

Planning Performance

Annual Report

2013-2014

Contents

Background

Development Planning

- Development Plan Schemes**

- Development Plan Pre-MIR Engagement**

- Housing Land**

- Employment Land**

- Developer Contributions**

Development Management

- Decision Making Timescales**

- Pre-Application Discussion**

- Regular and Proportionate Policy Advice**

- Processing Agreements**

- Applications Determined**

- Decision Making Timescales by Application type**

- Decision Making Processes**

 - Delegation**

 - Committees and Local Review Bodies**

 - Approval Rates**

 - Legacy/Stalled Sites**

 - Legal Agreements**

- Enforcement**

Corporate working

ePlanning

Continuous Improvement and Sharing Good Practice

Staffing / Workforce

Conclusion

Appendix 1 - Strategic Development Plan Authorities

Appendix 2 - Key Agencies

Appendix 3 – Performance Markers

The infographics contained within this report were produced using

Infogr.am

Background

A strong, well-functioning planning service is vital for the long term, sustainable economic growth of Scotland.

Since 2011/12 planning authorities, strategic development plan authorities and Key Agencies have all completed an annual report based on the template devised by Heads of Planning Scotland. This framework provides authorities with a vehicle to set out their achievements over the year and their commitments to improve in the following year. This is the third year of submission and this year, for the first time, we have produced additional appendices to this report showing SDPA (appendix 1) and Key Agency (appendix 2) performance – these have been kept separate as some of the performance markers do not cover areas within their remit. **The information contained in this report reflects not only what authorities have told us but the feedback they have received from the Scottish Government on their performance against the 15 Performance Markers established by the High Level Group on Planning Performance.** A copy of these markers can be found at appendix 3.

The reporting period ran from 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014 and the feedback was provided to authorities in two parts, qualitative feedback on the reports and a 'red, amber, green' (RAG) rating against the 15 Performance Markers. For the purpose of the reports the following criteria is applied to each rating:

RED - Where no information or insufficient evidence to meet the markers has been provided, a 'red' marking is allocated.

AMBER - An amber marking shows that some evidence has been provided and that work is ongoing in the area, with further improvements needed; or that there is a commitment to move this work forward.

GREEN - Green signifies that an authority is meeting the requirements of the marker on all levels.

This year has seen an overall improvement by authorities across all the key markers with the number of red markings halving this year. The number of amber ratings have remained static whilst there has been a marked improvement in the number of authorities who received green ratings. This is encouraging, although it is still a concern to see that some individual authorities are struggling to deliver continuous improvement in key areas. Certainly within the decision making category this lack of progress in some authorities is impacting considerably on the wider Scottish averages for decision making timescales.

Development Planning

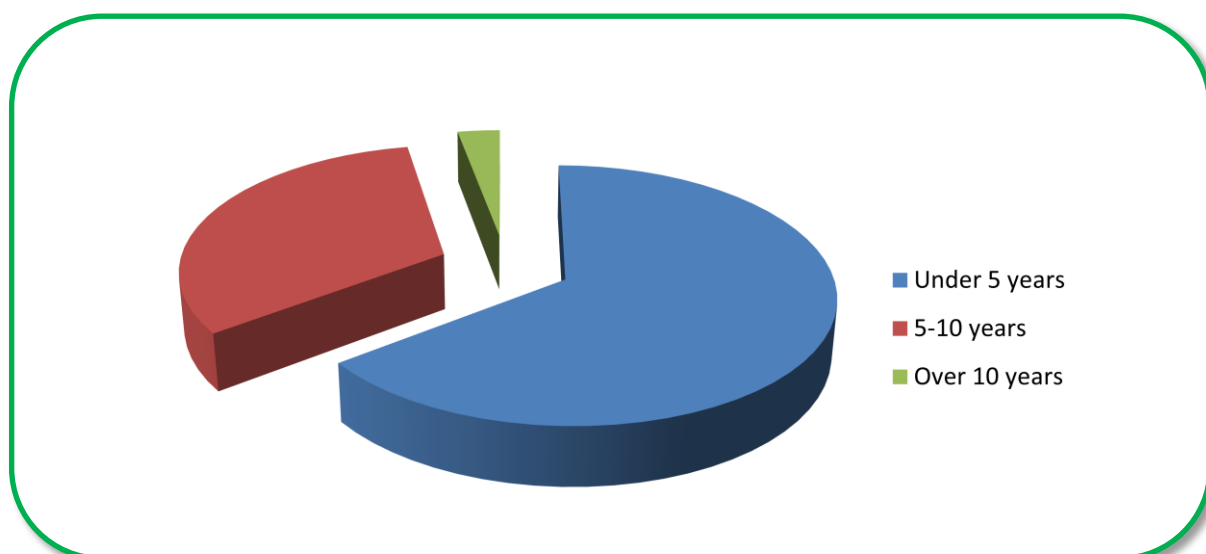
We aspire to a plan-led system; the primacy of the plan is reflected in our legislation. Development Plans are the basis for decision making and it is important that they are up-to-date, relate to the people and places they cover and enable the right development in the right place.

2014 was a significant year for development planning in Scotland with the publication of the third National Planning Framework and a complete refresh of Scottish Planning Policy. These documents provide an important basis for development plans, with implications for both their content and process.

When NPF3 and SPP were considered in Parliament, MSPs from across political parties referred to the importance of development plans being up-to-date. Development plans need to be succinct, map based and focussed on delivery. They also need to be up-to-date and this report reflects on that aspect.

In April 2004, Making Development Plans Deliver stated that there were 131 adopted local plans covering Scotland and around 70% of those were older than 5 years and 20% were over 15 years old. The average age of plan was just under 10 years. Moving on 10 years to 2014, 75% of all plans are less than 5 years old and none are more than 15 years old. The average age of local development plans (LDPs) is 3.5 years and the average age of all plans (including Strategic Development Plans (SDPs)) is 3.17 years.

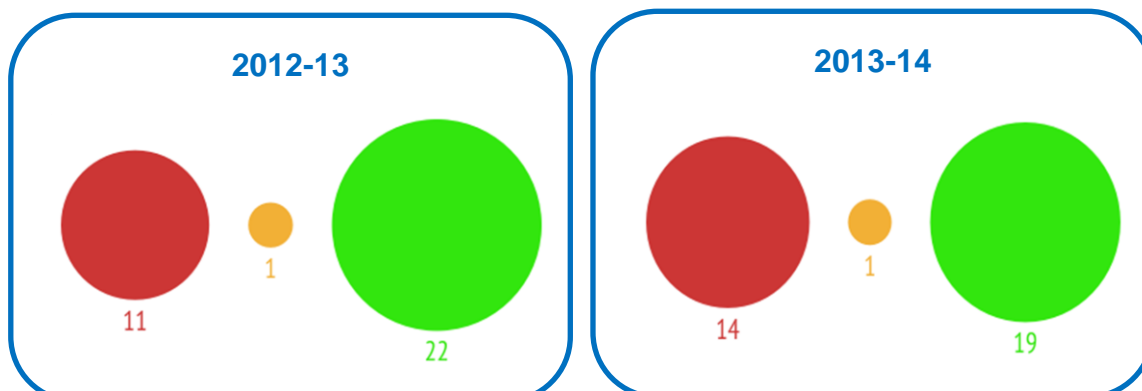
Age of Local Development Plans as at 31 March 2014



The table below showing performance marker 7 indicates that there was an increase in the number of authorities who have an out-of-date plan within the reporting period. It is however important to note that since the end of the reporting period a number of further plans have been adopted, including the replacement of a number of plans of significant age so we expect the average age of LDPs in Scotland to continue to improve.

Performance Marker 7

LDP less than 5 years since adoption.

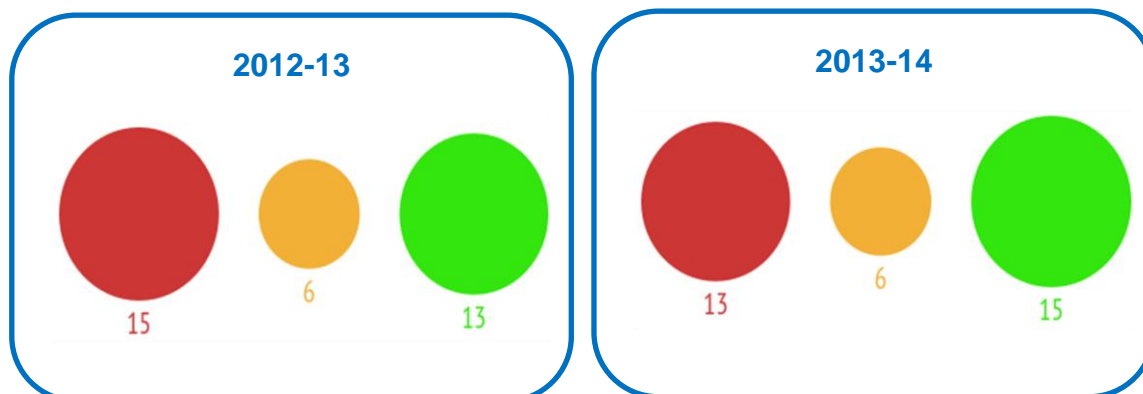


Development Plan Schemes

Performance Marker 8

Development plan scheme – next LDP:

- on course for adoption within 5 years of current plan(s) adoption; and
- project planned and expected to be delivered to planned timescale



Development Plan Schemes are vital to ensure that the development plan process is project managed and provides the public with a description of how the Plan is progressing. Strong and effective project management is crucial to maintaining an up-to-date development plan. This year saw a slight increase in the number of LDPs that were on track for adoption within 5 years of the current plan, increasing from 13 last year to 15 this year. Of those that were shown as 'red' last year, 3 are now green and 1 is amber. 2 authorities who were green previously have seen slippage which has taken them to an amber rating and a further 2 have slipped from amber to red.

We consider it of high importance that plans are carefully project managed to completion and the focus on delivery is reflected in action programmes and their monitoring. Whilst timescales provide a readily comparable indicator of performance, we will continue to work with planning authorities to improve wider aspects of performance in development planning.

Local Development Plan pre-MIR Engagement

It can be quite difficult to draw any meaningful Scotland wide conclusions from the markers on engagement with elected members and stakeholders during the consideration of their Main Issues Reports, because each year authorities are at different stages and many are not going through this particular stage of the plan. This year saw 7 authorities report on engagement and whilst last year elected member engagement was quite poorly evidenced, this year 5 of the 7 authorities who reported on this marker received a green. 4 of these authorities also reported last year and 3 have subsequently seen their marking move from a red to a green.

7 authorities reported on the stakeholder engagement marker, with 6 out of 7 receiving a green. 5 of these authorities also reported last year with 4 sustaining their green marking. One authority remained at amber.

