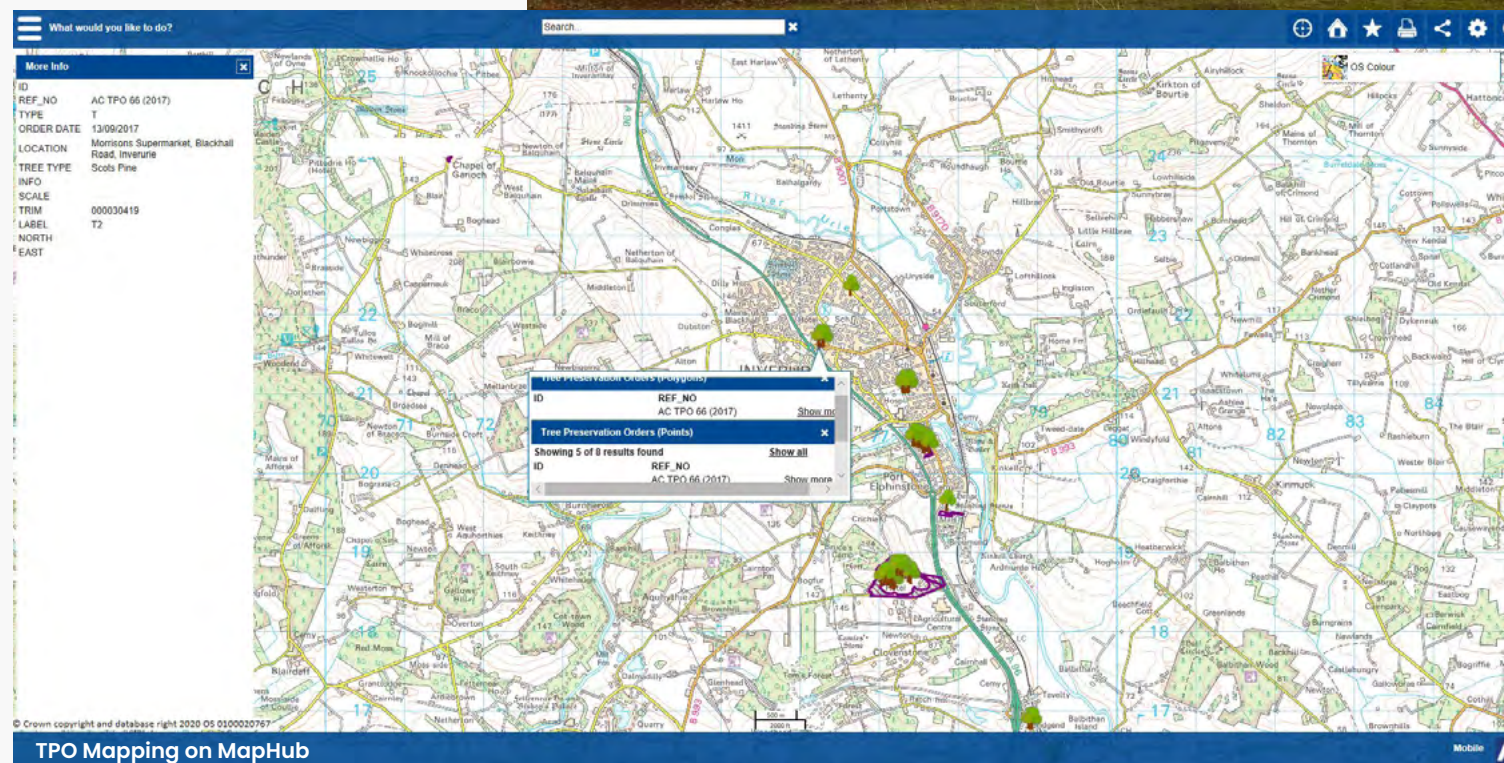
This phased programme is expected to commence in summer 2020 and will continue as an ongoing rolling review, ensuring continued adherence to the project goals.

### Name of key officer

Fiona Chirnside – Environment Planner



TPO at Riverstone Banchory



TPO Mapping on MapHub



# Case Study 36.

## Adapting to Planning Reform in Development Planning

### Location and Dates:

Spring 2019 – ongoing

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

- Culture of continuous improvement
- Quality of outcomes

### Key Markers:

10 – Cross-sector stakeholders engaged early in development plan preparation

### Key Areas of Work:

- Local Development Plan
- Process Improvement

### Stakeholders Involved:

- Hard to reach groups
- Authority Planning Staff

### Overview:

The latest round of [planning reform](#) began in September 2015 with a Bill subsequently being laid in Scottish Parliament in December 2017. This review of the Scottish planning system coincided with initial stages of preparation of a new Local Development Plan for the Aberdeenshire area.

Whilst continuing to work within the existing statutory framework, the Policy Team wished to embrace new ideas coming through the review and emerging legislation. To this end, as part of preparing the [Main Issues Report 2019](#) and [Proposed Local Development](#)

[Plan 2020](#), the Policy Team has sought to undertake:

- A move to review the Local Development Plan every 10 years, as opposed to 5 years. It is likely that an interim review of the Local Development Plan will be undertaken to bring forward the full suite of provisions outlined in the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 and any secondary legislation still to be brought forward.
- Inclusion of ‘the purpose of planning’ within the Proposed Local Development Plan.
- Removal of supplementary guidance.
- Participation of children and young people in the Plan-making process through a Pilot Youth Engagement Project.
- Developing Local Place Plans such as supporting the *Imagine Udney* charrette process lead by the Udney Community Trust.
- Publication of a Draft Proposed Local Development Plan alongside the Main Issues Report to consider how the Proposed LDP might be prepared without the main issues stage.
- Renaming of the Action Programme to Delivery Programme. The content of the Delivery Programme will be amended as such time as Regulations come forward.

### Goals:

By attempting to pre-empt changes coming through the review of planning, it is anticipated that Aberdeenshire Council and customers involved in the Plan-making process, including communities, will be better prepared to adapt as these changes are formally brought forward.

### Outcomes:

Taking opportunities to trial and develop revised and innovative ways of Plan-making will allow for smoother transition to future arrangements. Several of the aspects already brought forward to the Plan-making process in Aberdeenshire are bringing additional benefits such as engagement with schools and more inclusive placemaking at a local level.

### Name of key officer

Ailsa Anderson – Senior Policy Planner

## Case Study 37.

# Development and Function of Icons to Assist the Delivery of Local Development Plan Policy Outcomes

### Location and Dates:

Woodhill House, Aberdeen  
January 2019 to January 2020

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

- Culture of continuous improvement
- Quality of outcomes

### Key Markers:

16 – Continuous improvement  
9 – Elected Members engaged early in development plan preparation

### Key Areas of Work:

- Local Development Plan

### Stakeholders Involved:

- Planning Committee
- Authority Planning Staff

### Overview:

This Case Study provides an insight into the development and function of icons that have been introduced into the [Proposed Local Development Plan 2020](#). The icons have been created with the primary aim to assist with the delivery of policy outcomes.

Application of the policies in the Local Development Plan may not necessarily lead to the achievement of all the goals of the Plan. As such, the Vision of the Plan has a specific

role in assisting Aberdeenshire Council in weighing up potentially conflicting objectives to achieve clearly definable outcomes that accord with those promoted by national and regional strategies.

