



PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK 11

2021/22

ARGYLL
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#abplace2b

About Argyll and Bute

Population (2019):

85,570

9%

Argyll and Bute as a proportion of the total Scottish land area.



43%

of Argyll and Bute's Population live in areas classified as "remote rural".

96%

of Argyll and Bute's population live within 10km of the coast.

52

of Argyll and Bute's 125 data zones are amongst the 20% most geographically access deprived data zones in Scotland.

Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2020

Average Pop. Density (2019):

0.12 persons per ha

21

Bute, Coll, Colonsay, Danna, Easdale, Eilean da Mheinn, Erraid, Gigha, Gometra, Iona, Islay, Jura, Kerrera, Lismore, Luing, Mull, Oronsay, Seil, Shuna (Luing), Tiree, Ulva

inhabited islands*

* not including LLTNP area

£536

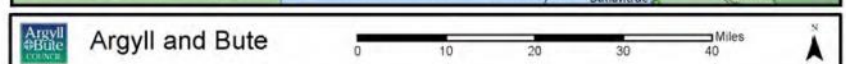
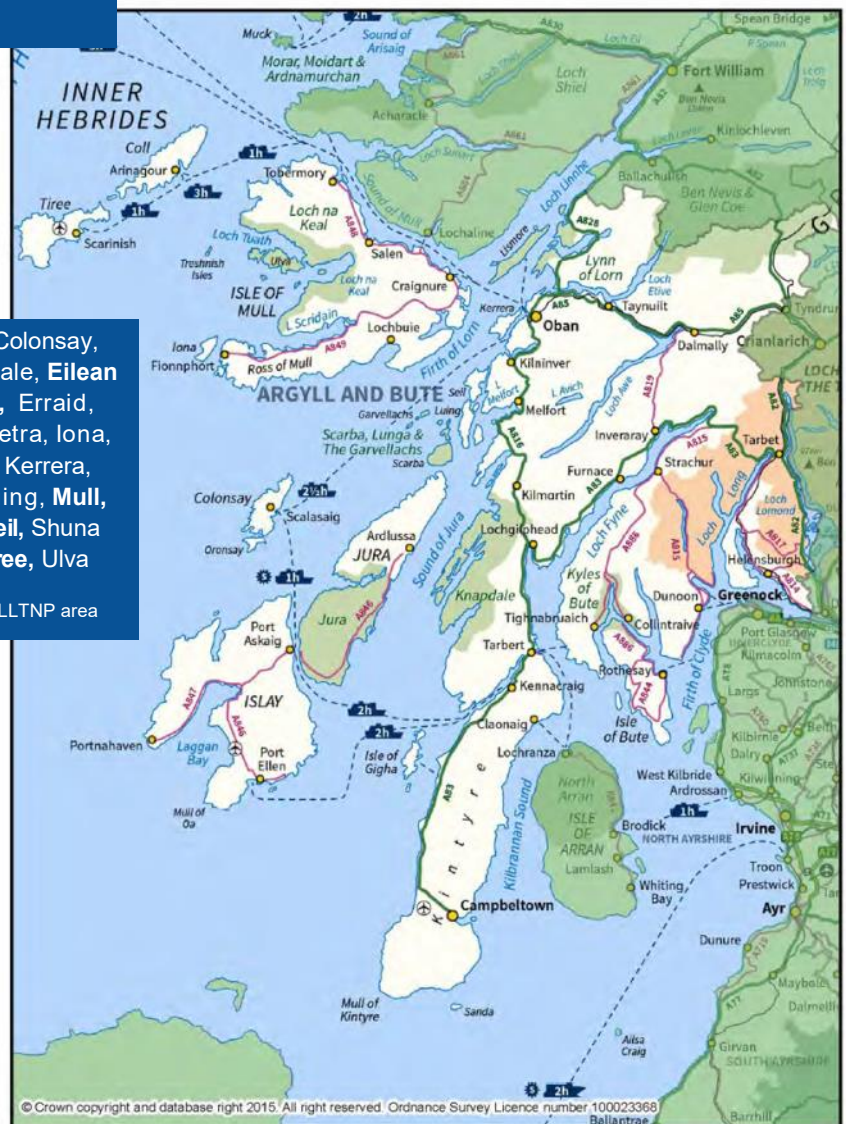
average weekly income

Compared to Scottish Average of £577, and UK Average of £688 (2019)

33%

of employment is in "Public Administration, Education and Health"

Compared to 29.8% in Scotland, 26.4% in UK (2018)



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Argyll and Bute Key Challenges:

Our geography – A highly rural area with many small communities, often separated by water. Access to the area and to key services are perennial challenges.

Reducing population – The projected decline in total population is a real threat to the viability of the area with a potential to adversely impact on the economy/wealth creation, workforce availability and efficient service delivery.

Changing population – With more extremes than most of Scotland we face increasing costs and challenges to deliver services to older people and we need to encourage younger people to move to the area so that our economy can grow.

Economy – Unlocking the opportunities offered by its significant, sustainable economic assets for the benefit of its communities and the competitiveness and security of the Scottish and EU economies.

Employment – Developing education, skills and training to maximise opportunities for all and create a workforce to support economic growth.