Housing Land

The provision of new housing remains a priority for government. Maintaining a supply of land which is free from constraints, developable and in sustainable locations is vital to enable the creation of well-designed good quality homes. Scottish Planning Policy requires authorities to maintain at least 5 years effective housing land supply (EHLS) to allow for the delivery of the Scottish Government's projected housing needs across all types of housing.

The PPF national headline indicator on 'Effective Land Supply and Delivery of Outputs' requires authorities to provide the number of years effective housing land supply they consider they have, and the number of units this would generate. The figures contained in this report represent a summary of the overall figures provided to us by authorities. Work is underway to define this indicator further to ensure that the information provided is consistent across Scotland.

Four authorities have not supplied any information on their length of effective housing land supply whilst a further 4 have less than the required 5 years. This leaves 26 authorities with what they consider to be 5+ years EHLS. The average number of years of EHLS in Scotland is 7.3 years.

The latest available figures from the reports estimate that the EHLS available in Scotland would generate 183,500 units/homes. These figures provided by authorities are based on their most recent Housing Land Audits which may have been completed in previous years.

We appreciate that the effectiveness of housing land is an area/can be an area of disagreement between parties and we are looking to promote a more consistent understanding of effectiveness.

In 2013/14 there were 116 major and 5,673 local housing applications decided in Scotland, this was a 53% and 3.5% increase respectively on the previous year. The number of housing approvals also increased, with an estimated 34,200 residential units approved, an increase of over 1,000 units on the previous year.

Employment Land

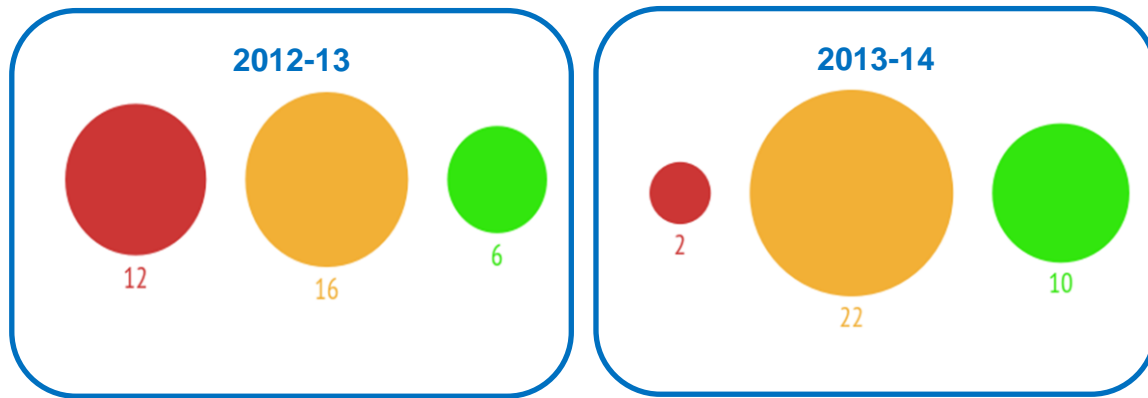
This national headline indicator asks authorities to provide information on how much marketable land meets business requirements, has a secure planning status and can be currently serviced or is serviceable within 5 years. 32 authorities were able to provide information on employment land this year, and when comparing authorities able to provide figures across both years employment land has decreased slightly in 2013/14 by 92 hectares (0.2%). Many authorities were unable to provide information on the uptake of employment land this year and because 4 of these provided information for 2012/13 but not this year, the figures are not comparable. However when figures are compared across those authorities who are able to provide figures for both years, the uptake of employment land across Scotland has more than doubled in 2013/14.

Developer Contributions

Performance Marker 15

Developer contributions: clear and proportionate expectations

- set out in development plan (and/or emerging plan); and
- in pre-application discussions



Through development plan policy and supplementary guidance planning authorities should aim to ensure that clear, transparent advice on likely levels of developer contributions is provided. The level or type of developer contributions required for certain developments should be clear to applicants and other stakeholders. Setting expectations out at the pre-application stage can help ensure that legal agreements can be concluded swiftly once authorities are minded to grant approval.

As with the previous markers there has been a significant improvement in authorities provision of advice in relation to developer contributions. There is some cross-over with performance marker 11 (Regular and Proportionate Policy Advice).

Those authorities which have been given a green rating demonstrated that they have clear policies set out in their development plan or supplementary guidance. Expected contributions are also set out clearly and early in the process during pre-application discussions. Examples and case studies were often used to demonstrate how policies and approaches are applied in practice and the outcomes.

Amber ratings were generally given where authorities failed to accurately explain or provide examples of how their policies were applied in a proportionate way.

The two red ratings are given due to the lack of guidance available and evidence provided.

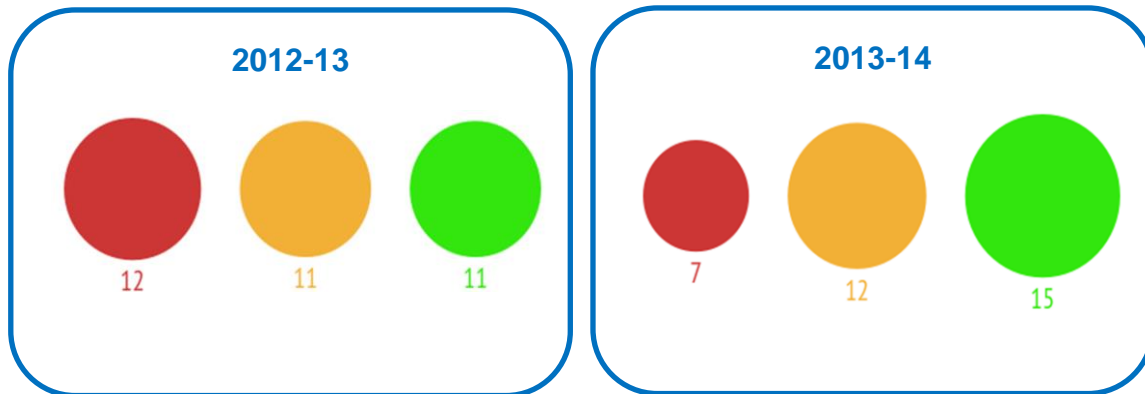
In relation to this marker authorities are reminded of the [10 suggested good practice points](#) published by the Scottish Government in 2013.

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

Decision making timescales

Performance Marker 1

Decision-making: continuous reduction of average timescales for all development categories [Q1 - Q4]



The awarding of the RAG rating in this particular marker is based on a number of factors. The ratings given are based on the performance of each authority on Major, Local (non-householder) and Householder applications, whether performance had improved or worsened since the previous year and whether the timescales were above or below the Scottish average.

This year saw an improvement in decision making timescales by a higher proportion of planning authorities. 80% of authorities are now either an amber or a green with only 7 authorities being given a red for decision making timescales. This overall improvement and reduction in decision making timescales over the year is encouraging, however performance remains extremely variable across Scotland and also across development types. Whilst decisions on local development are being made relatively quickly, work remains to be done on major development timescales which continue to cause concern.

In a number of authorities work is on-going to reduce legacy cases which have been in the system for a number of years. These cases continue to have a significant adverse impact on timescales and performance. Whilst we expect timescales to reduce as legacy cases are withdrawn or decided by authorities we remain concerned at the number of pre-August 2009 cases which remain in the system and would urge authorities to clear these as soon as practicably possible. In considering the markers, performance was assessed on all applications (including pre-2009 cases) in the Householder, Local and Major applications categories found within the NHIs.

Only 7 authorities are showing a red for decision making timescales, an improvement from last year's 12. 14 authorities improved from their marking last year moving from red to amber (4), amber to green (5) and red to green (5). 6 authorities who were given 'green' markings last year have fallen back to either an amber (4) or a red (2), whilst 2 authorities went from amber to red – albeit a number of these were down to authorities taking legacy cases back to committee for consideration.

3 authorities showed no improvement and remained at red. 7 authorities remained at either a green or amber marker.

In terms of decision making timescales the table below shows the shortest and longest average timescales for decision making across authorities.

Average decision making timescales 2013/14 (all applications)

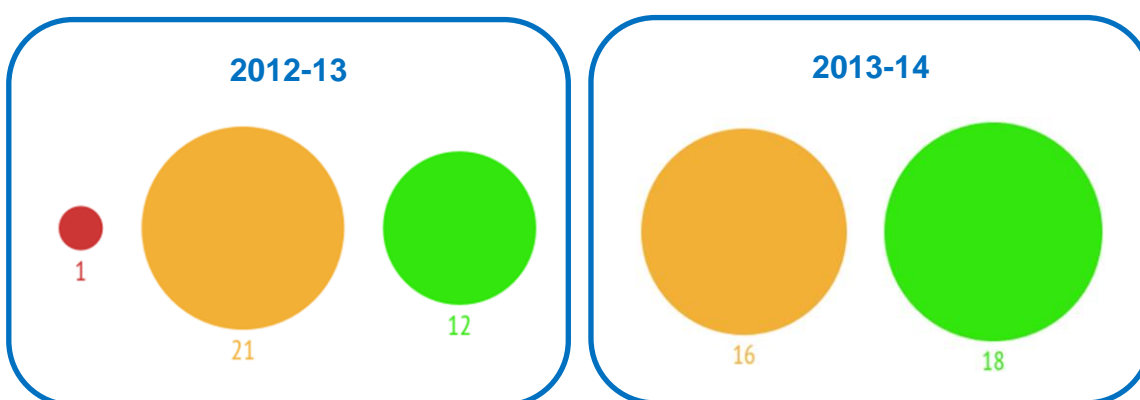
	Shortest Avg.	Longest Avg.	Scotland Avg.
Householder	5.7 weeks	10 weeks	7.7 weeks
Local (non-HH)	6.8 weeks	26.8 weeks	14.3 weeks
Major	7.3 weeks	251 weeks	53.8 weeks

Pre-application Discussion

Performance Marker 3

Early collaboration with applicants and consultees

- availability and promotion of pre-application discussions for all prospective applications; and
- clear and proportionate requests for supporting information



This marker relates to the availability of pre-application discussions and clear and proportionate requests for supporting information. This year has seen an improvement in how authorities have evidenced this particular marker and the percentage of pre-application discussion reported has also increased. Last year there was one authority at red, with a further 21 at amber and 12 at green. This year there are no red markings.