The icons were developed in accordance with the Vision of the Plan, with the primary aim of providing a stronger connection between the Vision and the policies set out in the Proposed Local Development Plan. Six icons have been produced, each relating to a specific outcome. A general concept for each icon was initially developed, which was progressively refined to ensure a clear and understandable link exists between the purpose of each outcome and the concept the icon represents.

Each policy contained within the Proposed Local Development Plan was then examined, and the relevant icon(s) placed alongside each policy. This ensures that a clear visual reference exists to demonstrate how the policy links with the Vision

### Goals:

The six icons are clearly set out throughout the Plan, and they have been developed to assist the weighing up of different policy outcomes in the delivery of the policy. The icons have also been created to provide guidance in cases where the Vision of the Plan is used to guide the determination of







planning applications where conflicts arise, and one policy cannot be applied at the expense of another.

The icons also provide a useful navigation tool for visually impaired users of the Proposed Local Development Plan. The “alt text” attached to the icons in the policy sections provide a useful reference to the Vision of the Plan, and how the policy relates to it.

### Outcomes:

The icons provide a tool to aid with the delivery of policy outcomes. The development of the icons to reflect the influence that policies have on achieving the Vision was presented as a recommendation in the Issues and Actions Papers which were considered by Elected Members during Autumn 2019. There were no objections from the Area Committees regarding this recommendation.

The Proposed Local Development Plan is to be published for public consultation in May 2020, and any comments received during this period will give an indication of how the addition of the icons has been received. Additionally, once the icons have been used by Development Management Officers, feedback will provide insight into the success of how the icons are used in practice.

Throughout the Plan we use the following symbols to assist the weighing up of the different policy outcomes in the delivery of policy:	
	To promote sustainable mixed communities with the highest standards of design
	To take on the challenges of sustainable development and climate change
	To protect and improve assets and resources
	To increase and diversify the economy
	To promote the creation of green-blue networks within and between settlements
	To make efficient use of the transport network, reduce the need to travel and promote walking, cycling, and public transport

### Policy B1 Town Centre Development

B1.1 We will allow retail and other frequently visited uses only in defined town centres unless a sequential assessment<sup>1</sup> shows that another site is clearly more appropriate. Other uses include office developments, leisure uses, community and cultural facilities and, where appropriate, other public buildings such as libraries and education and healthcare facilities. In the case of office developments, where it can be shown that there is no suitable town centre location, they will normally be accommodated on identified employment and business land

### Name of key officer

Piers Blaxter – Team Leader  
Lisa Crossan – Policy Planner

## Case Study 38.

### Engaging with Evidence

#### Location and Dates:

Aberdeenshire – throughout reporting year and still ongoing

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

- Culture of continuous improvement
- Quality of service and engagement

#### Key Markers:

6 – Continuous improvements  
12 – Corporate working across-services to improve outputs

#### Key Areas of Work:

- Skills Sharing
- Online Systems
- Collaborative Working

#### Stakeholders Involved:

- Authority Planning Staff
- Authority Other Staff

#### Overview:

The Planning Information and Delivery Team (PIDT) believes that reliable, relevant and up to date statistics should be at the heart of the Council's decision-making processes. However, with so much data available it is not always easy or time effective for Officers to determine the most appropriate figures for their purpose. Is this information up to date? Is this source reliable? Is the data relevant to this decision-making process?

To address these questions this project seeks to engage colleagues in the Planning and Environment Service and across the whole organisation with data. Work of the PID Team is being promoted through the implementation of a communication plan and engagement with the relevant stakeholders. The aim is to extend staff knowledge of information sources, to expand their interest in the type of data that is available and to increase their confidence in using data generally.

The Team uses a variety of methods to engage staff and inform the work of the Service. Bulletins and briefing notes are produced regularly, which analyse and give a brief synopsis of some of the main national statistical publications, including areas such as population, households, employment and unemployment statistics. A publication strategy has been developed to try and make sure that as many people as possible are aware of its publications.

In addition, Aberdeenshire Council's internal communication channels, Yammer and Sharepoint, have been utilised for the specific purpose of data engagement. The Team has not only created a library of data publications relevant to Aberdeenshire Council for all staff to access, but also uses Yammer and Sharepoint to provide a space to discuss statistical publications informally, to share ideas and to promote best practice



Buchan House, Peterhead

for data use.

As well as introducing and commenting on information sources, the Team is also concerned with how data is presented. The publication library allows the team to share ideas on data presentation, such as the use of infographics and data mapping. The idea being, the more engaging you can make data the more people will interact with it.

A further channel of communication the Team explored was to hold a data engagement event. Following the publication

of the Registrar General's Annual Review of Demographic Trends 2019, an Officer from National Records of Scotland (NRS) was invited to give a presentation of the main trends revealed in the report, with particular reference to Aberdeenshire and the north east of Scotland. This event was open to anyone working in the public or voluntary sector in the north east of Scotland.



**Goals:**

The project aims to:

- Ensure that a reliable evidence base forms the foundation for all work within the Planning and Environment Service
- Engage stakeholders and interested parties across the department and the Council as a whole with statistics
- Promote the appropriate use and increase understanding and knowledge of data sources

**Outcomes:**

The project is ongoing, however there has already been positive engagement from across the organisation.

The Aberdeenshire Statistics Yammer group has over 70 members from a large range of departments including, amongst others, Housing, Waste Management, Business Development and Community Learning and Development.

The range of publications the Team produces is available on-line and through the Council's intranet. The seminar delivered by the NRS was extremely popular and in the end had to be moved to a larger venue to accommodate all the people interested. Staff from Aberdeenshire Council were joined by Officers from Aberdeen City and the NHS and as such the event also provided networking opportunities. Interest was expressed in the Team organising future events on demographic themes and, though these have obviously had to be put on hold for the time being, this is something which will be pursued in the future. 93% of those surveyed following the event rated its

value as 4 or 5 (on a scale from 1, not at all valuable to 5, very valuable). One participant stated the event *"empower(ed) us to use data more effectively"*.

A toolkit on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation has been made available on-line for all staff to use. This not only highlights the availability of the data set but also provides the individuals with the tools to analyse and present the data themselves. It was hoped that this would be presented in a workshop to teams across the Council but considering Covid-19 an online question and answer session is being explored instead.

**Name of key officer**

Vicky Morris – Sustainability Information & Research Officer  
Paula Argo – Sustainability Information & Research Officer



The Tollbooth, Stonehaven

# Case Study 39.

## Planning Processing Agreements (PPAs) – Update

### Location and Dates:

Aberdeenshire, 2019 – 2020

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

- Culture of continuous improvement
- Quality of service and engagement

### Key Markers:

2 – Project Management  
6 – Continuous improvements

### Key Areas of Work:

- Planning Applications
- Project Management

### Stakeholders Involved:

- Local Developers
- Authority Planning Staff

### Overview:

Following on from work done previously a team was established which continued to review and analyse information pertaining to applications which were subject to a Planning Processing Agreement (PPA) during 2018 – 2019. The use of PPA's within Local Applications was higher than the national average. Aberdeenshire utilised 334 agreements on non-householder local applications in total representing 24% of all non-householders determined. It was acknowledged that, across Aberdeenshire Council, the number of PPA's in use were not necessarily proportionate to the scale,

or complexity of the developments being considered. It was also acknowledged that some PPA's were being entered into at a later stage with the average PPA being entered into at week 6 of the planning process.