Arrinagour, Isle of Coll

Infrastructure – Improving and making better use of infrastructure in order to promote the conditions for economic growth including enhancing the built environment and our town centres.

Sustainability – Ensuring a sustainable future by protecting the natural environment and mitigating climate change.

Health – Improving health and well being and reducing health inequalities.

Deprivation – Inequalities exist in Argyll and Bute so we need to improve how we identify and implement action to address them.

People on the fringe – Many of our communities are very isolated and risk collapsing as population changes take affect alongside urban communities where deprivation can create real hardships.

Foreword:



Fergus Murray
Head of Development & Economic Growth
Argyll and Bute Council

As the Head of Development and Economic Growth, I am pleased to submit the annual performance report for Argyll and Bute Council's Planning Service, which provides relevant statistics for 2021/22 and case studies highlighting the work of the council's planning service that forms part of the wider Development and Economic Growth Service of the council. This 11th Planning Performance Framework report is written at a time of unprecedented challenges. The need to address climate change, the impacts of the pandemic, a cost of living crisis, together with a critical shortage of skilled workers is placing a significant pressure on the planning service in terms of our performance.

Our workforce is moving to hybrid working with face to face meetings increasingly common. That said, our main communication with our many customers remains predominately through digital channels and this will be the norm going forward as we rationalise and adapt our offices to new ways of working.

Workload levels remain high across the service, dealing with backlogs due to the pandemic, adapting to the new requirements from the Planning Act, responding to Government consultations including NPF4, taking forward the Local Development Plan through a Public Local Inquiry, dealing with an increasing workload of complex planning applications including major investments in renewables, food and drink, housing and tourism. This rising and increasingly complex workload has been made more challenging by our difficulty in attracting experienced Planners with the right skills to improve our performance as a Planning Service.

This situation is reflected in our overall performance, whilst our approval rates remain high at 98% our performance in determining planning applications this year is not yet in the place where we want to be. This situation is compounded further by our need to address long standing legacy applications that when determined inevitably impact negatively on our overall planning application decision averages.

Striking a more positive note, our area regeneration efforts continue to help transform our region, creating great places for people to live, to invest in and importantly for us to visit given the dominance of the tourism sector in our economy. The Planning Service working closely with the Council's Economic Growth and Housing Services has played a key role here, helping new homes to be built, new businesses to start, buildings to be repurposed and facilitating the expansion of major renewable energy projects. Key projects include the development of the Dunbeg Corridor and the building of housing on former areas of the Helensburgh Greenbelt, the delivery of key infrastructure on our islands, the repowering of on shore wind farms in Kintyre, the continued expansion of our forest, aquaculture and the spirits industries.

This work will continue and has considerable potential to expand further given the continued delivery of our Rural Growth Deal and taking account of recent Levelling Up Bids to the UK Government focussing on regeneration in Rothesay and Dunoon town centres.

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Part 1: Defining and Measuring a High Quality Planning Service

1.1 QUALITY OF OUTCOMES

1.1.1 Throughout 2021/22 the Planning Service has continued to work closely with communities, developers and partner organisations to deliver a range of developments across Argyll and Bute.

1.1.2 The [adopted Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan 2015](#) (the LDP) is firmly embedded into decision making with 12 key policies which seek to promote the delivery of sustainable long term economic growth to support the retention and growth of our population; to support the transition to a low carbon economy; to help retain and improve essential services; to protect and enhance our outstanding natural and built environment, and to maintain and improve our quality of life. Whilst the LDP is now more than five years old it is still considered fit for purpose in terms of decision making and will remain so until it is replaced by the [Argyll and Bute Proposed Local Development Plan 2](#) (PLDP2) which is now at an advanced stage in its preparation and has reached Examination stage.

1.1.3 Interpretation and implementation of the LDP policy aims is assisted by a suite of Supplementary Guidance and non-statutory Technical Working Notes. These include publications on: [Masterplanning](#), [Advertisement and Signage Policy](#), [Houses in Multiple Occupation](#), and a [Biodiversity Technical Note for Planners and Developers](#). In 2021/22 we published non-statutory guidance on the handling of requests for [Non-Material Amendments](#) under S64 of the Act was updated. Advice for communities interested in [Local Place Plans](#) was published also online during 2021/22.

1.1.4 The Council seeks to promote high quality design through the publication of [Sustainable Design Guidance](#) covering a range of topics including Small Scale Housing Development, Larger Housing Development, Working with Argyll and Bute's Built Heritage, Case Studies on Sustainable Materials and Technologies, and place specific guidance for the unique circumstances of the Islands of Coll and Tiree. Delivery of quality in design and place making is celebrated and championed through the Council's [Sustainable Design Award](#) scheme and identification of [exemplar designs](#) via the Council's website. The most recent iteration of the Sustainable Design Awards was launched in February 2020 but has subsequently been postponed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. To date it has not been possible to re-schedule. However, subject to availability of resources, it is hoped that this will be re-instigated by Summer 2023. The [Design Awards 2020](#) were intended to recognise work that was carried out or completed in the period July 2015 to May 2020, however this will be subject to review at an appropriate time. The proposed award categories have been identified as Sustainable Design, Aesthetic Design, Community Led Regeneration Project, Built Heritage, and Design for Under £100k. The range of categories are intended to highlight good practice across varying scales and types of development, and include for the promotion of low cost-innovative design, and community led developments.

