

Planning Performance Framework 2013/14 (PPF3)



Fife Council's Annual Planning Performance Framework

1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014

September 2014

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Foreword - PPF3



by Cllr Lesley Laird
Depute Leader and Executive
Spokesperson for Economy & Planning

The development of the Planning Performance Framework has been an important part of Scotland's drive to ensure the planning system across the country is fit for purpose.

In Fife our aim is to ensure that the planning systems can support sustainable economic growth – in keeping with our aim to make Fife the Best Place to Do Business - as well as protect our environment.

Fife Council has been a strong supporter of the balanced approach set out within the Planning Performance Frameworks, and is fully committed to helping shape its development. The new culture of performance management and stakeholder feedback is starting to deliver real results in Fife and across the country.

PPF3 summarises the key areas that we are working on in Fife to become a top performing planning authority. It's clear from the Scottish Government's feedback last year that there is much to commend in planning in Fife. However, we recognise that there are still a number of areas for improvement and my role, as the Executive Spokesperson for Economy & Planning, is to ensure that the customers' needs are championed as part of this reform.

I have been particularly keen to ensure that customer improvement is at the heart of the change in Fife. As part of this the Head of Enterprise, Planning & Protective Services and his team have introduced a Customer Focus Project and a Planning Improvement Programme. These bring together all the improvement activity strands within the Service.

Speed of decision making remains an important measure of our effectiveness as a planning service and we have opportunities to improve in this area. However there are other indicators, such as complaints handling, and the quality of development on the ground that must all be given our attention.

We know that listening to our customers will help us improve our performance. By always looking for opportunities to improve we can continue to develop a high performing planning team which in turn supports us on our journey to make Fife the Best Place to Do Business.

1. Introduction

Fife Council is pleased to submit its third Planning Performance Framework (PPF3.) From the introduction of PPFs this Council has continued to advocate and support this more balanced and holistic approach to performance management and measurement. PPF 3 continues to demonstrate further improvements and progress in the quality of planning decisions, processes and the final outcomes being achieved in Fife.

Now in its third year this comprehensive approach to performance management, effectiveness, leadership and achieving and illustrating quality outcomes continues to be supported and promoted by the Scottish Government, COSLA, SOLACE and HOPS. Fife Council has clear strategic objectives for sustainable development, encouraging business investment, providing quality places, ensuring an effective supply of housing and employment land and providing environmental safeguarding policies. The role of the planning functions is central to all these strategic outcomes and this latest PPF illustrates the overall progress and performance of the planning authority during 2013 and 2014 in achieving these objectives.

Whilst we are proud of our achievements, we are not complacent and we recognise that we still need and want to improve in certain areas and these are identified in the PPF as part of our continuous improvement processes. These improvements also take account of the Government's feedback comments at the national level and comments specific to Fife on PPF2.

Whilst speed of decision making is still recognised as an important element of the overall performance process, we consider that Fife's open, democratic and transparent decision making processes taken together with pro-active negotiation and enforcement approaches, ensures that the final development outcomes maximise the benefits for our local communities. Customer focus and delivering on "Best for Business" remain our key areas for further refinement and prioritisation alongside the reduction of all planning decision times.

In 2013/14 we have commenced a more focussed process to understand the needs of our customers better, and adjusting our service provision to meet these needs. We have actively sought new ways to engage with our customers and to increase the level of participation in the planning process. Whilst the level of corporate complaints remains low in relation to the number

of applications processed (below 0.05%), we have recognised the value of this feedback in providing us with useful indications of how we can improve what we do.

2013/2014 has been another challenging year due to the continuing economic challenges and changing market conditions, further pressures on the Council's budgets including the planning revenue budget, and the difficulties still being experienced in the development industry and particularly local house building. This has been compounded by difficult market conditions in the opencast coal industry and the overall position of financial bond providers which has required new approaches to be considered. This PPF builds on the issues raised in PPF2 and features some of the new and creative ways we are working together in partnership with others to resolve these issues to provide a first class planning service to Fife's residents and customers.

Fife is pleased to showcase these contributions, achievements and outcomes as a clear demonstration of the effective leadership and management of our planning processes, at a political and officer level. The key planning processes and activities in Fife are carried out by a range of specialist staff in the Enterprise, Planning and Protective Service (EPPS).

The Service is based in a single office (Kingdom House) in Glenrothes, which provides a single, focussed customer channel for enquiries and transactions. Following the co-location of the Service in this building in 2012, the synergies of multi-disciplinary teams working together in a single office environment are evident, and further improvements and new ways of working will continue to be introduced and delivered over the coming 2014-2015 period to ensure that enhanced levels of service are delivered for the people of Fife. The formation during 2013-14 of a single Planning Service integrating Development Management, Development Planning and specialist planning and transportation advisers in a single service is key to this progression.

The third PPF enables Fife Council to reflect on the outcomes from PPF 2, developing and building on our successes and focussing on areas where we can do better, as well as providing an opportunity to demonstrate some of the ways in which we deliver on sustainable economic growth, and the varied ways in which our people in EPPS deploy their skills to shape, support, influence, lead, champion, and deliver key planning, social, economic, and environmental outcomes across Fife. These were important elements in PPF1, they were further developed and honed in PPF2 and as we reflect on the achievements and outcomes of PPF2 we build on these in PPF 3 and can demonstrate an on-going commitment to these values and what planning can deliver.

We firmly believe that the achievements and successes highlighted in PPF3 demonstrate the positive and effective roles planning can and does play in developing, growing, enhancing, and protecting Fife's communities. At the same time it promotes the Council's contributions to the Single Outcome Agreement and the Fife Community Planning Partnership. The political administration has a commitment and focus on town centres and ensuring that businesses whether new or established; or those seeking to invest or relocate find Fife the best place for their business to be.

The contributions we make are inter-connected and linked in many ways and the actions and activities in PPF3 reflect this interdependency and partnership working approach which provides wider holistic and longer lasting benefits to the people of Fife and their communities far in excess of what the statutory planning processes can achieve on their own.

This third PPF is designed to provide the evidence of our commitment, desire and determination to place Fife at the forefront of achieving excellence and quality in the range of planning, development, enterprise, employment and protective services we provide.



Robin Presswood,

Head of Enterprise,
Planning and Protective Services



Jim Birrell,

Senior Manager, Planning

2. Scottish Government feedback on the second round of Planning Performance Frameworks and Fife Council 2013/2014 (PPF 2)

In March 2014, the Scottish Government (Directorate for Local Government and Communities, Planning and Architecture Division) published its report on the second round of Planning Performance Annual Reports.

The report summarised the outcomes from all Planning Authorities on a Scotland wide basis and also set out the Scottish Government's future priorities and actions. The Scottish Government's feedback report with RAG commentary is published at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0044/00447160.pdf>

On 21 August 2013, Derek Mackay, MSP, Minister for local Government and Planning, and Councillor Stephen Hagan, COSLA Spokesperson for Development, Economy and Sustainability, wrote to all LPAs to ensure that clear reference is made to the Key Performance Markers (KPMs) in the PPF.

In September 2013 Derek Mackay, MSP, Minister for Local Government and Planning wrote to the Chief Executive enclosing a feedback report on the Fife Council PPF2 as part of the approach to pursuing improvement together.

Commenting on Fife Council's report The Minister stated:

"Turning to your authority's performance report, I was pleased with your thorough and positive report which provided a good indication of progress towards the culture and behaviours of a high performing planning authority as envisaged through the PPF, with a strong emphasis on delivering economic development and collaborative working. The progress you have made to reduce average timescales for householder developments is welcomed, although I am concerned with the increase in timescales for local (non-householder) developments, which now remain above the national figure. It is also important that your LDP continues to be project managed to remain on course for adoption within the statutory 5-year timescale"

The report specific to each local authority featured a Red, Amber, Green, (RAG) classification which identified each Council's performance against the 15 key performance markers. The RAG grading system highlights areas where the Council was considered to be operating

successfully, (green); those areas to be monitored to secure future improvement, (amber); and those areas in red where no information was provided, action was required to improve performance, or additional context required to clarify performance levels. The Fife Council RAG rating is included as Table 1, whilst current progress on the identified key performance markers is summarised in Table 2.

"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."

Scottish Government, 2013

Table 1

Fife Council's performance markers report 2012-13

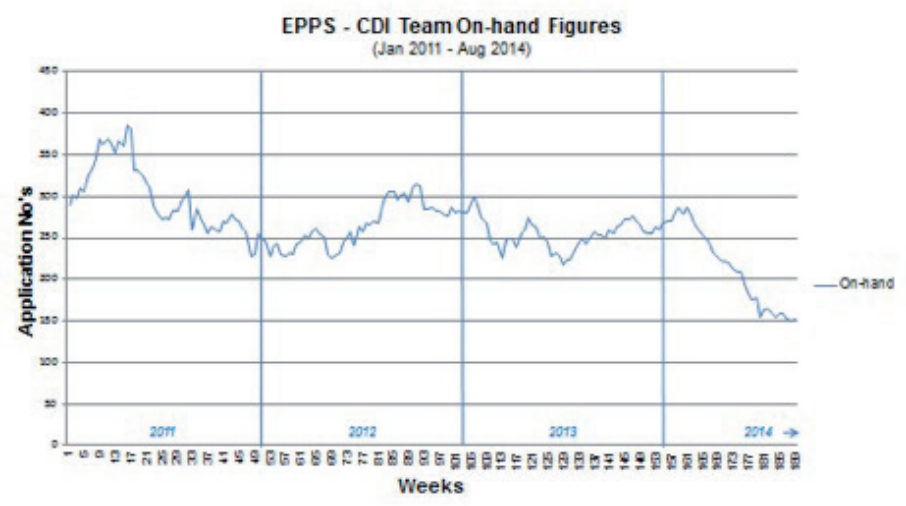
| No | Performance Marker | RAG Rating | SG Comments |
|----|--|------------|---|
| 1 | Decision-making: continuous reduction of average timescales for all development categories [Q1 - Q4] | Red | Sharp increase in decision making timescales for local (non-householder) developments, with average now lower than national figure. Good progress made on reducing timescales for householder developments. Timescales for major developments remain unchanged. Progress made on reducing timescales for applications subject to legal agreements, average (58.2 weeks) now better than national figure (75.1). |
| 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 | Authority has recently started offering processing agreements for major developments and other local applications, as appropriate. Report lacks a description of how they are made available and publicised. This needs to be covered in the next report. |
| 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 | Amber | Pre-application service offered for all applications, with charge currently made for service. Take-up (8%) is relatively low. Report lacks a description of how early collaboration ensures 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) | Amber | Progress made on reducing timescales for applications subject to legal agreements, average (58.2 weeks) now better than national figure (75.1). This was supported by an audit of applications subject to outstanding legal agreements. Service Improvement 2013/14 to introduce "planning obligations" manual tracker system. This should help improve future monitoring and reporting. |
| 5 | Enforcement charter updated / re-published within last 2 years | Green | Charter 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 | Amber | Mixed progress in relation to NHI's, with timescale reductions in some categories of development, but increases in others. This was especially the case for local (non-householder) developments. Some slippage with LDP. LDP project managed to remain on course for adoption within statutory 5yr period. Some good progress made with improvement actions, with noticeable results, although some not completed within the year and carried forward. |
| 7 | Local development plan less than 5 years since adoption | Green | Three local plans adopted in 2012. |

