



Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

Planning Performance Framework

ANNUAL REPORT 2018-2019





8th Planning Performance Framework Annual Report 2018-19

Outer Hebrides Planning Context	2
<u>Part 1: Defining and Measuring a High-Quality Planning Service</u>	7
Outer Hebrides Case Studies	7-24
1. Quality of Outcomes	25
High quality development on the ground	25
2. Quality of Service and Engagement	27
a) Open for business	27
b) Certainty	28
c) Communications, engagement and customer service	31
3. Governance	35
4. Culture of Continuous Improvement	38
<u>Part 2: Supporting Evidence</u>	44
Checklist for Part 2: Qualitative Narrative and Case Studies	45
<u>Part 3: Service Improvements 2018-19</u>	46
Delivery of our service improvement actions 2017-18	46
<u>Part 4: National Headline Indicators (NHI)</u>	48
<u>Part 5: Scottish Government Official Statistics</u>	51
A: Decision-making timescales (based on 'all applications' timescales)	51
B: Decision-making: local reviews and appeals	52
C: Context	52
<u>Part 6: Workforce Information</u>	53
<u>Part 7: Planning Committee Information</u>	54
Performance Markers and Evidence Base	55

Outer Hebrides Planning Context

This is the eighth Planning Performance Framework Report prepared by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar for its Planning Service, covering the reporting period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019. The Planning Service's commitment to continuous improvement and innovation over this period is evidenced by: positive feedback from the Scottish Government; improvement in the quality of development on the ground; progress in developing a better relationship with our Councillors who are well-engaged with the LDP process. We are working with Community Planning Partners to align our LDP with the Local Outcome Improvement Plan and engaging extensively with the community to ensure the new Plan adopted in November 2018 can facilitate high quality development whilst ensuring that our assets: communities, the natural and built heritage are protected and enhanced.

During the reporting year, the Planning Service has again faced staff resourcing challenges, however through redeployment of officers from Planning Policy to Development Management, the Service has continued to meet determination targets, and provided good service to our customers. This has impacted on the Development Plan work programme, despite this the new Local Development Plan, revised Supplementary Guidance and other associated documents were still adopted in November 2018.

The Service has responded to local and global challenges and opportunities by contributing to better placemaking, and enabling sustainable development through the planning process. The adoption of the new LDP provides an up to date and 'Place' focused policy framework to guide development. The expanded principal policy DS1 Development Strategy and a dedicated policy section on 'Placemaking and Design' underpins this.

Delivering development in the Outer Hebrides is distinct from that in other areas, with unique challenges and opportunities: an extensive geography and coastline; dispersed settlements; high scenic value and natural heritage reflected in high levels of environmental designation. Transportation and logistics contribute to significantly higher on-costs for construction, materials etc. throughout the islands. There is a distinct private sector economy, with a high incidence self-build and limited volume house building other than public sector-led development.

The Planning Service has sought to support the Comhairle and Scottish Government's objectives to deliver more affordable homes, addressing varied housing needs, by inputting to feasibility work with housing stakeholders, and the successful approval of the multi-development Major Goathill Housing development addressing a range of housing needs (see **Case Study 1**).

National Context

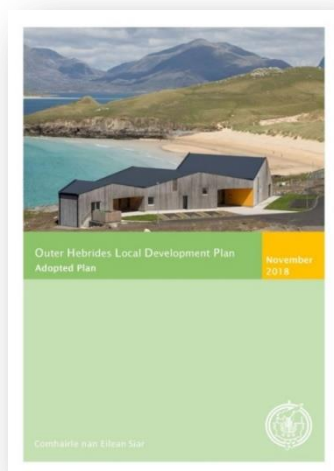
We, along with other authorities in particular rural and island authorities, continue to engage with Scottish Government colleagues to ensure that the evolving Planning Bill recognises and acknowledges the distinctive development context, constraints and opportunities in our island areas. This 'island proofing' of the Planning Bill has been an iterative process as the Bill has progressed through parliamentary stages. The island proofing agenda will continue as the Bill moves forward to enactment and to the subsequent pieces of guidance and secondary legislation.

Regional Context

We have contributed to the development of the 'Our Islands Our Future Campaign' which has led to the Islands Act and we will input on the potential projects as part of the Island's Deal currently being negotiated.

We are collaborating with the Strategy team of the Comhairle on potential resource requirements and on the feasibility of progressing Marine Planning in the Outer Hebrides. Whilst an EU funding bid to support pre-marine plan activity has been unsuccessful, other avenues are being explored. Further, the Comhairle's aspirations to have greater autonomy over its marine extents is being progressed through a pilot with the Crown Estate to enable locally determined seabed leasing, in partnership with community bodies.

Local Context

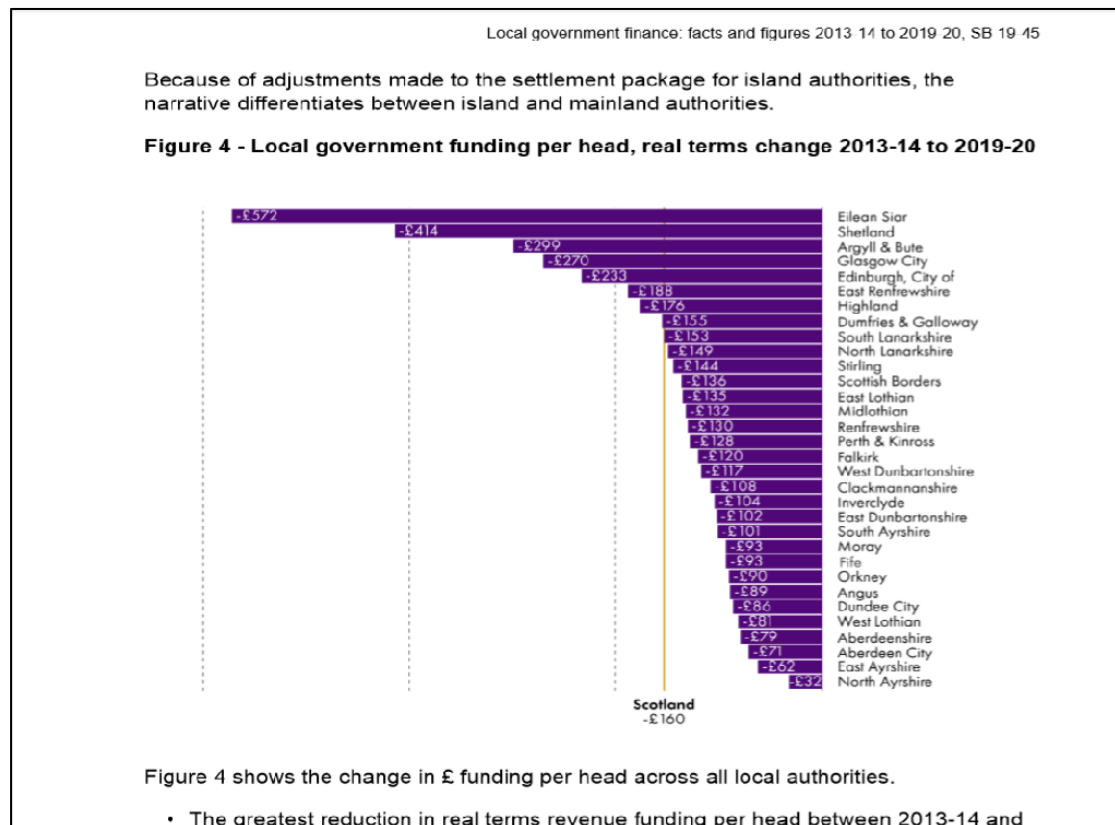


Our main priorities this year will be to continue to deploy our resources to concentrate on achieving high quality planning outcomes which enhance the environment, whilst contributing to the delivery of more quality homes, services and infrastructure for people in line with our new Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan (OHLDP).

Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan Adopted November 2018

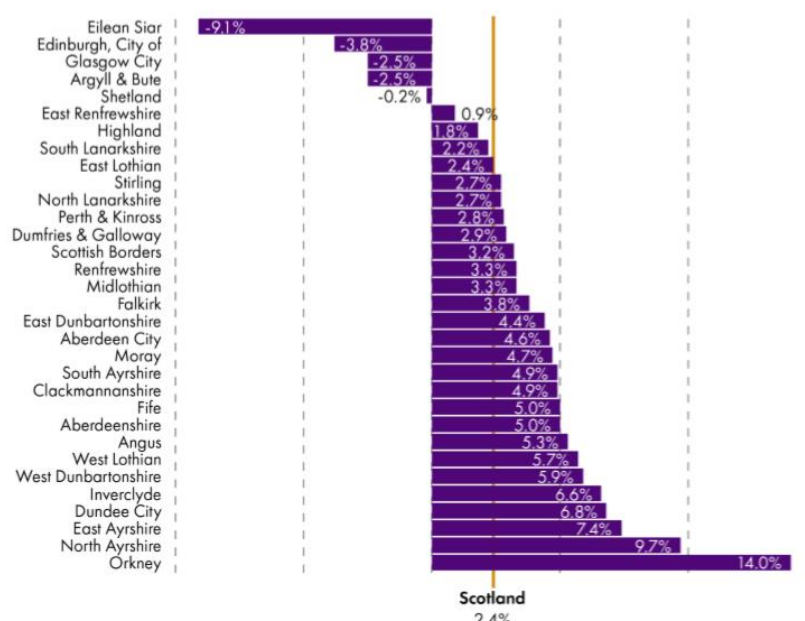
Ongoing Financial Challenges

The Revenue Grant awarded to Comhairle nan Eilean Siar has been reduced year on year and in February 2018, in setting the annual budget for 2018/19 it was projected that the deficit for 2018/19 would be £6.3m, having managed a reduction of funding of 18% between 2010 and 2017, the second highest reduction in Scotland. A Scottish Parliament SPICE publication, **‘Local government finance: facts and figures 2013-14 to 2019-20’**, published 2 July 2019, provides evidence of the recent and ongoing financial challenges being faced by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar.



‘The greatest reduction in real terms revenue funding per head between 2013-14 and 2019-20 has been for Eilean Siar, at £572’

Figure 6 - local government funding per head, % of the Scottish average, percentage point change from 2013-14 to 2019-20



'The island authority with the greatest percentage point change is Eilean Siar, with a 9.1 percentage point decrease between 2013-14 and 2018-19. Orkney has seen, by comparison, 14.0 percentage point increase'

It has therefore been necessary to review the services we provide, and identify ways to deliver the service with less resource. It is unfortunate that the means of achieving this in the reporting period has been at the expense of further aspects of Planning Policy work.

Managers continue to work hard to consolidate the staffing structure within the Planning Service in light of previous workforce planning and budget consideration decisions. However, we are still facing difficult staffing situations, with diminished and vacant posts and difficulties in recruiting experienced planning officers.