1.1.5 There are [33 Conservation Area designations](#) across Argyll and Bute providing protection to the historic built environment. Where resources allow, the Council seeks to review and update the Conservation Area Appraisal and Character Evaluations that underpin the management of these designations and to support regeneration activity.

1.1.6 Through considered and targeted investment, the Council is continuing to develop, deliver and distribute funding to regeneration projects, the foundations of which support more attractive and prosperous places. During 2021/22, we have developed a bespoke website which highlights the many ongoing and completed regeneration projects which are being delivered by teams across Argyll and Bute Council as well as by community groups. Further information can be found at <https://investinargyllandbute.co.uk/physical-regeneration-in-argyll-and-bute/>. The projects which were developed and delivered by the Projects and Regeneration Team during 2021/22 are as follows:

[Dunoon CARS](#) - partnership project with Historic Environment Scotland. To date this has delivered the completion of 3 priority buildings and 22 shopfronts, with 6 units brought back into use, and 7 Owners Associations formed with a total investment spend of £1.9m. During 2021/22 an allocation of £70,000 was made from the Place Based Investment funds towards improvements to the area surrounding Castle House Gate Lodge. Delivery of the CARS is continuing through 2022/23.

[Rothesay TH2](#) - partnership project with National Lottery Heritage Fund, Historic Environment Scotland, Highlands & Islands Enterprise, LEADER and Sustrans. To date this has delivered completion of 8 priority buildings, 14 shopfronts, 10 small repairs and 2 window projects with total investment spend of £5.4m. The project is ongoing until the end of March 2023 due to delays arising from the Covid-19 pandemic. The project was supported by a grant of funding by the Place Based Investment during the year to help assist with rising construction costs.

[Lochgilphead CARS](#) - partnership project with Historic Environment Scotland with total investment spend of £1.8m. First priority buildings are expected to be on site during 2022/23. First small repair grant has been awarded with other cases being developed. A number of training activities have taken place including a traditional skills roadshow across 4 towns and a seminar on how to heat older properties.

[Lochgilphead Front Green](#) / [Lochgilphead Public Realm Works](#) - Following completion of the Argyll Street public realm improvements during 2020/21 (see previous PPF), work commenced on the £1.6m investment planned for the redevelopment of the Front Green in May 2021, the project is delivering a new play park, pathways, a public square and open space. The site is identified as an Area for Action within the Local Development Plan. Works are planned to complete during 2022/23.

[Tarbert / Ardrishaig Regeneration](#) - Regeneration projects in Ardrishaig are informed by outcomes from the Crinan Canal Corridor Charrette joint working with Scottish Canals which we reported on in PPF 5 and PPF 6. In PPF 9 we reported on the completion of the Ardrishaig Harbour Regeneration project, The Egg Shed has since been recognised by the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland (RIAS) in their 2021 awards. During 2021/22 development work related to the Ardrishaig North Public Realm project has continued and works are planned to take place during 2022/23. Works have been delayed as a result of increased construction costs associated with issues around the Covid-19 pandemic, Brexit and the war in Ukraine.

[Town Centre Fund](#) - The team has continued to implement projects which were funded through Town Centre Funding and have completed works in Rothesay to provide a covered seating area

7 and 'Welcome to Bute' sign which aim to help support the recovery of local businesses and raise the profile of the Island of Bute - see Case Study 1. Town Centre Funding has been superseded by Place Based Investment (PBI) funding, which the Scottish Government has committed to allocating on an annual basis over a five year period. Projects committed within the 2021/22 period are as follows:

Region-wide shopfront scheme aimed for small and micro businesses in rural and smaller settlements. Deadline for applications closed at the end of December 2021, with a total of £80,000 awarded to 16 businesses to carry out improvement works, works are now largely completed.

£250,000 towards public realm improvements in Gibraltar Street, Oban. This project will provide a bright, contemporary gateway into the Oban town centre, improve access and encourage people to shop locally. Design work was commenced during 2021/22 and are currently being finalised for the site with delivery planned for 2022/23.

A third party grant of £50,000 to support the Dunoon Burgh Hall Trust through the creation of an attractive outdoor garden café area to the rear of the building, designed to boost income generation potential and the sustainability of Dunoon Burgh Hall. The immediate area to the rear of the Burgh Hall would be tackled as an initial phase, then further developed should additional funding allow.

A £300,000 investment towards enhanced hard landscaping and lighting of the masonry pier section of Helensburgh Pier. The project follows on from the Council's £22 million Helensburgh Waterfront Development project as it will uplift the pier's visual appearance including the views looking out from the new swimming pool and gym. Delivery is planned for 2022/23.