| | | | |
|----|--|-------|--|
| 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 | Green | LDP project managed to remain on course for adoption in 2015. LDP project planned and managed through a project board |
| 9 | Elected members engaged early (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation – <i>if plan has been at pre-MIR stage during reporting year</i> | Green | Elected member engagement in advance of MIR publication |
| 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 Scot. Govt</i> | Green | Report provides evidence of cross sector pre-MIR engagement and involvement with a range of stakeholders. |
| 11 | Regular and proportionate policy advice produced on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • information required to support applications; and • expected developer contributions | Amber | Validation checklist in place and pre-application service available for all developments. Supplementary guidance being prepared as part of LDP. However, report lacks a full description of how policy advice ensures regular and proportionate requests for supporting information. Detailed description provided on approach to expected developer contributions through development plan policy, infrastructure investment fund and emerging guidance on planning obligations. |
| 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) | Green | Good evidence provided of corporate working, and close-working relationships with council services and external organisations. Future reports would benefit from the inclusion of case studies and a more detailed description of approach to corporate working through pre-application advice and the provision of joined-up services. |
| 13 | Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge between authorities | Amber | About to commence benchmarking with a number of authorities. Service improvement commitment for 2014/15 to identify and implement lessons learned/new initiatives. |
| 14 | Stalled sites / legacy cases: conclusion or withdrawal of old planning applications and reducing number of live applications more than one year old | Amber | Ongoing commitment made to conclude legacy cases, but no information provided on success with this exercise so far. More detail should be provided in future reports. Some good progress made on determining applications subject to outstanding legal agreements, with further service improvements identified for 2013/14. |
| 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 | Green | Through description provided on approach to expected developer contributions through development plan policy, infrastructure investment fund and emerging guidance on planning obligations. Planning obligations discussed and addressed with housing and business representatives through forums/meetings. Small sites exempted from education contribution. Framework and emerging supplementary guidance used during pre-application discussions. Future reports should aim to include feedback from developers and case studies to help supplement description. |

Fife Council comments on Specific RAG Ratings.

Application decision making (Red)

We have introduced strong performance management measures over the last year in all 3 planning teams. Proactive management of the local application workload handled by our Community Development and Investment (CDI) team has substantially reduced the number of legacy cases and this reduction has to some degree influenced and increased the reported average time periods. However as these older cases are worked out of the system the average determination periods will improve. Workload re allocation and redeployment across the teams has assisted in providing capacity to deal with unplanned long term staff absences while maintaining an acceptable level of service. Performance levels for processing of Local applications will continue to be a priority for monitoring and intervention.



Local Development Plan Progress (Amber)

All three “old style” Local Plans were adopted in 2012 as programmed and work is well underway to prepare for the new Fife LDP providing a single, coherent and consistent planning vision for Fife. This began with the publication of a Main Issues Report at the start of 2013. The publication of the Proposed Local Development Plan (called FIFEplan) is now scheduled for October 2014 - a delay from the work programmes of late 2013 due to an additional stage of work required for SESplan - the strategic development plan for South East Scotland.

The delay however allowed Fife Council to publish site assessment and spatial strategy information that had been prepared for the Proposed FIFEplan Local Development Plan. The Council sought views on the proposed spatial strategy and the preferred new sites and reasonable alternatives for future housing, employment, and mixed use development

over an additional 8 week consultation that ran between December 2013 and February 2014. The comments received have helped to inform the final recommendations for the Proposed FIFEplan Local Development Plan which was approved in September 2014 for consultation.

The policies of the adopted local plans have been reviewed and rationalised and now are encompassed in an over-arching policy. The LDP also introduces a number of new policy requirements reflected in the recently revised SPP including low carbon, maintaining an effective land supply and town centres first policies. The LDP is scheduled for adoption in 2016.

Other Amber Ratings

Progress and actions in relation to all other Amber Ratings are amplified later in this PPF document

Summary of Current Progress

The following table provides an analysis of how we consider Fife Council are performing and the progress we are making in relation to the performance markers identified by the Scottish Government. A similar RAG rating as used in the report on PPF2 (2013-14) is used to highlight the progress made.

Table 2: Key performance markers

Driving improved performance

| Performance Marker | RAG Status | Source/Evidence |
|---|------------|--|
| Decision making: Continuous reduction of average timescales for all development categories (Q1-Q4) | Amber | PPF 3 demonstrates reduction in timescale in processing times for major and locals The average time period for determining minor applications has increased over the figure reported in PPF2 |
| Project management: offer of processing agreements (or other agreed project plan) made to prospective applicants in advance of all major applications and availability publicised on planning authority website | Green | Fife continues to offer and promote the use of processing agreements for all Major and some Local applications. Advice is available on the website and the service is actively promoted by case officers and as part of the pre- application process. Where appropriate, further promotion takes place during the processing of the application. |
| Early collaboration with applicants and consultees on planning applications: - availability and promotion of pre-application discussions for all prospective applications - clear and proportionate requests for supporting information | Green | Fife Council has a pro-active approach to pre application discussions and a charge is currently made for this service. Customer comments are included in the PPF on this aspect. |
| Legal agreements: conclude (or reconsider) applications within 6 months of resolving to | Amber | The reduction in legacy cases has been a focus during 2013/14 and many of these featured unfinished legal agreements. Moving forward reports of handling now identify the appropriate period within which an agreement is expected to be concluded (generally 3 or 6 months). |
| Enforcement charter updated / re-published | Green | Third version issued in 2013 |
| Continuous improvement: - show progress/improvement in relation to PPF National Headline Indicators | Green | Performance monitoring has resulted in a significant reduction in legacy cases across the teams. |

Promoting the plan led system

| Performance Marker | RAG Status | Source/Evidence |
|--|------------|--|
| LDP (or LP) less than 5 years since adoption | Green | All three Local Plans adopted in 2012/2013. |
| Development plan scheme demonstrates next LDP: - on course for adoption within 5-year cycle - project planned and expected to be delivered to planned timescale | Green | Timetable included in PPF demonstrating revised timescale following progress with SESplan. LDP will be adopted within 5 year cycle. |
| Elected members engaged early (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation | Green | Additional consultation accommodated due to delay in SESplan timescale. Commentary in PPF3 explains member involvement in LDP this round |
| Cross-sector stakeholders, including industry, agencies and Scottish Government, engaged early (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation | Green | Additional consultation accommodated due to delay in SESplan timescale. Commentary in section 3.7 |
| Production of regular and proportionate policy advice, for example through SPGs, on (i) information required to support applications and (ii) expected developer contributions | Green | Development Plan Scheme (DPS) summarises policy development and changes since the previous DPS. Policy review, including supplementary guidance is part of LDP preparation involving input from development management. Policy changes are subject to assessment of change & implications. This covers examples (i) & (ii). |

Simplifying and streamlining

| Performance Marker | RAG Status | Source/Evidence |
|---|------------|--|
| Corporate working across services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit (e.g. protocols; joined-up services; single contact; joint pre-application advice) | Green | Development Management protocol, Partnership Management Agreement (PMA) with Edinburgh City, Network Rail re Planning/LBC for Forth Rail Bridge in context of UNESCO World Heritage submission. Coordinated and tailored assistance with Transport and Environment Services to assist delivery of Council renewable energy program. |
| Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge between authorities | Green | Evidenced in PPF 3 section 6.4.5 |

Delivering development

| Performance Marker | RAG Status | Source/Evidence |
|--|------------|---|
| Stalled sites/legacy cases: conclusion/withdrawal of planning applications more than one year old | Green | Evidence in PPF3 (Commentary on Decision Making in RAG report) Reducing number of applications more than one year old (from same time last year) |
| Developer contributions: clear and proportionate expectations - set out in development plan (and/or emerging plan,) and - in pre-application discussions | Green | Revised Financial Framework for Planning Obligations as Supplementary Planning Guidance has been approved September 2014. This exempts small sites and brownfield sites/ conversions from Education, Affordable Housing and Strategic Transportation Contributions to help simplify and speed the conclusion of legal agreements and accelerate development of smaller sites. Developer contributions are an integral part of all Pre Application Discussions |

3. Fife in Figures

Fife is a geographically large and economically diverse area and as a consequence the Planning Authority receives a wide variety of development proposals to consider and assess. It is one of the five 'busiest' Local Planning authorities in Scotland by volume of applications received.

In population terms Fife is the third largest local authority after Glasgow and Edinburgh, with a population of 360,000. The combination of Fife being the third largest authority in terms of population while also having substantial rural hinterland results in an application profile reflecting the complexities of a combined City authority with that of a rural one.

The Council has a 10-year capital investment plan (7 years left to run) in excess of £1bn. This covers investment in Council houses, schools, roads, leisure facilities and other Council assets. It includes acquisition, improvement and enhancement and new-build projects and an ambitious capital investment plan that is "front-loaded" to assist in mitigating some of the negative impacts of the economic downturn.