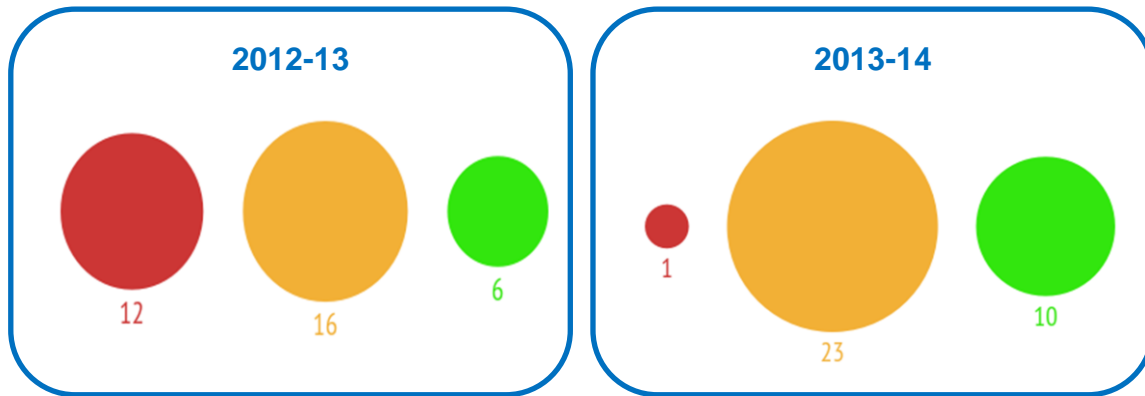
Certainty is often cited as a key component of efficient and effective working between authority, developer and stakeholders. Having a clear understanding of what is required to be submitted early in the process is vital as is an understanding of each other's role in the process. All authorities now enter into pre-application discussion for major developments. Whilst they may not always be needed for smaller developments there will be a number that will benefit from early engagement and understanding of what will be required of them. Looking across the individual reports only one authority was unable to provide any figures.

Regular and proportionate policy advice

Performance Marker 11

Regular and proportionate policy advice produced on:

- information required to support applications; and
- expected developer contributions



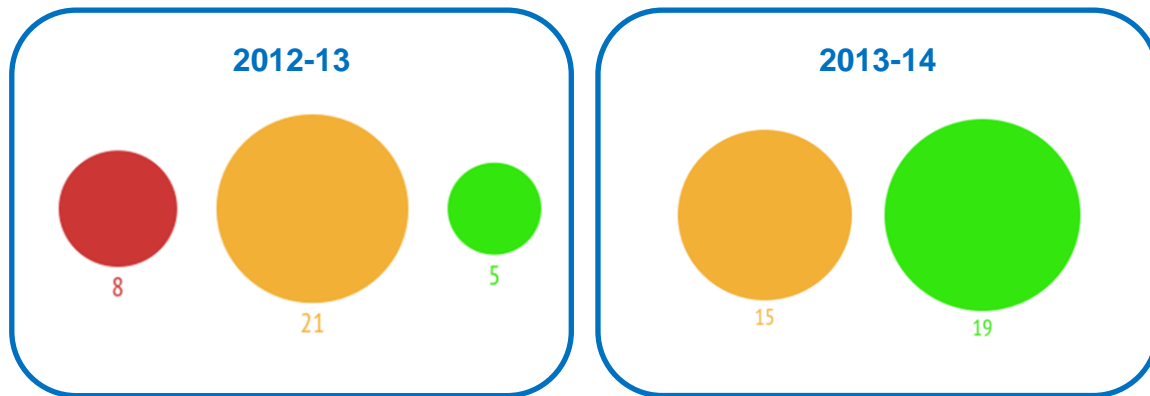
This marker requires authorities to provide evidence of the proportionality of the information they request to support the processing of applications and development contributions. This marker is split between supporting information and developer contributions so an authority could be awarded a green in one area but a red in another so the overall marking becomes an amber. The marker also cross references a couple of the others which look for clarity and certainty about supplementary planning guidance and developer contributions – both of which are vital for authorities and developers to understand what is expected of certain application types. It is encouraging to see that this marker has improved with only one authority attributed a red rating compared with nine last year. The number of amber and green ratings has also improved from 16 amber and 6 green to 23 and 10 respectively, although some authorities are still struggling to evidence the work they have put into these areas. Those authorities awarded a green marking provided strong evidence of a systematic approach to pre-application discussions, supporting information and expected developer contributions, including case studies and links to guidance. Amber markings were awarded for a variety of reasons, often it was due to a lack of evidence as to how the supporting information requirements or developer contributions were proportionate.

Processing Agreements

Performance Marker 2

Processing agreements:

- offer to all prospective applicants for major development planning applications; and
- availability publicised on website



This performance marker relates to the use and promotion of processing agreements for both major and complex or significant local developments. This year saw a further improvement in the number of authorities offering and promoting processing agreements. All authorities are now committed to their use for major developments and some authorities are also utilising them for significant or complex local applications. Official statistics show that the number of authorities using processing agreements has risen from 9 in 2012/13 to 15 in 2013/14.

We have seen the number of red ratings improve from 8 down to 0. The number of amber ratings has also dropped from 21 to 15 while green ratings have improved significantly from 5 to 19.

The improvement is also reflected in the actual number of processing agreements used. The number of major applications subject to a processing agreement has risen from 40 in 2012/13 to 64 in 2013/14. There has also been an improvement in the number of agreements which have been dealt with within agreed timescales, rising from 81.8% to 82.4%. However, the number of processing agreements being used is still relatively small when compared to the total number of major applications. Only 19% of major developments were subject to a processing agreement.

Proposal of application notices are identified by a number of authorities as the way in which they promote processing agreements to applicants. The majority of authorities promote their availability on their websites.

A number of authorities have indicated that they do proactively offer processing agreements however, applicant uptake has been poor. It is recommended that authorities investigate the reasons why applicants are reluctant to sign up to processing agreements and possibly discuss their experiences and possible actions with their benchmarking partners.

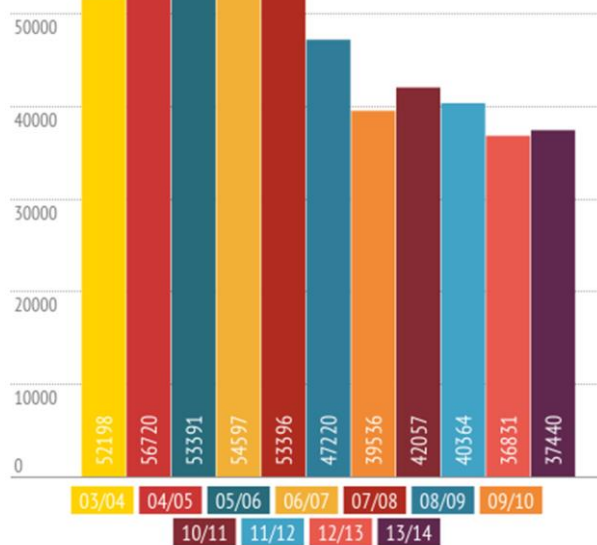
The Scottish Government undertook a project to identify authorities and applicants experiences of processing agreements. A summary of the findings was shared with Heads of Planning Scotland in November 2014. The findings will be published on our website in February 2015.

Applications Determined

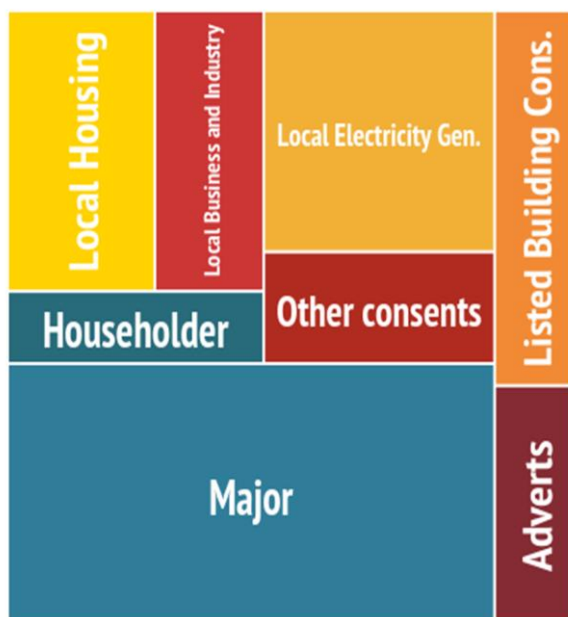
The information in this section is based on the annual planning performance statistics that were published in July 2014. A full breakdown of this information and the accompanying statistical bulletin can be found at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Planning/Publications>

No. of applications determined in Scotland



Decision making timescales by application type 2013/14



Decision Making Processes

Delegation

Delegation rates across Scotland have increased again this year, rising to 92.6% of all decisions being made at officer level. It is understandable that this has increased given that a number of Schemes of Delegation have been amended to take into account legislative changes made last year which allowed for greater delegation for certain types of developments. It still remains the case however that a high level of delegation does not automatically equate to quicker decision times on applications.

The highest delegation rate in Scotland was 96.6% and the lowest 81.9%.

Committees and Local Review Bodies

Authorities were asked to provide information on the set up of their committees, the number of times they convene and arrangements for local review bodies and site visits. 32 authorities provided this information and the results demonstrate no correlation between delegation levels and the number of committees that sit.

During the year 748 planning related committee meetings were held, 172 of these were full council meetings. 26 authorities took planning applications to full council committees at least once in the last year, 4 more authorities than last year.

Planning committees met a total of 422 times. Area committees met a total of 154 times, although the number of authorities that have area committees appears to have reduced by 1 to 6. Across these committees, 303 site visits were undertaken, 54 less than last year. Although not conclusive we could draw the conclusion that the increase in frequency of both planning and area committee meetings may have led to the improvement in decision making times. Local review bodies convened 279 times, undertaking 139 site visits, 45 more site visits than last year.

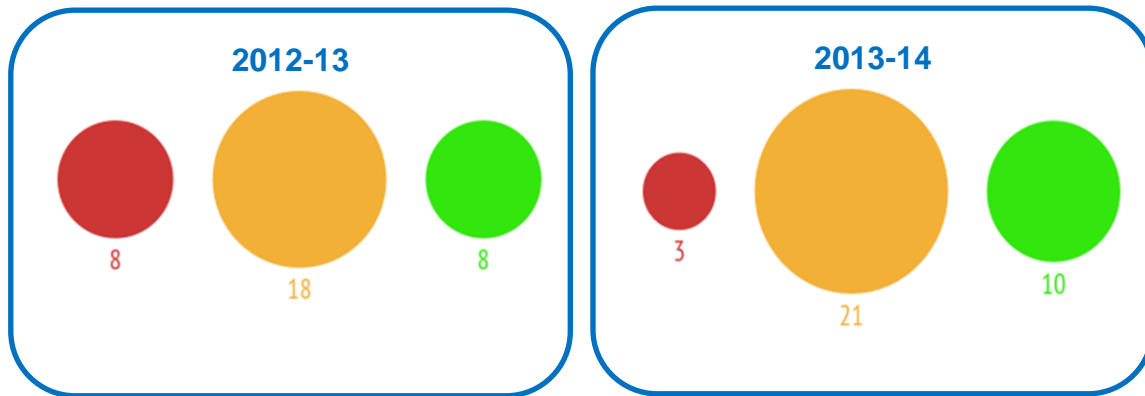
Approval Rates

Approval rates remain at their highest in 10 years with 94.1% of all applications being granted permission. 10 authorities have seen their approval rate lower -although some of these are very slight. The highest approval rate in Scotland remains at 98.4%. Only four authorities in Scotland had an approval rate less than 90%.