[Hermitage Parks for People](#) - £3.7m project for the heritage-led regeneration of Hermitage Park. The project has been part funded by National Lottery Heritage Funding and is now reaching its final phase of implementation and is programmed for completion in December 2022 (extended due to the Covid-19 pandemic). In addition to work reported in the previous PPF, the project has delivered assorted areas of new or improved planting and a demonstration garden with bespoke volunteer bothy (with funding from Place Based Investment). In June 2022 Hermitage Park was awarded its third consecutive [Green Flag status](#) recognising not only the park's green credentials but also the involvement of the [community](#) and educational link to the [University of the Highlands and Islands](#).

[Helensburgh CARS](#) - Funding secured in March 2021 for a £3m heritage-led regeneration project in partnership with Historic Environment Scotland. Three priority buildings have been identified and in partnership with the accredited architect all owners have been met and CARS Funding discussed. Two small repairs projects have also been identified and are being progressed. There have been 6 expressions of interest regarding the replacement of shopfronts and these are being progressed with costs. A traditional skills day was hosted at Hermitage Academy in conjunction with Developing Young People skills included roof slating, stone carving, surveying via VR with positive feedback received via the school and the young people who took part *"I'm continuing to hear positive comments from the day - we even have a young person who wasn't engaging in school who showed up on Friday, loved the activities that much he has now signed up to the Tulloch Trust's "Furniture Fix" social enterprise to develop his skills further and plans to apply for a joinery apprenticeship towards the end of the year... I am chuffed that a young person who had no pathway lined up has now taken these steps off the back of our event"*. Further training events are planned for September 2022.

Case Study 1

Welcome to Bute

Themes	A: Quality of Outcomes				B: Quality of Services & Engagement			C: Governance				D: Culture of Continuous Improvement			
Performance Markers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Key Areas of Work	Regeneration, Town Centres														
Stakeholders	Argyll & Bute Council, Bute Community Council, Isle of Bute BIDS														
Project Lead	Genna Lugue														

Using Scottish Government Town Centre Funding, Argyll and Bute Council supported community ambitions through delivery of a bespoke sculptural welcome sign and an all-weather canopy. Both projects have involved strong collaboration with the Bute Community Council, Isle of Bute BID and elected members through design and delivery stages.

The new bespoke welcome sign is located in the Winter Gardens in Rothesay aimed to encourage visitors to take photographs and share the Bute welcome on social media to the rest of the world. Promoting Bute as a visitor destination and creative new visitor attractions are long-held aspirations of the local community and businesses. A welcome sign was a key action set out by Audience Development work in 2019 from the Rothesay Townscape Heritage Programme. The location of which captures the architecture of the Victorian seaside town, the formal waterfront gardens, as well as the Firth of Clyde and hills behind.

To further support local businesses, a new all-weather canopy has now been installed at Montague Street Gardens, Rothesay. The canopy enables businesses to extend a typical season by offering residents and visitors cover for dining and events. Both projects were aimed at attracting more people of the Isle of Bute and extending the tourism season which will help with ongoing economic recovery from the impact of the COVID pandemic.

Project officers were supported by Development Management Team through providing quality advice on the planning requirements of the projects and ensuring it was within tight funding deadlines.

The projects have contributed to the wider goals and outcomes of the planning service through supporting the delivery of town centre regeneration and place-making projects which support Argyll and Bute to become a more attractive and prosperous places to work, live, visit and do business. It has also been demonstrated that delivering physical improvements to our built environment can make our area a more attractive place to live, work and invest in. Feedback from the community has outlined the success of both projects, with the canopy used regularly by businesses as cover for alfresco dining and locals for events and festivals. The welcome sign has

been drawing in visitors and has led to them sharing their photographs on social media helping to raise the profile of Bute. Both projects have succeeded in the aim of helping to extend the tourism season on the Isle of Bute and help local businesses recover from the impact of the COVID pandemic.



Case Study 2

ACT-ing Together: Compensatory Planting

Themes	A: Quality of Outcomes				B: Quality of Services & Engagement			C: Governance				D: Culture of Continuous Improvement			
Performance Markers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Key Areas of Work	Climate Change, Biodiversity, Collaborative Working														
Stakeholders	Argyll and Bute Council, Argyll & the Isles Coast and Countryside Trust, Scottish & Southern Energy Network Transmission														
Project Lead	Matt Mulderrig														

Argyll and Bute Council have joined forces with SSEN Transmission and leading community and conservation organisation, Argyll and the Isles Coast and Countryside Trust (ACT), to help deliver SSEN Transmission's compensatory tree planting commitments and in doing so, help support and enhance Scotland's rainforest in Argyll. The partnership was initiated following a recommendation from the Planning Service (who were engaged on the S37 project from pre-application through to discharge of conditions) that the Council's aspirations for management of its own woodlands might offer scope for SSEN to deliver offsite replacement planting across Argyll.

[ACT](#) is a community-led organisation and registered charity, established in 2014. Their mission is to sustainably maintain, enhance and promote the coast and countryside of Argyll and the Isles.



Argyll's rainforest, also known as Atlantic woodland, temperate rainforest or Celtic rainforest, is a unique and rare habitat of ancient and native woodland, open glades, boulders, rocky cliffs and river gorges. Scotland is now the last stronghold for this habitat that was once widespread along the Atlantic coast of Europe. The mild, wet climate of the west coast of Scotland provides perfect growing conditions for this diverse habitat that supports a variety of plants and animals.