Fife Council employs 33 chartered town planners within the wider planning portfolio, which in turn employs a total of 84 staff from a range of professional and technical backgrounds. Together the staff lead, manage implement and advise on the planning functions, whilst also contributing to the significantly wider remit of Enterprise Planning and Protective Services.

In terms of the Development Management function of the Planning Portfolio:-

- In the period 1st April 2013 to 31st March 2014, 2411 applications were received and 2408 applications were determined.
- 62% of all applications are submitted online.
- 77% of applications are validated within 3 working days
- The Council issues an average of 20,000 neighbour notification letters annually.
- 91% of planning applications were determined by officers under the scheme of delegation
- 94% of planning applications were approved, this being a significant increase on the figure of 88% achieved last year.

- 903 householder applications were determined and 77% of these decisions were issued within two months.
- 33 Local electricity generation applications were decided with an average decision time of 32.8 weeks.
- The DPEA determined 29 appeals, of which 18 were allowed, which represents a 62% success rate compared to the Scottish average of 46%.
- The Council determined 51 local reviews and 27 of the decisions were overturned or had the conditions varied. (53%).



In economic development terms:-

- Over the past 9 years, a total of 5449 jobs have been created. The number of jobs figure submitted in PPF 2 was a year on year average and the above noted figure for PPF 3 is an actual aggregated total.
- On average £81m per annum has been created through inward and mobile investment projects supported by Fife Council.
- In 2013/2014 the Invest in Fife Team attracted 10 investment projects to Fife, worth over £32.2 million and creating a total of 464 jobs.

The Fife Council Development Plan function can demonstrate:

- A strong, plan-led approach which has the core principles of the infrastructure planning framework requirements enshrined within the strategic development plans, the three Fife Local Plans and their related Financial Frameworks. This gives developers early clarity over likely levels of strategic planning requirements, specifically education and transportation obligations. This will be replaced during the PPF4 period with a single LDP and Planning Obligations SPG
- Draft supplementary planning guidance on ways to maintain an effective five year land supply of housing land was prepared and produced as part of the FIFEplan Main Issues Report consultation. This was approved in October 2013 and will form part of the FIFEplan LDP once adopted.
- Development of a Fife Infrastructure Investment Fund which will assist in the delivery of strategic infrastructure projects which are necessary to unlock proposed growth areas across Fife. The model is underpinned by the Planning Obligations Supplementary Guidance (SPG) which will be finalised in 2014/2015. This approach is consistent with Scottish Government guidance in Circular 3/2012 (Planning Obligations and Good Neighbour Agreements) and will be closely monitored as development progresses.

4. National Headline Indicators

Planning performance framework Annual Report 2013-2014

| Key Outcomes | 2013-2014 | 2012-2013 |
|--|---|---|
| Development Planning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • age of local/strategic development plan(s) (full years) <i>Requirement: less than 5 years</i> • development plan scheme: on track? (Y/N) | Area local plans 1-2 years Minerals Subject local plans 3 years No – due to SESplan delay | Area local plans 0-1 years Minerals Subject Local Plan-2 years No |
| Effective Land Supply and Delivery of Outputs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • effective housing land: 5 years supply Yes/No • effective housing land supply • housing approvals (sites of 5 units and more) • effective employment land supply • employment land take-up | No Not available* 1295 units 156.76 ha 36.47 ha <i>*This figure is not available at time of publication pending finalisation of discussions with Homes for Scotland. The final agreed figure will be published in October 2014.</i> | No 5,558 units 545 units 149.7 Ha 3.0 Ha |
| Development Management Project Planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • percentage of applications subject to pre-application advice • number of major applications subject to processing agreement or other project plan • percentage planned timescales met Decision-making <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • application approval rate • delegation rate | 9% 36 72% 93.6% 90.9% | 8% 28 79% 88% 90% |
| Decision-making timescales Average number of weeks to decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • major developments • local developments (non-householder) • householder developments | 49.7 19.5 8.1 | 55.5 21.2 7.2 |
| Enforcement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • time since enforcement charter published / reviewed (months) Requirement: review every 2 years • number of breaches identified / resolved | 1 55/213 | 0 84/349 |

Context and commentary on the national headline indicators

The current local government backdrop in terms of budget challenges and staffing pressures creates a challenging context in which to realise performance improvements. This challenge has been met by being more adaptive and responsive to changing circumstances through detailed workload monitoring and re-allocation of specific workloads when required. In addition, LEAN management has continued to provide further efficiencies in processing as staff have embraced the culture of continuous improvement.

The reduction in processing times for major and local applications from the PPF2 level is welcome but we recognise that we have more to do to reduce timescales further. The reduction in legacy cases has been an area of focus and this work will continue, ultimately creating more capacity for officers to deal with contemporary workload. Whilst periods of unplanned staff absence and vacancies continue to have an impact, the effects on performance have been reduced by improvements in productivity.

The increase in the number of applications subject to a processing agreement or project plan is welcomed and this demonstrates our commitment to deliver on this key performance objective arising from PPF2. It is evident that the percentage of planned timescales met has dropped from 79% in PPF2 period to 72% in the

PPF3 reporting period. Whilst this is regrettable, it demonstrates that the relatively small number of major applications (25) on which this statistic is based can make it more volatile and sensitive. Nevertheless the reasons behind this reduction have been reviewed and lessons learned will be applied to the future processing of this type of application.

The percentage of applications approved has seen a significant increase over the PPF 2 figure and this reflects our commitment to customer engagement at the pre application stage and the improvements in the availability of customer guidance and informal advice which is provided verbally by officers. It is also a product of the Fife Council approach to working with applicants to resolve issues and work towards achieving a positive recommendation on applications wherever possible. Whilst this may lead to an increase in the length of time taken to determine some cases we consider this key to delivering on our clear commitment to put our customer at the centre of what we do and to promote and facilitate sustainable economic development.

The FIFEplan Main Issues Report was consulted on in January – March 2013. The additional work that required to be carried out on SESplan's housing land supply had implications for the FIFEplan work programme as Fife could not finalise the proposed Local Development Plan

until the additional SESplan guidance was produced and agreement reached on how much housing land each plan should provide. This external factor caused delay in the LDP work programme.

Previous editions of the Development Plan Scheme highlighted that the next stage programmed in FIFEplan's preparation after the Main Issues Report was the Proposed Local Development Plan which was scheduled for the end of 2013. This had to be delayed until the SESplan supplementary guidance was finalised and the housing land requirement for SESplan known.

The delay caused by the SESplan supplementary guidance had the positive benefit of allowing time for additional public consultation. The Council sought views on the proposed spatial strategy and the preferred new sites and reasonable alternatives for future housing, employment, and mixed use development over an 8 week consultation that ran between December 2013 and February 2014. The comments received have helped to inform final recommendations for the Proposed FIFEplan Local Development Plan. The Proposed Plan was approved by the Executive Committee in September 2014 for consultation. The consultation is programmed to start in October, and progress will be set out in PPF4.

5. Defining and measuring a high quality planning service

Enterprise, Planning and Protective Services takes the lead on the Fife Council agenda for economic regeneration. It does this by encouraging business development, assisting people into work and promoting high quality developments, including a wide range of employment and housing sites across Fife. The Service aims to develop the Fife Economy by assisting people into work and promoting high quality sustainable development for business and communities whilst protecting public health and consumer safety and balancing environmental contexts.

The Service is managed through three distinct portfolios who work effectively together:

- **Planning:** Performs a range of functions relating to all planning activities including processing applications and permissions, planning appeals and local reviews, road construction consents and strategic and local planning policy matters, enforcement, high hedges, and specialist planning and environmental advice such as urban design, natural heritage, and archaeology.
- **Business and Employability:** Leads on economic development and inward and mobile investments, town centre initiatives and strategic policy direction, and provides access

to employment through a programme of vocational training and a range of initiatives to assist disadvantaged groups in to work.

- **Protective Services:** Monitoring and inspection in the fields of Environmental Health, Trading Standards, Buildings Standards and Public Safety.

The creation of a single Planning Portfolio in 2013/2014 is a significant achievement which provides efficient and effective synergies for customers and staff. With all the planning functions under a single senior manager it is possible to benefit from all the specialist resources and skills being deployed together.

Within these three service portfolios, there are seven teams which provide a range of planning, economic and development activities across Fife:-

- Transportation, Enforcement and Minor Developments (minor and householder applications)
- Community Developments and Investment (local applications)
- Major Business and Customer Service (major applications)

- Development Plans
- Economy, Tourism and Town Centres
- Economic Development
- Building Standards and Public Safety

A detailed Service structure is included as Appendix 3

Council priorities

The Council Plan sets out the priorities for the next five years. The Council aims for 2017 are:

- Growing a vibrant economy
- Increasing opportunities and reducing poverty and inequality
- Improving quality of life in local communities
- Promoting a sustainable society
- Reforming Fife Council's services.

Of these priorities, Enterprise, Planning & Protective Services is identified as having lead responsibility for Growing a vibrant economy and the Service also has a key supporting role in relation to Improving quality of life in local communities.

These strategic priorities have been cascaded from the Council Plan to the Service Plan. The Service addresses the delivery of these priorities under the following themes:

- Business & Economy (Growing a vibrant economy)
- Extended Employment & Skills Opportunities (Growing a vibrant economy)
- Development, Place & Regeneration (Improving quality of life in local communities)
- Public Health & Consumer Protection (Improving quality of life in local communities)

- Effective Management of Strategic Assets and Resources (Reforming Fife Council's services)

Our vision for 2023 is for a vibrant local economy in Fife created through sustainable economic growth – where Fife's business environment inspires residents and businesses to provide private sector job opportunities, making Fife the best place to start and grow a business.

As Fife Council is responsible for planning or overseeing the delivery of much of the infrastructure and a range of services that affect businesses operation and growth, the Fife Economic Strategy (2013-2023) challenges the Council to examine the ways in which it interacts with businesses to make it as straightforward as possible to work with the Council.