Legacy cases

Performance Marker 14

Stalled sites / legacy cases: conclusion or withdrawal of old planning applications and reducing number of live applications more than one year

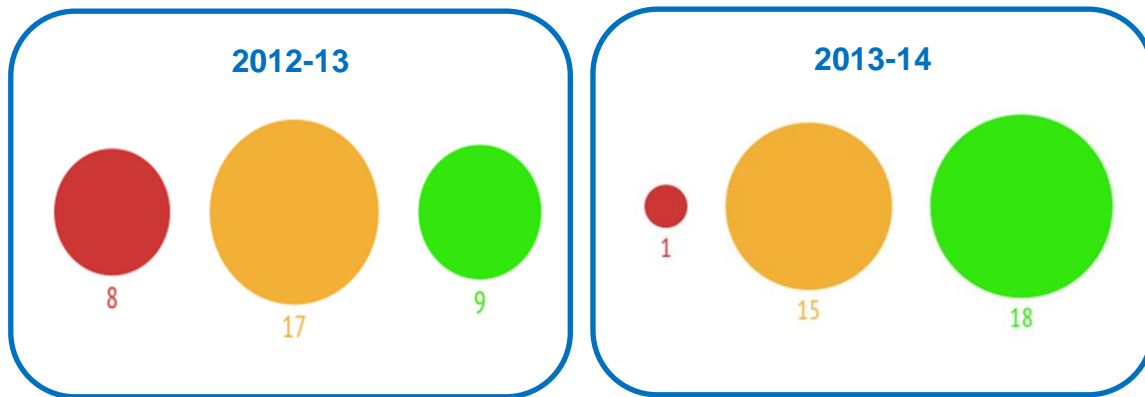


This marker requires authorities to conclude or withdraw cases which are more than a year old. The Scottish Government has been clear that it expects authorities to make a concerted effort to clear these cases by either withdrawing them or determining them. A lot of work has been done by authorities and last year 154 legacy cases were decided by 25 authorities, compared to 221 cases in 2012/13. The average time taken for these cases was 206.1 weeks. The reports show that a number of authorities have either cleared all their cases or have very few left to conclude, however this has impacted on the timescales of many of these authorities. It is evident however that a high number of legacy cases still exist within authorities and that effort should be made to clear these as soon as is practicably possible. A small number of the reports note that whilst efforts to conclude legacy cases have been made, a number of new ones are being created. Authorities should continue to put measures in place to ensure that applications are not continued without good reason, and avoid the creation of new legacy cases.

Legal Agreements

Performance Marker 4

Legal agreements: conclude (or reconsider) applications after resolving to grant permission



As noted earlier in the report the number of authorities who have clear and proportionate expectations with regard to developer contributions has increased. The need and general terms of a legal agreement to be attached to a planning decision should not come as a surprise to the developer. This should make the negotiations around the details of legal agreements clearer and simpler with less need to take applications back to committee. This key marker asks authorities to conclude (or reconsider) applications within 6 months of 'resolving to grant'.

2013/14 saw a significant increase in authorities who demonstrated that they have such measures in place with 18 authorities receiving a 'green' compared to 9 from the previous year. However not all authorities have this in place and a small number are of the opinion that limiting the negotiation period for legal agreements would run counter to an 'open for business' culture so do not attach a timescale for conclusion.

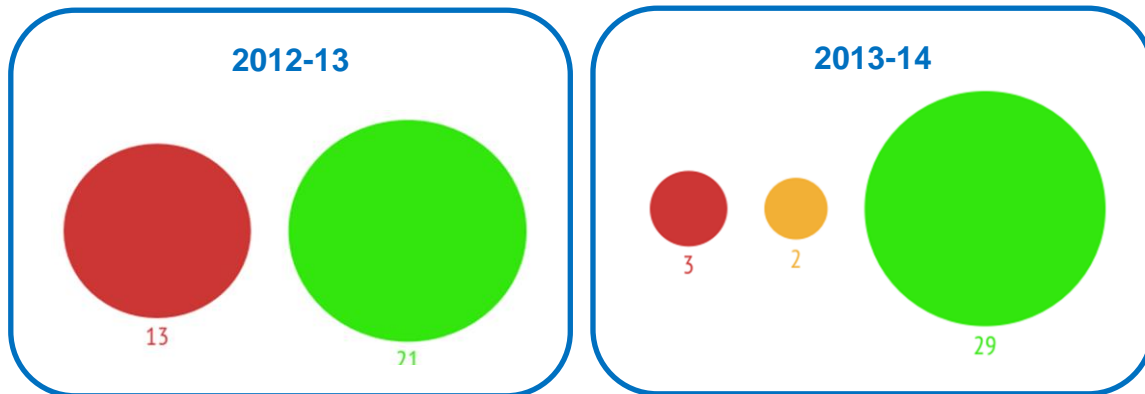
Timescales for the conclusion of applications with an agreement remain a concern, with all application types – major applications taking on average twice as long for authorities to issue a decision and local over 4 times as long. This marker links into the legacy cases marker too. There is a clear connection between legacy cases and legal agreements given the often protracted nature of the latter.

The 2013/14 statistics concerning legal agreements show once again that only a very small proportion of applications have them attached. Around 27% of the 309 major applications had a legal agreement attached compared to 25% in 2012/13, whilst of the 30,000+ local applications decided in 2013/14, only 1.3% were subject to a legal agreement. A number of authorities noted in their reports that they were using, or would use in the future, planning conditions to secure the permission where possible rather than use planning obligations. Such an approach is supported in Circular 3/2012 'Planning Obligations and Good Neighbour Agreements'.

Enforcement

Performance Marker 5

Enforcement charter updated / re-published within last 2 years



Planning authorities have a legal requirement to maintain an Enforcement Charter. Charters must be updated and re-published at least every two years, but more frequently if circumstances change.

At the end of the reporting period, three authorities had enforcement charters that were over 2 years old. This is a significant improvement on the previous reporting year, where 13 authorities had a charter which had not been updated within 2 years. Both authorities which received an amber reported that they had updated their charter, but provided no evidence that it had been published.

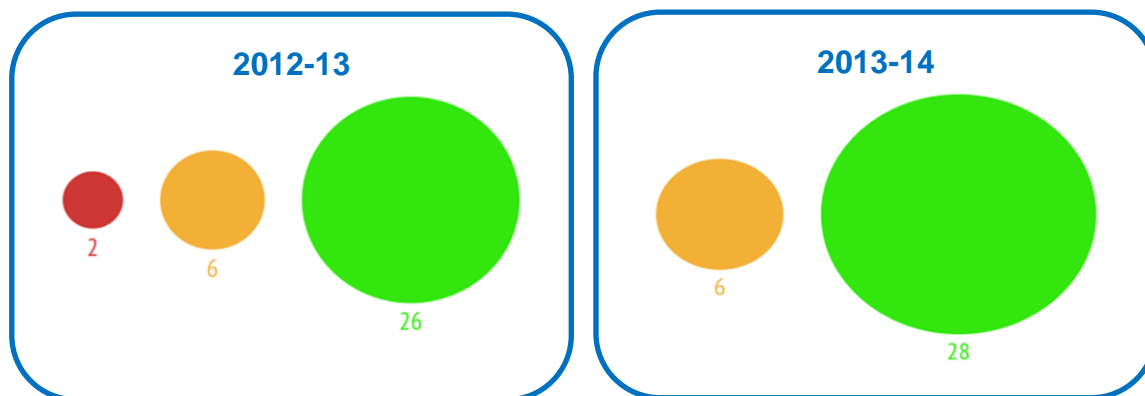
It is difficult to explain why any planning authority should not have an up-to-date enforcement charter available to its' stakeholders.

With regard to enforcement activity, 5,832 breaches were identified, an increase of 1,376 from the previous year. 4,211 of the breaches were resolved giving a resolution rate of 72% compared to 84% and 71% during the two previous reporting periods.

Corporate Working

Performance Marker 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)



This marker relates to the steps planning authorities have taken to work with other Council services to provide single points of contact, joint pre-application advice and a more streamlined service.

There has been further improvement with this marker. No authorities received a red rating and only one authority dropped from a green rating down to an amber. One authority has improved from a red rating to an amber rating, two authorities have improved to a green rating and the remaining authorities have all retained their rating from 2012-13.

The reason for one authority's rating dropping was due to the lack of progress to formalise and finalise protocols with other departments.

Amber ratings were provided where a lack of evidence of the benefits which have been realised from more proactive working with other service areas. Specific examples of more streamlined processes or the use of case studies has been encouraged to be included in the next round of reports, which could include evidence from customer feedback.

Examples of corporate working provided in this year's report included: Regular process and business meetings with other relevant service areas, inter department service protocols, aligning planning and roads consents, joint pre-application advice service, having a one door approach to consents and creating special project teams to deal with specific applications. Examples were also given of authorities holding multi-agency pre-application meetings and extending this to include the Ministry of Defence.

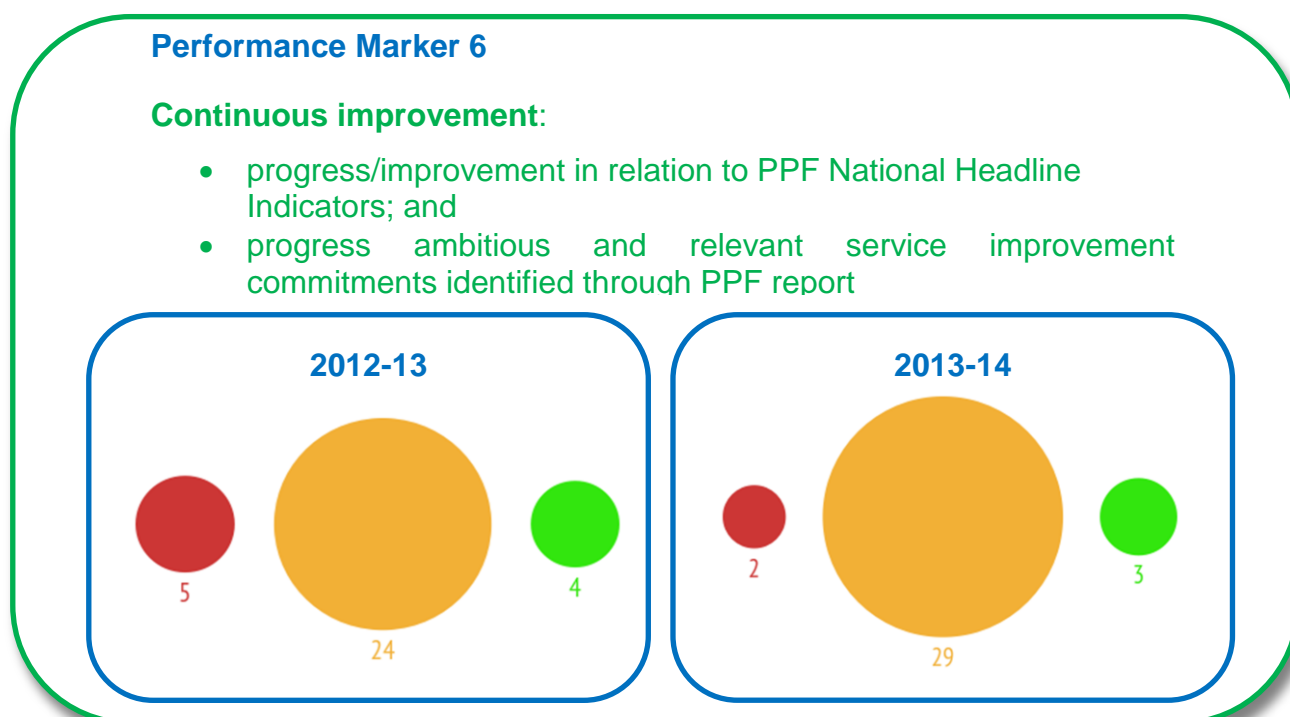
There are also examples of authorities restructuring their departments so that those which are relevant to planning are all within the same department.