The ground-breaking partnership will see ACT help deliver SSEN Transmission's compensatory tree planting relating to its Inveraray-Crossaig reinforcement project which involve the construction of a new 275kV overhead line to provide capacity to connect wind farm development to the electricity network. The project is 81km in length and has potential to impact upon almost 460ha of woodland.

The initial phase of compensatory planting is underway on Argyll and Bute Council's sites near Lochgilphead in Argyll. By planting native species, the planting will support local flora and fauna, creating natural habitats for native species to thrive, supporting SSEN Transmission's commitments to deliver biodiversity net gain and compensatory planting on all its major projects.

The planting will also create a natural asset for the local community to enjoy for generations to come, leaving a positive lasting legacy beyond SSEN Transmission's primary objective of delivering a network for net zero emissions across the north of Scotland.

Richard Baldwin, Head of Consenting and the Environment for SSEN Transmission, said:

"I'm really excited about our partnership with ACT to deliver our compensatory planting for our Inveraray-Crossaig project. By working in partnership with local experts we can ensure our compensatory planting focusses on the right species, in the right locations, to deliver the right outcomes for the local communities in which we operate."

"Argyll's rainforests are a truly stunning and precious resource and we're delighted to be playing a small part in helping ensure the long term sustainability of this nationally significant natural asset. You can't help but be mesmerised when you first discover Argyll's rainforest and ACT's dedication and passion to protect and enhance this wonderful natural asset is great to be part of."

"As we continue to deliver a network for net zero emissions across the north of Scotland, we are committed to doing so in a responsible and sustainable way, helping sustain and enhance the local habitats in which we operate. We look forward to building on this initial planting project with ACT and other community organisations across the north of Scotland, leaving a positive legacy for generations to come."

Ross Lilley, ACT Chairman, said:

"This partnership with SSEN Transmission and Argyll and Bute Council has been a very significant one for ACT as we've been able to create new native woodland sites which is an important part of Argyll's Rainforest Strategy."



Ross McLaughlin ABC; Ross Lilley, ACT;
Richard Baldwin SSEN

"By improving existing woodland, as we have recently done at Kilmory and Glenan woods with extensive Rhododendron ponticum removal, and gradually linking up the clusters of Rainforest with new planting, we can create corridors for the rare species that are unique to our Rainforest habitat to thrive."

"Argyll is incredibly fortunate to be home to more than half of Scotland's rainforest and to ensure that it is safeguarded, we will need a partnership approach from businesses, communities and agencies. This agreement between SSEN Transmission, ACT and Argyll and Bute Council is a great example of what can be achieved."

Ross McLaughlin, Head of Commercial Services at Argyll and Bute Council said:

"It's important that we take all steps we can to make day-to-day life in Argyll and Bute climate-friendly. We are pleased therefore to support this woodland conservation initiative. Becoming climate-friendly is about developing sustainable ways of living and working, to protect the planet on which we all depend for our future generations."

[Crown Estate Funding](#) - we have administered funding received from the Crown Estate to a number of community projects and during 2021/22 the ACT Hub was completed by the [Argyll and the Isles Coast and Countryside Trust](#). The building is to be their main base as they look to deliver environmental and climate change work across Argyll. Other projects are ongoing. We have continued to work on securing funding which can be used to deliver improvements across Argyll and Bute. Funding was allocated to a number of community projects through the Regeneration Capital Grant Fund during 2021/22 including Obair Ùr Thirodh – Tìree Community Business Hub (£565,000), [Kerrera Old School](#) - Community Hub Final Phase (£285,000), and [Ulva Ferry Shore Facilities Building](#) - Doras Caolas Ulbha (£603,000) these projects are to start delivery during 2022/23. We have also been preparing a bid for the Levelling Up Fund which, if successful, would focus on delivering projects in Dunoon and Rothesay.

1.1.7 Involvement of the Planning Service has been instrumental in facilitating a number of developments which have/will deliver new housing, schools, employment, renewable energy, and tourism accommodation/facilities.

1.2 QUALITY OF SERVICE AND ENGAGEMENT

1.2.1 The LDP and priorities of the Planning Service are closely aligned with the [Argyll and Bute Outcome Improvement Plan 2013-23](#) (previously known as the Single Outcome Agreement and Community Plan). The Outcome Improvement Plan remains the sovereign document and the LDP aims to translate its objectives in to a deliverable spatial strategy. The Council's [Action Programme](#) is utilised to focus action on priority proposals and allocations, and to identify work which is required to enable development. The Council's internal key performance indicators for the Planning Service all directly tie in and seek to demonstrate a contribution to delivery of the [six long term outcomes](#) identified in the Outcome Improvement Plan. Case Study 3 & 6 provide an example of these corporate aims being delivered on the ground by LDP policy.

1.2.2 During 2021/22 preparation of [PLDP2](#) has focussed on final preparation of electronic documentation for submission to the Scottish Government for an Examination of PLDP2. All documentation was submitted early 2022 and subsequently the DPEA has issued a statement of conformity. The Examination is currently underway. In addition the Development Policy team has fully engaged with the Scottish Government on NPF4. An updated project plan for the [Development Plan Scheme](#) was published in March 2022.