6. Our planning achievements in 2013- 2014

Open for business

Fostering new economic development and making Fife the best place to do business is a key priority for Fife Council. The multiple roles and strands of service delivery which planning encompasses enable it to play a key role in co-ordinating and assisting the delivery of sustainable economic development and the co-location of different specialities in one building is assisting us to deliver multi-disciplinary approaches to achieve this objective.

Emphasising this way of working there continues to be involvement at strategic management level relating to all critical investment applications; this provides coordination, clarity and certainty across all related teams thus re-assuring investors and enabling Fife to compete as a location of choice for development. This is supported by the open door approach promoted by senior management with guaranteed accessibility and prioritisation for all major and inward investment proposals. The Head of Service is also represented on both the Housing and Education boards to provide planning advice and to ensure corporate collaboration and early direction as required.

The Priority Applications Team work closely with colleagues in economic development and the business community to prioritise all major and national category planning applications as well as those submitted for Fife's top 100 companies. The team delivers a planning service customised to meet the needs of this specific customer group. Fife Council Officers Network reinforces this close relationship whilst maintaining the requirement for an independent and objective regulatory approach

Key to this relationship is the continuing development of a project managed approach to major applications and those identified as a business priority. In 2013/2014 a number of important business investment projects have benefited from this including:

- 13/00750/FULL : A new three storey office building with car park for FMC in Dunfermline, providing 3345sq m of new office space to accommodate over 360 staff.
- 13/02204/FULL : The expansion of a brewery facility at Eden Brewery in Guardbridge supported the consolidation of a new business on a former employment site providing a total of 11 jobs.

- 13/00842/FULL : The construction of a new biomass plant for Quaker Oats near Cupar, which will significantly improve the efficiency of a Fife based multinational company by reducing the need to transport waste products off site whilst providing a new energy source
- 13/00573/FULL : The construction of a new storage facility for Babcock International in Rosyth providing 4680 sq m of additional storage for one of Fife's top 100 businesses
- 13/00172/FULL : The creation of a new distillery and visitor centre at Cambo outside Kingsbarns providing employment opportunities and visitor facilities in a redundant farm steading
- 13/00976/EIA : The extension to the sand and gravel quarry at Melville Gates Ladybank will provide for the extraction of 1.7 million tonnes of sand and gravel over a period of 17 years.

Building on the success of the Officers Network, we are now looking to expand this approach to prioritise and target business critical applications within the Community Developments and Investment Team, expanding and building on the principles established within the Priority Applications Team. This approach seeks to assist with the achievement of sustainable economic

development within the Small Medium Enterprise (SME) sector, where these applications are generally processed as local, but certainty and priority of timescales for determination are nevertheless critical for this business sector. Further coordinated work with colleagues in Economic Development and this business sector is a priority for PPF4. The availability of Processing Agreements within this area will also be promoted as one means to provide greater security and certainty to deliver economic growth.

Following the collapse of both Scottish Coal and ATH Ltd., a proactive planning, enforcement and legal approach provided the means for the new operator at two extensive open cast sites to continue the extraction of coal and to achieve site restoration. (Muirdean near Crossgates and St Ninians near Kelty).

The planning team took a lead role in resolving the coal site issues in conjunction with legal, finance, procurement and engineering colleagues. Positive enforcement notices and specific contractual arrangements with the new owners, Hargreaves Services PLC, were critical success factors. In addition the Council carried out its own lessons learned, audit and Committee scrutiny processes to ensure the planning monitoring, compliance and bonding arrangements remained fit for purpose.

The “Town Centres First approach” draws on expertise both in the community as well as economic development, development management, housing, and building standards colleagues. The delivery of this initiative will require new ways of working across many services and require a holistic approach to service delivery. In this, the Planning Service of Fife Council is well positioned to provide a lead role in facilitating and leading on this key political priority.

The delivery of critical national projects continue to be supported and assisted by Fife Council planning. Joint working across the service to provide worker accommodation and local support infrastructure is key to deliver the completion of the bridge on schedule.

The new Queensferry crossing looking North towards Fife



On-going cross service working continues to deliver the Fife Schools programme with regulatory processes aligned with project delivery timescales. The second of these new format high schools, at Auchmuty in Glenrothes opened in August 2013, whilst the new Burntisland Primary School was substantially completed, following a site start in 2013, ready for the first intake of pupils in August 2014.

In a similar vein, cross service working has provided an enhanced and streamlined delivery mechanism for Fife Council's ambitious affordable housing programme, underpinning the project aspirations for the delivery of 2700 affordable housing units on sites across Fife by May 2017. To date the programme has delivered 670 units on site. Recent planning permissions issued through the Priority Applications team include:

- 13/03312/FULL Change of use and alteration of office and erection of 4 storey building to form 18 flatted dwellings at County Buildings, Cupar.
- 13/03297/FULL Erection of 26 "extra care" housing units at Ostlers Way Kirkcaldy.
- 13/03221/FULL Erection of 31 dwellings at Orebank Terrace, Thornton.

The service adopts a multiple strand proactive approach to engagement with the development industry, which includes regular liaison with specific interest groups including those involved in housing construction and promoting the development of local businesses as well as regular engagement with the top 100 businesses



in Fife's as part of our Business Relationship Management Scheme. To support the business focus of the Priority Applications Team, the Service Manager responsible for the team is also relationship manager for 3 of the top 100 companies.

Through consultation with colleagues in Housing and Neighbourhood Services and Education Services we have agreed a proportionate application of the requirements of the Fife Financial Framework in relation to contributions from developers. In order to assist small scale developments and therefore assist small and medium business involved in the construction sector, only developments of 6 or more housing

units will be required to contribute payments towards the financial framework. This is kept under review and will be further updated in 2014.

The creation and activation of the Fife Council on line wind turbine live mapping system was the result of collaborative working with colleagues in Development Plans, Development Management, and IT to deliver a continuously updated interactive tool which provides a GIS based system illustrating wind turbine proposals in the planning system and those approved. It assists both local communities and developers to determine the locations and extent of this form of development across Fife.

High quality development on the ground.

Our commitment to achieving high quality development is key to the delivery of successful planning outcomes for Fife and this includes the on-going need to protect and secure the extensive built heritage of Fife. This is achieved by accommodating carefully managed change within our many conservation areas and historic places. In addition, there is a clear focus on the objective of securing the future architectural heritage of Fife through attaining the highest possible standards of design for new development. This involves ensuring positive engagement with specialist urban design advisors and Architecture and Design Scotland. These urban design inputs are extensively used to improve and influence final design solutions.

The following examples and case studies illustrate those areas of collaboration and the application of specialist skills within the portfolio to achieve quality of design and high quality places on the ground. Fife's Historic environment both helps to define the character of the Kingdom and plays an important role in its economy. Achieving the correct balance between conservation, preservation, and development is a key role of the planning portfolio.

Environmental Planning: *Mainstreaming the Historic Environment*

The management of the built and buried historic environment, the role of heritage in place-making and the promotion of heritage-led regeneration are all key elements of Fife's approach to culturally sustainable development. Indeed, the historic environment contributes much both to the quality of place and to local distinctiveness.



Crail Harbour

In-house archaeological and conservation specialists ensure that the historic environment is a consideration in every planning decision made.

Innovative approaches to project work, aimed at better linking heritage with economics, serve both to protect and enhance Fife's unique built heritage and to promote the historic environment as a cultural, educational and recreational resource. Just some of the projects that delivered real, immediate and tangible investment in Fife's historic environment in 2013/14 included:

- Anstruther Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme & Townscape Heritage Initiative (£2.35m investment 2012- 2017)
- Cupar Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme & Townscape heritage Initiative (£6.5m investment 2014- 2019)

- Dunfermline community archaeological excavation project (60k Lottery funding)
- Forth Bridge World Heritage bid
- Wemyss Caves Working Group (20k funding for laser scanning)
- Kirkton Church conservation & interpretation project (80k award pending)
- North Queensferry Town Pier Coastal Communities Fund bid (500k award pending)
- Ten Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans were completed.



Excavations inside the Hay Fleming Library, St Andrews.
Site of a late medieval Trintish Church cemetery

- Specialist conservation advice shaped the determination of 479 planning applications and further advice was provided in response to 162 enquiries.
- Archaeological input shaped the determination of 67 planning applications and led to 12 excavations and two standing building surveys. Advice was provided in response to a further 173 enquiries.
- 120 news sites were added to the Fife Sites and Monument Records (SMR) and 210 site entries were updated.

Effective engagement with A+Ds through the Fife Sustainable Placemaking Workshop. This event emphasised the key role that A+Ds has in assisting Planning Authorities achieve urban design objectives.