This baseline information was then used to devise a working protocol for when staff could reasonably be expected to ask an applicant to enter into a PPA, when in the process a PPA should be entered into, and in what circumstances PPA timescales would reasonably require to be revised. A [summary of the protocol](#) has been provided as a link.

### Goals:

Following the review of the baseline information, the formulation of the protocol and discussion within teams it is anticipated that the number and type of applications subject to a PPA will become more consistent across Aberdeenshire and, in turn, lead to a more consistent approach to using PPA's in order to manage planning applications, and development industry and stakeholder expectations.

Key goals of the protocol are to ensure that Processing Agreements are used at an early stage (and preferably primarily pre-application) for applications where there is likely to be specific governance requirements and/or where unforeseen additional information is required and in

the spirit of a project management approach to more complex applications.

The protocol discourages the use of PPA's where applicants have not provided information which had previously been requested or could have been reasonably anticipated through pre-application engagement. This should result in greater use of the free pre-application enquiry service offered to applicants by the Planning Authority.

### Outcomes:

In terms of outcomes, the protocol has now been agreed and will be implemented alongside the Service's new pre-application process. Data will be available for 2020/2021 and the change in use and timing of PPA's as well as developer feedback will be considered throughout the year with an intention to feed into the PPF in 2021. Key deliverable outcomes will be:

- No Householder application (other than those requiring determination at Committee) will be subject to a PPA and that this will allow for a more focused attention to project management
- Frontloading of PPA with a greater proportion of PPA's agreed at pre-application or within the first four weeks of an application
- 100% of applications determined within agreed PPA timescales

- Review protocol depending on applicant/agent survey feedback for PPA's

### Name of key officer

James Wheater – Senior Planner



# Part 2:

## Supporting Evidence



**Aberdeenshire**  
COUNCIL

[aberdeenshire.gov.uk](http://aberdeenshire.gov.uk)



Portsoy



# Checklist for Part 1: Qualitative Narrative and Case Studies

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

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

- Customer feedback and inputs from various events and engagement exercises
- Testimonials
- Evidence of collaborative partnership working with internal and external bodies and agencies
- Evidence of pre-application and planning application processes and outcomes;
- Direct regeneration and environmental project work and outcomes
- Direct project management and improvement work in on-going LDP work
- Development Management process improvement projects including customer based initiatives
- Direct re-structuring of staff resources
- Linkages to the suite of relevant Council and Service specific documents such as the Council Plan, Infrastructure Services Plan, Customer Surveys and Action Plans, Corporate Initiatives (One Council), Local Development Plan, Regeneration Strategies, Economic Strategies and a range of Committee Reports

## Checklist for Part 1

Case Study Topics	Issue covered by Case Study	Case Study Topics	Issue covered by Case Study
Design	4, 5, 6, 8, 15, 17, 19, 27	Interdisciplinary Working	1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 10, 21, 32, 33
Conservation	4, 5, 6, 9, 11, 15, 20, 24, 34	Collaborative Working	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34, 38
Regeneration	4, 9, 11, 15, 25	Community Engagement	4, 7, 12, 13, 16, 18, 20, 23, 24
Environment	4, 15, 22, 26, 30, 35	Placemaking	4, 8, 16, 18, 27
Greenspace	4	Charrettes	
Town Centres	4, 6, 9, 11, 25	Place Standards	8
Masterplanning	4, 16, 18	Performance Monitoring	1, 2, 30, 32
LDP & Supplementary Guidance	8, 10, 13, 16, 18, 36, 37	Process Improvement	1, 2, 10, 12, 16, 18, 22, 28, 29, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36
Housing Supply	18, 27	Project Management	1, 2, 3, 7, 15, 16, 17, 18, 26, 27, 32, 39
Affordable Housing	18, 31	Skills Sharing	10, 21, 28, 29, 33, 38
Economic Development	19, 20, 25	Staff Training	14, 29
Enforcement		Online Systems	29, 32, 34, 38
Development Management Processes	1, 2, 8, 14, 18, 21, 22, 27, 28, 29, 32, 33	Transport	
Planning Applications	1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 15, 17, 18, 19, 21, 23, 26, 27, 28, 32, 39	Active Travel	
Other: please note			



# Part 3: Service Improvements



**Aberdeenshire**  
COUNCIL

[aberdeenshire.gov.uk](http://aberdeenshire.gov.uk)





# 3A. Development Planning

## Service Improvements 2020 – 21

### Local Development Plan Team

#### In the coming year we will:

- Seek innovative means of engagement (taking account of Covid-19 Pandemic restrictions) as part of the Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (LDP) 2020 consultation. Our consultation methods identified within our Participation Statement will be tested against the principles of SP=EED
- Undertake a review of planning advice required to support the next Local Development Plan and begin the process of preparing these notes for public consultation upon receipt of the Proposed LDP Report of Examination (expected autumn 2021)
- Build upon work undertaken during the Pilot Youth Engagement Project and highlight ways in which young people (primary and secondary pupils) can participate in the Proposed LDP consultation
- Submit the Proposed LDP for Examination following assessment of representations made in respect to the Proposed LDP and subsequent preparation of Schedule 4s



Peterhead Town Centre



# Environment Planning/Specialist Service Improvements 2020 – 21

## In the coming year we will:

- Review and prepare new strategies for the following services – Archaeology, North East of Scotland Biological Records Centre, Rangers, for the period 2021–2024, and prepare the related annual Action Plans for 2021
- Complete implementation of improved process for management of access cases
- Complete implementation of use of CONFIRM asset management software to improve management and monitoring of Council owned/managed paths, bridges and associated infrastructure
- Deliver at least 2 specialist training sessions to Development Management staff and/or Elected Members to help raise awareness of natural and built heritage and access considerations and improve decision-making
- Complete engagement of Development Management staff in the preparation of a Conservation Area Management Plan
- Develop and implement a surgery and consultation protocol between the Environment Team and Development Management Teams to improve response times, quality of the final decision in relation to environment issues and, communication between the Teams
- Provide a training session for staff on new approaches to public and community engagement to maximise use of on-line/virtual resources and social media platforms



Gardenstown Frontage

# Development Management Service Improvements 2020–21

## In the coming year we will:

- **Implement Site Visit Technology** – including development of Virtual Site Visit tools by Development Management Officers for planning applications but also collaborative working with agents and consultees in collation, viewing, and presentation of visual site information. Aim also to provide efficiencies in time and expense for the DM Service and other stakeholders
- **Local and Major Application Pre-application Review – completion and implementation** – includes final full roll out of agreed new processes which are in place and thereafter monitoring including review of customer feedback
- **Review of Masterplan Process – conclusion/implementation** – includes a re-focus of the working group to develop the work undertaken during 2019–20; to undertake further liaison with stakeholders; and to align and refine processes with the agreed new Pre-application processes – in particular in relation to Major Developments
- **Customer Service Excellence Accreditation** – continue to refine the extensive multi-faceted work that has been undertaken during 2019–20 with a view to a final Audit before the end of the 2020–21 reporting year and thereafter achieve Accreditation
- **Assess and further develop projects for new working practices and processes to address the challenges set by the Covid-19 Pandemic** – including reference to wider Council objectives, and any new legislative changes and guidance
- **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
- **E:planning Online Submissions – target 90%** – maintain
- **Percentage timescales within 2 months – all LD planning applications – 75%** – increased
- **Percentage timescales within 2 months – non-householder applications – 65%** – maintain
- **Percentage timescales within 2 months – householder applications – 95%** – maintain
- **Processing Agreements – 100% major applications** – maintain
- **Legal Agreements – average weeks target – 32 weeks** – maintain
- **Legacy applications** – reduce pre-2015 to 0 and overall post 2015 by 50%