Organisational Review (January 2019)

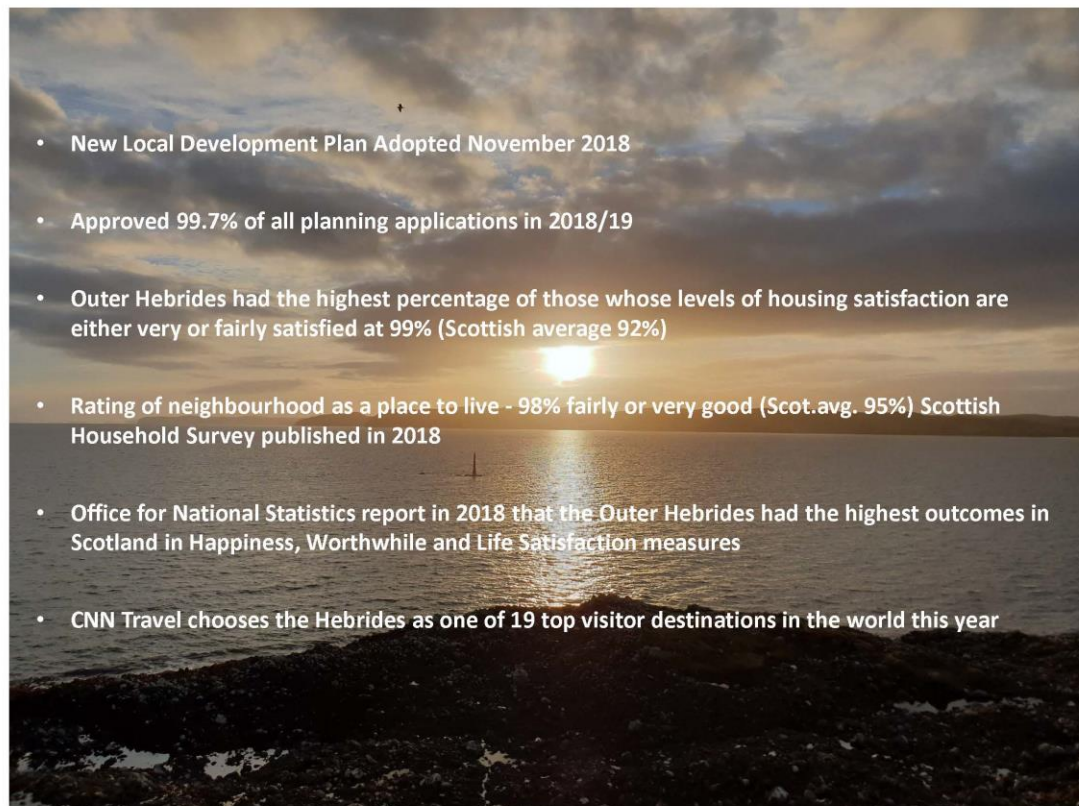
An Organisational Review and 'high-level' Service Redesign programme was completed in January 2019 in response to a cross-Council commitment to make efficiencies and to save money so as to produce and maintain financial balances and

the security of the Comhairle going forward. The Planning Service now sits under a Head of Service with a broad management remit which includes Economic Development, Regeneration Services, Business Gateway, Library Services, Cultural and Heritage Services, Building Standards as well as Planning. The posts of Planning Manager are now the most senior level Planning positions within the Comhairle.

Comhairle nan Eilean - Business Transformation Programme

The Planning Service is also contributing to the Comhairle's Transformational Change and Service Redesign, a Comhairle wide initiative aimed at streamlining and improving performance whilst making best use of decreasing resources.

Planning Managers have been pro-active in consolidating and safeguarding the Service, reporting to the Comhairle's HR Committee. During 2018-19 HR approved a Report providing an overview of the current status of the Development Management function of the Planning Service which put forward cost neutral recommendations that have consolidated the staffing in anticipation of future needs and challenges in view of the pending transformation of Comhairle services.



Part 1: Defining and Measuring a High-Quality Planning Service

Case Study 1: Goathill Care Centre
Location and Dates:
OHLDP Proposal Site Goathill Farm West, Lewis
Elements of a High Quality Planning Service this study relates to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of service and engagement • Governance
Key Markers:
<p>Key Marker 2: offering processing agreements; Key Marker 3: early collaboration with applicants and consultees on planning applications: availability and promotion of pre-application discussions for all prospective applications; and clear and proportionate requests for supporting information; Key Marker 6: progress ambitious and relevant service improvement commitments for the year ahead, Key Marker 12: corporate working across services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit (e.g. protocols; joined-up services; single contact; joint pre-application advice), Key Marker 15: Developer contributions: clear expectations: set out in development plan (and/or emerging plan,) and in pre-application discussions.</p>
Key Areas of Work:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative Working • Project Management
Stakeholders Involved:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Developers • Authority Planning Staff
Overview:
<p>The £46M Goathill flagship project aims to development intergenerational housing within an eight hectare site, partly within a Local Development Plan proposal site allocation. It will deliver a mixed development include 74 affordable houses, a 52 bed care unit and 50 housing with extra care units, and associated access, services, landscaping and recreation provision.</p> <p>The project was initiated following a review of existing care facilities in and around the Stornoway area. The project is being delivered by a unique partnership between the Comhairle, the local Integrated Joint Board (including the NHS Western Isles), and Hebridean Housing Partnership (HHP) the only registered local landlord (RSL) and volume house builder.</p> <p>Planning became involved in an early working group to looking at potential sites to accommodate new or extended care facilities, in Stornoway and also at a potential location in rural Lewis. This early involvement enabled Planning Service input into the project brief for the Stornoway site which commissioned a masterplanning exercise.</p>

Goals:

This project will deliver a multi-generational partnership project on an LDP Plan allocation site. It aims to address the affordable housing need in and around Stornoway, and help deliver the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) and Strategic Local Programme (SLP).

Outcomes:



Developer's Masterplan for Goathill Care Centre

The project was directed by an extensive masterplanning exercise led by a partnership working group which included Planning Service staff. In advance of commissioning the masterplan, planning staff helped inform the Brief for the masterplan. This helped ensure that as well as enabling an effective inclusive process the masterplan considered aspects of Planning, including placemaking, early on in the process.

This development is a multi-partnership project that has sought to demonstrate good governance and inclusiveness throughout, involving service delivery stakeholders, service users, employees, community and neighbourhood groups, landowners, potential contractors and supply chain agents.

It is seeking to achieve a legacy through a suite of apprenticeship, beyond just conventional construction apprentices, to address skills gaps in the care and other sectors locally. This is being coordinated with skills development and Apprenticeship staff at the local authority.

As a Major application the development was subject to a pre-application consultation, involving public and stakeholder engagement events and consultation to evolve the project. This stage informed the development's detail and connections with its environs, and refined the finalised proposal.

The agent for the planning application accepted the offer of entering into a processing agreement before the planning application was submitted and the key dates in the agreement were largely adhered to and milestones met the timeline including presenting the application to the Planning Application Board and Full Comhairle in December 2018.



Artist Impression of Housing With Extra Care (HWEC) from Perceval Road


A number of community benefits have been secured through the planning and development process, in addition to the skills development noted previously. The development provides some open space and activity area within the site which will be available to local residents outside the scheme. However as there is an existing play park across the road from the development site, it was agreed with the applicant that a formal play area would not be required, instead the existing facilities will be upgraded. As the play park is owned by the Comhairle it was considered that this issue would be addressed by Condition rather than by a legal agreement.

The applicant had discussions with the Comhairle Senior Education Officer who advised: "Stornoway Primary currently has capacity for additional pupils and the degree of capacity would be sufficient for the likely number of additional pupils that the nature and scope of the proposed development would bring." It was therefore concluded that no contributions were required of the developer to secure additional education facilities.

Concerns were raised as part of the public consultation process regarding pedestrian safety in the area particularly children walking to the nearby primary school as there are no formal pedestrian crossings. To address this issue two pedestrian crossings either side of the new junction on Perceval Road are being created along with a crossing on Columbia Place. A pavement along the pedestrian desire line adjacent to the playpark on Columbia Place is also being provided.

The approval of the Major application for the Goathill Farm site in Stornoway in December 2018 was the culmination of a several years of project planning and partnership working. Of course, several years of construction and delivery remain subject to conclusion of commission contracts, with the project anticipated to be completed by autumn 2022. The project is formally starting on site with the first phase contract for enabling works to service the entire site breaking ground early July 2019. Subsequent contracts for the affordable housing, and the care and extra care housing are currently being concluded.

Name of key Officers
<i>Mairi Maciver (DP & MP) and Hannah Morrison (DP & MP - redeployed to DM)</i>

Case Study 2. Machair Interpretation Centre
Location and Dates:
Huisinis Gateway, North Harris 2018
Elements of a High Quality Planning Service this study relates to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of service and engagement • Quality of outcomes
Key Markers:
<i>This Case Study relates to Key Marker 1: decision making: authorities demonstrating continuous evidence of reducing average timescales for all development types; Key Marker 3: early collaboration with applicants and consultees on planning applications; availability and promotion of pre-application discussions; and clear and proportionate requests for supporting information.</i>
Key Areas of Work:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment • Design
Stakeholders Involved:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Developers • Authority Planning Staff
Overview:
 <p><i>View of site prior to the new development</i></p> <p>Huisinis is a small crofting settlement nestled between two beaches on the North West coast of Harris. Growing visitor numbers combined with an increase in overnight campervans were putting pressure on existing parking, waste disposal and public toilet facilities. Vehicular traffic had been damaging the sensitive machair grassland.</p>

New visitor facilities were proposed to address the need to protect the machair; provide natural heritage interpretive facilities; accessible toilets; a sluice for visiting campervans and parking.

As the development would be located in a National Scenic Area and is also within a Site of Special Scientific Interest, Special Area of Conservation and Special Protection Area it was important that the proposal would not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the NSA or the qualities for which it was designated. Local Development Plan policy and DM procedures were critical in shaping and influencing the siting and design approach to the new development, ensuring that the facilities were of high design quality, using natural materials appropriate for this unique environment.

Accessible public toilets, changing facilities, and an interpretation area were included in the proposal. Improved car parking facilities would encourage visitors to park in a designated place, and a separate area on the approach road was proposed as a campervan site with electric hook-up points, reducing damage to the machair. In addition the existing wind turbine control gear would be retained in the new building.

Goals:

The main aim of the development was to form a barrier to deter visitors from further encroaching on the sensitive machair area. The goal for planning was to enable this community-led approach and to support the development of well-designed facilities that complied with National and LDP policy, siting visitor facilities in one area on common ground rather than on the precious but fragile machair grassland.

Outcomes:

The exceptional remoteness and the unspoilt beauty of the white shell sand beach at Huisinis, on the north west coast of the Island of Harris has, largely through extensive media coverage, seen the area grow in popularity with visitors to the islands; this has resulted in pressures on the area arising from lack of facilities and the absence of information that educates visitors on the uniqueness of the environment. This development solves a number of issues caused by this new pressure.

The Case Study demonstrates the value of [Local Development Plan](#) policy in identifying the sensitivity of the site and specifying the criteria that must be met for new development in a highly designated area, providing a clear policy framework for assessing this community development.

It highlights how planning plays an important role in the delivery of rural development through meaningful engagement with the consultants at pre-app stage, throughout and following determination.

In this project the developer/landowner is a Community Land Trust and has been able to provide quality visitor facilities, whilst at the same time finding a practical solution to an identified local environmental problem. The partnership project was made possible with assistance from the Comhairle, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Scottish Landfill Communities Fund, Bord na Gaidhlig, The Mushroom Trust, Scottish Government and the European Community Outer Hebrides LEADER 2014-2020 Programme.

The Case Officer engaged throughout with Rural Design Consultants and the community land owner, the [North Harris Trust](#) to secure a better outcome which was able to meet an identified business and an environmental need.



Photo: North Harris Trust



Photo: North Harris Trust

The facilities have been carefully sited and designed to complement the character of the surrounding area and do not erode the character which forms the distinctiveness of this rural settlement.

Name of key Officer

<i>Iain MacLeod (DM)</i>

Case Study 3: Conservation Area Enhancement

Location and Dates:

27 Cromwell Street, Stornoway, Lewis, 2018

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

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

Key Markers:

*This Case Study relates to **Key Marker 3:** early collaboration with applicants on planning applications: availability and promotion of pre-application discussions; and clear and proportionate requests for supporting information; **Key Marker 6:** progress ambitious and relevant service improvements; **Key Marker 12:** corporate working across services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit (e.g. protocols; joined-up services; single contact; joint pre-application advice).*

Key Areas of Work:

- Process Improvement
- Conservation

Stakeholders Involved:

- Local Developers
- Authority Planning Staff

Overview:



27 North Beach, before works



After works completed

The [Conservation Area Grant Scheme](#) contributes to the Comhairle's requirement to protect listed buildings and conservation areas under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997. It provides (50% of eligible costs up to £3,000) to conserve original features, or bring back character to buildings. The [Stornoway Town Centre Painting Grant](#) has a higher rate of intervention (75% of eligible costs up to £3,000) to encourage property-owners to maintain traditionally painted buildings, brightening up the appearance of the Town Centre retail area.

The grants provide an incentive to assist property-owners in the Islands' Conservation Areas maintain their distinctive heritage assets. The assistance bridges the gap between the costs of using traditional methods and materials rather than

modern materials and techniques which can be detrimental for older properties. Originally a one storey building, with an upper floor added later, the old shop at 27 Cromwell Street sits in a prominent position in the Town Centre Retail Area, within the Stornoway Conservation Area. The building is adjacent to the Town House, a Category B Listed building. Evaluating the context, it was considered that any changes had to respect the sensitive location and not impact on the setting or character of the adjacent Town House or the Conservation Area.