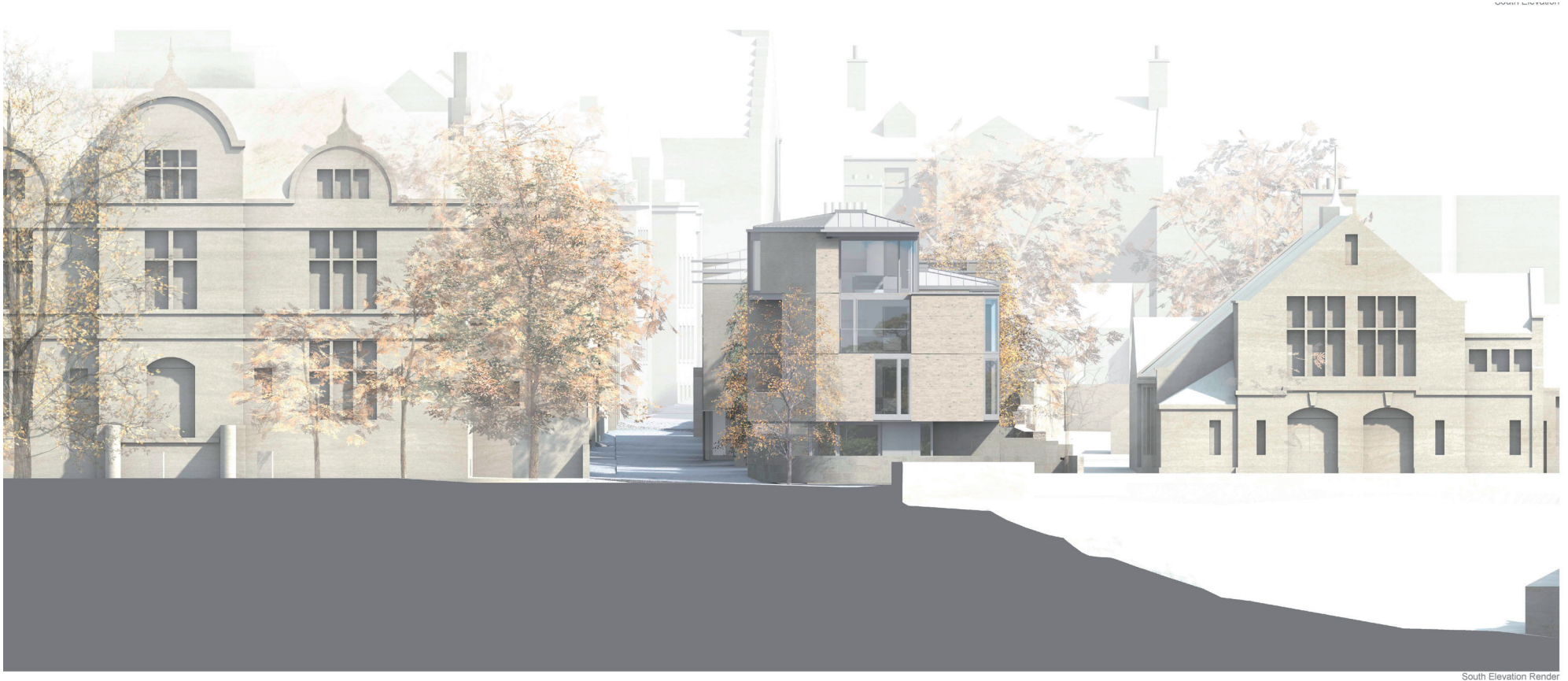


FIFE SUSTAINABLE PLACEMAKING WORKSHOP REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2013



Case study: Woodburn Lane St Andrews, A contemporary development in a historic environment



This case study represents the redevelopment of a long term vacant site, which had been the subject of several planning applications, and extensive discussion and negotiation with the Planning Service and various developers for over a decade. Following the approval of an innovative and challenging contemporary

scheme for this sensitive location in the central St Andrews Outstanding Conservation Area, work commenced on the construction of 14 town houses in 2013. Resolution of the development solution for this site evidenced:

- Close collaboration between, Development Management, Transportation, Built Heritage, and Urban design colleagues was a critical success factor.
- Implementation of the Designing Streets agenda by reinvigorating a little used back lane.



- Achieving innovative contemporary design in a challenging and sensitive historic environment.
- Addressing concerns of neighbours and conservation groups.
- Collaborative working with the developer to achieve high quality design approach and securing the implementation of a design competition winning scheme.
- Securing the provision of financial contributions to fund affordable housing in the housing market area.



Certainty

Consistency and certainty are key objectives to ensure the residents, and the business community of Fife can make informed decisions and plan for the future; which frequently involves significant financial and personal commitments. In addition, applicants, neighbours, and those close to development sites need to know how and why decisions are made.

We actively promote the use of processing agreements by;

- making information which highlights the benefits of processing agreements available on our website
- encouraging the use of agreements as part of all pre-application advice issued
- officers providing informal advice to developers on the benefits of processing agreements
- where agreements are not in place at the start of the application process and additional information or amendments are required, again advising the applicant of the benefits of proceeding under the auspices of an agreement.

The availability and use of processing agreements are recognised to be a key element to provide certainty and delivery of planning decisions within an agreed timescale, thus ensuring that key business decisions can be made with a reasonable degree of security. While we actively promote the use of PAs, our

tailored support process for major and critical business applications also provides an additional mechanism to deliver certainty in the planning process for major business investment. Alongside this approach we are developing and expanding the use of validation standards to provide further certainty and front loading of the process to assist business investment.

We have created strong links across the wider Service and with other Council Services to ensure greater alignment with the strategic objectives in terms of economic development and to achieve sustainable economic investment and growth

We monitor the effectiveness of the scheme of delegation to ensure it is up to date and also provides the most efficient means to process applications. We publish details of the scheme of delegation and Committee meeting schedules and information on our website.

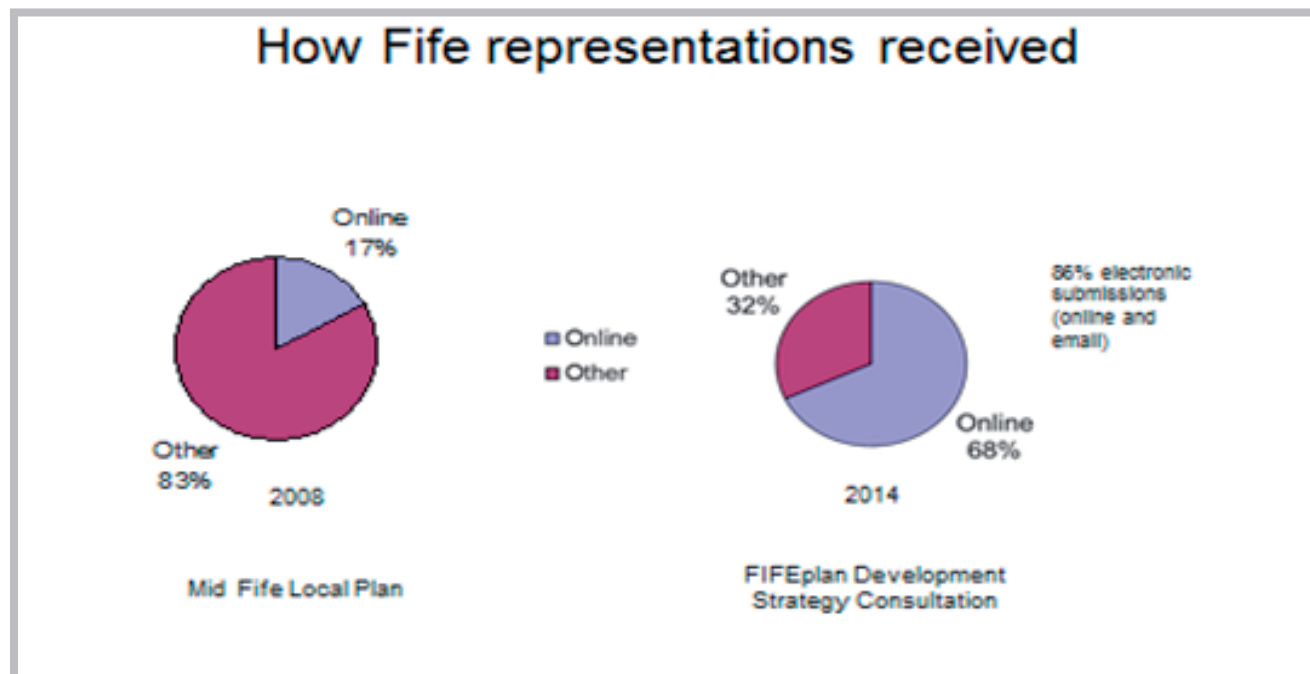
We publish detailed guidance providing developers with clear advice on the likely requirements for developer contributions associated with different types of development proposals.

We are developing protocols with our key consultees and key agencies. Work has commenced on framing an agreement with our colleagues in legal services and this work will be developed further in PPF4.

As part of our processing of applications, we routinely publish all consultation responses and all representations received as soon as practical during the processing of the application. Correspondence with the applicant or agent and any additional information submitted is also made available as and when it is submitted. This greatly enhances the openness and legibility of the process, allowing both applicants and the community to understand and participate fully in the assessment process.

Communications, engagement and customer service

We have fully embraced electronic working and encourage electronic communication. This allows us to work more efficiently by avoiding the need to re-key and record information in different systems and enables us to make more of our information accessible to all of our customers and stakeholders. It also supports mobile and flexible working by making information accessible at any location. We have achieved a significant channel shift towards electronic communication and this can be evidenced in a number of ways such as the percentage of development plan representations which are now submitted in electronic form.



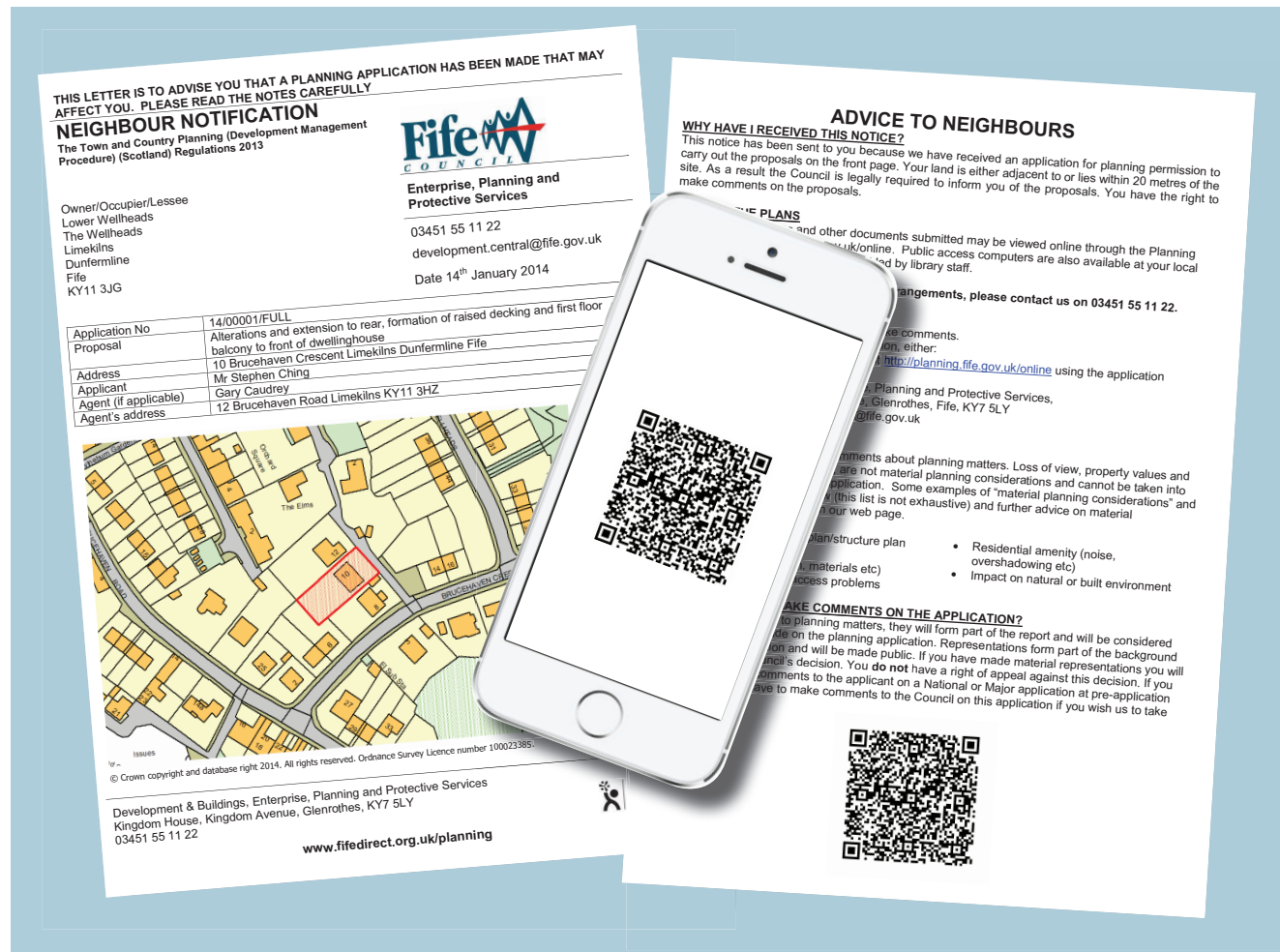
Planning QR links:

We have introduced consultee access software which allows consultees to comment on applications directly, using the online portal. This has reduced the time we spent re-recording information on other systems and also allows the consultee to manage their outstanding responses. To date 8 consultees are using the system.

We maintain a regular agents database of approx. 350 contacts and communicate with this group approximately every two months. This allows us to provide updates when we introduce changes to our processes or guidance and to notify the group when legislative change is introduced.

We continue to develop the use of new technology and social media to promote the service and the assistance available to customers. We have introduced QR codes to ease online access to information and now include these on all neighbour notifications and site notices.

We have completed a long term exercise to catalogue and index our archive files, making it easier and quicker for us to provide full planning history information to meet service requests from our customers. This has been further improved by making our paper plan registers (1975 -1999) available electronically as part of our document management system.



In August 2013, we held a Community Council Event, highlighting the work of development management and in particular showcasing the online planning system. The event attracted representation from about 30% of our Community Councils as well as 25% of Elected Members. On the night we assisted delegates with setting up user accounts and defining saved searches to encourage greater levels of self service for planning information.

In September 2013 the main theme of our annual staff development day was customer focus. This kick started the establishment of our Customer Focus Group and we have worked with the group to build the capacity to take forward a major customer focus initiative across the Planning Portfolio. This is now moving into a cultural change phase through the initiation of a Customer Focus Project, which will be featured in PPF4.

Throughout 2013 Fife Council has participated as a key partner with the Improvement Service and Tellmesotland in a project led by Aberdeen City to develop and implement the PINs project (planning information notices) The work undertaken by Fife Council was acknowledged by the Improvement Service as pivotal to the delivery of this key development of the eplanning project:

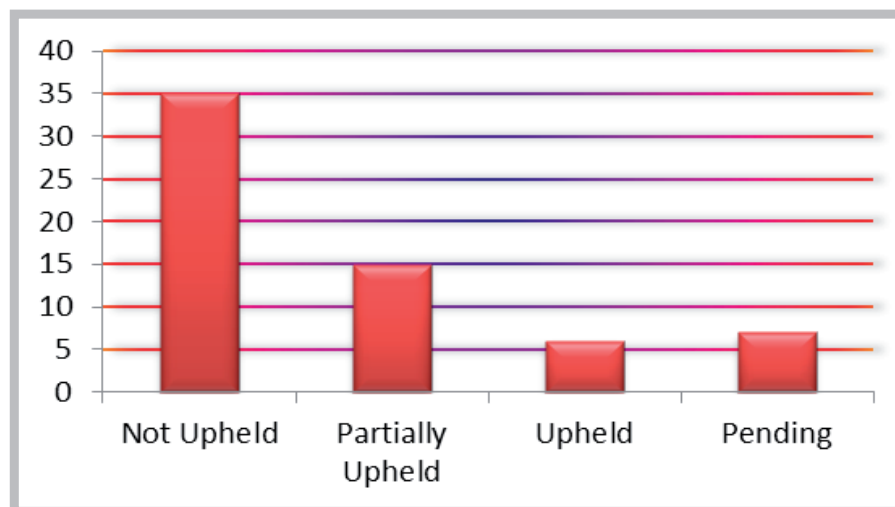
"Firstly, just to acknowledge the excellent support and effort from Fife Council with a special recognition to Alan and his Planning colleagues which has seen some of the best exemplars of Planning Notices presented on Tellmesotland. Alan has personally been very supportive in many other practical ways such as presenting at PINs Steering Group meetings as well as being a champion at other stakeholder meetings and events. This truly defines partnership working and collaboration to improve the channels of information to citizens and communities across Fife and beyond.

As you know, through your involvement with the development of the Generic XML adaptor led by Aberdeen City Council, this has proved successful and will be used as a catalyst for other Council's to adopt this approach. Glasgow City and West Dunbartonshire Councils are currently working with us to adopt the XML for uploading Traffic Notices."

Tom Mc Hugh, Improvement Service.

During 2013 a total of 63 complaints were recorded for Development Management out of a total of 2408 applications determined during the same period..

Development management complaint outcomes 2013



More than half (55%) of the complaints we received in 2013 were not upheld and less than 8% were fully upheld. However, we fully recognise the value of every complaint we receive in terms of providing us with the opportunity to improve. Where a complaint highlights issues in our processes or our approach to communication we adopt a 'lessons learned' approach and use this to inform change and improvement, addressing the issues raised.

Examples of actions we have taken because of customer feedback in the last year are:-

- All staff involved in the development management process received Tier 1 Data Protection Training and whilst Tier 2 training is ongoing, more than 50% of staff have completed this.
- Information and guidance on our website was re-drafted to clarify the application assessment process, provide a better explanation of material planning considerations and improve guidance on submitting representations.
- We have introduced letters advising agents, applicants and those who have submitted representations at the point when the application is included on the agenda for a Committee meeting.
- We have introduced a quality assurance check for the neighbour notification process.

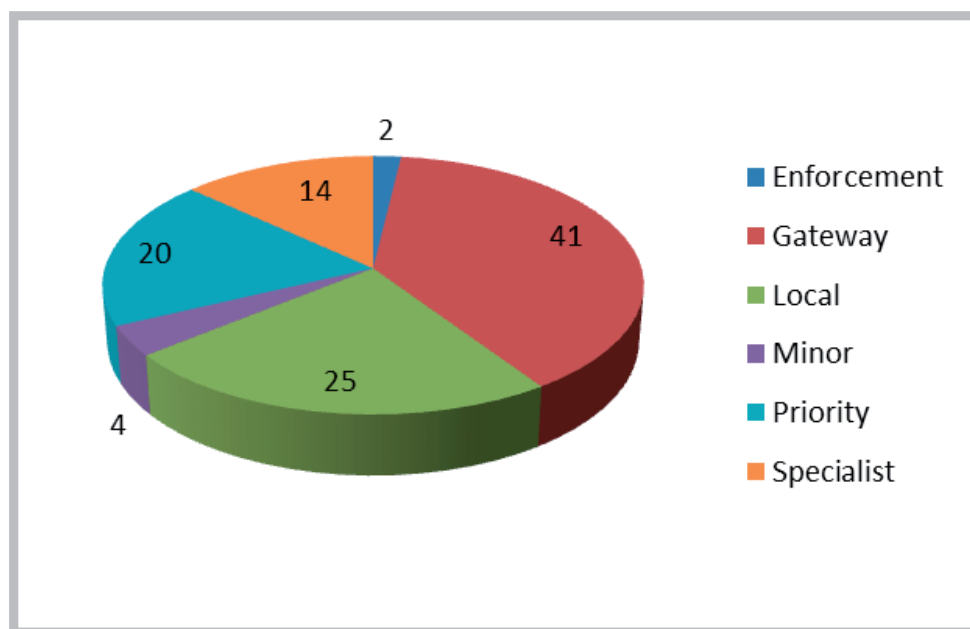
- We produced improved guidance on accessing information online and delivered a number of workshops to assist Fife Council staff outwith EPPS, elected Members and community groups to find the information they need.
- A major improvement has been made in terms of the information available online relating to wind turbine applications. The live wind energy mapping provides up to date information on all planning applications for wind turbines in Fife which are under consideration, at appeal or approved.
- Senior councillors and senior managers developed a single Customer Improvement Action Plan based on customer complaints and lessons learned. 25 identified actions are being progressed as a result of this exercise.
- Two specific complaints led us to review and update our Planning Customer Guidance notes on Non Material Variations and Dormers.
- The Service Leadership Group now monitors all complaints on a weekly basis as part of a comprehensive and ongoing process to learn from customer feedback.
- During the PPF4 period we will be introducing a survey of applicants at the determination of each application.

106 compliments were received from a wide range of our customers, although a significant proportion were from businesses, householders and agents involved in the planning application process. Examples of compliments received are noted below:-

"Many thanks for the quick response and also for your professionalism and attentiveness throughout the project"

"As you may appreciate, this has been a complex and lengthy application with many stakeholders to consider for both ourselves and also the Council. This can be problematic at times. However throughout this application, I must say that I and my client have found the planners to be very professional, accessible and proactive which has been very helpful. It is good to have open and constructive working relationships with officers. We look forward to doing more business in Fife"

Development management compliments received by function 2013



Efficient and effective decision making.