# 3B. Delivery of our Improvement Actions Committed in 2018–19 and Delivered in 2019–20

## Development Planning

Committed Improvements and Actions	Complete?
Complete full assessment of comments made to the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2021 Main Issues Report.	Yes
Review comments made on the interim SEA Environmental Report which informed the Main Issues Report and Draft Proposed Local Development Plan to produce a revised Strategic Environmental Assessment.	Yes
Review comments made on the Assessment undertaken under the Habitats Regulations which informed the Main Issues Report and Draft Proposed Local Development Plan to produce a revised Habits Regulations Assessment.	Yes
Undertake formal meetings with Elected Members (Area/ Ward level) to evaluate the Local Development Plan MIR submissions received.	Yes
Prepare the Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2021 and associated documents for consideration by Members of Aberdeenshire Council.	Yes
Publish the Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan for public comment.	No, due to unavoidable delay outwith the control of Aberdeenshire Council this is now scheduled to take place in April 2020.
Start to Review comments made to the Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan in the form of "Schedule 4" statements.	No, due to unavoidable delay outwith the control of Aberdeenshire Council this is now scheduled to take place in between May and December 2020.
Prepare a revised Development Plan Scheme in November 2019 for discussion with local Area Committee Members and approval by Infrastructure Services Committee in January 2020.	Yes, the Development Plan Scheme 2020 was considered by Area Committees in January 2020 and adopted by the Council's Infrastructure Services Committee on 12 March 2020.
Complete meetings as required with key stakeholders.	Yes

# Delivery of our Improvement Actions Committed in 2018–19 and Delivered in 2019–20

## Environment/Specialist Services

Committed Improvements and Actions	Percentage Complete
Review of Tree Preservation Orders: Progress Phase 5, involving surveying and assessing of TPOs. Final completion and review of project.	95%
Complete Natural Heritage Strategy for 2019–2022 and prepare annual Action Plan.	100%
Review and improve process for management of access cases.	25%
Implement use of CONFIRM asset management software to improve management and monitoring of Council owned/managed paths, bridges and associated infrastructure.	50%
Deliver at least 2 specialist training sessions to Development Management staff to help raise awareness of natural and built heritage and access considerations and improve decision-making.	100%
Engage Development Management staff in the preparation of Conservation Area Management Plans.	80%
Review and monitor Development Management surgery and consultation process.	80%
Develop and implement a consultation protocol between the Archaeology Team and Development Management Teams to improve response times, quality of the final decision in relation to archaeology and, communication between the Teams.	100%
Implement use of an online booking system by the Countryside Ranger Service for the publication, booking and collection of feedback on public events to make it more efficient for the Ranger organising the event, and a more customer friendly and efficient system for booking a place on an event.	100%



# Delivery of our Improvement Actions Committed in 2018–19 and Delivered in 2019–20

## Development Management

Committed Improvements and Actions	Complete/Achieved
Implement Site Visit Technology	This remains a commitment but due to wider Council resources/efficiencies and ICT issues this has been taken in a different direction. As a result of Covid-19 Pandemic significant progress has now been made to move towards use of technology for promoting real time Virtual Site Visits and recording and sharing of video information for use by DM staff and other services in the DM process.
Pre-application and Major Application Review – completion and implementation	Partial completion. Majority of aspects of the new pre-app process for Local Developments are in place including customer liaison and feedback, protocols, guidance, website information, forms etc. Some complexities have arisen with consultee input processes and ICT/website finalisation which has delayed the final implementation. Final roll out and implementation of the Local Development Pre-app process is due summer 2020. Thereafter there will be a monitoring period which will also inform forthcoming required work on Major Developments and Masterplanning.
Review of Masterplan Process – conclusion/implementation	Partial completion. A working group was set up and following benchmarking and liaison, identified potential processes and guidance on Masterplan requirements. Complexities have arisen in terms of timescales of process, consultee input, and the best way to fit with the other Pre-application processes in particular Major Development. This remains a continued commitment for 2020–21.
Review Use of Planning Processing Agreements and Finalise Guidance	Complete. The working group and the level of research, evidence and potential recommendations on ways forward have been reviewed. These have been presented and recommendations are finalised. Progress to roll out which includes training for staff, formal implementation and then monitoring will be undertaken during 2020–21.
Customer Service Excellence Accreditation	Partial completion. A considerable amount of complex and multi-faceted work towards this continued throughout the reporting year following, in early 2019, first stage Pre-Audit liaison with the appointed Auditor. A final Audit date was set out for March 2020. However due to a operational reasons that required review this has been postponed. A revised final Audit date is being set for before end of the 2020–21 reporting year.

Committed Improvements and Actions	Complete/Achieved
Average timescales targets - Major applications - 35 weeks	Yes - 23 weeks
Average timescales targets - Local applications - 11 weeks	Yes - 9 weeks
Average timescales targets - Householder applications - 6 weeks	No - 7 weeks
Average timescales targets - Other applications - 8 weeks	Yes - 8 weeks
E:planning Online Submissions - target 90%	No - 87.5% (up by 0.5% on last year). This outwith our control but since Covid-19 generally only accepting online applications - first Quarter for 2020-21 - over 95%
Percentage timescales within 2 months - all LD planning applications - 70%	Yes - 81%
Percentage timescales within 2 months - non-householder applications - 65%	Yes - 74.5%
Percentage timescales within 2 months - householder applications - 95%	No - 91%
Processing Agreements - 100% major applications	No - 73% (100% were offered)
Legal Agreements - average weeks target - 32 weeks	Yes - majors - 32.6 weeks; locals - 14.1 weeks
Legacy applications - reduce pre-2009 to 0 and overall (post 2009) by 50%	Pre-2009 - Yes Overall - No - cleared 34; remaining 39