1.2.3 The Planning Service is located in various offices across the main settlements of Argyll and Bute providing relatively easy access to a large proportion of the population. Customers on remoter mainland and island locations are also able to access Council services at Customer Service Points. The Planning Service also provide website, e-mail, and telephone based services to customers, and continues to utilise social media as a means of public engagement. The Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic involved the temporary closure of public offices and delivery of planning services via home working and digital communication channels; these arrangements have continued throughout 2021/22. The Planning Service has engaged within a wider corporate discussion within the Council on 'Our Modern Workplace' that is exploring the potential to review future workplace arrangements through permanent home working / hybrid working arrangements, and rationalisation of the Council's portfolio of office accommodation.

1.2.4 The Planning Service, working in partnership with Regulatory Services, initially attained the [Customer Service Excellence Standard](#) in February 2019. An overview of the work

undertaken to reach this attainment was set out in [PPF 8](#). The CSE Standard was retained following reassessment and confirmed in April 2021.

1.2.5 The Planning Service continues to build partnerships both internally and externally. The Development Policy and Development Management teams have close links and seek to co-ordinate activity/resources with Economic Growth, Projects and Regeneration, Building Standards, Environmental Health, Strategic Transport, Housing, Access, GIS and Coastal Development through revised management arrangements for these functions which has seen them brought under a single Head of Service from July 2019. Departmentally the Planning Service is also aligned with Roads and Infrastructure under a single Executive Director. The Council Service structure facilitates partnership working and promotes symbiosis in working practice including the merging of Housing with Development Policy to better realise the synergies between these services in the delivery of effective affordable housing development and the [Strategic Housing Investment Plan](#) (SHIP). Over the past year the Housing and Development Policy teams have worked closely together to develop an updated [Housing Needs and Demand Assessment \(HNDA\)](#) which formed the basis of housing calculations submitted to the Scottish Government to inform the housing land requirement set by the draft NPF4. The approved HNDA has been approved by the CMHA and commended for its methodology. The HNDA has also informed the refreshed [Local Housing Strategy](#) which was launched at the beginning of 2022 and the updated [SHIP](#).

1.2.6 Customer User Forums are held regularly as a joint exercise between the Development Management, Development Policy and Building Standards Services providing a co-ordinated approach to engagement with regular professional customers. The content of recent User Forums include updates on the PLDP2 process, validation standards, updates on changes to legislation, details of any revision to staffing and service delivery arrangements, performance appraisal, and details of recent publications/guidance. Customer User Forums have not been held during the pandemic but is currently intended to be reinitiated later in 2022 as a virtual event.

1.2.7 In addition to engaging with individual companies on application specific issues, the Planning Service also seeks to engage directly with the aquaculture industry by arranging an annual liaison meeting with local industry representatives with hosting arrangements alternating between the Council and Industry. The event intended for 2019/20 was due to be organised and hosted by the Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation and has still to be revived following the Covid-19 pandemic. The agenda for the last meeting in 2018/19 meeting included an update on LDP2, the [Clyde Marine Plan](#), Planning Performance, revised Industry Planning Protocols, discussion about [changes to SEPA's licensing regime](#) and its implications for planning, wild fish interactions, and updated EIA Regulations.

1.2.8 The Development Policy Service has developed a remote based assessment of housing land supply in order to verify that it is fit for purpose and does not act as an impediment to the delivery of new house building. This has allowed us to carry out a survey despite 'lockdown' restrictions. The Council continues to explore innovative ways in which it can contribute to or facilitate the further delivery of a variety of housing types as reported in [PPF 7](#), and is meeting regularly with all local Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to identify working groups as appropriate to find tailored solutions for site specific development impediments. A quarterly Housing Forum is chaired by the Leader of the Council and we also now have a forum with Community Housing Trusts with planning being an agenda item for both groups.

1.2.9 The Council remains supportive of national efforts to roll out improved communications infrastructure. The Council's Digital Liaison

Officer continues to provide assistance and single point contact for numerous consultants and monitors progress of telecommunications planning applications as they are developed, submitted and implemented, following internal protocols to engage planning officers with greater expertise in telecoms development when required. Feedback from consultants has been complimentary of the processes which the Council have implemented to assist in the progress of digital connectivity. EE/BT have previously commented positively on the streamlined process that the Planning Service have implemented in assisting in network coverage development. It has also been highlighted internally that cross departmental working will be intrinsic to the successful development of improved fibre penetration into rural communities given the challenges and, in some cases, short timeframes for implementation.

1.2.10 The Council recognises that it cannot work in isolation and that collaborative working will deliver the most productive outcomes for communities. Area regeneration efforts require substantial involvement from the community as a whole, and relies on private and third party partnerships and subsequent investment. The Council has previously reported on ongoing collaborative work with a number of housing sector partners to identify solutions that continue to deliver new homes where and when they are needed. Amongst others this includes [Mull and Iona Community Housing Trust](#) who have completed detailed research on Key Worker housing provision; [North West Mull Community Woodland Company](#) who are being supported to repopulate the island of Ulva; [Colonsay Community Development Company](#), and [LINK Housing Association](#) who are exploring the potential for further phases of development at Dunbeg beyond the 375 units anticipated to be completed by December 2022. [The Rockfield Centre](#) was previously reported as a good example of effective regeneration through partnership working which has occurred with the assistance of Regeneration Capital Grant Funding and Town Centre Funding. The Rockfield Centre is now operational providing an increasing programme of events and activities, providing social support to the community and economic activity within the previously vacant, town centre building. The Council also supports, and works in partnership with the area's [Business Improvement Districts](#).