Regular reviews of the appropriateness of the scheme of delegation take place to ensure maximum service efficiency. A new scheme will be completed in late summer 2014 and will be reported on in PPF 4. Fife Council maintains a strong commitment to democratic input into the planning process and this is reflected in the scheme of delegation. It is anticipated that this will assist in improving decision timescales.

The three new planning committees were introduced last year and are now well established and take all decisions relating to planning applications which are not delegated to officers. This change was designed to ensure that Fife has the correct democratic structures in place to facilitate efficient decision making replacing the previous arrangement where planning formed a part of the responsibility of 7 Area Committees. A report in to the effectiveness and performance of the planning committees is being prepared in late 2014 and the outcomes will be summarised in PPF4.

Effective management structures

Planning is a key function within Fife's corporate structure. It is recognised as an essential component of development delivery and implementation and complementing the Council's wider goals and objectives set out in the single outcome agreement the Fife Community Plan and the Fife Economic Strategy.

Our current team structure aligns closely with key customer groupings, allowing us to respond to householders, community groups, local developers and major employers in a way which meets the differing needs of each group.

We have committed to LEAN management over a period of 4 years, thus empowering our staff and creating a culture of continuous improvement. LEAN Rapid Improvement Events provide a focussed and inclusive means of resolving problems and ensuring that processes continue to meet our needs.

This work has been recognised through the achievement of a Bronze Certificate in the 2014 COSLA Awards in the Category for Service Innovation and Improvement.

We are leading on driving efficiency by reducing transaction costs and overheads. Part of this has meant maximising the benefits derived from mobile and flexible working arrangements and these are currently in place for 87% of development management staff.

We are continuing to review and develop processes and procedures: flexible cross team approaches are being developed and applied to address potential delays in processing applications and to fulfil short term project delivery. Co-location of teams provides more opportunities to expand this approach to increase resilience and ensure minimum disruption to service delivery.

In addition proactive management is leading to a reduction in the number of legacy local cases and this has released capacity to enable re allocation of applications, improving resilience. The timescales for processing Major and Local applications have seen a reduction over the PPF 2 figure and we aim to build on this in 2014/15.

An ethos of resolution of applications through negotiation exists in Fife Council, reflective of enabling sustainable economic development. From validation through to determination Development Management are committed to working with applicants to try to obtain a resolution for their applications. While this added value approach can lead to higher than average times for determination, it is recognised however that this approach cannot be at the expense of ensuring an efficient service and commitment to determining applications wherever possible within as short a period as practical.

Financial management and local governance.

During 2013/2014 the economic downturn continued to adversely affect the Fife income levels for planning, as the number of applications remained lower than in earlier years. Fife Council monitors the revenue budget by working closely with our financial support team, regular monthly meetings or our internal budget scrutiny group and through reporting to Committee.

Work is being carried out in the Planning teams to analyse transaction costs at a detailed level. This work is being carried out in conjunction with the Heads of Planning Scotland benchmarking exercise.

The specific financial details in financial year 2013- 2014 were:

- In 2013/14 planning fee income required corporate financial assistance of £494,000 to maintain planned budget levels.
- The Planning portfolio of EPPS has a gross expenditure budget of £4,800,000 and is delivered by 78fte employees.
- The net expenditure is £3,198,000 and there is an income target of £1,602,000, derived mostly from planning application fee income of £1,413,000.
- Since the start of the economic recession, there has been a significant drop in this income which previously ran at c.£1,700,000 per year.

- This drop in income levels is compounded by the need to make savings, so strong financial management is essential in the current climate.

On-going budget efficiencies mean that in 2014/2015 further revenue budget savings will be required and that will require our continuing commitment to adapt to change and find innovative ways of providing our services.

Culture of continuous improvement.

The evidence and actions carried forward from PPF2 and the outcomes and initiatives evidenced in this report clearly demonstrate that the Planning Portfolio of Fife Council operates with continuous improvement embedded as a business as usual concept. We not only are committed to deliver continuous improvement because it is in the Fife Council plan as a key driver and objective, but fundamentally because it is a business necessity to maintain an effective and efficient planning service for the people of Fife. Our approaches to the scheme of delegation, cross service working, new initiatives to encourage and facilitate customer consultations and contacts, amongst many others; clearly demonstrate that we look to improve through learning and experience, and grow and change from mistakes as well as proactively adapt to new business realities and environments, whether these be legislative, political or economic.

In considering any changes to processes or procedures we apply Prince 2 project management principles and are committed to implementing “lean” business process reviews to ensure that we are responsive to pressures for change and actively involve both those delivering our services, and those who are affected by changes to those processes and subsequently the decisions and outcomes arising from them.

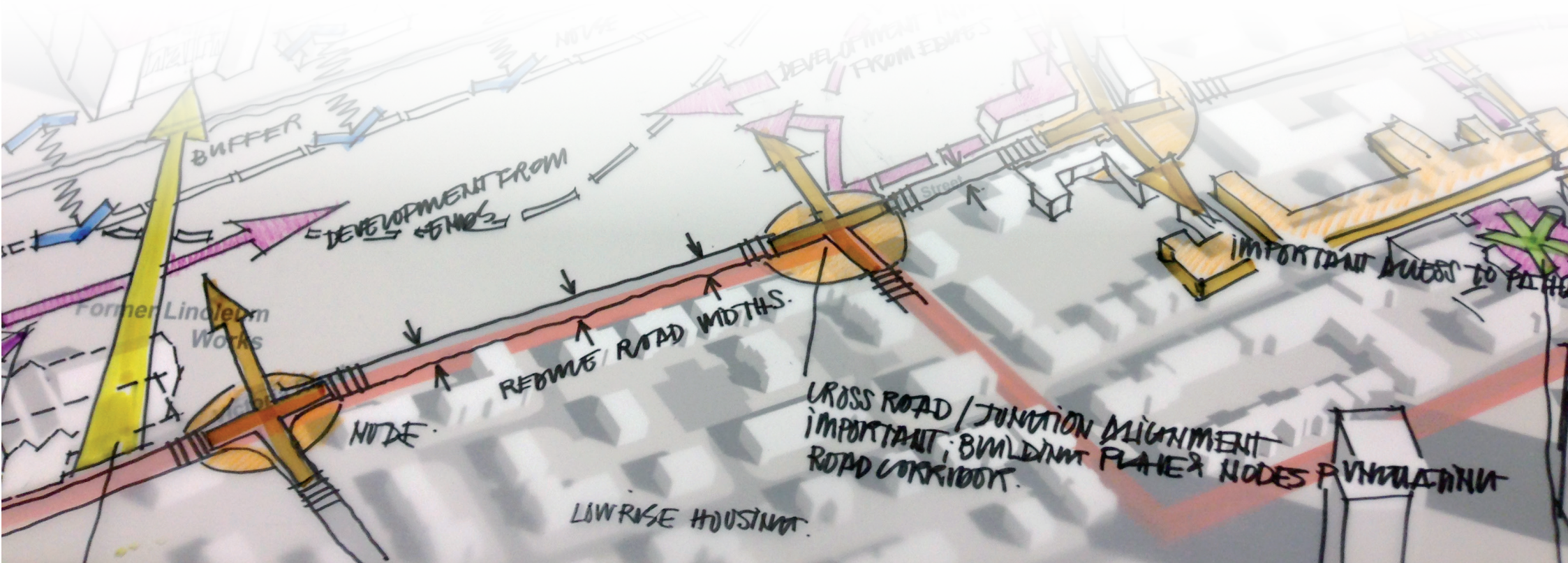
Benchmarking with authorities with similar application profiles is a priority for 2014-2015, to ensure continued improvements to performance.

As part of the Service’s drive to manage customer expectations and relationships, the Development Plan Team has developed the FIFEplan LDP Toolkit. Managing customer expectations and relationships is one of the two central themes of the toolkit along with project management.

The toolkit, which was shortlisted for the Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning 2013 aims to manage and meet customer expectations by looking at the format, ease of use and accessibility of plans and information. It concentrates on:

- Fewer words/more graphics
- Online interactive plans
- A variety of tools to interact – both with customers and the council (examples/case studies can be provided)

The toolkit is built around having continuous dialogue throughout the plan-making process and not just at the set-piece consultations. A suite of tools are used that promote two-way dialogue.



7. Supporting evidence

Sections 5 and 6 of this report were compiled drawing on evidence from a variety of published sources. Full details of our key publications, customer guidance and planning procedures are available on

[↗ Fife Direct](#)

Specific links to key information are provided below:-

- [↗ Development Management Guidance Notes and Advice](#)
- [↗ Fife Local Development Plan Main Issues Report](#)
- [↗ Fife Council Development Plan Scheme 2014](#)
- [↗ Fife Development Plans and Supplementary Guidance](#)
- [↗ Fife Conservation and Listed Buildings Information and Guidance](#)
- [↗ Fife Wind Turbine Locations](#)
- [↗ Fife Housing Land Audit](#)
- [↗ Fife Core Paths Plan](#)
- [↗ Fife Planning Committees](#)

[↗ Fife Council Scheme of Delegation](#)

[↗ Fife Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement](#)

[↗ Fife Council Plan](#)

[↗ Non Material Variation Customer Guidance](#)

[↗ Dormer Customer Guidance](#)

Other relevant web links include:

- [↗ Scottish Government Planning Authority Performance Statistics](#)
- [↗ DPEA website](#)
- [↗ Directorate for Planning and Environmental Appeals Annual Review 2013-2014.](#)

8. Service improvements - 2012/2013 and 2013/2014:

In 2012/2013 we continued to embed the new planning and building processes and procedures and to prioritise our work in assisting developers recover from the impacts of the economic downturn. In 2013/2014 fresh challenges were encountered in relation to continued reduced public sector funding and we reviewed current resources, and processes and how we managed our business.