Goals:

Grants administered by the Planning Service contribute to the regeneration of Stornoway, the capital of the Outer Hebrides, which is a key political and policy objective for the Local Authority.

Outcomes:

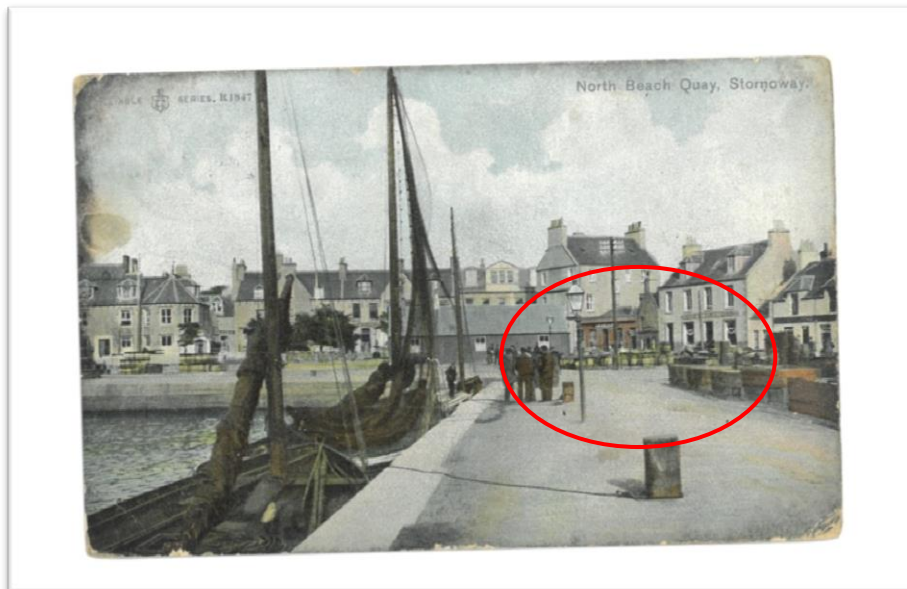
As the Conservation Grant application forms are available online, this application was submitted without any pre-application discussion. The application proposed to replace the timber facing with composite stone, and re-render the façade of the shop premises. For clarification a pre-app meeting was arranged to discuss the grant eligibility and the requirement for a planning application. Due to intervention at pre-app, the DM Officer was able to convince the developer to use a more traditional fascia which was in keeping with the character of the streetscape rather than inappropriate stone cladding. The DP Officer piloted the use of Photoshop to produce options for colour schemes for the shopfront. The meeting resulted in the agent submitting an application for planning permission for a change of colour, removal of timber panelling, re-rendering the lower storey and replacement of the entrance tiles which was approved.



*Pre-application
advice
suggested
interventions
for 27 Cromwell
Street*

The grants contribute to placemaking creating a high quality urban environment. Through administration and intervention both Officers work has added value, enabling the developer to contribute to improving the physical appearance and distinctiveness of the Town Centre.

The Case Study has demonstrated how simple improvements can make a big difference. The shop's previously tired appearance has been transformed by re-rendering; and a dramatic colour scheme has unified the building. As a follow up further improvements were suggested for future heritage refurbishment, including reinstating the original Crittall windows that can be seen on the side elevation.



1907 postcard of Stornoway town centre, showing 27 South Beach before the upper storey was added.

A change in protocol was initiated to avoid abortive Conservation Grant applications, requiring pre-application discussions to establish basic eligibility and the appropriate conservation approach. This ensures applicants have accurate information about the grant process; and Officers can direct applicants to historic photographs, Historic Environment Scotland Inform Guides, contributing to restoring lost architectural detail and achieving a better overall planning outcome for the Conservation Area.

The DM Officer dealt with the planning application and the DP Officer facilitated the offer of grant. Both Officers collaborated with the client to ensure that a good outcome was achieved, with the new colour scheme echoing the original facade of the building pre-render (red brick) which can be seen in the 1907 postcard above. It is hoped that future interventions may include replacing the windows to match the original style.

Name of key Officers
<i>Susan Rabé (DP &MP) and Mairi Mackinnon (DM)</i>

Case Study 4: Corran Ciasmol - Housing Delivery
Location and Dates:
Castlebay, Barra, May 2018
Elements of a High Quality Planning Service this study relates to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of outcomes
Key Markers
<p><i>Key Marker 3: early collaboration with applicants and consultees on planning applications: availability and promotion of pre-application discussions; and clear and proportionate requests for supporting information; Key Marker 11: production of regular and proportionate policy advice, for example through supplementary guidance, on information required to support applications; Key Marker 12: corporate working across services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit (e.g. protocols; joined-up services; single contact; joint pre-application advice); and Key Marker 15: developer contributions: clear expectations set out in development plan (and/or emerging plan,) an in pre-application discussions.</i></p>
Key Areas of Work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable Housing • Planning Applications
Stakeholders Involved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Developers • Authority Planning Staff
Overview:
<div>   </div> <p><i>Corran Ciasmol under construction Completed development</i> <i>January 2019 (photo: Hebridean Housing Partnership)</i></p> <p>Proposed Local Development Plan Housing Proposal Site - this site was originally identified by the Registered Social Landlord (RSL) Hebridean Housing Partnership (HHP) during a pre-MIR Call for Sites exercise to identify suitable land across the Outer Hebrides for development, including housing development and in order to maximise the potential of available Scottish Government funding for affordable housing. Initial feasibility studies suggested that there was capacity to develop 8 units on the site.</p>

Issues arose during the site assessment and subsequent consultations related to flooding and woodland. The greenfield site presented difficulties in terms of development as it was highly constrained due to flood risk, part of the site being below the 1 in 200 year flood risk level, the finalised layout took account of flooding issues. Following the proposed Plan consultation SEPA advised that the man-made drain which runs through the site would need to be diverted at least 6 metres away from any building and would be required to be kept open for maintenance.

During initial pre-app discussion with consultants [Tighean Innse Gall](#) (TIG), planning advised on the need for the developer to carry out early public consultation as previous housing applications in the area had raised significant concerns over access and parking during construction. The site was also public amenity land with one of the few established tree planted areas in Barra; there were concerns about the loss of greenspace and trees.

The LDP site assessment process flagged up constraints and provided requirements to enable development, which included the provision, made by the Reporter following the LDP Examination, that a band of trees should be retained around the edge of the site adjacent to existing housing and their curtilage to maintain privacy of existing residents. In addition to this, compensatory planting (comprising of native species only) equal to the area of woodland lost was to be planted within Barra, preferably within Castlebay.

Planning Application Stage - during determination, public objections related to traffic management and over-density. Planning interventions included reducing the density, refining the proposed design to reduce overlooking; the consented layout minimised the loss of native woodland, retaining green space behind the development and conditioning to require the developer to plant trees to replace those lost.

The proposal plans were subsequently amended, housing density was reduced from 8 to 6 units, window positions were changed to avoid overlooking and the developer produced a landscaping plan to retain trees to the North of the development and to provide compensatory planting with native species in a public space nearby, to compensate for trees lost to the development.

The proposal complied with relevant LDP Policy, apart from Policy 1 Development Strategy which requires development proposals in Main Settlements to retain open space areas within the settlement for amenity and recreation purposes. The material considerations of the site being a Proposal Site for Housing, reflecting an assessed need and demand for the proposed affordable housing, and thereby, a

significant social benefit arising from the development, combined with the opportunity to safeguard remaining trees and secure replacements for those to be removed, were considered to be of sufficient weight to warrant a departure from the Development Plan. The development was recommended for approval subject to planning conditions to retain trees and plant new replacement trees.

Goals:

One of the major objectives of the LDP is to facilitate and enable the delivery of good placemaking and quality affordable housing throughout the Outer Hebrides. This involves dealing with significant challenges such as the lack of suitable sites; understanding and tackling additional island building costs; and the necessity for architects to produce sustainable designs and specify materials capable of withstanding the harsh maritime climate.

Outcomes:

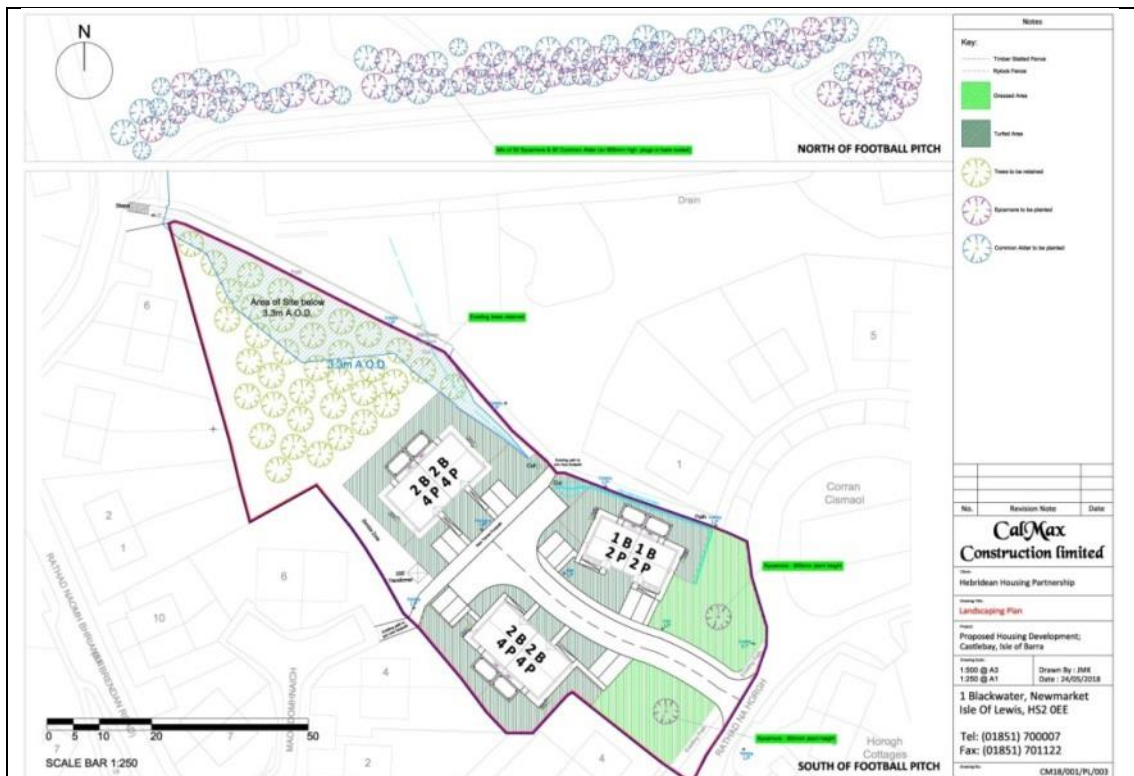
This case study profiles a highly constrained housing proposal site which went through a difficult birth. It demonstrates that developing affordable housing sites in the Outer Hebrides can be challenging, the Case Officer had to make a finely balanced assessment; achieving a good outcome under pressure, as this is one of several developments that has been grant aided by the Scottish Government's [Affordable Housing Supply Programme](#).

The Comhairle approved the officer recommendation to permit the development subject to conditions, which justified going against the LDP to utilise a landscaped area between two existing developments for affordable housing.

The final outcome has gone some way to meeting the identified housing need in Barra; contributing to place making as the new planting will eventually screen the adjacent recreational area and sports pitch from the new housing.

It also evidences how planning was able to add value at different stages of the Plan-led system: by initiating a Call for Sites; early consultation with Key Agencies; identifying constraints and how to overcome these; negotiating with the developer to make adjustments and improvements to the final design and securing environmental improvements by condition which will enhance local biodiversity, and provide sustainable, well-designed homes.

This case study demonstrates how planning has contributed to delivering affordable housing and quality placemaking on a difficult constrained site, planners delivered results under time pressure as this development was being funded with additional Government funding for affordable housing and showcasing at a local level an example of successful partnership working between the Comhairle, HHP and TIG, with support from the Scottish Government.