# Enforcement Service Improvements

## Completed, Committed And New – 2019-20

Task	Update
<b>Completed commitment</b> – Review of Enforcement Decision Report and Consultation proforma with Development Management	The Enforcement Decision Report has been reviewed and updated to ensure consistent and accurate reporting of all aspects of the investigation. This has included formalising a process to undertake consultations with development management and other Services to ensure a timely and accountable response.
<b>Completed Commitment</b> – Benchmarking with adjacent Enforcement Teams	An additional benchmarking day took place in February 2020 and there has been enhanced engagement with the adjacent Local Authorities. This engagement has developed the sharing of best practice and ideas and will be maintained.
<b>Completed Commitment</b> – Identify measurable targets for performance management	In line with increasing the use of Uniform the Enforcement Team aims to identify methods of recording timescales for the closure of non-breach cases. All complainants are responded to with an initial letter within a six week time period. The Enforcement Team aim to close investigations where no breach of Planning Control is identified within an 8 week period and be able to record this easily.
<b>Continued Commitment</b> – Review of Procedure and Best Practice Notes	We will review and update procedure and Best Practice notes to reflect the type of cases that have regularly caused contention to ensure a consistent approach is made. This will include guidance on containers and advertisements. In order to improve engagement and working relationships with various Services of the Council working groups will be set up and procedures formalised. All Enforcement Notices and standard letters are to be reviewed/redrafted to bring them up to date to reflect amendments in the Planning Bill.
<b>Continued Commitment</b> – Enhance tools for gathering evidence	A working group shall be set up for reporting cases via Specialist Reporting Agency Website (SRAWEB) with other Services of the Council (Animal Health, Trading Standards and EH). The group will identify all documents / evidence storage / interview needs and tools required to ensure cases can be reported timeously and ensure consistency in evidence gathering by Officers. It is expected that an initial meeting will take place once current Covid-19 restrictions allow. A list of documents and tools required has been formulated and these are being sourced with new procedures to be produced for their use to ensure cases can be reported timeously and ensure consistency in evidence gathering by Officers. The use of body worn cameras is currently being investigated both in terms of Officer protection and for accurately collecting and preserving evidence on site to allow for later review. The use of drones is something that has yet to be explored which will be particularly useful for large scale developments or sites that would prove difficult to evaluate on foot. This will be further developed in the next reporting period.





Task	Update
<b>Continued Commitment</b> – Develop Relations with the Procurator Fiscal Office – Collaboration and Liaison	Linked to the commitment above for gathering evidence, Officers have registered to become users of the COPFS reporting system and have undertaken test cases. In order to improve the ability for reporting cases, a process map, example application and checklist for enclosures shall be produced. Training event for the team will be scheduled once current Covid-19 restrictions allow closer contact.
<b>Continued Commitment</b> – Develop use of Uniform System for Enforcement Team	The number of Standard Letters within Uniform has increased with further developments to enhance the usability of the interactive Enforcement Decision Report being brought forward in the next reporting period. Further performance indicators to be introduced to enhance the monitoring of officer workload, highlight problem areas and inform measures to improve ways of working.
<b>New Commitment</b> – Develop the Planning Enforcement Content on Councils Website	Building on the current Enforcement Policy and Guidance on the Council's website, a series of guidance notes for frequently raised issues in Enforcement is in progress. Guidance on agricultural drainage, biomass, and home working are now complete. Pending guidance includes storage containers and advertisements. The guidance is to be published in early course. The website content is proposed to be developed further improving the customer experience. As an example of this and in order to improve the reporting function for breaches, work is underway to allow for photographs to be uploaded and attached to the interactive complaint form.
<b>New Commitment</b> – Produce process map for direct action	Building on the work undertaken on the High hedges process map, work is underway to develop a process map for direct action which identifies the internal procedures for Officers to follow when a formal Enforcement Notice has not been complied with. This will cover the procedures and process that requires to be in place both prior to and on the day of direct action being instigated.
<b>New Commitment</b> – Data sharing with external agencies	Work is underway to produce a data sharing protocol with external agencies such as SEPA, Grampian Valuation Joint Board and Police Scotland to improve intelligence where the information is often essential not only to prove a breach exists but also to assist the investigation process.
<b>New commitment</b> – Monitoring of Conditions on major developments	To work collaboratively with Colleagues in Development Management to monitor compliance with planning permission for major developments. It is anticipated that measures will be put in place following relevant guidance from Scottish Government (expected Q1 2021)

# Part 4:

## National Headline Indicators (NHI)



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Skene



# 4A. NHI Key Outcomes

## Development Planning

Development Planning	2019-20	2018-19
Local and Strategic Development Planning		
Age of local/strategic development plan(s) at end of reporting period <i>Requirement: less than 5 years</i>	35 months	23 months
Will the local/strategic development plan(s) be replaced by their 5th anniversary according to the current development plan scheme?	Yes	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 2019 development plan scheme indicated that the Proposed LDP would be submitted for examination in September 2020. Due to delay in publishing the Report of Examination on the Aberdeen City and Shire Proposed Strategic Development Plan, we now anticipate submitting the Proposed LDP for examination in December 2020.	No
Were development plan scheme engagement/consultation commitments met during the year?	Yes - all commitments were met, however, due to delay in publishing the Report of Examination on the Aberdeen City and Shire Proposed Strategic Development Plan, publication and consultation on the Proposed LDP has been delayed and will now fall into the 2020/21 period.	Yes



Key Outcomes	2018-19		2019-20		
Effective Land Supply and Delivery of Outputs	AHMA	RHMA	AHMA	RHMA	Notes
Established Housing Land Supply	33,789 units	12,845 units	32,708 units	12,702 units	Note 1
5 Year Effective Housing Land Supply (units)	12,142 units	3,597 units	10,816 units	3,507 units	Note 1
5 Year Effective Land Supply Total Capacity	30,737 units	6,705 units	28,236 units	6,670 units	Note 1
5 Year Housing Supply Target	7,509 units	3,206 units	7,509 units	3,206 units	Note 1
5 Year Effective Land Supply	8.1 years	5.6 years	7.2 years	5.5 years	Note 1
Housing Approvals	2,309 units		3,219 units		Note 2
Housing Completions in last 5yrs	5,695 units		5,611 units		Note 3
Marketable Employment Land Supply	307 ha		281 ha		Note 4
Employment take-up during reporting year	15.1 ha		3.39 ha		Note 4

**Note 1**

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

There is currently 7.2 years' worth of effective housing land in the Aberdeen HMA, demonstrating the generous supply provided by allocations in the Strategic Development Plan and Local Development Plan. Despite the more challenging market situation resulting from difficulties in the oil and gas sector, sites in Aberdeenshire are continuing to progress, albeit at a slower rate.

In the Rural HMA there is 5.5 years' worth of effective housing land. The extent of the effective supply in the Rural HMA is primarily limited by low demand in parts of the area which affects the number of units that can reasonably be expected to come forward within 5 years. As a result, only a limited amount of the total land available appears in the five year supply.

Source: Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Housing Land Audit 2019. Figures correct as at 1 January 2019.

**Note 2**

The number of housing approvals in Aberdeenshire has increased by 39.4% since

2018/19, largely due to the approval of several large sites which are allocated in the Local Development Plan.

Source: Uniform Housing Approvals April 2019 – March 2020.

**Note 3**

There were 1,094 housing completions in Aberdeenshire in 2019. Over the last 5 years 53.6% of units built in Aberdeenshire were in the Aberdeen HMA, 45.5% in the Rural HMA and <1% in the Aberdeenshire part of the Cairngorms National Park.

Source: Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Housing Land Audit 2019. Figures correct as at 1 January 2019.

**Note 4**

The marketable employment land supply in Aberdeenshire has decreased by 9% as a number of sites have been built out or are under construction and others have moved into the constrained supply. The supply of marketable land in Aberdeenshire remains generous with a wide selection of sites readily available.