Delivery of our service improvements and actions in 2013/2014 is set out in the following table:

Table 3: Delivery of our service improvement actions from PPF2

| Committed Improvements and Actions | RAG status |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on Performance improvement identified within the Key Performance Markers focus set out earlier in the PPF | Achieved and embedded as business as usual. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance targets and achieved performance for all application types to be further scrutinised and improved upon. | Further improvements needed |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New benchmarking arrangements to be introduced for the SOLACE “family” to identify “best in class” and to identify and implement any lessons learned/new initiatives for Fife. | Implemented and underway |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The creation of a new planning portfolio to bring together all the statutory planning functions and specialist planning activities into a single unified team. | Completed |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The implementation of an electronic Planning Obligations Tracker (POT) together with a cross-service focus on all legal agreements. | Further improvements and developments on-going towards full implementation |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The setting up of a new Customer Focus Group based on specific lessons learned and customer feedback. | Superseded by launch of Customer Project. To be fully implemented in 2014/15. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processing agreements to be positively promoted and to be used for all major applications (and other local applications as appropriate). | Limited uptake is still evident. On-going promotion and development of new methods of communication |

In addition to the on-going improvements identified as amber above we will carry out the following improvements in 2014-2015.

- Continuing to focus on Key Performance Markers identified by Scottish Government/ COSLA will set the agenda for continuous improvement and implementation of delivery of customer focussed initiatives.
- Our new Customer Focus Project will enhance Fife’s Planning Service by delivering a systematic approach to listening to our customers, considering their views and responding to their feedback.
- Performance targets for all application types will be scrutinised and improved upon. Developing and implementing strategic approaches to managing caseloads to improve service delivery.

- Continue to explore and develop new initiatives aimed at increasing engagement of the people of Fife with Planning. Development Management and Development Plans are proactively implementing opportunities created by new technologies and media to engage communities and individuals.
- Develop and build on the benefits of co-location and the formation of a single Planning portfolio to promote sustainable economic development.
- Targeted promotion of processing agreements to the business sector and Major applications.
- Formalisation of Protocols with internal consultees and external agencies.
- Initiation of “Business Pages” online available through Fife Direct web site, providing a coordinated one stop online shop for new business. This provides a cross service single information point providing guidance and advice to new, or expanding existing businesses. Information provides clarity and certainty relating to all regulatory processes, such as development management, transportation, licensing, housing, etc. In addition information on grants, licensing, and business accommodation availability and assistance is accessible from a single site. Appendix 5. (Sept 2014)
- Appointment of a specialist affordable housing planner to focus and prioritise the delivery of affordable housing across Fife.
- Preparation of wind turbine validation standards.
- Maintain and develop active participation of staff in relevant benchmarking and improvement, and professional bodies and organisations: SOLACE, HOPS, RTPi, Improvement Service etc. Active participation in consultation and policy formulation through Scottish Govt.
- Implementation of new Non Material Variation process including notification of neighbours and objectors as standard practice.
- Implementation of new standardised and clearer timescales for public comments to be made on applications.
- Continuing to innovate to improve processing systems and procedures and lead practice through benchmarking with other authorities and publicising successes.
- Introduction of Development Management desk duty planning advisor to assist householder/minor applicants to augment the existing appointment service and that for Priority business applicants. This will introduce a bespoke three tier advice service delivering assistance; effectively aligned with the hierarchy of planning applications: Minor, Local, Major.
- Formalise validation standards for wind turbine applications and investigate the potential opportunities for streamlining the validation and processing of renewable energy developments to improve processing times.
- Raising the profile of Planning through participation in awards programmes.
- We will seek ways to engage with customer groups currently not actively engaged in our Planning processes.

9. Conclusions

Fife Council provides Planning, Economic Development and Environmental Services at a consistently high level as evidenced by developer, applicant and customer feedback. During 2013/2014 it has performed well in changing circumstances with some staff reductions, further internal team changes, and on-going budgetary implications arising from the economic downturn. Notwithstanding this period of significant change and budgetary constraint, the main focus of the service continues to be on making Fife the best place for business and sustainable economic growth, and our outcomes based on effective structures and processes can demonstrate a clear commitment to delivering that agenda.

Hand in hand with the approach to sustainable development, while continuing to operate through challenging times we remain focussed on proactively engaging with our customers and learning from their feedback to improve our processes and how we deliver our services to the people of Fife. Customer based outcomes and learning how to provide a better service for the people of Fife is a key aim for the implementation of outcomes from PPF 3 and also will be a major element of PPF 4.

Key highlights in the 2013/2014 period have included:

- A continuing and successful track record of fast tracking large scale inward investments to planned project timescales.
- Complete up to date development plan coverage.
- Development and implementation of the FIFEplan LDP Toolkit.
- Demonstrating best practice and benchmarking with other authorities and organisations.
- Service Improvements derived from Lessons Learned.
- Active participation in Scottish Government consultation exercises.
- Utilisation of new technology to develop innovative approaches to customer consultation and receiving feedback.
- Ongoing staff development and training.
- Reduction in “on hand” case load of local and minor applications.
- Town Centres First Approach

- Development of targeted processing approach to Small Medium Enterprise (SME) Business customers’ planning applications through the Officer’s Network.

Areas which have been identified for further focussed improvements during 2014/2015 include meeting with customers who have experienced low levels of customer satisfaction in dealing with us and learning from their experiences and views.

Fife Council considers that the PPF approach to performance and outcomes is a sound and appropriate approach which it wishes to consolidate and improve where necessary. Any subsequent suggestions for change will be submitted to the Heads of Planning Scotland and the Scottish Government for further discussion and consideration in rolling forward the PPF for 2014/2015.

Contact and Communication

This PPF has not covered every aspect of Fife Council's performance on planning matters and it has not listed all the different team achievements and outputs. It has focussed on the higher level and more obvious achievements as required by the PPF template.

Fife Council welcomes comments about the services provided, suggestions for improvements and endorsements of good practice.

If you wish to provide specific comments or you require any further information on the contents of the PPF, the available supporting evidence or you wish to enquire about other areas of performance and achievement then please contact:

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Appendix 1: Official Statistics - Decision making timescales

| Category | Total number of decisions 2013-2014 | Average timescale (weeks) | |
|---|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------|
| | | 2013-2014 | 2012-2013 |
| Major developments | 25 | 49.7 | 55.5 |
| Local developments (non-householder) | 859 | 19.5 | 21.2 |
| • Local: less than 2 months | (42.6%) | | |
| • Local: more than 2 months | (57.4%) | | |
| Householder developments | 903 | 8.1 | 7.2 |
| • Local: less than 2 months | (76.6%) | | |
| • Local: more than 2 months | (23.4%) | | |
| Housing developments | 10 | | 62.6 |
| Major | 215 | 65.1 | 28.9 |
| Local housing developments | | 35.5 | |
| • Local: less than 2 months | (19.5%) | | |
| • Local: more than 2 months | (80.5%) | | |
| Business and industry | | | 21.8 |
| Major | 2 | 15.9 | 13.2 |
| Local business and industry | 161 | 15 | |
| • Local: less than 2 months | (42.9%) | | |
| • Local: more than 2 months | (57.1%) | | |
| EIA developments | 8 | 56.1 | 76.6 |
| Other consents* | 621 | 8.9 | 8.6 |
| Planning/legal agreements** | 51 | 91.2 | 58.2 |
| Local reviews | 51 | 16.4 | 16.3 |

Decision-making: local reviews and appeals

| Type | Total number of decisions | Original decision upheld | | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|------|-----------|------|
| | | 2013-2014 | | 2012-2013 | |
| | | No. | % | No. | % |
| Local reviews | 51 | 24 | 47.1 | 42 | 47.6 |
| Appeals to Scottish Ministers | 29 | 11 | 37.9 | 40 | 63.1 |

Enforcement Activity

| | 2013-2014 | 2012-2013 |
|------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Cases taken up | 55 | 50 |
| Breaches identified | 139 | 84 |
| Cases resolved | 213 | 349 |
| Notices served*** | 3 | 22 |
| Reports to Procurator Fiscal | 0 | 0 |
| Prosecutions | 0 | 0 |

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

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

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

Appendix 2: Fife workforce and financial information

The information requested in this section is an integral part of providing the context for the information in parts 1-5. Staffing information should be a snapshot of the position on 31 March. Financial information should relate to the full financial year.

| | Tier 1 | Tier 2 | Tier 3 | Tier 4 |
|--------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Head of Planning Service | | | 1 | |

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

| | | DM | DP | Enforcement | Other |
|-------------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|-------------|----------|
| Managers | No. Posts | 6.5 | 6.0 | 0.5 | 2.0 |
| | Vacant | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Main grade posts | No. Posts | 21.5 | 8.0 | 0 | 3.5 |
| | Vacant | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.5 |
| Technician | No. Posts | 5.0 | 3.0 | 5.0 | 0 |
| | Vacant | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Office Support/Clerical | No. Posts | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Vacant | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL | | 39 | 17.0 | 5 | 5 |

| Staffing profile (DM & DP Teams) | Number |
|----------------------------------|--------|
| Under 30 | 7 |
| 30-39 | 19 |
| 40-49 | 28 |
| 50 and Over | 18 |

As at 31 March 2014

| Committees & site visits (3) | No. per year |
|----------------------------------|--------------|
| Full Council committees | 6-weekly |
| Planning Committees | 4-weekly |
| Area Committees (where relevant) | 4-weekly |
| Committee site visits | N/K |
| LRB (4) | 4-weekly |
| LRB site visits | N/K |

Notes:

*References to committees also include National Park Authority Boards. Number of site visits is those cases where visits were carried out by committees/boards.

**this relates to the number of meetings of the LRB. The number of applications going to LRB are reported elsewhere.

| | Total Budget | Costs | | Income*** |
|------------------------|--------------|---------|------------|-----------|
| | | Direct* | Indirect** | |
| Development management | £1,071k | £1,285K | £1,306k | -£1,521k |

| | | | | |
|----------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Development planning | £1,307k | £715k | £664k | -£72k |
| Enforcement | £393k | £195k | £198k | £0 |
| Other | £427k | £217k | £220k | -£9k |
| TOTAL | £3,198k | £2,412k | £2,388k | -£1,602k |

Notes:

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

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

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

Appendix 3: Planning Portfolio Management Structure

