

PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK: 2013-14

FEEDBACK REPORT: **Comhairle nan Eilean Siar**

Date performance report due: 30 September 2014

Date of receipt of report: 30 September 2014

National Headline Indicators

- Your Local Development Plan (LDP) is relatively new and we note that your LDP remains on track with your development plan scheme. We were pleased to read that you have launched an interactive version of your Local Development Plan. Your next LDP should be project managed to remain on course for adoption within the statutory 5-year timescale.
- You offer pre-application advice and actively promote pre-application discussion for all developments. Your pre-application engagement has increased, with over half of all applications in the past year subject to some degree of pre-application discussion. It was not clear whether you also provide formal written advice.
- You had one major development in the past year, this was an EIA application and a processing agreement was not entered into. We note, however, that you have delivered your service improvement to pilot processing agreements for selected large or complex local applications and a case study is provided. We also note that your service improvements for 2014/15 include a review of your pilot approach and your intention to make advice and templates available on your website. We look forward to more detail on this in your next report.
- You have reduced the average decision making timescales for local (non-householder) developments. Timescales for householder developments have reduced slightly and are very close to the national average. We also note that you have taken steps to tackle legacy cases, although it would have been useful to include detail on the number outstanding. You report that numbers have increased due to specific circumstances surrounding Ministry of Defence objections and detail steps being taken to work in conjunction with them to better understand the issues arising in order to improve pre-application advice and consequent developer certainty.
- Your approval rate, already very high, has risen further to 98.4% and remains substantially higher than the Scottish average. Future reports would benefit from some commentary to explain the reasons behind this performance.
- Your enforcement charter is up to date and you should ensure that updates continue to happen within the required 2-year cycle.

Defining and measuring a high-quality planning service

- You again demonstrate a range of customer-focused activities, delivered in a manner that is welcoming and which indicates that you have an Open for Business approach. You continue to offer pre-application advice and promote pre-application discussion in relation to all developments. You continue to offer customers the opportunity to talk, by telephone or face to face, to a planning officer.

- You work with both internal and external consultees and have introduced a protocol for internal consultees that provides information on the appropriate detail required in responses and the timescale for providing consultation responses. We look forward to further detail on your working relationships, particularly with developers and how you ensure that information requests are clear and proportionate.
- We are pleased to see that you are continuing to work collaboratively with the Ministry of Defence to try to resolve issues arising from the pressure for wind energy development and the Ministry of Defence's priorities.
- We welcome your continuous promotion of good design through your policies and Design Guide and with planning officers attending the 'Drawing Places' workshop and field visits run by the Scottish Government and Prince's Foundation. We were pleased to hear about the Outer Hebrides Design Awards 2014 with the winners being part of an on-line resource which promotes good design in the Outer Hebrides to your customers and to read the case studies provided in respect of high quality development on the ground.
- Your report again lacked detail on how expectations for clear and proportionate developer contributions are set out through pre-application discussions and we would like to see this in your next report.
- You have reviewed and updated your customer survey and results for the past two years are available online. Results show very positive feedback on your service provision. While you report that "Any improvements required as a result of customer feedback are to be implemented on an ongoing basis", it would have been useful to include some of the issues raised by customers and the actions or improvements undertaken to address them.
- We note that you are continuing your commitment to customer focused engagement with local developers and agents through quarterly electronic updates and annual meetings with the aquaculture industry.
- It would be useful if you could provide more detail on how collaborative working and feedback gathering has helped to identify issues and any improvements that have resulted.
- You continue to review and update management structures and internal processes to monitor workloads and ensure effective service delivery and you have successfully piloted a service agreement with Orkney Islands Council relating to the provision of conservation advice; this is proving to be an effective use of resource for both Authorities.
- You are committed to staff development and training and encourage staff input into business development and service improvement. It would be useful to include information on any training for Elected Members.
- We are again encouraged to note that you are sharing ideas and good practice with other authorities through attendance at a range of forums including development plan and HOPS forums. It would be useful to see more detail of the benchmarking that has occurred and examples of good practice shared.

Service improvements 2013-14: delivery

- You have delivered the majority of the service improvements identified in your previous report, with one action ongoing.
- You have provided detail on the outcomes of reviews you have undertaken and on the future benefits and uses of these outcomes.

Service improvement commitments 2014-15

- You have committed to a good range of activities that should help contribute towards continuing improvements in processes, performance and positive customer service.

Conclusion

- Your report once again demonstrates your commitment to pre-application engagement, delivering high quality design and the continuing improvements to your processes and services.
- The further reductions in the timescales taken to determine local (non-householder) developments are welcomed as are your moves towards the introduction of processing agreements and internal protocols. We look forward to hearing about the progress you have made in other areas, especially in relation to the increased number of legacy cases, in your next report.

The feedback in this report is based solely on the information provided within your Planning Performance Framework Report covering the period April 2013 to March 2014.

If you need to clarify any aspect of the report please contact us on 0131 244 7148 or email Chief.Planner@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Please note that Planning Performance Framework Reports covering the period April 2014 to March 2015 are due to be submitted to the Scottish Government by 31 July 2015.

PERFORMANCE MARKERS REPORT 2013-14

Name of planning authority: **Comhairle nan Eilean Siar**

The High Level Group on Performance agreed a set of performance markers. We have assessed your report against those markers to give an indication of priority areas for improvement action. The high level group will monitor and evaluate how the key markers have been reported and the value which they have added.