As required by planning conditions, the developer produced a landscaping plan to retain trees to the North of the development and to replace trees lost in the development through compensatory planting with native species.

Name of key Officers

Hannah Morrison (DP & MP) and Alastair Banks (DM)

Case Study 5: Meeting the Housing Challenge in the Outer Hebrides
Location and Dates:
Various sites throughout the Islands Area 2018-19
Elements of a High Quality Planning Service this study relates to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of service and engagement • Quality of Outcomes • Governance
Key Markers:
<p><i>Key Marker 3: early collaboration with applicants and consultees on planning applications: availability and promotion of pre-application discussions for all prospective applications; and clear and proportionate requests for supporting information; Key Marker 12: corporate working across services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit (e.g. protocols; joined-up services; single contact; joint pre-application advice), Key Marker 15: Developer contributions: clear expectations: set out in development plan (and/or emerging plan,) and in pre-application discussions.</i></p>
Key Areas of Work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative Working • Affordable Housing
Stakeholders Involved:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Developers: Hebridean Housing Partnership (HHP) & Tighean Innse Gall (TIG) • Authority Planning Service & Housing Service Staff
Overview:
<p>To expedite the delivery of new sustainable housing across the Outer Hebrides, the Planning Service has been working in partnership with the Comhairle's Housing Service, HHP and TIG. This year much progress has been achieved throughout the Islands area.</p>

<p><i>HHP's existing scheme at Tom Na Ba, Galson was complemented by four new homes, which were officially opened by Alasdair Allan MSP on Monday 12 November 2018.</i></p>

Feasibility Studies

The Comhairle's Affordable Housing Programme aims to deliver a range of new homes throughout the whole of the Outer Hebrides.

One of the particular challenges in delivering Affordable Housing in the Outer Hebrides has been finding suitable land that can be developed effectively for housing purposes. The constraints of the physical landscape (for example, unsuitable ground conditions, difficulties with site accessibility), along with the prevalence of Crofting Tenure has made the acquisition and development of some sites problematic. This has led to delays in progressing the Housing programme and in many cases abortive works.

In order to address some of these issues, the Comhairle and its main development partner Hebridean Housing Partnership, commission Feasibility Studies to examine the suitability of land offered up for housing.

An important aspect of the Feasibility Study process is the consultation with the Comhairle's Planning Service. Both Planning Teams contribute towards the process and are able to input important information relating to land use, site constraints and development potential. The Development Planning Team is also able to provide useful advice and guidance on site layout and house design. The Local Development Plan and Housing Land Audit also inform the Feasibility Studies.

"These are high quality houses of just the kind that there is a huge need for in the islands, not least in rural areas. The Scottish Government have provided major funding to build the houses here, and it was a good example of the Scottish Government, the Comhairle and HHP working together. With very significant Scottish Government funding for housing on the table, I hope we will now see more families throughout the islands get the new homes they need to ensure our communities thrive."

Alasdair Allan MSP

The Comhairle's Planning Service has a firm commitment to achieving the quality of design and environment that our communities deserve. To guide developers the Comhairle's Development Plan Team have set out robust design policies in the previous LDP (Adopted 2012) and through the development plan process this has evolved into seven new policies under the umbrella of Placemaking and Design, expressing shared visions for places through policy, site briefing, supplementary guidance and action planning in the newly adopted LDP.

Development Management Officers have taken a proactive approach, engaging positively with developers throughout the planning process, working hard to up-design in negotiating planning applications with a view to achieving quality places and good planning outcomes for our communities.

In addition, to facilitate affordable housing delivery, during 2017/18 the Research Officer (DP & MP Team) was seconded to the Housing Service to support the delivery of affordable housing and the production of the [Local Housing Strategy 2017-22](#).

Empty Homes Project

The Comhairle started an Empty Homes Project during 2018/19 and appointed an Empty Homes Officer (EHO) in October 2018 for a two year period. The EHO is tasked with providing information and practical assistance to the owners of empty houses, with a view to bringing the properties back in to use. This can be for use as a main residence, private rented accommodation or for sale on the open market.

Goals:

The delivery of high quality affordable homes is a key priority for the Comhairle and achieving this outcome is a main goal of the new OHLDP.

Outcomes:

DP Team were consulted on feasibility studies for thirty-two sites, eight of which have now progressed to development or are in the planning system. This work added value, helped iron-out issues at an early stage, streamlining the development process and speeding up delivery of new homes facilitated with support from the Scottish Government through their 'Affordable Housing Supply Programme'.

This Spring saw four developments on site in Lewis and Harris, with a total of 78 units between them, all of which are on schedule for completion in 2019:

- Mackenzie Avenue, Melbost, Lewis (50 units)
- Corran Ciasmol, Castlebay, Barra (6 units) see **Case Study 4** (Page 17)
- Sealladh a' Chliseim, Leurbost, Lewis (10 units)
- Langley Apartments, Stornoway, Lewis (12 Units)

There are a number of developments at various stages of development, in design, entering the planning process and awaiting site start:

- Rural Uist (7 units)
- Rural Lewis (8 Units)
- Breasclete, Lewis (10 Units)
- Tarbert Police Station, Harris (8 Units)
- Low Flyer, Balivanich, Benbecula (10 Units)
- Horgabost, Harris (4 Units)
- Goathill Farm Housing, Stornoway, Lewis (74 units) and
- Goathill Farm Care Home, Stornoway, Lewis (52 spaces) and housing with extra care (50 units) see **Case Study 1** (Page 7).

This Case Study is an excellent example of successful partnership working between the Comhairle, HHP and TIG, with support from the Scottish Government. The project has been successful in providing new homes and creating employment opportunities in the construction industry. The Planning Service will continue to follow up on delivery of this project, through the planning process into the next reporting year.



Open Day Poster prepared by HHP

Name of key Officers

Both DP&MP and DM Teams have contributed to this project and work is ongoing.

1. Quality of Outcomes

a) High Quality Development on the Ground

1.1 During the 2018/19 the Planning Service continued to work closely with communities, developers and partner organisations to deliver a range of developments across the Outer Hebrides. In November 2018 the new [Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan](#) was adopted. The policies and proposals provided in the Plan, together with associated supplementary guidance will help shape the evolution of our built and natural environment in the Outer Hebrides over the next five years.

1.2 One of the key challenges for strategic planning in the Outer Hebrides is that people are living longer, in-migration is skewed in favour of those over 55 and the population of the Islands is ageing. This has implications for the economy, public services, society and the individual. There will inevitably be increased pressure on Health and Social Services. In recent years the Comhairle commissioned feasibility studies which concluded that the existing care facilities in Stornoway were no longer fit for purpose or sufficient to sustainably meet demand; consequently a new purpose built development was required to provide appropriate care and specialised housing for people who have additional care needs, **Case Study 1. Goathill Care Centre (Page 7)** evidences how planners have enabled development.

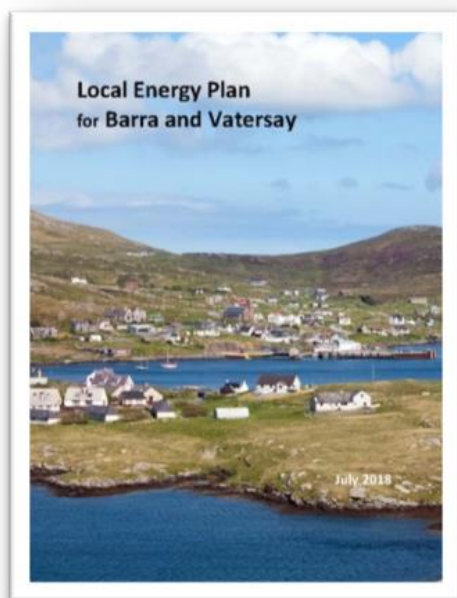
1.3 The new Development Plan continues to prioritise the development of affordable housing, a number of new developments being delivered through the planning system, catalysed by additional grant from the Scottish Government as part of their ambitious target to deliver 50,000 affordable homes (**see Case Studies 4, Page 17 and 5, on Page 21**). Marked progress was made in enabling a programme of new home building across the Outer Hebrides during the reporting year. This is an example of successful partnership working between the Comhairle, Hebridean Housing Partnership and Tighean Innse Gall, with support from the Scottish Government.

1.4 Our commitment to creating better places and to this end design quality is steadily improving in response to the Comhairle's promotion of good design in the [Outer Hebrides Design Guide](#). The new LDP Development Strategy and Placemaking and Design policies are now embedded in decision making, combined with Officer Intervention at pre-app stage this has made a big difference to planning outcomes creating places of lasting quality and supporting the delivery of rural development. **Case Study 2 Machair Interpretation Centre (Page 11)** demonstrates how the Comhairle has worked closely with the Community Land Trust to facilitate the provision of much needed quality visitor facilities, whilst at the same time finding a sustainable solution to an identified local environmental problem in a highly

designated area. The Study also highlights the importance of design tools in contributing to creating better outcomes. Submission of a design statement, a DM requirement within a National Scenic Area and also required by (Policy PD1: Placemaking and Design) and outwith settlement (Development Strategy DS1) was also useful in assisting developers to present how the local context was appraised and how the design responded sensitively to this highly designated context.

1.5 Managing change within the Historic Environment is a key part of planning. The Comhairle provides small Conservation Area Grants to help property owners repair and maintain their buildings. Officers work with local developers to explore options for bringing lost character back to old buildings and the grants help bridge the cost difference between using modern methods and materials which might be inappropriate and cause damage to a building and using traditional techniques and materials. **See Case Study 3 Conservation Area Enhancement (Page 14)** for an example demonstrating how planners can help influence positive change to enhance the historic environment.

1.6 Planning Officer Hannah Morrison continued her involvement on the steering Group for the [Barra and Vatersay Local Energy Plan](#), which was the subject of a Case Study in last year's PPF Report. The group jointly published the Local Energy Plan in July 2018.



Planning helped enable the Energy Plan for Barra and Vatersay

2. Quality of Service and Engagement

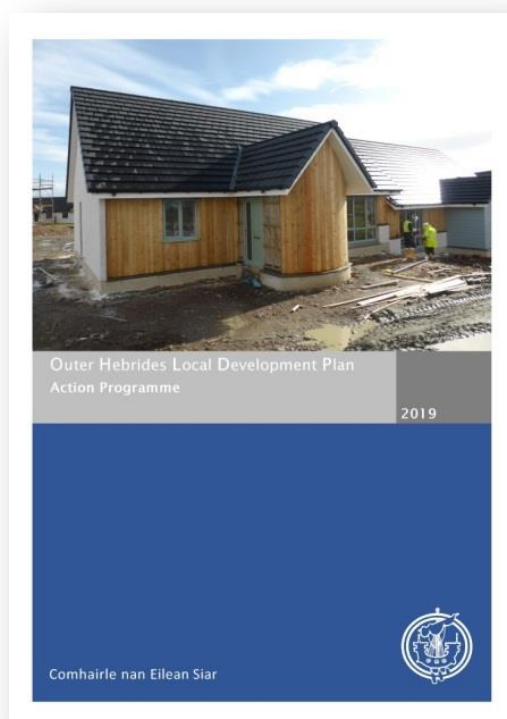
a) Open for Business

Working with Community Planning

2.1 The new OHLDP policies are closely aligned with the [Outer Hebrides Local Outcomes Improvement Plan \(LOIP\) 2017-2027](#). The Plan has a key part to play in helping to deliver the land use development elements of the LOIP which is focusing on sustainable economic growth; accessible quality services for older people (**See Case Study 1 Goathill Care Centre on Page 7**); a better start for young people; communities that are safer and healthier; increased physical and social activity; addressing inequalities; and better connections with high quality infrastructure supporting broadband, travel and renewables.

New LDP Action Programme Published

2.2 The DP & MP Team delivered the Comhairle's [LDP Action Programme](#) in March 2019. It focuses action on priority proposals and allocations, and identifies the work required to enable development. **Case Study 4 Corran Ciasmol – Housing Delivery (Page 17)** provides an example of these corporate aims being delivered on the ground by LDP policy.



Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan Action Programme 2019

b) Certainty

2.3 To provide certainty to developers and the community, the Planning Service provides a free pre-application advice service which is promoted in its [Planning Charter](#) and on the Comhairle's [web pages](#).



Pre-Application Advice Service

The Planning Service continues to provide the opportunity to discuss proposals with prospective applicants at an appointment at no cost and offers professional advice before you submit a planning application. Pre-application discussions ensure that officers are able to clarify the extent of information required for the planning application and that proportionate requests for supporting information are made ensuring that the application can be registered and determined in the shortest possible time. An Officer may be able to make suggestions that could turn a potential recommendation for refusal into one for approval. Although pre-app advice generally involves appointments, written correspondence, site visits and provide bespoke advice may be provided, for example on ideas for appropriate new signage in the Stornoway Conservation Area:



Pre-application advice for prospective applicant

Case Study 3 Conservation Area Enhancement (Page 14) also demonstrates the Planning Service’s commitment to pre-application engagement as a means of resolving potential issues, saving the developer time and money, and adding value to the final outcome on the ground.

Engagement on the new Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan

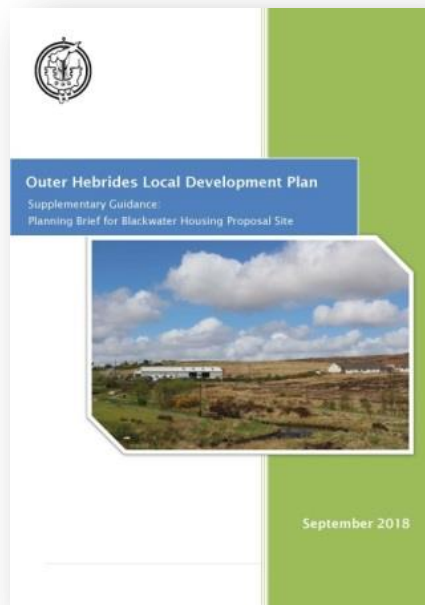
2.4 The [Local Development Plan](#) was adopted in November 2018. Following the Plan Examination, the Development Plan and Marine Planning Team (DP & MP) held workshops in October, focussing on the introduction to the new LDP for Development Management; and for the Council Members to further engage with them in the Development Plan Process, encouraging ownership of the new Plan and to reinforce key plan messages, changes and policies prior to the formal adoption in November 2018. As a result we have a better working relationship with Members and they are more engaged with the LDP process and have a better understanding of the primacy of the Plan and their role in decision making.



New Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan (Adopted November 2018)

Supplementary Guidance for Blackwater Housing Proposal Site

2.5 As part of the new LDP, a [Planning Brief for Blackwater](#) was published to guide developers. This has catalysed the developer to produce a Masterplan in response to the planning brief for this LDP housing proposal site.



Planning Brief for Blackwater Housing Proposal Site

C) Communications, Engagement and Customer Service

2.6 The Planning Support Officer post has now been made permanent and the Officer manages an appointments system for Development Management. To provide Officers with sufficient time to devote to determining applications, they limit appointments to Tuesdays and Thursdays (9am to 3pm). Outwith these times, the Planning Support Officer ascertains what the query is about and if possible, officers will try to accommodate prospective applicants to discuss projects at short notice, particularly if the person has travelled from an outlying area to get to the office. For continuity and to increase certainty; applicants are assigned one Officer who deals with their case throughout the planning process.

RE: Emergency Services Network Mast, Frobost, South Uist

Many thanks; that's fantastic work by Western Isles Council planners. My Client / Home Office will be very pleased with this approval to extend Emergency Services Network within the Community.

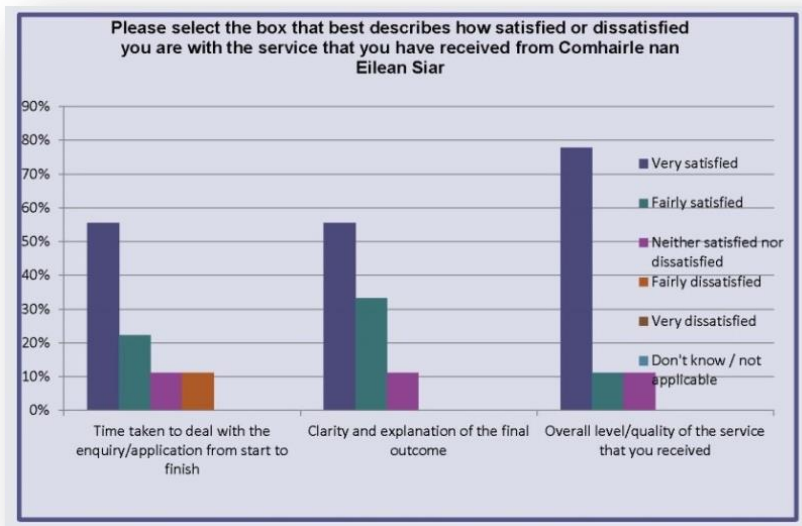
Please pass on our thanks to all those concerned.

Regards, John

Whptelecoms.com

Customer Feedback Questionnaire


2.7 The Planning Service gathers feedback from customers in a questionnaire survey. The results are published annually on the Comhairle web pages; comments submitted help us to improve the service we provide to our customers.



*Extract from
2018/19
Planning Service
Customer Survey
results.*

Customer Communications

2.8 The Planning Service's [web pages](#) are regularly reviewed and DM and DP&MP Teams keep their respective pages updated, including useful information for people with early queries about development, particularly domestic development, and to provide a consistent service to our customers. In addition the Planning Service also sends out regular stakeholder updates and emails a weekly list of planning applications to organisations, for example Community Councils and people who request this service.



2018/19

BUILDING STANDARDS AND PLANNING SERVICE UPDATE

Number 13 December 2018

In this issue:

Christmas and New Year Holiday Dates

Building Standards

- Vacancies and Recruitment

Development Plan and Marine Planning

- Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan
- Statutory Supplementary Guidance
- Non-statutory Supplementary Guidance
- Conservation Area Grants – Buildings and Painting Grant Schemes

Development Management

- Information on Zero and Low Carbon Buildings
- Flood Risk
- Online Resources
- Customer Survey

Performance Information

- Building Standards
- Development Management

Contact us at:

Building Standards
CNES_BuildingStandards@cne-siar.gov.uk
01851 822692 (Stornoway)
01870 604990 (Balivanich)

Planning Service
Development Management
planning@cne-siar.gov.uk
01851 822690 (Stornoway)
01870 604990 (Balivanich)

Development Plan and Marine Planning
localdevplan@cne-siar.gov.uk
01851 822690 (Stornoway)
01870 604990 (Balivanich)

Christmas and New Year Holiday Dates

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Offices will be closed from 5pm on Monday 24 December 2018 and will re-open on Thursday 3 January 2019. Please be aware that, as the Planning Service has reduced staffing cover, any application submitted after 12 noon on Friday 21 December, is unlikely to be processed until 3 January. If you plan to submit any applications prior to Christmas it would be appreciated if you would do so by 9am on Thursday 20 December, if at all possible.

Building Standards

Vacancies and Recruitment

The Building Standards team welcomed a new member of staff in September when Lauren Mackay was appointed as a Building Standards Assistant based in the Balivanich office. Lauren takes up the post formerly held by Mark Macleod and will be working with John MacMillan dealing with the building standards workload in the Uist and Barra area. The appointment of Lauren will bring the building standards team up to full complement once again.

Development Plan and Marine Planning

Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan

On Monday 19 November the Comhairle adopted and published a new Outer Hebrides [Local Development Plan](#) (LDP), replacing the LDP previously adopted in 2012. The LDP provides the statutory policy planning framework to guide development – what develop is appropriate and where. The LDP is a land use plan for the development of the islands, drawn up by the Comhairle in consultation with the community and stakeholders. It sets out a spatial framework for development, and includes a suite of policies and proposal sites by which planning applications are determined.

Statutory Supplementary Guidance

As part of the Development Plan, the Comhairle has also re-adopted, as statutory, some [Supplementary Guidance](#) documents. Supplementary Guidance provides more detailed or technical policy on some areas of development. The Guidances which have been re-adopted are: Caravans and Temporary Buildings; Conservation Area Management Plans; Wind Energy Development; and Marine Fish Farming. Some of the Guidances will be subject to review in the coming months, reflecting the dynamic and important policy sectors they cover. The Development Plan team welcomes participation in these reviews from planning stakeholders. Information on any formal stages of these Guidances' reviews will be published on the Development Plan Consultations [webpage](#) in due course.

Processing Agreements

2.9 Since 2014-15 the Planning Service has promoted the use of processing agreements to applicants in advance of major planning applications on the Comhairle website, where prospective applicants can download [project management templates](#) for these. This reporting year one developer took up the offer of a processing agreement for a major application: the Goathill Care Centre Project (see **Case Study 1 on Page 7**), subsequently the applicant found this approach very useful and the Officer was also able to deal with the application timeously (see feedback below and **Part 5 Scottish Government Official Statistics Table A, Page 51**).

Dear Hannah,

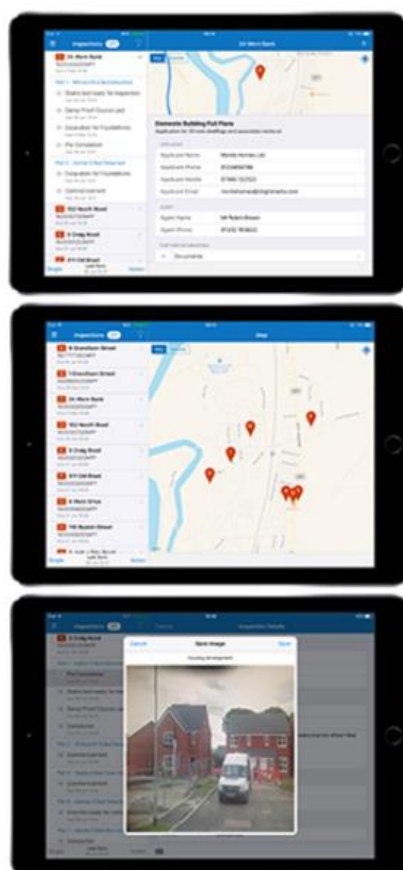
We have received the Planning Permission notice - thank you for meeting the dates in the processing agreement, which I think worked very well. We will prepare a Conditions tracker to assist us in applying for discharge of these at the appropriate time.

Yours sincerely,

R Jonathan Potter

Senior Partner

Technology Update



2.10 The on-line and mobile capabilities of the Comhairle's Geographic Information Systems (GIS) continue to be developed saving officer time and providing our customers with speedier access to information. All DM Officers within the Planning Service are provided with tablets to facilitate their ability to travel efficiently and work flexibly throughout the Islands' area. The Service is considering the feasibility of purchasing Onsite Mobile Apps in order that site inspection data can be entered directly into uniform, eliminating duplication and saving time.

On-Site Mobile Apps

The Planning Service has recently subscribed to ArcGIS Online with a view to publish our Local Development Plan; Supplementary Guidance; Housing Land Audit and various other planning related documents on the internet making them interactive and more readily accessible to the public **(See Part 3 Service Improvements, Page 46)**. The DP and MP Team are planning to trial 'Story Map' GIS software as an innovative way of reaching out to people and getting them to engage with the LDP planning process. The Service continues to contribute GIS datasets to the Improvement Service Spatial Hub.

3. Governance

3.1 The Comhairle has in place a 'Scheme of Administration' which details the membership, quorum, purpose and functions of the Comhairle and its Committees, Sub-Committees, Panels and Joint Consultative Committees. It also regulates certain aspects of procedure.

3.2 Development Management items are reported to the Planning Applications Board which can meet with appropriate notice, according to the needs of the Service. A high percentage of applications are delegated to the appointed officer and therefore during 2018/19 the Board met on only 3 occasions, in May, October and December 2018. Each member of the Board has undertaken relevant training before being permitted to take part in Board meetings. The Planning Service has engaged with members this reporting year by providing training workshops on the new LDP policies. The Planning Applications Board convenes for site visits and pre-determination hearings as required.