Take-up of employment land over the year was 3.39 ha, a decrease from the previous years.

Source: Employment Land Audit 2018/19. Figures correct as at 1 April 2019.

# 4B. NHI Key Outcomes

## Development Management

Development Management	2019-20	2018-19
<b>Project Planning</b>		
Percentage and number of applications subject to pre-application advice	397 – 18%	339 – 14 %
Percentage and number of major applications subject to processing agreement	8 – 73%	14 – 78%
<b>Decision-Making</b>		
Application approval rate	94.3%	94%
Delegation rate	92.5%	91.4%
Validation	25%	24%
<b>Decision-Making Timescales (weeks)</b>		
Major Developments	23.1	35.3
Local developments (non-householder)	9.3	9.2
Householder developments	7.3	7.1
<b>Legacy Cases</b>		
Number cleared during reporting period	34*	47
Number remaining	39**	35

\*29 had PPAs in place, 23 of these were issued within the required timescale.

\*\*25 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 case

studies set out throughout this Planning Performance Framework document. In particular reference should be made to the Case Studies 1, 2 and 28, relating to Aberdeenshire Council Performance on Local and Major Developments (Quality of Outcomes) and Aberdeenshire Legacy Case Team (Governance).



# 4C. NHI Key Outcomes

## Enforcement Activity

**The figures demonstrate that the number of complaints has dropped by 19% in the current period as compare to the number reported in 2018–2019. This is consistent with the slight decline in the number of planning applications received during the period. This should also be attributed to**

**the additional information on the Council web pages informing the public of matters that Planning Enforcement can and cannot investigate alongside the screening out of potential developments that are permitted developments.**

Enforcement	2019–20	2018–19
Time since enforcement charter published / reviewed Requirement: review every 2 years	N/A	June 2019
Complaints lodged	380	467
Breaches identified	193	*
Cases closed	332	462
Notices served	20	13
Direct Action	0	0
Reports to Procurator Fiscal	0	0
Prosecutions	0	0

\* not available

In terms of responding to complaints further information is being sought from complainants by way of photographs and/or video evidence which not only assists with speeding up the screening of the complaints to eliminate those cases that are not planning breaches but also will assist the investigation process. Out of the total complaints lodged (380), a total of 323 of these were taken up and of those cases 60% were recorded as breaches. This indicates a moderately high incidence of breaches in the cases investigated which again emphasises the effectiveness of the screening process in identifying breaches from the outset. The focus for the next reporting period is to close off non breaches as soon as possible to ensure that Officer workload is focused on the investigating those cases where there is a breach evident.

The number of cases closed has dropped significantly by 29% from 462 in the previous year to 332. This as a percentage against the cases lodged is 87% as compared to 98% from the previous period which indicates that whilst there is a drop in the number of cases taken up, that of those cases, a larger proportion remain open. This suggests a higher incidence of breaches

in this period that are taking a longer time period to resolve due to complexity of the cases. The number of formal notices served has increased by 35% as compared to the previous year. It is expected that this pattern will continue as we are increasingly using formal action to resolve long standing matters where the subject of the complaint is non cooperative. No prosecutions have been pursued. This is mainly due to the fact that there have not been any cases that warranted such action and the fact that such action does not resolve the breach. Work is in progress (as detailed within the priorities for Enforcement) to ensure that Planning Enforcement are appropriately resourced to take action should the need arise to report cases in future.



# Part 5:

## Scottish Government Official Statistics



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Catterline



# 5A. Official Statistics

## Decision-making timescales

Timescales	2019-20	2019-20	2018-19
<b>Overall</b>			
<b>Major developments</b>	3	23.1 weeks	35.3 weeks
<b>Local developments (non-householder)</b>	864	9.3 weeks	9.2 weeks
• Local: less than 2 months	74.5%	7.3 weeks	7.3 weeks
• Local: more than 2 months	25.5%	15.3 weeks	17.8 weeks
<b>Householder developments</b>	665	7.3 weeks	7.1 weeks
• Local: less than 2 months	91%	6.8 weeks	6.8 weeks
• Local: more than 2 months	9%	12.3 weeks	12.9 weeks
<b>Decision-Making</b>			
<b>Major</b>	2	28.5 weeks	57.8 weeks
<b>Local housing developments</b>	330	9.8 weeks	10.4 weeks
• Local: less than 2 months	67.9%	7.6 weeks	7.5 weeks
• Local: more than 2 months	32.1%	14.6 weeks	18.8 weeks
<b>Business and Industry</b>			
<b>Major</b>	0	-	16.7 weeks
<b>Local business and industry developments</b>	95	9.3 weeks	7.9 weeks
• Local: less than 2 months	72.6%	7.3 weeks	7.2 weeks
• Local: more than 2 months	27.4%	14.5 weeks	13.3 weeks
<b>EIA Developments</b>	1	37.7 weeks	-
<b>Other Consents</b>	240	8.1 weeks	7.2 weeks
• Listed Building/Conservation Area Consents	105	9.1 weeks	8.3 weeks
• Advertisements	80	7.9 weeks	6.7 weeks
• Hazardous Substances Consents	0	-	11 weeks
• Other Consents and Certificates	55	6.3 weeks	6.1 weeks
<b>Planning/legal agreements</b>	43	14.5	-
• Major: average time	1	32.6 weeks	57.8 weeks
• Local: average time	42	14.1 weeks	15.7 weeks



# 5B. Official Statistics

## Decision-making: local reviews and appeals

		Original decision upheld			
		2019-20		2018-19	
Type	Total number of decisions	No.	%	No.	%
Local reviews	37	25	67.6%	25	86%
Appeals to Scottish Ministers	15	7	46.7%	16	67%





# 5C. Official Statistics

## Context

In relation to these figures and performance generally, the reasons, factors and influences for any increase or decrease are embodied in the Case Studies and general commentaries set out in the Planning Performance Framework document. In relation specifically to the number of appeals considered through Local Reviews there has been an increase of cases by 8 from those reported in 2018–19. Notably there has also been a 19.4% decrease in the percentage number of those Local Review cases where the original officer decision was upheld. The number of appeals to the Scottish Government has decreased by 9.



Haddo Country Park



# Part 6:

## Workforce Information



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Torphins



# Workforce Information

	Tier 1 Chief Executive	Tier 2 Director	Tier 3 Head of Service	Tier 4 Manager
Relating to the Planning and Environment Service which sits within the Infrastructure Services Directorate	1	1	1	11.8 (Planning Managers/Team Managers and Team Leaders)

Staff Age Profile	Headcount
Under 30	12
30-39	28
40-49	34
50 and over	50

RTPI Chartered Staff	Headcount
Chartered staff	49

NB. Collated information relates to the entire Planning and Environment Service which also now includes the E:planning and Embedded Administration Teams. In comparison to last year, the figures also include the removal of staff in the Building Standards Service who moved to be within the management of the Housing Service.