1.2.11 The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted on a number of consultation projects originally planned for 2020/21, including postponement of consultation on the Tarbert and Helensburgh Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisals. The Council however adopted a virtual consultation approach to progress the public consultation on the [Ardishaig North Public Realm Improvements](#) in June 2020 to seek input on the final design drawings in advance of an [application for planning permission](#) which was submitted and determined during 2021. It has been a long term aspiration of local residents and community organisations to see these public spaces integrate better with activity in the town, including provision of crossing points and space for public events, along with an uplift to their overall appearance. The Council has been working closely with members of the Community Council and Community Trust to bring the proposals forward within budget.

1.2.12 The Development Management Service continues to offer a [pre-application and permitted development enquiry service](#). Previously we have reported on the introduction of charging, template responses and online submissions to provide timely, consistent, high quality advice to prospective developers through identification of relevant planning policies, constraints and requirement for supporting information in advance of the formal application process. The [Planning section of the Council website](#) includes useful customer information including advice on 'Permitted Development', relevant publications including the LDP and non-statutory guidance, information on the planning process and details of how interested parties can engage with it.

Customer feedback has however identified demand for a pre-app initiation and follow up advice service however plans to extend the range of services and undertake a full review and refresh of website content has not been possible during 2021/22 due to additional work pressures continuing from the Covid-19 pandemic. Throughout 2021/22 details of disruption to the delivery of services and alternative arrangements for contacting the Planning Service during the Covid-19 pandemic have been published and kept up to date on the [Council's website](#).

1.2.13 Elected members are involved at an early stage of an application for 'major' development and are provided with a briefing on all Proposal of Application Notices (PANs). This [protocol](#) requires all PANs to be reported to the PPSL Committee and allows Members the opportunity to identify matters which they consider would be material to the determination of any subsequent application. Any issues raised by Members are then fed back to the applicant to take into account in the preparation of their formal application. Commencement of s23 of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 has also introduced a new requirement to directly notify local, Scottish, and UK elected representatives when an application for Major development is received. The Council responded to this additional requirement through the introduction in 2019/20 of a new protocol providing notification to the relevant parties by e-mail.

1.2.14 We have reported in previous PPFs on the certainty provided through development of masterplans and LDP allocations. Recent years have seen development, including affordable housing, delivered within masterplan/LDP allocations in Bowmore, Campbeltown, Dunoon, Helensburgh, Lochgilphead, Inveraray, Port Ellen, and Tobermory and we reported in [PPF 7](#), [PPF 8](#) and [PPF 9](#) that the Dunbeg masterplan area was the subject of a detailed application for 300 affordable dwelling units that is now on site. Case Study 3 provides an update on activity at Dunbeg over the past 12 months where significant progress has been made toward delivery of 300 affordable houses with completion anticipated during 2022/23. 2020/21 saw the approval of a new masterplan for a designated Potential Development Area in [Scalasaig, Colonsay](#) to support community led aspirations spearheaded by the [Colonsay Community Development Company](#) in partnership with [MOWI](#) for social housing and economic development on the island. Approval of the masterplan facilitated a grant of planning permission for phase 1 of the development which will be onsite during 2022/23.

1.2.15 Throughout 2020/21 and 2021/22, the Development Management and Projects & Regeneration officers have participated in cross-service/agency working groups as part of the Council's ongoing response to and recovery from the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. Notably this has included participation in the Town Centre Recovery working group including Council representatives from Regulatory Services, Roads, and Licencing, and external stakeholders including Transport Scotland, Police Scotland, and BIDS representatives. Co-ordination of activity with this group has also informed the Council's approach to relaxation of planning controls during the emergency period, a pragmatic approach to planning input in the consideration of temporary licence applications, and proactive identification of public realm sites and management of demand for use of these locations.

1.2.16 Progression of pilot projects to deliver two [Simplified Planning Zones \(SPZs\)](#) have not been taken forward in 2021/22 as previously planned. Further investigation into flooding issues on the Lochgilphead site has cast doubt over viability of the intended development. The Mull site has been identified for delivery of housing for key workers and will now be taken forward as part of the Council's [Rural Growth Deal](#).

Case Study 3

Dunbeg Masterplan - Update 2022

Themes	A: Quality of Outcomes				B: Quality of Services & Engagement				C: Governance				D: Culture of Continuous Improvement			
Performance Markers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
Key Areas of Work	Design, Masterplanning, Affordable Housing, Collaborative Working, Housing Supply, Placemaking															
Stakeholders	Argyll and Bute Council, Scottish Government, LINK Housing															
Project Lead	David Moore / Matt Mulderrig															

In [PPF 8](#), [PPF 9](#) and [PPF 10](#) we provided an update on the implementation of the [Dunbeg Masterplan](#), which focussed on the installation of essential infrastructure upgrades, and provided an overview of cross-service internal and external collaborative working arrangements that had been put in place to bring the project to fruition.