3.3 The Comhairle has a Local Review Body (LRB) which has meetings that are advised by officers of the Comhairle as may be determined by the Chief Executive. Each member of the LRB must have undertaken both planning training and specific training on Local Review Bodies before being permitted to participate in a decision making role on the LRB.

3.4 The Comhairle's 'Scheme of Delegation' to Officers operates effectively with 98.5% of decisions being made under delegated powers in 2018/19. During the reporting year 99.7% of applications were approved evidencing the effectiveness of the Plan-led system; using flexible pro-development policies which are aligned to the Comhairle's priority of encouraging and facilitating sustainable economic growth, and ensuring that development contributes to the creation of well-designed attractive places.

3.5 Development Planning and Marine Planning Policy items report to the Sustainable Development Committee which meets 5 times per year.

3.6 The Planning Service continues to face significant budget pressures due to the requirement for delivery of savings across all Council Services.

3.7 Legacy cases are reviewed regularly as part of caseload management. During 2018/19 these comprised the same 2 windfarm cases that were classed as 'Legacy cases' the previous year, both stalled, one awaiting further environmental information on EIA grounds and the other to allow the applicant the opportunity to achieve resolution of objections from aviation stakeholders. No new legacy cases arose during the reporting period. During 2019/20 legacy cases will be the subject of

additional monthly reporting and performance review by the DM Management Team.

Enforcement

3.8 A review of the Enforcement Charter setting out customer expectations for the Service was completed in April 2018 and subsequently adopted by the Comhairle.

3.9 The Planning Service no longer has a dedicated Planning Enforcement Officer. The post of Planning Enforcement Officer had been held vacant to review models of delivering this aspect of the Service within increasingly constrained budgets. It has been concluded that while the legal processes and investigation of enforcement ‘in the field’ could reasonably be absorbed within the duties of the Development Management Planning Officer posts, that the enforcement function of the service to be delivered competently, required support resource to record and monitor and manage complaints to maintain an enforcement record fit for managing an incremental series of enforcement processes and ultimately fit for presenting as an evidence base in Court.

3.10 To address this gap in service, the ‘office based’ administrative aspects of the former enforcement post were incorporated into the Systems Support post which includes other support duties such as systems and change management requirements, QA, Customer Care and specific areas of technical system support. In consultation with Planning Officers, changes have been made to the Planning Officer Job Descriptions to include the ‘customer facing’ complaint investigation and enforcement duties within their remit.



Planning Enforcement Charter Revised 2018

New Appointment

3.11 This reporting period we appointed new graduate Lee Harkness, a member of the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (IEMA), who joined the DM team as a career-grade Planning Officer, based in Benbecula. Lee took up a post, which had been vacant for 18 months and formerly held by a qualified RTPI Planning officer. Lee is working towards securing an Associate Membership of the RTPI.

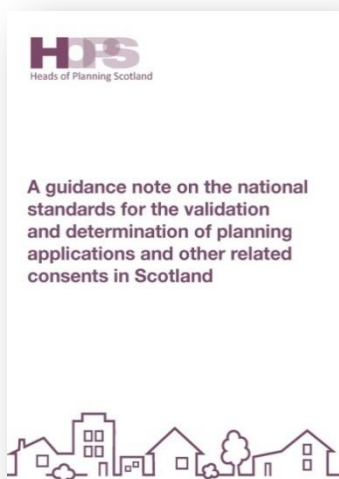
Service Improvement Project

3.12 A Service Improvement Project had been resourced by 1FTE officer seconded for the past 3 years from the Planning Support Post. The project which is coming to a close has focussed on improving planning processes to free up professional officer time to focus on planning assessment work. Significant achievements of the Service Improvement Project included development; refinement of historic planning process to e-enable processes; refine and document them to enable more efficient processing of Online Applications and Appeals; the successful implementation and sign-off of the projects for both ePlanning and eBuilding Standards; the refinement, updating and creation of suites of new standard templates for use with the casework management system; improvements in document publication for public engagement; and commencement of a review of planning conditions. While the project is complete aspects of this work are on-going as change is an on-going process.

Validation

3.13 The Development Management Service continues to seek to review and refine existing processes to deliver efficiency savings and improve performance and outcomes for their customers. Of the applications which were validated between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019, 66.6% were electronic: 54.3% received via the portal¹, and 12.3% received by email, delivering efficiencies and saving the environment through reduced printing/scanning and systems. The Service has adopted the new HOPS [guidance](#) for validation.

¹ Please note however, that this includes **all** types of 'applications' and not just planning applications, so will probably not correlate with any statistics that SG will publish in relation to applications received or validated in the same period.



Validation Standards produced by Heads of Planning Scotland

Inter-Departmental Consultation

3.14 The Planning Service also has a [Planning Application Consultation Protocol](#) in place with other Comhairle Departments to improve efficiency on the part of the Planning Service and that of internal consultees to the process through gaining a better understanding of the requirements and challenges of both parties. Increasing efficiency in the process will release time to drive quality in development and to reduce Planning Decision timescales to the benefit of delivering developments on the ground across the Outer Hebrides.

4. Culture of Continuous Improvement

4.1 During this reporting year the Planning Service delivered on a range of Improvement Actions identified in PPF 2017/18. An overview of progress is provided in **Part 3** of this Report.

4.2 Benchmarking with other island authorities shows that our Planning Service is very 'light' on staffing and budget resources.

4.3 Internally, team meetings are held on a regular basis. Section managers within the Economic Development and Planning Service meeting weekly – in addition to addressing corporate, staffing and any budgetary matters, they discuss any major projects or developments of mutual interest and potential issues and opportunities. Any relevant information is then subsequently shared with planning service staff. Separate team (e.g. DM, DP) meetings are scheduled periodically to disseminate information, discuss work programmes and individuals' caseload, progress and scope for wider team support.

4.4 The Planning Service has engaged with COSLA and Scottish Government during 2018/19, in response to the Planning Bill, and has issued regular internal briefings to Management and elected Members.

Engagement with Other Planning Authorities

4.5 Planning Service representatives regularly attend meetings of Heads of Planning Scotland (including DM and the DP sub-group); DP Manager Mairi Maciver attends meetings of the North of Scotland Development Plans Forum; and the Comhairle continues to participate with other rural and island authorities on joint responses on pieces of legislation e.g. the evolving Planning Bill. These engagements facilitate sharing of good practice, exchange of ideas and on occasion skills sharing to progress specific pieces of work/projects. We have liaised with other authorities before taking on new applications/tools e.g. 'StoryMap' platform.

Aquaculture and Marine Planning

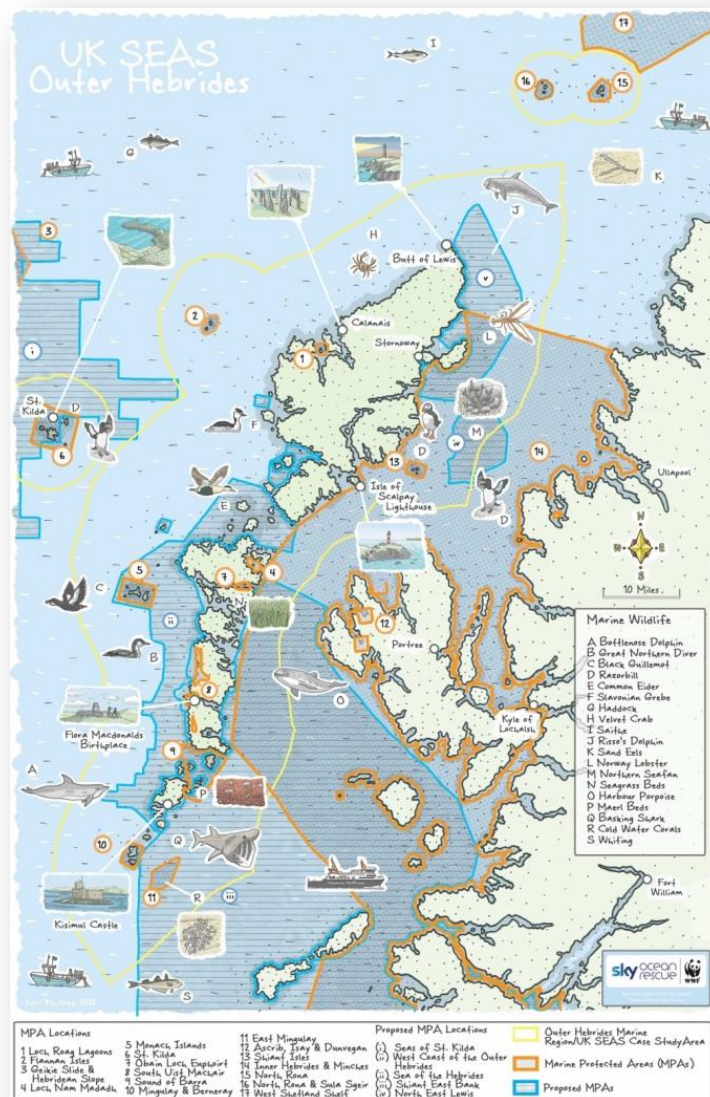
4.6 The Comhairle nan Eilean Siar area, due to its extensive coastline and suitable marine environment is home to a high percentage of Scotland's production of Atlantic salmon. This is a buoyant and expanding sector with a strong environmental focus and scrutiny by lobby groups, in particular in relation to contributory impacts by the industry on the decline wild salmon stocks. On the 5 March 2018, the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (ECCLR) Committee of the Scottish Parliament wrote to the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee regarding its inquiry into the environmental impact of salmon farming in Scotland. The Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee published its report on its inquiry into Salmon Farming in Scotland on 27 November 2018. That Report contained a series of recommendations that are now being taken forward. Throughout the year, the Planning Service has therefore regularly engaged with the Scottish Government's Aquaculture Planning Policy team and the industry body, Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation. Work is progressing with regulatory bodies to strengthen regulation while enabling the industry to grow sustainably.

Marine Planning in the Outer Hebrides

4.7 Local management of marine resources is a key objective of the Comhairle and we are committed to taking forward regional marine planning for the Outer Hebrides marine region. As such, the Development Plan and Marine Planning Team have been involved with a number of projects which will assist in the preparatory stages of this process and ensure the role communities play in enabling successful marine resource management is recognised. An Officer from the DP & MP Team attends the regional Marine Spatial Planning Forum which is held annually.

Seas of the Outer Hebrides

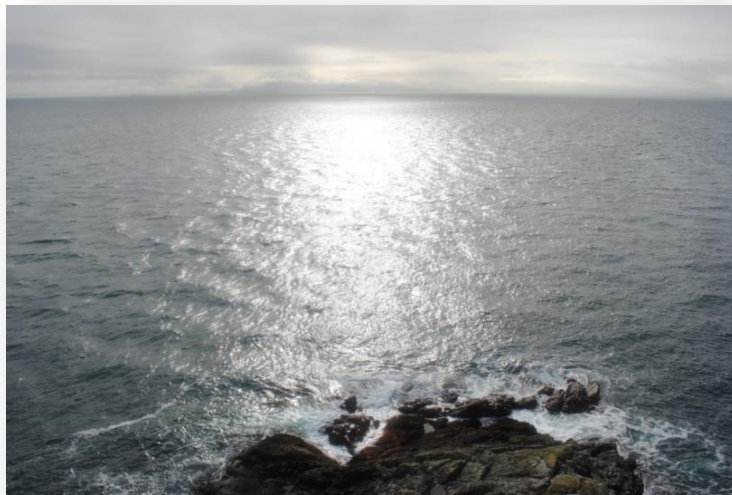
4.8 The Comhairle is involved in an INTERREG funded project called 'Seas of the Outer Hebrides'. Working in partnership with Marine Scotland, World Wildlife Fund and Scottish Natural Heritage, the project aims to develop a shared vision for marine management in the Outer Hebrides and to coproduce a regional management plan for Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) within the Outer Hebrides Region. This 3.5 year project will bring together communities, partner organisations and marine users with the aim of building consensus around the future management for all MPAs in the seas around the Outer Hebrides. One of the key aims of the project is to inform the development of a future Regional Marine Plan and an Officer from the Development Plan and Marine Planning Team sits on the steering group. This new marine project recognises the importance of communities in enabling successful marine conservation.