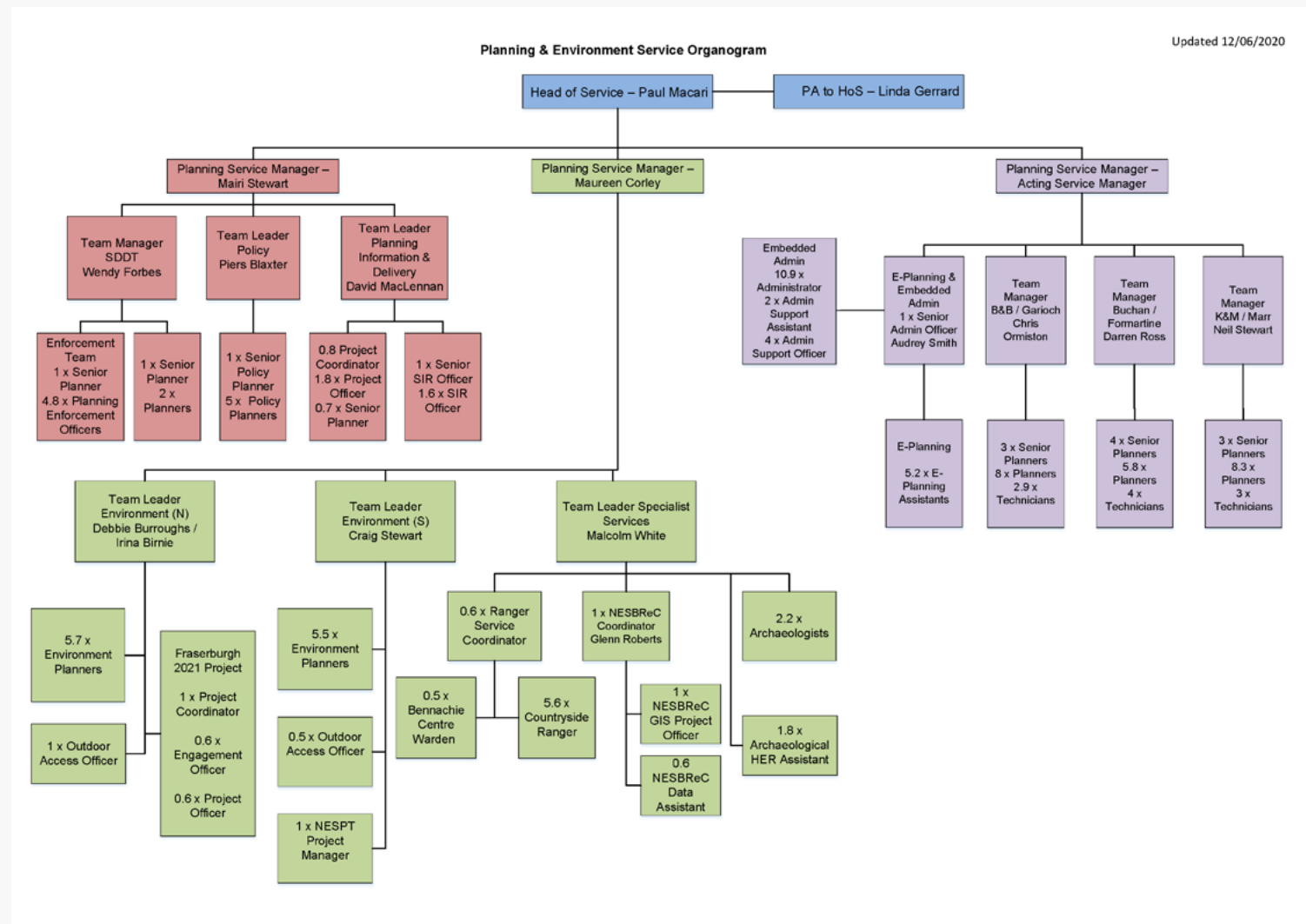
Laurencekirk Train Station

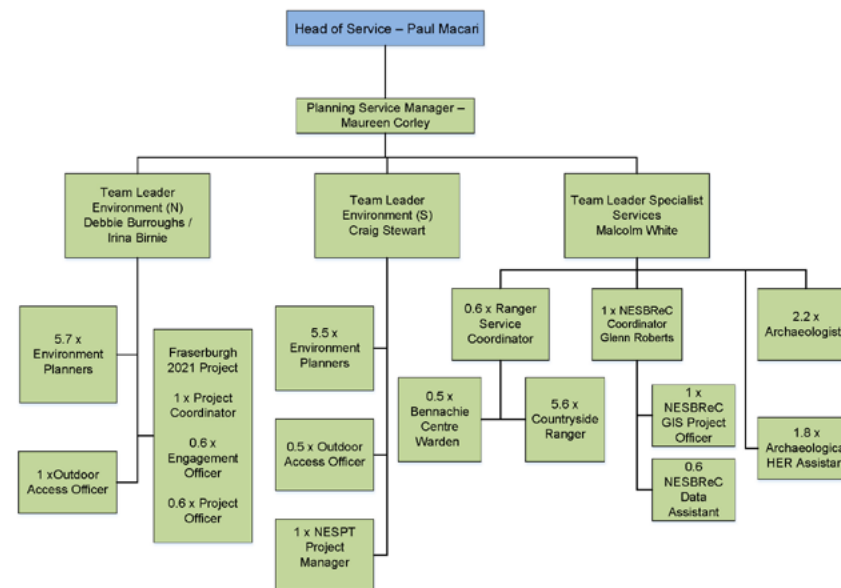
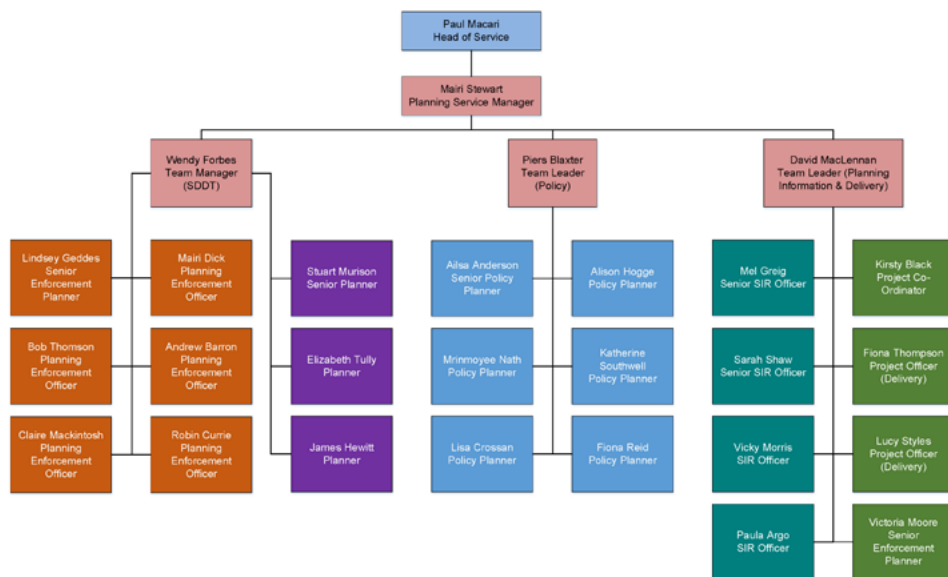