ePlanning

Planning authorities who promote and make full use of ePlanning experience significant efficiency savings. This year another significant milestone was reached. The latest statistics show that, as of September 2014, 60% of all applications are now submitted through the ePlanning Scotland website. This continues to be extremely positive and a reflection of the hard work authorities and the Scottish Government have invested in this initiative.

The Scottish Government expects all authorities to embed the use of ePlanning and publicise the online submission and publication of applications. This ensures maximum benefit to authorities, applicants and communities of high quality customer services and the realisation of financial savings.

Continuous Improvement and Sharing Good Practice



Authorities are rated on their performance against the national headline indicators and their performance against the service improvement commitments that they made in their 2012-13 PPF report.

The number of red ratings has gone down from 5 to 2, amber and green ratings have remained fairly static.

Only one authority has seen their rating drop from amber to red and one authority retains a red marking from the previous year. All other authorities have either improved from red to amber, maintained their amber rating or improved to or retained their green rating.

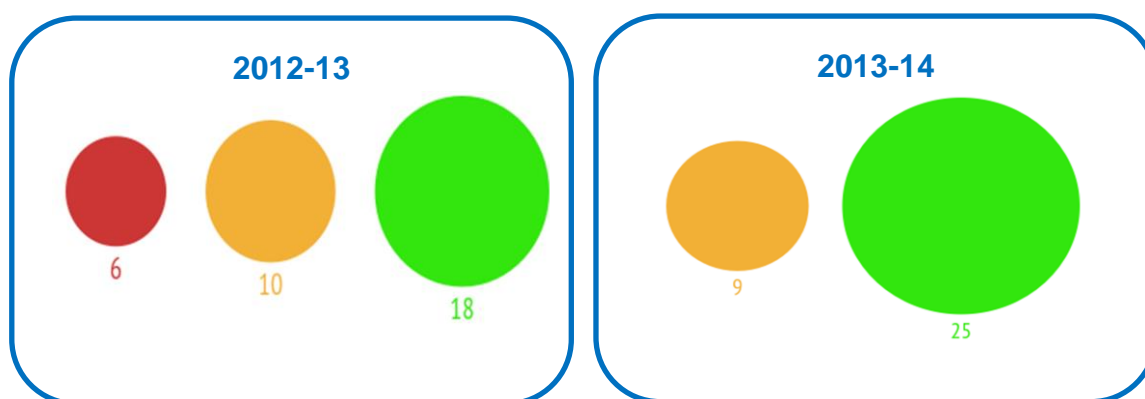
This demonstrates that authorities are adopting the culture of continuous improvement as envisaged in the planning performance framework.

As reported under performance marker 1 we have seen a general improvement in decision making timescales. Performance marker 7, 'Local plans less than 5 years since adoption' is also making progress. The number of service improvement commitments made by each authority also varies with some making a small number of very focussed commitments to those that make a large

number of small changes. Where necessary our feedback highlighted that identified future service improvement commitments should be specific, measurable and include a completion date. Reports should also contain a description of the actions that authorities have taken throughout the previous year and note any outcomes or feedback authorities have received on the changes.

Performance Marker 13

Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge between authorities



This performance marker asks authorities to provide evidence of the work that they are doing to share their skills, knowledge and good practice within other planning authorities. This marker has moved on positively from last year with no authorities receiving a red rating. Those that received an amber rating were able to provide information in their reports but there was a lack of evidence around it. The rest of the authorities were able to provide strong information and evidence of the skill sharing they are undertaking with a number committing to do so.

Evidence included active participation in Heads of Planning Scotland committees as well as the use of benchmarking groups to provide a basis to share good practice and experience. One specific example was the creation of a 'validation' checklist to assist both applicants and authorities. Other examples included the use of an 'email network' to share policy advice, updated legislation and planning law. Site visits were also undertaken between officials in authorities to share working practices and the provision of joint training on specific areas of interest.

Staffing/Workforce

This year all authorities were able to provide information on staff numbers, whilst only one was unable to provide details of its staffing age profile. It should be noted that full comparison with last year is not possible as restructuring in a number of authorities mean that the number of staff now working across teams and departments will vary from last year. The information provided does show up some interesting differences however the commentary below is assumptions based only on the figures provided.

The graphic below shows the breakdown of staff by service and age. When we look at those authorities who provided information over both years we can see that approximately 30 staff (almost one per authority) have been lost across the service in Scotland. These losses seem to fall mainly in the Development Management (3%), Enforcement (10%) and 'other' (13%) categories although it must be acknowledged that this could just be due to different counting methods. Development planning has seen a 6% increase in staff over the reporting period.

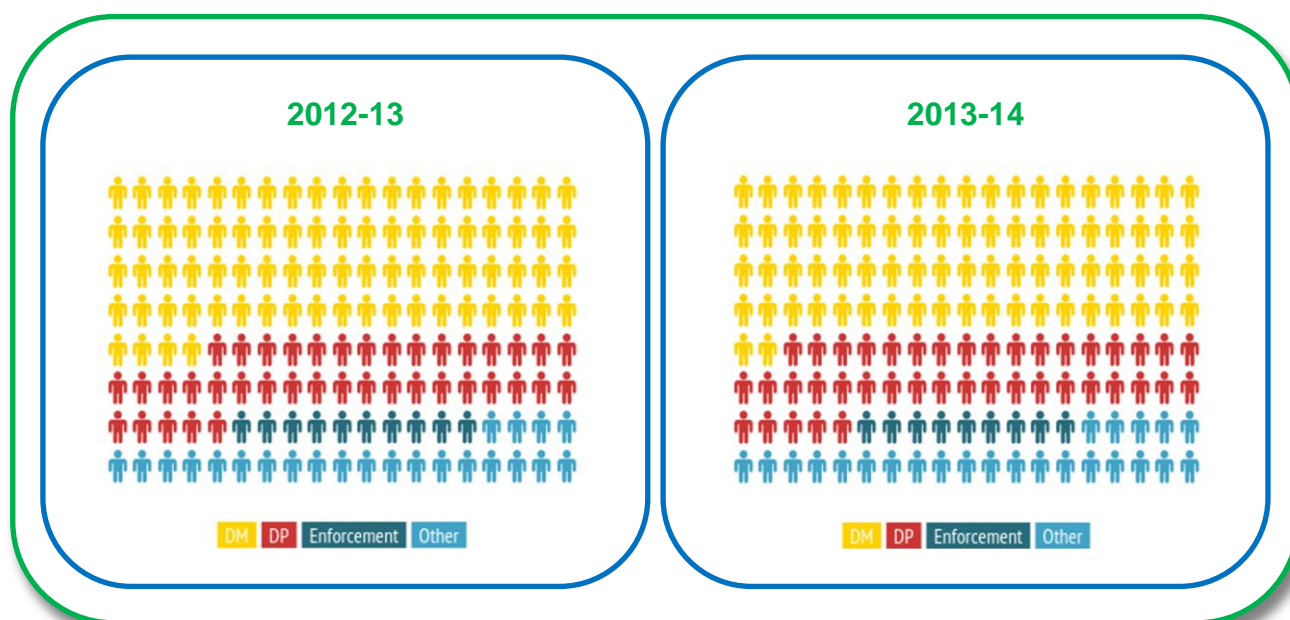
Whilst the figures noted above appear to be quite small, a number of authorities have lost (based on the figures provided), substantial numbers of staff during the last year. One authority lost 21% of its Development Management staff whilst another authority saw its Development Planning team almost halved.

According to the figures provided Scotland's planning authorities have 744 posts within development management. Based on the applications received during 2013/14 (43,999) this means that on average an officer deals with 59 cases a year. This of course does not include applications which have been submitted previously and await a decision.

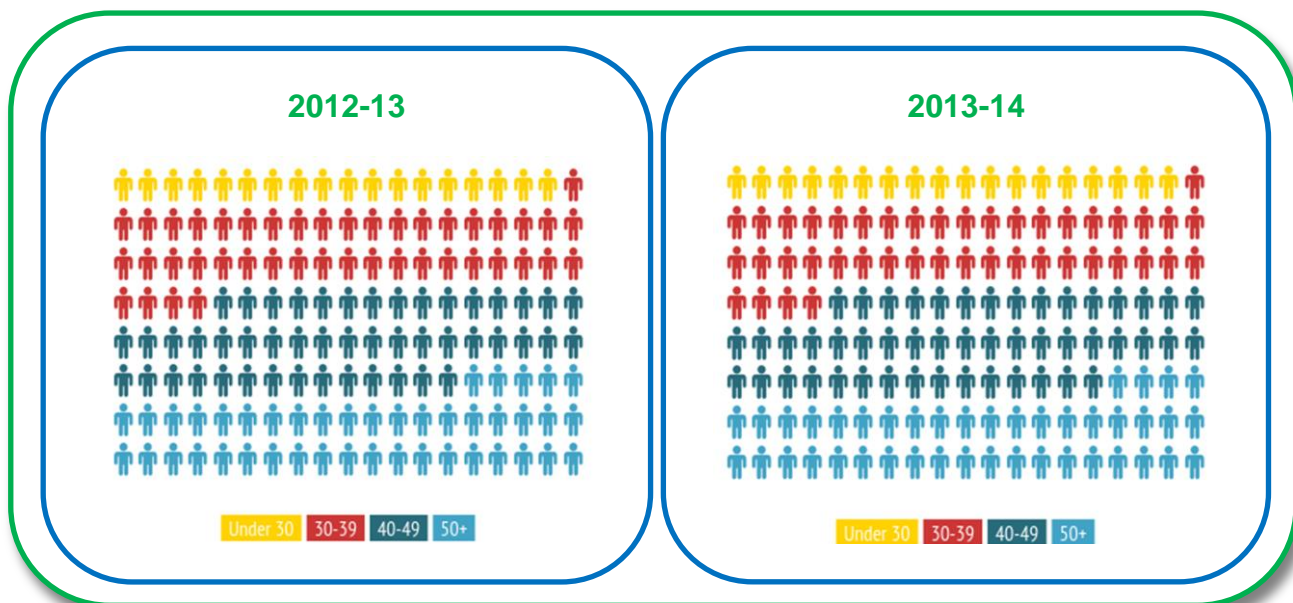
Based only on those applications decided during the period, the caseload per officer differs considerably from 111 cases per year, to 28. Case officers who routinely manage major or complex applications will generally have a lower caseload.