Outer Hebrides Map – created by: Karl Whiteley 2018 (Sky ocean rescue;

MSP Navigator

4.9 The Comhairle is part of a consortium submitting a proposal to the INTERREG North Sea programme as part of a wider bid for funding called ‘MSP Navigator’. An element of the project is to support regional marine planning in the Outer Hebrides and the Development Plan and Marine Planning team have been involved in the development of the bid. The project has made it through to Stage 2 of the process, and if ultimately successful, will start in October 2019 and run until 2022. The overall programme objective focuses on innovative digital solutions fostered through e-services in Marine Spatial Planning, such as gaming based planning support platforms, interactive stakeholder engagement tools, and digital cumulative impact assessments of land-sea interactions.



The Minch

Crown Estates – Local Asset Management Pilot Scheme

4.10 The Comhairle’s bid to manage the Outer Hebrides foreshore and seabed out to 12nm has progressed to Stage 2 of Crown Estate Scotland’s Local Asset Management Pilot Scheme process. The bid focuses on community engagement and will be delivered by a new Outer Hebrides Marine Leasing Partnership with a wide range of representatives. The Development Plan and Marine Planning Team have been involved in the development of this proposal and if it progresses will be instrumental in its delivery.

4.11 The premise of the proposal is that a Marine Leasing Partnership will receive lease applications then invite the host community to carry out a Community Impact

Assessment, whose recommendation will be a material consideration in the Marine Planning Partnership's subsequent consideration of the application. The Partnership would then consult widely, and present a recommendation, with suggested lease conditions to the Marine Licensing sub-committee made up of elected member representatives. If approved, the application would be passed to Crown Estate Scotland for issue of lease documentation and lifetime management of the lease.

Local Development Plan – Marine Environment

4.12 The newly adopted Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan (2018) has two new categories in the Spatial Strategy called 'Marine and Shore Environment' and 'Offshore islands' to fill a policy void for these areas and to provide reference to the supplementary guidance for marine fish farming in the development strategy. The supplementary guidance for Marine Fish Farming is currently being reviewed to bring it up to date with national policy guidance and changes to regulation.

Continual Professional Development

4.13 Planning Officer Isla Macarthur attended a Forum Workshop on Marine Planning organised by Marine Alliance Science Technology Scotland in February 2019; Susan Rabé became a chartered member of the RTPI in August 2018 and contributed an article 'Lord Leverhulme's Experiment' to the Highlands and Islands-themed issue of the journal [Context](#).



Context is the journal of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation which represents professionals working in the historic built environment in the UK. It is published five times a year and is distributed to Institute members and to a range of other subscribers.

4.14 Our staff continue to participate in free webinars and utilise online training resources to increase their knowledge and understanding of planning-related topics as and when work schedules allow.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Training

4.15 A large percentage of the land in the Outer Hebrides is under natural heritage designation, consequently development proposals, such as Wind Farms and Aquaculture often require an EIA. To keep up to speed with the EIA process, DM Manager Morag Ferguson attended a Scottish Government/IEMA sponsored workshop on EIA Regulation in May 2018. The Planning Service continues to engage with developers at screening, scoping pre-app stages regarding the requirement for and information required in Environmental Reports for the assessment of development proposals.

Part 2: Supporting Evidence

- [Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan \(Adopted November 2018\)](#)
- [Outer Hebrides Monitoring Report 2015](#)
- [OHLDP Development Plan Scheme 2018](#)
- [Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan Action Programme 2019](#)
- [Planning Service Charter Revised February 2019](#)
- [Enforcement Charter Revised April 2018](#)
- [Customer Satisfaction Survey Results](#)
- [Stakeholder Updates](#)
- [Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Housing Land Audit for 2018](#)
- [Outer Hebrides Local Housing Strategy 2017-2022](#)
- [Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Planning Service Web information pages and public access](#)
- [Service Business Plan: Development Department Management Plan 18/19 – 22/23](#)
- [Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Planning Performance Framework Reports and Feedback](#)
- [Socio-Economic Updates](#)
- [Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Public Performance Report 2017-18](#)
- [Outer Hebrides Local Outcome Improvement Plan](#)
- Uniform Data Management System
- Development Department Management Structure 2018-19

Checklist for Part 2: Qualitative Narrative and Case Studies

Case Study Topics	Issue covered by case study (pg number)	Case Study Topics	Issue covered by case study (pg number)
Design	CS2 Page 11	Interdisciplinary Working	
Conservation	CS3 Page 14	Collaborative Working	CS1 Page 7 CS5 Page 21
Regeneration		Community Engagement	
Environment	CS2 Page 11	Placemaking	
Greenspace		Charrettes	
Town Centres		Place Standard	
Masterplanning		Performance Monitoring	
LDP & Supplementary Guidance		Process Improvement	CS3 Page 14
Housing Supply		Project Management	CS1 Page 7
Affordable Housing	CS4 Page 17 CS5 Page 21	Skills Sharing	
Economic Development		Staff Training	
Enforcement		Online Systems	
Development Management Processes		Transport	
Planning Applications	CS4 Page 17	Active Travel	
Other: please note			

Part 3: Service Improvements 2019-20

In the coming year we will:

- Pilot the use of interactive 'Story Map' GIS to improve our engagement with stakeholders, the community and developers on the development plan process;
- Ensure that prospective applicants for Conservation Area Grants have a pre-application meeting to establish eligibility and avoid abortive applications;
- Instigate Pre Strategic Local Programme (SLP) meetings with Building Standards and Hebridean Housing Partnership to understand each other's challenges; make early interventions as required; offsetting problems at the application stage.

Delivery of our service improvement actions in 2018-19:

Committed improvements and actions	Complete?
<p><i>Build on interim arrangements of cross-working between planning teams by piloting a project to deploy generic planning Officers with a view to developing transferrable skills to meet changing needs across the service.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Contract roles and responsibilities were reviewed and Officers were given the opportunity to comment on the draft content, new generic contracts were then issued by HR, subsequently Planning Officers have been successfully deployed between teams to meet service needs where required and contribute to the delivery of targets during this reporting period.</i> • <i>This approach has developed new skills and flexibility, helping to create responsive and adaptable planners familiar with both DP and DM functions and processes and equipped to deal with a wide range of planning issues across disciplines and topics.</i> 	<p><i>[Yes, planners are gaining wider experience across functions]</i></p>
<p><i>Establish a new post of Enforcement and Planning Systems Officer</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Looking to better address the needs of the Service going forward a new post of Enforcement and Planning Systems Support Officer has been designed, evaluated and established through Vacancy Panel. The post has now been made permanent.</i> 	<p><i>[Yes; successful outcome]</i></p>
<p><i>Trial an arrangement whereby a dedicated Officer co-ordinates Freedom of Information requests</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>This task is being carried out by the Enforcement and Planning Systems Officer</i> 	<p><i>[Yes; has been a huge help in freeing up officers' time to plan]</i></p>
<p><i>Provide a regular update in response to volume of work to Planning and Building Standards Staff showing Officer Area responsibilities</i></p>	<p><i>[Yes; useful tool]</i></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A sheet is circulated showing Officer Area responsibilities and weekly reports are generated from Uniform and circulated showing Officer Caseloads and determination dates. 	
Development Planning & Marine Planning Team will take the lead on the promotion and delivery of the Outer Hebrides Design Awards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due to staffing issues and workloads during the reporting year it was not possible to hold the Awards 	[adjourned until next reporting year]
Seek to conclude Planning Service management arrangements subject to wider corporate Service Re-design implications. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This matter has been reported to committee and as part of the restructuring a new Head of Service has been appointed. 	[Yes; now resolved]

Part 4: National Headline Indicators (NHI)

A: NHI Key outcomes - Development Planning:

Development Planning	2018-19	2017-18
Local and Strategic Development Planning:		
Age of local development plan at end of reporting period <i>Requirement: less than 5 years</i>	0 years and 4 months	5 years and 4 months
Will the local development plan be replaced by its 5 th anniversary according to the current development plan scheme?	Y	N (Notice of Intention to Adopt LDP published 02/07/18. Adoption imminent)
Has the expected date of submission of the plan to Scottish Ministers in the development plan scheme changed over the past year?	N	Y-later
Were development plan scheme engagement/consultation commitments met during the year?	Y	Y
Effective Land Supply and Delivery of Outputs²		
Established housing land supply	904 units (NB: 2018 HLA, we produce a biennial audit)	904 units
5-year effective housing land supply programming	623 units	623 units
5-year effective land supply total capacity	623 units Per LDP	623 units Per LDP
5-year housing supply target	360 LDP target units	360 LDP target units

² Audit Year 2018/19

The [Outer Hebrides Housing Land Audit 2018](#) (final) was utilised.

5-year effective housing land supply	8.6 years	8.6 years
Housing approvals	304 units	164 units
Housing completions over the last 5 years	361 units	489 units
Marketable employment land supply	13.67 ha*	26.23 ha
Employment land take-up during reporting year	0 ha*	4.05 ha

**Reduced number of economic development sites identified in new LDP, adopted Nov 2018, hence significant change in figures.*

B: NHI Key outcomes – Development Management:

Development Management:	2018-19	2017-18
Project Planning		
Percentage and number of applications subject to pre-application advice	We no longer collect this information	53%
Percentage and number of major applications subject to processing agreement	100% 1	0%
Decision Making		
Application approval rate	99.7%	99.2%
Delegation rate	98.5%	97.2%
Validation	We don't analyse this	We don't analyse this
Decision-making Timescales		
Major Developments	17 weeks (1 case)	36.9 weeks (1 case)
Local developments (non-householder)	8.3 weeks	9.7 weeks
Householder developments	5.8 weeks	7.5 weeks
Legacy Cases		
Number cleared during reporting period	0	0
Number remaining * The number (5) reported in 2017/18 was incorrect. The correct number was (2) cases.	2	2*

C: Enforcement activity

	2018-19	2017-18
Time since <u>enforcement charter</u> published / reviewed	11 months	1 month

Requirement: review every 2 years		
Complaints lodged and investigated	9	11
Breaches identified – no further action taken	0	2
Cases closed	6	5
Notices served	4	3
Direct Action	0	0
Reports to Procurator Fiscal	1	0
Prosecutions	0	0

D: NHI Key outcomes – Commentary

Commentary

CONTEXT (Short contextual statement)

The Development Management Team is a small team where a single vacancy or period of absence by one member of staff has a significant effect on the resource available to deliver the Service.

During the Reporting year the established posts for delivering the Service was 1 FTE Manager, 4.6 FTE Planning Officers, 1 FTE Enforcement and Planning Systems Improvement Officer, 1 FTE Planning Support Officer and 1 FTE Clerical Assistant. Additional administration support (1 FTE) is delivered via a Service level agreement with another service.

However during 10 months of the reporting period, 1FTE Planning post was vacant due to difficulty recruiting to a Maternity Leave vacancy and a further officer was on three periods of extended sick leave.

This has resulted in delivery of the Development Management Function being at risk. The Planning Manager (Development Management) was therefore required to carry a significant volume of larger scale and complex casework. The staff of the Development Management Team worked exceptionally hard and efficiently, in addition, the performance of that function was supported by redeployment of staff from the Planning Policy Team.

With regards to Development Planning, again with a small team, the adoption of the new LDP was still achieved with the current Plan being 5 years old. This has been achieved despite there being no designated manager for a good part of the Plan's preparation, and some team members being seconded to other roles to support delivery of wider Development Services functions.