The Red, Amber, Green ratings are based on the evidence provided within the PPF reports. Where no information or insufficient evidence has been provided, a 'red' marking has been allocated.

No.	Performance Marker	RAG rating	Comments
1	Decision-making: continuous reduction of average timescales for all development categories [Q1 - Q4]	Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major Developments There were no major developments last year and one this year. Timescale for this application was 44.9 weeks which is better than the national average of 53.8 weeks. RAG = Green Local (Non-Householder) Developments Average timescales have improved since last year going from 11.3 weeks to 10.5 weeks. This remains better than the national average of 14.3 weeks. RAG=Green Householder Developments Average timescales have improved since last year from 8.2 weeks to 7.8 weeks. However, this remains worse than the national average of 7.7 weeks. RAG=Amber <p>TOTAL RAG = Green</p>
2	Processing agreements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> offer to all prospective applicants for major development planning applications; and availability publicised on website 	Amber	<p>One major development received during the reporting period; no evidence that processing agreement was offered.</p> <p>A pilot of a processing agreement project management tool was adopted in relation to a planning application for a large development.</p> <p>The approach used will be reviewed and arrangements made to have advice and templates available on the website.</p>

3	<p>Early collaboration with applicants and consultees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • availability and promotion of pre-application discussions for all prospective applications; and • clear and proportionate requests for supporting information 	Green	<p>Pre-application advice is offered and actively promoted for all application types.</p> <p>Good evidence provided of multi-agency working, especially in relation to pre-application discussions for renewable energy and marine fish farm applications.</p> <p>Updated Planning Service Charter defines the standards for pre-application discussion, representations and reviews. The next report could include some more details of how requests for supporting information are proportionate.</p>
4	<p>Legal agreements: conclude (or reconsider) applications after resolving to grant permission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reducing number of live applications more than 6 months after resolution to grant (from last reporting period) 	Green	<p>One major application subject to legal agreement compared to none in the previous period. Timescale is better than national average.</p> <p>Authority have been proactively pursuing to finalise legal agreements for windfarm applications in short timescales.</p>
5	<p>Enforcement charter updated / re-published within last 2 years</p>	Green	<p>Enforcement charter up to date.</p>
6	<p>Continuous improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • progress/improvement in relation to PPF National Headline Indicators; and • progress ambitious and relevant service improvement commitments identified through PPF report 	Green	<p>LDP up to date. Development plan scheme on track.</p> <p>Small improvements on decision-making timescales, all better or very close to national averages.</p> <p>Shows very good progress in delivering 2013/14 service improvement commitments.</p>
7	<p>Local development plan less than 5 years since adoption</p>	Green	<p>LDP was adopted in November 2012.</p>
8	<p>Development plan scheme – next LDP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • on course for adoption within 5 years of current plan(s) adoption; and • project planned and expected to be delivered to planned timescale 	Green	<p>Development plan scheme on track. LDP adopted in November 2012.</p>

9	Elected members engaged early (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation – <i>if plan has been at pre-MIR stage during reporting year</i>	N/A	
10	Cross sector stakeholders* engaged early (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation – <i>if plan has been at pre-MIR stage during reporting year</i> <i>*including industry, agencies and Scottish Government</i>	N/A	
11	Regular and proportionate policy advice produced on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> information required to support applications; and expected developer contributions 	Amber	<p>Regular and proportionate policy advice produced on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> information required to support applications; Up to date LDP provides clear indication of requirements. There is collaborative working in place aimed at identifying information requirements for renewable energy and fish farm applications. RAG = Green expected developer contributions Report does not provide detail of how developer contributions are used. RAG = Amber <p>TOTAL RAG = Amber</p>
12	Corporate working across services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit (for example: protocols; joined-up services; single contact arrangements; joint pre-application advice)	Amber	<p>Good evidence provided of corporate working to contribute to regeneration.</p> <p>Examples given of the relationship between the planning service and corporate services and approaches.</p> <p>Protocol for internal consultees has been introduced.</p> <p>Details of multi-agency pre-application meetings provided.</p> <p>Service improvement commitment identified for 2014/15 for joint working with Ministry of Defence in relation to pre-application.</p>
13	Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge between authorities	Green	<p>Report outlines joint forums and HOPS events for the sharing of ideas and exchange of good practice.</p> <p>Example given of joint training initiative with other planning authorities and key agencies and sharing good practice through design awards.</p>

14	<p>Stalled sites / legacy cases: conclusion or withdrawal of old planning applications and reducing number of live applications more than one year old</p>	Amber	<p>System developed and practices altered to tackle legacy cases. However, additional legacy cases have been created due to specific circumstances. Future reports should include the number of legacy cases removed in the reporting period and the number that remain.</p>
15	<p>Developer contributions: clear and proportionate expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set out in development plan (and/or emerging plan); and • in pre-application discussions 	Amber	<p>Developer contributions: clear and proportionate expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set out in the development plan (and/or emerging plan); • in pre-application discussions <p>Reference to specific policies within LDP and supplementary guidance relating to a range of developments.</p> <p>RAG = Green</p> <p>Case study provided but does not provide detail as to the type and level of developer contribution. Updated Planning Service Charter defines the standards for pre-application discussion, representations and reviews. The report should include more detail of how proportionate and clear requests for supporting information are achieved at the pre-application stage.</p> <p>RAG = Amber</p> <p>TOTAL RAG = Amber</p>