In terms of enforcement the changes to staffing levels have had in a number of authorities a corresponding effect on enforcement action. The number of breaches taken up and resolved have reduced amongst a number of authorities who have lost enforcement staff.

Breakdown of staff by service



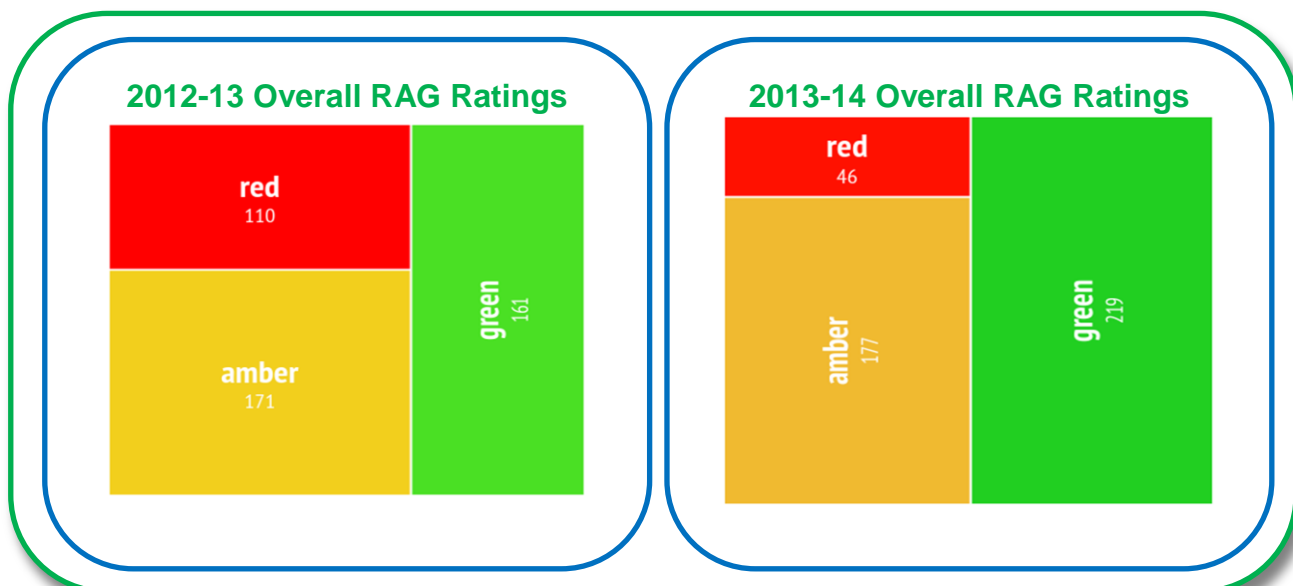
Breakdown of staff by age



Conclusion

The quality of the reports submitted continues to improve and provides, not only the Scottish Government but local authorities, their customers and stakeholders with an informative overview of the wide ranging work they do. It is clear that there is some very good work being carried out across the country and we would urge authorities to share these innovative and good practice examples with each other.

As the overall RAG markings below show (and the RAG ratings throughout the report has shown) performance across authorities has continued to improve each year.



We look forward to receiving the next PPF reports covering the period April 2014-March 2015 by 31 July 2015.

STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN AUTHORITIES – ANNUAL REPORT

This is the first Annual Report of the Strategic Development Plan Authorities (SDPAs) Planning Performance Framework (PPF) reports which covered the period April 2013 to March 2014.

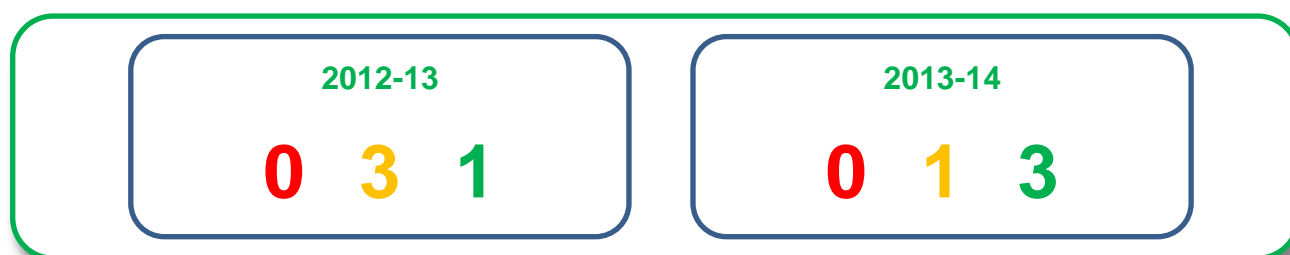
All 4 SDPAs provided reports. The SDPAs are:

- Aberdeen City and Shire
- Glasgow and Clyde Valley SDPA (now ClydePlan)
- SESplan
- Tayplan

Part 1 of this report provides a summary of the 6 performance markers which are applicable to the SDPAs. Commentary is provided on the themes emerging and the aspects that should be addressed in future reports.

Part 2 provides a summary of the information provided in the 'Defining and Measuring a High Quality Planning Service' section of the SDPAs PPF reports.

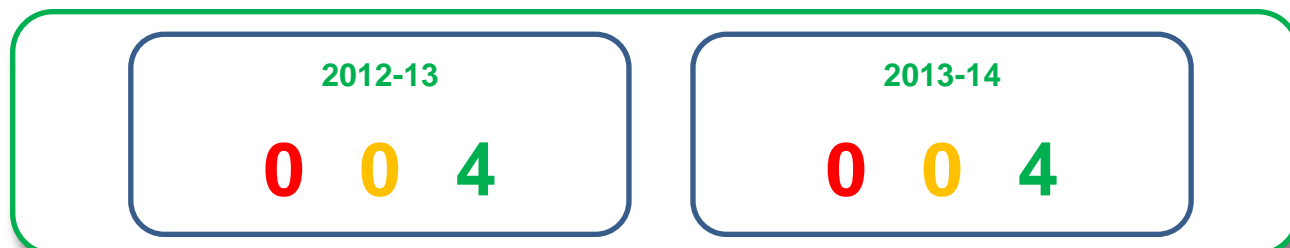
Continuous Improvement - Performance Marker 6



Ratings for this marker are based on the Strategic Development Plan (SDP) being up to date and on course for submission to Scottish Ministers within the required 4 year period. Progress on previous (2012/13) service improvement commitments and the relevance of service improvement commitments for next reporting period (2014/15) are also assessed.

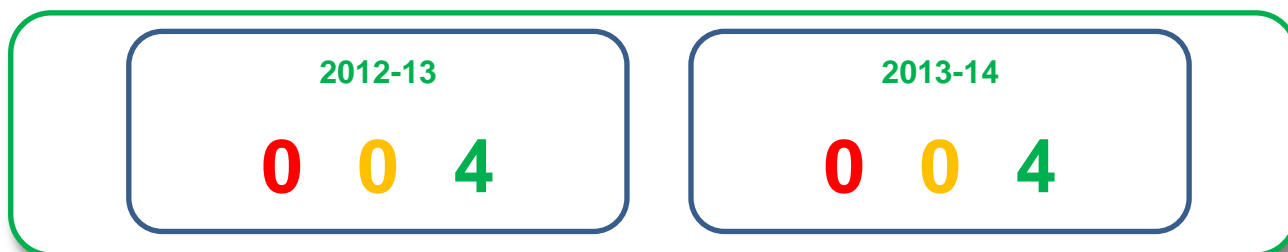
It can be seen that performance has improved. This is attributed to the progress made in completing previous service improvement commitments and setting out ambitious commitments for the next reporting period. Our feedback highlighted, where necessary, that future service improvement commitments should be specific, measurable and include a completion date.

Strategic Development Plan - Performance Marker 7



This marker is based on whether it has been less than four years since the approval of the Strategic Development Plan. All 4 SDPAs continued to achieve a green rating for this marker as their SDPs remain up to date.

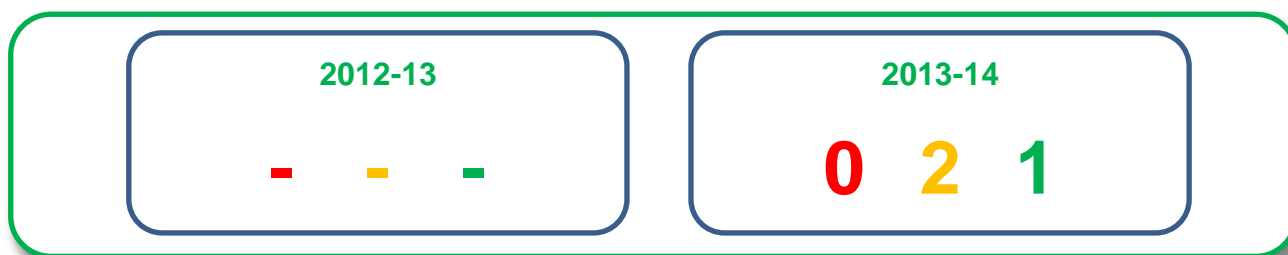
Development Plan Scheme - Performance Marker 8



This marker is based on whether the next SDP is on course for submission to Scottish Ministers within 4 years of the current plan's approval and whether it is project planned to be delivered to a planned timescale.

All of the SDPAs continued to achieve a green rating for this marker. The reports provided a strong commitment to project management to ensure timescales are met. Examples included the use of PRINCE 2 and Gantt charts. We suggested that SPDAs share good practice of their project management achievements more widely for the benefit of others.