Part 5: Scottish Government Official Statistics

A: Decision-making timescales (based on 'all applications' timescales)

Timescales	Total number of decisions	Average timescale (weeks)	
	2018-19	2018-19	2017-18
Overall			
Major developments	1	Weeks 17	weeks 36.9
Local developments (non-householder)	253	weeks	weeks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local: less than 2 months Local: more than 2 months 	(66%) (34%)	6.4 11.9	6.5 12.6
Householder developments	68	weeks	weeks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local: less than 2 months Local: more than 2 months 	(91.2%) (8.8%)	5.4 10.3	5.9 11.4
Housing Developments			
Major	0	weeks n/a	weeks n/a
Local housing developments	120	weeks	weeks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local: less than 2 months Local: more than 2 months 	(62.5%) (37.5%)	6.4 11.7	6.5 12.2
Business and Industry			
Major	0	weeks n/a	weeks n/a
Local business and industry developments	18	weeks	weeks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local: less than 2 months Local: more than 2 months 	(72.2%) (27.8%)	6.8 12	6.6 12.9
EIA Developments	0	N/A	weeks 14.7
Other Consents	79	weeks 5.7	weeks 6.8
Planning/legal agreements		weeks	weeks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major: average time Local: average time 	0 0	n/a n/a	36.9 32.6

B: Decision-making: local reviews and appeals

Type	Total number of decisions No.	Original decision upheld			
		2018-19		2017-2018	
		No.	%	No.	%
Local reviews	1	0	0%	1	0%
Appeals to Scottish Ministers	0	0	N/A	5	60%

C: Context

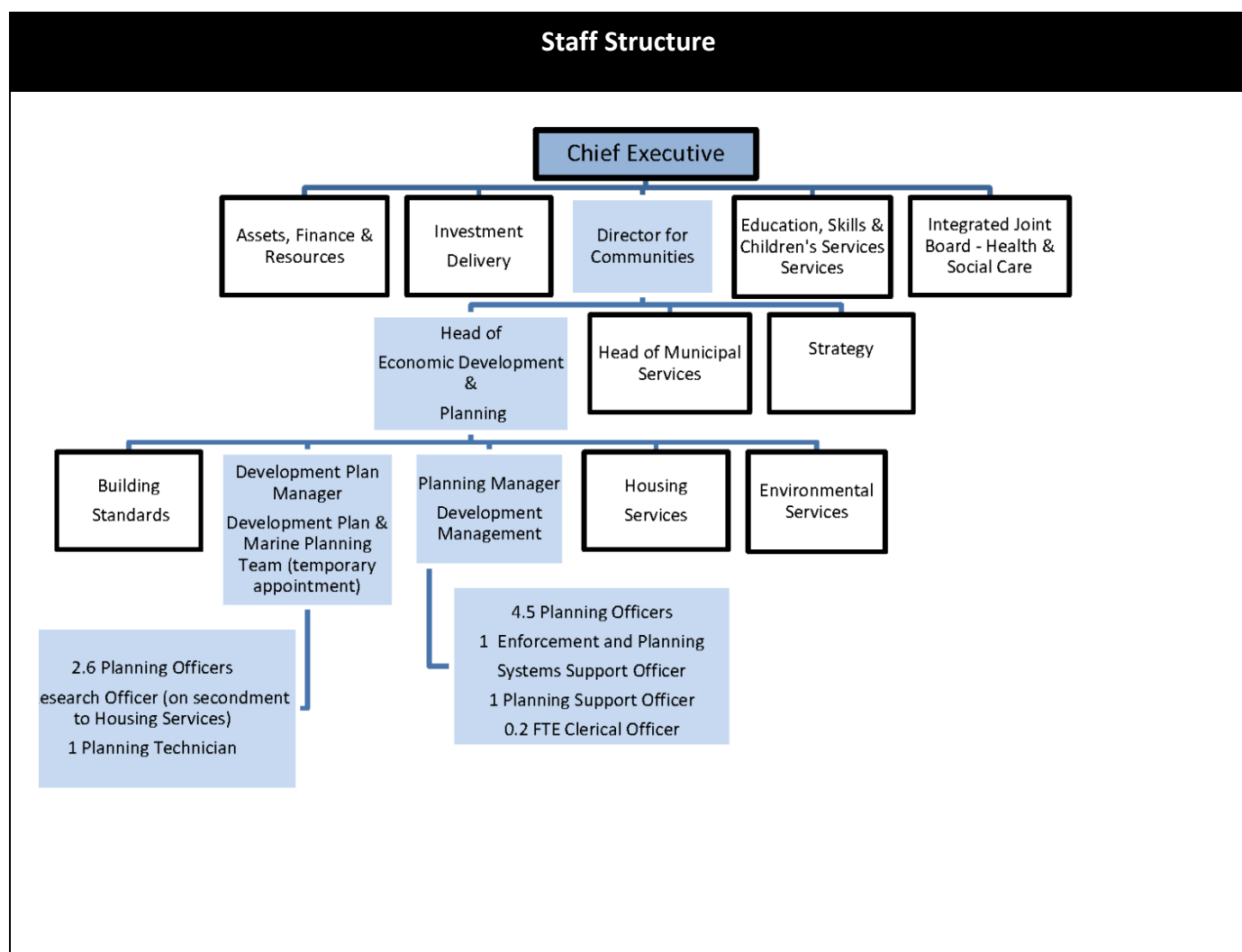
In 2018/19 there was a small reduction (321 as opposed to 351) in the number of planning application determined. In the context of staff vacancy the Development Management function were operating under considerable pressure; relieved only by redeployment of staff from the Planning Policy team. As a result of these management measures, determination performance was marginally improved on that in 2017/18. New applications received were down on the previous year, but due to the type and complexity of cases registered, fee income levels were maintained.

Part 6: Workforce Information

	Tier 1 <i>Chief Executive</i>	Tier 2 <i>Director</i>	Tier 3 <i>Head of Service</i>	Tier 4 <i>Manager</i>
Head of Planning Service			1	

Staff Age Profile	Headcount
Under 30	1
30-39	4
40-49	4
50 and over	8

RTPI Chartered and Associate Staff	Headcount
Chartered and Associate	6 Chartered Members and 3 Associate Members



The Planning Service of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar was formerly headed up by a Chartered Town Planner in the Post of Head of Development Services with management responsibility for Planning Policy and Marine Planning, Planning (Development Management), Building Standards, Housing and Environmental Health. The post was vacated in August 2017 and held vacant to allow for a corporate review of departmental structures and senior grade staffing across the Comhairle.

The Organisational Review of the Services of the Comhairle was completed in January 2019 and the Head of Development Services post, formerly held by a Chartered Town Planner was dis-established. Both Planning Managers now report to the newly created Head of Economic Development and Planning. The new Head of Service post has management responsibility for Planning Policy and Marine Planning; Planning (Development Management); Building Standards; to add to those of Economic Development; Regeneration; Business Gateway; Museums and Heritage; and Library Services.

While the loss of a senior grade professional planning post is regrettable, the restructuring provides an opportunity to realise synergies between the Planning and Development Services leading to shared understanding, increased collaboration and better planning outcomes.

Part 7: Planning Committee Information

Committee & Site Visits	Number per year
Full council meetings	6 (of which there was one report from Planning)
Planning committees	3 (on demand)
Area committees	N/A
Committee site visits	0
Local Review Body	1
LRB site visits	0

Performance Markers and Evidence Base

	Performance Marker	Measure	Policy Background to Marker	Part of PPF report best suited to evidence this marker
DRIVING IMPROVED PERFORMANCE				
1	Decision making: authorities demonstrating continuous evidence of reducing average timescales for all development types	Part 4 (Table B) & Part 5 (Table A) Contextual commentary setting out factors affecting performance on decision making are set out in Part 5 C.	Official Statistics and PPF reports	NHI Scottish Government Official Statistics
2	Project management: offer of processing agreements (or other agreed project plan) made to prospective applicants in advance of all major applications <u>and</u> availability publicised on planning authority website	Y See Case Study 1 Goathill Care Centre Page 7 and see Page 33 for positive feedback on this processing agreement. Processing Agreements for major and 'locally significant' developments are promoted through pre-application discussion and online.	Modernising the Planning System (Audit Scotland); SG website / template	NHI Quality of Service and Engagement
3	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	Y See Case Study 1 Goathill Care Centre (see Page 7) See Case Study 2 Machair Interpretation Centre (see Page 11) See Case Study 3 Conservation Area Enhancement (see Page 14) The Comhairle's Planning Service Charter revised in February 2019 is on the Comhairle's web pages and sets out how the service approaches pre-app and requests for supporting information. Applications are validated against the National Validation Standard published by HOPS to ensure that submissions and requirements for supporting information are quality checked on a consistent basis.	White Paper; Delivering Planning Reform; Planning Reform Next Steps	NHI Quality of Service and Engagement

4	Legal agreements: conclude (or reconsider) applications within 6 months of 'resolving to grant' ³	<p>Part 5 (Table A)</p> <p>We didn't have any legal agreements in this reporting year.</p> <p>In practice however, applications requiring a legal agreement are reviewed regularly and are highlighted on officers' outstanding items case lists.</p>	Official statistics; PPF reports; evidence of delays to major developments	Quality of Service and Engagement Governance
5	Enforcement charter updated / re-published	Planning Enforcement Charter has been reviewed and updated in April 2018 to reflect revised service arrangements.	Planning Act (s158A)	NHI
6	<p>Continuous improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - show progress/improvement in relation to PPF National Headline Indicators; - progress ambitious and relevant service improvement commitments identified through PPF report. 	Progress on all commitments (see Part 2 Quality of Service & Engagement, 4. Culture of Continuous Improvement (see Page 38), and Part 3 Service Improvements (see Page 46) although we have not been able to hold the Design Awards due to other work streams taking priority and lack of staff resources to promote and organise this event (see Page 47).	Delivering Planning Reform; PPF Report	Culture of Continuous Improvement Service Improvement Plan

³ This will require production of supporting guidance, following wider stakeholder input

PROMOTING THE PLAN-LED SYSTEM				
7	LDP less than 5 years since adoption	The Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan was adopted in November 2018.	Planning Act (s16); Scottish Planning Policy	NHI Quality of Outcomes Quality of service and engagement
8	Development plan scheme demonstrates next LDP: - on course for adoption within 5-year cycle - project planned and expected to be delivered to planned timescale	Y Y Outer Hebrides Development Plan Scheme 2019 published.	Planning Act (s16); Scottish Planning Policy	NHI Quality of Outcomes Quality of service and engagement
9	Elected members engaged early (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation	N/A.		Quality of Service and Engagement Governance
10	Cross-sector stakeholders, including industry, agencies and Scottish Government, engaged early (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation	N/A.		Quality of Service and Engagement Governance
11	Production of regular and proportionate policy advice, for example through supplementary guidance, on information required to support applications	This link takes you to the Outer Hebrides LDP home page, where all the documents below may be accessed: New LDP and associated documents adopted : Proposals Booklet; Action Programme; Statutory Supplementary Guidance: Caravans and Temporary Buildings (adopted November 2018); Conservation Area Management Plans (adopted November 2018); Marine Fish Farming (adopted November 2018); Wind Energy Development (Adopted November 2018); Other Non-Statutory Supplementary Guidance Planning Brief for Blackwater Housing Proposal Site (adopted September 2018).		Quality of Service and Engagement

SIMPLIFYING AND STREAMLINING				
12	Corporate working across services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit (e.g. protocols; joined-up services; single contact; joint pre-application advice)	Examples from the year Case Study 4: Corran Ciasmol – Housing Delivery (see Page 17). CnES has an internal Planning Application Consultation Protocol (see Page 38).		Quality of Service and Engagement Governance
13	Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge between authorities	Evidence of activity to pass on and adopt good practice, refer to North of Scotland Development Plan Forum (see Page 39) , regarding Aquaculture, engagement and exchange of knowledge with Scottish Government's 'Aquaculture Planning Policy team' and the industry body, 'Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation'. (see Page 39) Marine Spatial Planning Forum (see Page 39).	Delivering Planning Reform; Planning Reform Next Steps	Culture of continuous improvement
DELIVERING DEVELOPMENT				
14	Stalled sites/legacy cases: conclusion/withdrawal of planning applications more than one-year-old	During 2018/19 zero legacy cases were cleared. At 31st March 2019 there were 2 'live' legacy applications remaining to be concluded.		Governance
15	Developer contributions: clear expectations - set out in development plan (and/or emerging plan,) and - in pre-application discussions	Yes - A distinct policy has been included in the new OHLDP on developer contributions Policy EI 12 Developer Contributions , also See Case Study 1: Goathill Care Centre (see Page 7) for evidence of this performance marker, where direct and indirect community benefit has been secured, for example the contractor in partnership with the Integrated Joint Board (WIs NHS and CnES) will be providing apprenticeships in construction and in the care sector.		Quality of service and engagement



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