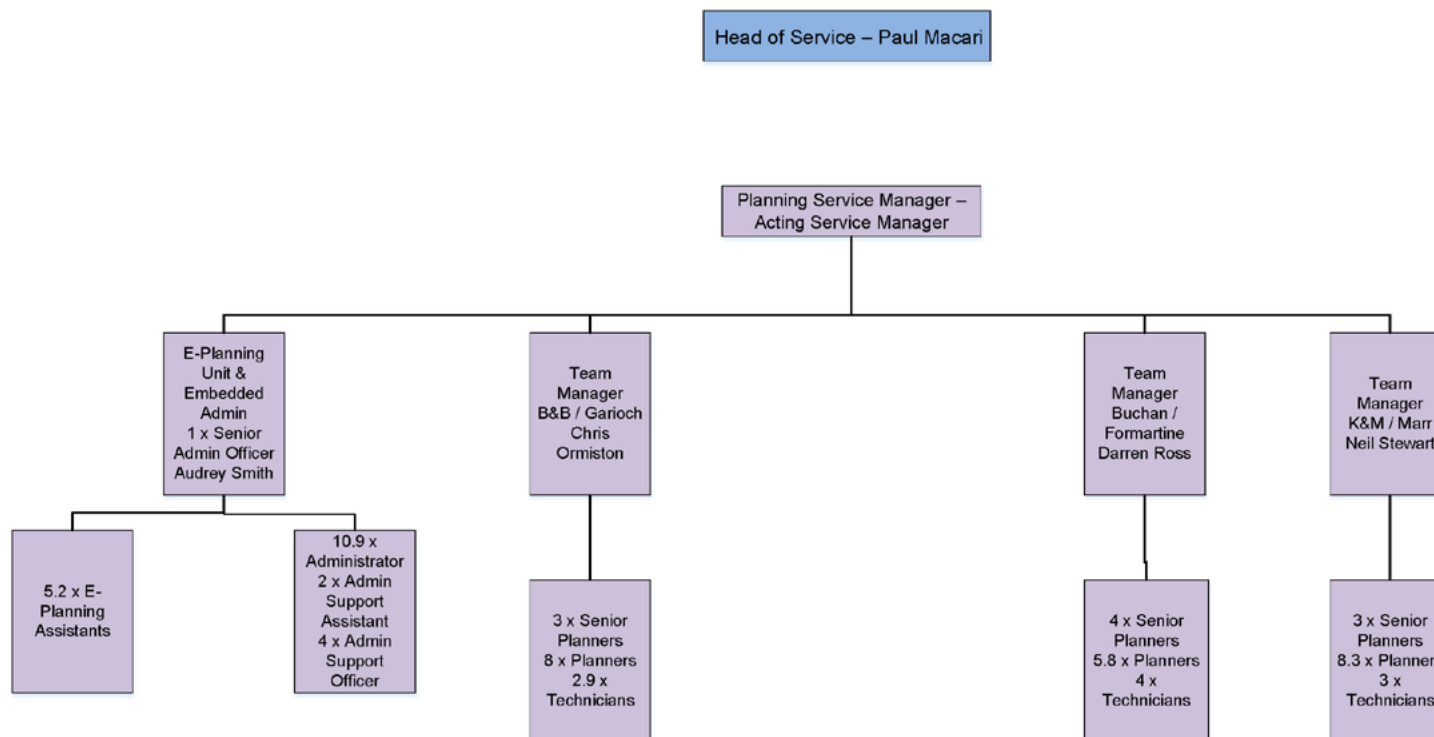
# Organogram

The staffing structure is as per the Organogram. This covers the Planning and Environment Service and all its constituent parts working under the Director of Infrastructure Services and the Head of Planning and Environment.

NB. This now includes the Embedded Administration Team which has been formed during this reporting year. It also excludes the Building Standards Service which was moved into the Housing Service.









# Part 7:

## Planning Committee Information



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Gardenstown



# Planning Committee Information

Committee & Site Visits	Number per Year
Full Council Meetings*	7
Infrastructure Services Committee**	7
Area Committees***	82
Committee Site Visits****	16
Pre-Determination Hearings (PDH)	0
Local Review Body (LRB)*****	12
LRB Site Visits	6

\*Aberdeenshire's Full Council considers a limited number of planning applications in line with its Scheme of Governance. In the reporting year 6 planning applications were reported to and decided by Full Council.

\*\*Aberdeenshire Council have 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 10 planning applications were reported to and decided by this Committee.

\*\*\*Aberdeenshire Council has 6 Area Committees. These deal with area business, including the majority of planning applications that are required to be reported to Committee under the Scheme of Governance.

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

\*\*\*\*\*This relates to the number of meetings of the LRB. The numbers of applications that were reported to the LRB are reported in Part 5B of this PPF but number 37.

# Part 8:

## Feedback from Customers



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Fraserburgh



# Feedback from Customers

## Complaints & Service Requests

This additional section provides information about the number and type of feedback requests the Planning and Environment Service has received over the reporting year. It also provides information about timescales for responding with the majority responded to within prescribed periods. It should be noted that the number of frontline complaints (38) decreased from 2018-19 (66). The number of Service Requests has also decreased (273) from 2018-19 (290).

The timescales for response in percentage terms are exactly the same as recorded in 2018-19.

In addition, during the reporting period, there were 3 complainants who took their cases to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO).

It is considered that on the basis of the number of a planning applications dealt with and the number of workstreams and projects delivered by the Planning and Environment Service, the information provided continues to demonstrate a high level of service to our customers.

	2019/20	2018/19
Complaints	38	66
Service Request	272	290
Compliments	30	99

Complaint Response Times	Responded to Within 20 Days	Responded to Outwith 20 Days
2019/20	34 (88%)	4 (12%)
2018/19	56 (88%)	8 (12%)



# Feedback from Customers

## Compliments

### Selection of Compliments

*"Just a quick thank you to you and your team for the tremendous work in keeping applications moving forward and communications at this very difficult time."*

– sent to Development Management Team

*"Thank you so much for putting all that together for all the Strachans from USA, Canada and Australia."*

– sent to Council Archaeologist

*"Thanks to you and X for a speedy response to my concerns about the road section of The Gordon Way. Three weeks on and I am well on the way to recovery. It was just an unfortunate accident but the uncut verge was the cause. When Councils come in for so much criticism it was really refreshing and a delight to get such positive feedback. As a member of Ramblers Scotland and with an interest in access, I would like to share X response with our Access Officer."*

– sent to Environment Planner.

*"Delighted to receive the planning permission on Friday – many thanks for such an efficient service"* – sent to Development Management Planner.

*"I attended the Garioch Area Committee meeting last week, as I often do, to hear the report and discussion around our proposed development. I was particularly impressed by the verbal report that the Senior Planner gave to Committee members, it was comprehensive, well presented and addressed all of the issues in a way that was clearly understood by the Elected Members. The development is one of our smallest projects but nevertheless it is relatively complicated with concerns on flood risk and technical difficulties around the roads design."*

*The Agent and I appreciate the proactive approach that has been taken throughout the consideration of this application, regardless of the eventual outcome. The agent suggested that we write to acknowledge that effort and I am happy to do so. Too often developers have reason to criticise the performance of the Planning Service and that performance is put down to a lack of resources but in this instance I am pleased to say that the experience has been positive."*

– sent to Senior Planner in Development Management



Slains Castle Nr. Cruden Bay



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