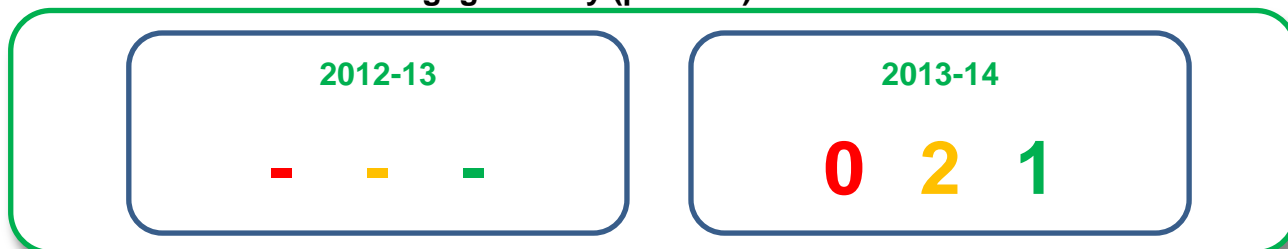
Elected Members Engaged Early at pre-MIR Stage - Performance Marker 9



This year three of the SDPA's had commenced working on their next SDP, with one due to begin in the next reporting period. Two amber ratings and one green rating were given.

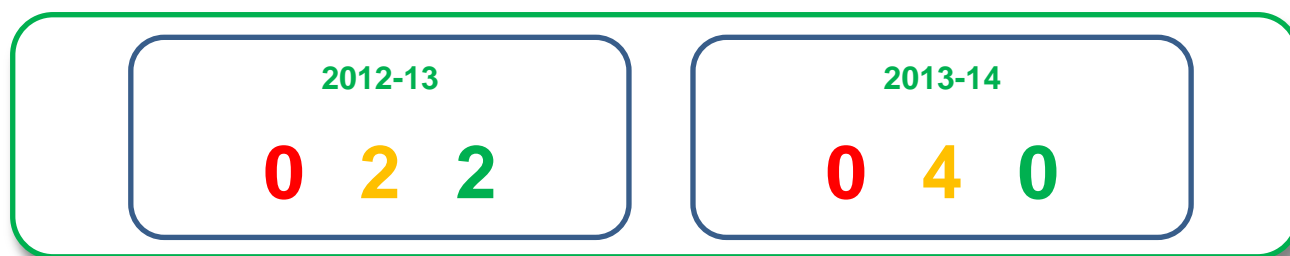
For the amber ratings, our feedback emphasised that future reports need to clearly set out the steps the SDPAs are taking to engage early in the SDP process with elected members. One report received a green rating by referring to a range of pre-MIR elected member engagement. This included the circulation of e-newsletters, briefing of joint committee members and ratification by constituent council of key joint committee decisions.

Cross Sector Stakeholders Engaged Early (pre-MIR) - Performance Marker 10



Although a strong commitment to engagement was emphasised in all of the reports, some lacked specific detail of the measures being taken to engage with cross sector stakeholders (industry, agencies and Scottish Government) at the pre-MIR stage. Our feedback emphasised that future reports need to explain this in more detail.

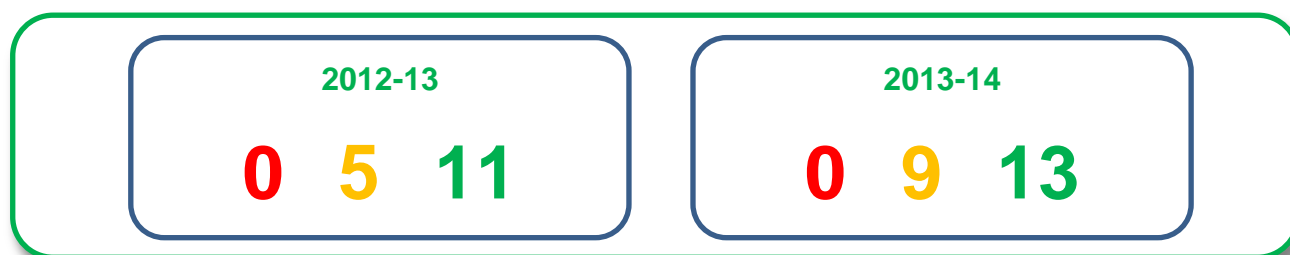
Sharing Good Practice, Skills and Knowledge - Performance Marker 13



The number of green ratings given for this marker has deteriorated since the last reporting period. Whilst the reports commented that good practice is shared between SDPAs and planning authorities, we found they lacked detail of the issues discussed, and the outcomes and benefits delivered.

Our feedback highlighted that future reports need to provide greater detail and evidence of how good practice, skills and knowledge is shared. The inclusion of specific examples or case studies could be a possible way of evidencing this marker.

Overall RAG Ratings for SDPAs - 2012/13 & 2013/14



The 6 additional markings given in 2013/14 were a result of 3 SDPAs commencing pre-MIR engagement (performance markers 9 and 10).

In conclusion, it can be seen from the above table that overall performance has remained positive for the SDPAs when compared with the last reporting period. The slight increase in the number of amber ratings can be attributed to the lack of evidence provided for performance markers 9, 10 and 13.

Part 2 of the PPF Report - Defining and Measuring a High Quality Planning Service – Summary

Open for Business

An open for business approach to delivering the SDP through engagement and collaborative working was demonstrated in all of the reports. There was also an emphasis on the importance of delivering Action Programmes. Our feedback highlighted that future reports should aim to supplement this section with some detailed examples or case studies of actions delivered and the outcomes.

High Quality Development on the Ground

The reports made a clear commitment to focus on delivering high quality development. There was a general feeling that it would be helpful if future reports provided more detail of how the SDP sets the context for delivering high quality development on the ground with constituent authority LDPs. The inclusion of examples or case studies, would be welcomed.

Certainty

The reports emphasised the important role of having an up to date SDP to provide certainty and attract investment into SDPA areas. We felt that additional evidence could have been provided to demonstrate how SDPA engagement and support for constituent authorities is informing the progress of their LDPs.

There was a commitment made within the reports to align the next round of SDPs with NPF3 and SPP. We look forward to hearing how this has progressed in future reports.

Communications, Engagement and Customer Service

All SDPAs are being proactive to engage and communicate with the public through a range of social media. We were encouraged to hear this was resulting in more people being engaged in the SDP process. For example, one report highlighted a significant increase in website visitors and twitter followers during the period.

SDPAs are continuing to look at ways to improve their communication and engagement. Examples included a commitment to the use of plain English, easy read versions of documents, Crystal Mark status and website redesign.

Efficient and Effective Decision Making

All of the reports highlighted that clear structures are in place to enable efficient and effective decision making. Some SDPA's reviewed the effectiveness of decision making structures during the reporting period and highlighted that this had helped to clarify roles and responsibilities.

Culture of Continuous Improvement

A commitment to a culture of learning and improving was demonstrated through a range of measures that had been identified and delivered by SDPAs. A number of reports provided details of staff development, appraisal and training. Two SDPAs had a customer survey planned for the next reporting period, whilst another had developed a lessons learnt log to use in the next SDP process.

We were encouraged to see that all of the reports made a commitment to work with other SDPAs and the Scottish Government to take forward the actions and recommendations contained in the [Review of Strategic Development Plans in Scotland](#) (April 2014). We look forward to hearing about the new approaches and improvements which have been achieved in future reports.

KEY AGENCIES – ANNUAL REPORT

This is the first Annual Report of the key agency Planning Performance Framework (PPF) reports which covered the period April 2013 to March 2014.

A total of 7 key agencies (agencies) provided PPF reports. This was the same number as the previous year. The agencies were:

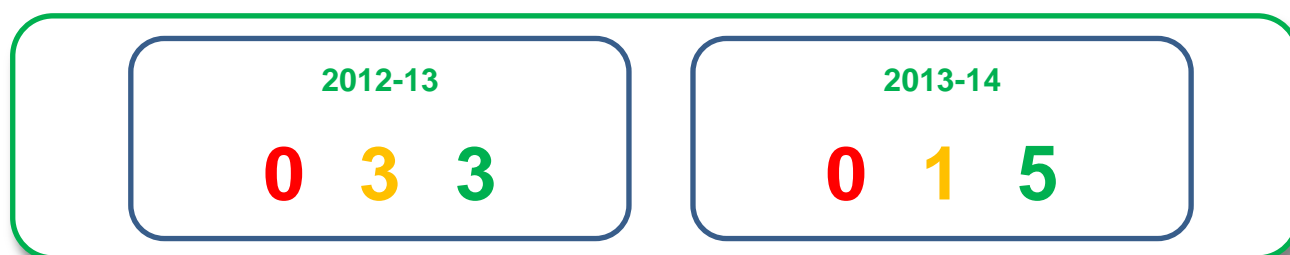
- Architecture and Design Scotland
- Historic Scotland
- Scottish Water
- SEPA
- SNH
- Sportscotland
- Transport Scotland

Part 1 of the report provides a summary of the 6 performance markers which were applicable to the agencies. Commentary is provided on the themes emerging and the aspects that should be addressed in future reports.

Part 2 provides a summary of the information provided in the 'Defining and Measuring a High Quality Planning Service' section of the agencies' PPF reports.

Part 1 – Analysis of Performance Markers

Decision Making Timescales – Performance Marker 1



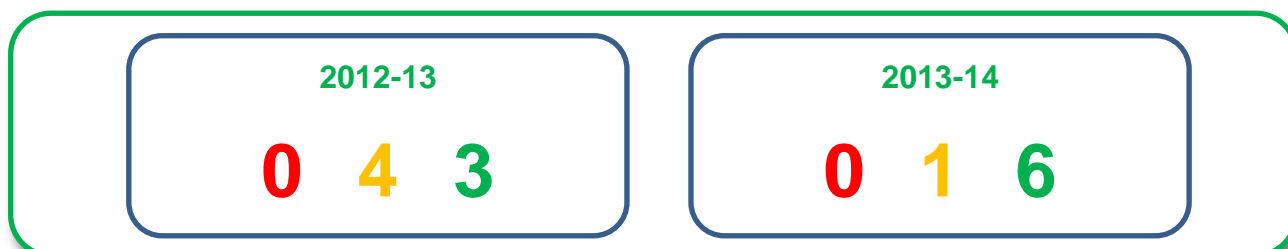
6 agencies provide information on decision making timescales. Architecture and Design Scotland do not provide figures due to their non-statutory advisory role as a Non-Departmental Public Body.

Overall, there has been an improvement in timescales for development plan and planning application consultation responses since the last reporting period. The reports show positive average response times are being achieved, with the majority of consultations responded to within the required timescales.

Active engagement in development planning was evidenced through the high number of development plan consultation responses made by agencies during the reporting period. Useful information on the number of responses made to development plan consultation stages (Pre-MIR, MIR, Pre-Proposed Plan, Proposed Plan) was included in some, but not all reports. We remarked that it would be helpful if future reports included this.

Our feedback continued to bring attention to the high number of planning application consultations which were resulting in a “no comment” response by the agencies. We were therefore pleased to note that many agencies are taking steps to prevent this from occurring. Initiatives to reduce unnecessary consultations included using standing advice, publishing improved guidance, service standards and developing protocols with planning authorities.

Early Collaboration with Applicants and Consultees – Performance Marker 3



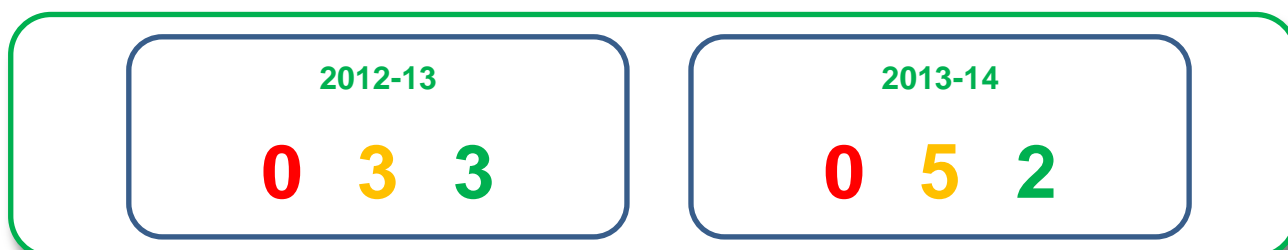
All of the reports evidenced a strong commitment to an open for business approach, built on early engagement through pre-application advice and development planning. This included active promotion of pre-application involvement and reference to the [Agency Joint Statement on Pre-application Engagement](#).

The number of pre-application responses made during the reporting period was provided in the majority of reports this year and it was encouraging to note that many agencies had been involved in a high number of consultations.

Some reports used case studies to provide examples of how early engagement had been achieved in the early stages of development plans. There was also reference to involvement in charrettes, masterplanning and supplementary guidance. Many reports referred to the agency's role in participating in Action Programmes. Our feedback highlighted that future reports should aim to provide greater detail of where value has been added through the engagement process and the outcomes that have been delivered.

To ensure clear and proportionate requests for supporting information all of the reports emphasised the importance of having up to date guidance in place. Internal guidance was also referred to in some reports as a means to help deliver clear and consistent responses.

Continuous Improvement – Performance Marker 6



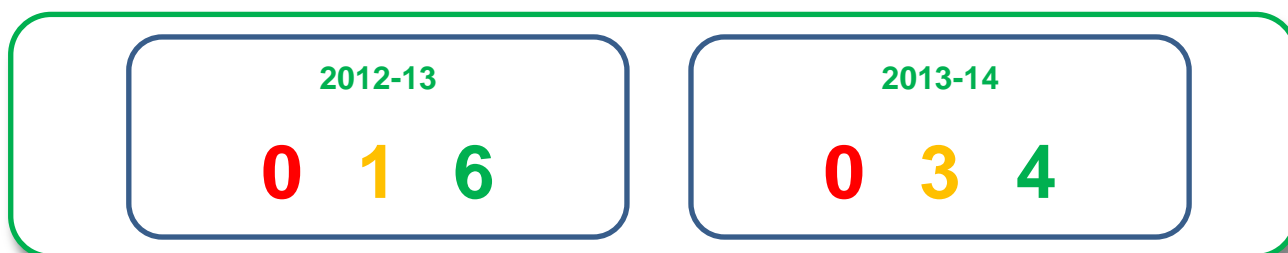
* Sportscotland's first report covered 2012-13, so no marking was given in last year's feedback.

This performance marker relates to progress on the National Headline Indicators (decision making timescales) and service improvement commitments.

As reported, this year saw a positive improvement in timescales for development plan and planning application consultation responses. With regard to service improvement commitments for 2013-14, the majority of agencies reported that a number remained incomplete and have been carried forward to the next period. This resulted in a slight increase in the number of amber ratings being given this year from 3 to 5 while green ratings dropped from 3 to 2.

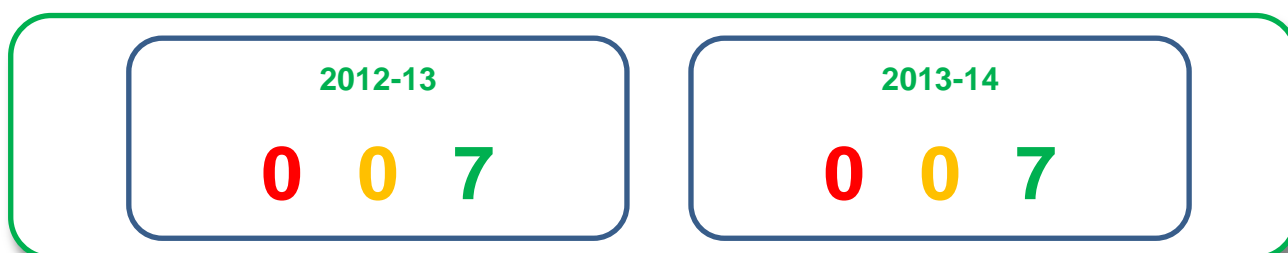
A generally good range of service improvements were identified for 2014-15. Where necessary, our feedback highlighted that identified future service improvement commitments should be specific, measurable and include a completion date.

Stakeholder Engagement at pre-MIR Stage – Performance Marker 10



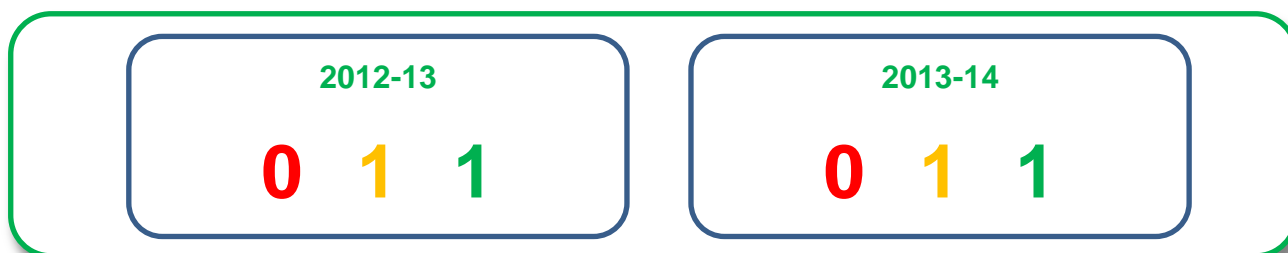
When compared to the previous year, a number of reports lacked a description of the approaches and outcomes of engagement at the pre-MIR stage of development plans. Some reports included case studies to provide examples of involvement and the issues that were discussed and overcome through early engagement.

Sharing Good Practice, Skills and Knowledge – Performance Marker 13



The reports continued to demonstrate that agencies have been active in working collaboratively with planning authorities to share good practice, skills and knowledge. Examples provided included planning authority training, forums, sharing good practice events and pilot projects. In some reports, examples were provided of where feedback from events and forums had led to further improvements being identified. There was a general observation made that future reports should aim to be clearer in describing the types of good practice which has been shared between agencies, and discussed during key agency group meetings.

Developer Contributions – Marker 15



Only two agencies, Transport Scotland and Scottish Water, have a role in developer contributions. Both provided evidence that clear and proportionate expectations are set out through development plan engagement and pre-application discussions. The inclusion of case study examples and customer feedback was recommended as a useful way of evidencing the approach to developer contributions.

Overall RAG Ratings for Key Agencies 2012/13 & 2013/14



In conclusion, it can be seen from the above table that overall performance has improved slightly for the agencies since the last reporting period, with an increase in the number of green ratings.

Part 2 of the PPF Report - Defining and Measuring a High Quality Planning Service - Summary

High Quality Development on the Ground

All of the reports demonstrated a commitment to helping deliver high quality development on the ground. We would like to see the increased use of specific examples, case studies and visuals in future reports to help evidence this section of the report in more detail.

Certainty

The importance of having up to date guidance for applicants and agents was clearly emphasised in the reports. Many agencies have produced new guidance during the reporting period and have included service improvements for 2014-15 to review and update guidance.

We were interested to note that two agencies emphasised early involvement with planning authorities who use a formal pre-application process, had resulted in the most value being added to the planning application process. This had enabled effective responses to be made and helped improve efficiency and streamline the latter stages of the planning application.

Joint working between agencies and planning authorities was referred to in a number of reports as a means of improving certainty for planning authorities and applicants. One example of joint working referred to in two agency reports has recently received a commendation in the Development Management section of the [2014 Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning](#).

Communications, Engagement and Customer Service

There was a common theme of highlighting the importance of the agency's website to provide a resource for customers. Many agencies had undertaken a review of their website during the reporting period and proposed to make improvements during 2014-15.

With regard to obtaining feedback some agencies used customer surveys during the reporting period, whilst others had used forums and liaison meetings. Our feedback continued to recommend all these methods as useful ways of engaging with customers and obtaining feedback on the standard of service provision. We have asked that the results of feedback and customer testimonies should be included in future reports, where possible.

Efficient and Effective Decision Making

We were pleased to note that efficient and effective decision making was being supported by tailored guidance on a range of different topics, relevant to each agency. We recommend that agencies should seek to obtain feedback from customers (both external and internal) on the effectiveness of their guidance.

Some reports referred to collaborative working with internal departments of the agency to identify issues, improve efficiency and general service delivery. It would be good to see such approaches replicated by all the agencies.

We noted that many of the reports lacked detail of how team and management structures enable the agency to respond to priorities and react to emerging issues. This should be covered in future reports.

Culture of Continuous Improvement

All of the reports contained reference to structures which are in place for the ongoing development of staff. Examples included staff appraisal and a description of the training that has been delivered or identified in the reporting period.

A number of reports also highlighted how services are being evaluated to identify further improvements. Notable examples included the monitoring of planning authority decisions to gauge how consultation responses are being used. Another example outlined the agency's complaints procedure and how complaints received had led to the changes to service. Comparative working between an agency and a council in Norway to share experiences and develop partnerships on a national level was also provided as an example.

PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK: PERFORMANCE MARKERS FOR PLANNING AUTHORITIES

No.	Performance Marker
1	Decision-making: continuous reduction of average timescales for all development categories [Q1 - Q4]
2	Processing agreements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> offer to all prospective applicants for major development planning applications; and availability publicised on website
3	Early collaboration with applicants and consultees <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
4	Legal agreements: conclude (or reconsider) applications after resolving to grant permission <ul style="list-style-type: none"> reducing number of live applications more than 6 months after resolution to grant (from last reporting period)
5	Enforcement charter updated / re-published within last 2 years
6	Continuous improvement: <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
7	Local development plan less than 5 years since adoption
8	Development plan scheme – next LDP: <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
9	Elected members engaged early (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation – <i>if plan has been at pre-MIR stage during reporting year</i>
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>
11	Regular and proportionate policy advice produced on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> information required to support applications; and expected developer contributions
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)
13	Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge between authorities
14	Stalled sites / legacy cases: conclusion or withdrawal of old planning applications and reducing number of live applications more than one year old
15	Developer contributions: clear and proportionate expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> set out in development plan (and/or emerging plan); and in pre-application discussions