The project is being delivered through a strategic partnership between Argyll and Bute Council and [LINK Housing Association](#). The aim of the project was to provide a sympathetic extension to the existing settlement of Dunbeg and has taken a design-led approach in addressing the challenges presented by its rural location and coastal, moorland landscape to deliver a development with placemaking and connectivity firmly established in its foundation.

To date 154 homes within Phases 3A-3D are completed and have been handed over to West Highland Housing Association. The delivery of the remaining 146 units are programmed to handed over in further phases between [June 2022 and May 2023](#). The project has faced significant challenges with supply chains and workforce availability reflecting post-Covid impacts

at national and global levels. The innovative design and layout of the development is now clearly starting to emerge on the ground and the demand for housing for workers and students in the locality has been bolstered through further new developments in the immediate locality including [further investment and growth at the adjacent European Marine Science Park](#), and ongoing work to expand the offering of the [University of the Highlands and Islands](#) Dunbeg campus.

The Council will continue to work with key partners in the area to ensure that all sections of the housing market continue to meet demand as this is a key aim of the Council's [Rural Growth Deal](#).

Beyond this phase the Council is now working in partnership with LINK to explore the delivery mechanisms for further phases of the Dunbeg Masterplan. Particularly the Halfway House Roundabout on the A85 trunk road, and associated commercial area adjacent it, and following this provision of a further link



road to facilitate another possible 300 houses. In the first instance the Council has [committed £640k in Lorn Arc TIF funding](#) to progress more detailed Site Investigation and Design Costs for the Half Way house roundabout. Proposal of Application Notices for Pre-Application Consultation have been submitted in advance of major planning applications for the further housing, commercial and infrastructure developments being progressed. Pre-application discussion has continued on the further submissions during 2021/22 and planning applications for these phases are expected later in 2022. The Council has reinstigated the Dunbeg Partnership which involves all key stakeholders and local community representatives to ensure that there is full engagement and sharing of information and views as the development of the masterplan moves forward.



Case Study 4

Bringing Empty Homes Back Into Use

Themes	A: Quality of Outcomes				B: Quality of Services & Engagement				C: Governance				D: Culture of Continuous Improvement			
Performance Markers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
Key Areas of Work	Collaborative Working, Interdisciplinary Working, Housing Supply, Regeneration															
Stakeholders	Argyll and Bute Council, Home Energy Scotland, Property Owner															
Project Lead	Matt Mulderrig / Kelly Ferns / Fiona Scott															

These original workers semi-detached cottage properties in the conversation village of Cullipool on Isle of Luing are rich in history and the village and have Listed Building status. Like other villages in the Slate Islands, Cullipool owes its existence and growth to the quarrying of the slate on which large parts of the islands are built. Quarrying lasted until 1965, probably the last commercial slate quarrying to take place anywhere in the Slate Islands.

The property had been registered as empty since 2013 and had been sporadically used as a second home for the preceding decades. Originally two dwellings, the property was in poor condition and not fit for habitation. One side of the building had a roof covering of corrugated metal sheeting with the other side finished in natural slate. The internal layout of the building was not fit for modern living and required to be stripped back to the bare walls in order to allow comprehensive refurbishment.



The owner's grandson was looking to acquire a property and unable to afford to buy in the area due to the high property prices and limited availability of houses on the market. They initially contacted the Empty Homes Officer of the Council to discuss trying to bring the building back into use. Through liaison to obtain advice and providing informed choices, this identified that the most realistic and affordable option for the young person to achieve their goal of being able to remain in the area would be to take on the ownership of the property and undertake renovation works to bring it back into use.

Once ownership had been transferred, the biggest challenge for the new owner was how to reconfigure the property to in a sympathetic manner to suit modern day living, whilst retaining the character of the property and the village at the same time. An architect was appointed to help the

owner make the best use of the existing floor plan and maximise the space to meet their needs. Plans were drawn up, an extensive refurbishment programme produced, quotes received and the process begun.

The renovation costs were high, this was due to the extent of the works required, cost of materials, and labour which are inflated due to the Island location. However, it was determined that it still demonstrated best value for the owner. The Council was able to provide support with a £10k empty home grant; they qualified for a reduced VAT rate; and Home Energy Scotland provided financial assistance to install a renewable energy heat source. All of these support mechanisms made a significant difference to achieving an affordable and viable project.

Listed Building Consent and Planning Permission were required and granted to conjoin the two dwellings, reconfigure the external porch/utility extension and for installation of an air source heat pump. The Building warrant also approved and following renovation works the completion certificate was issued December 2021.

This has been a fantastic project that has saved the future of a listed building; provided a young first time buyer with an energy efficient and sustainable home; and supported the local economy and community. The property owner and occupier said:

"In rural communities every house is an asset and should be lived in. I have been fortunate to renovate an empty property into my full-time home in Cullipool on the Isle of Luing. Like many rural areas, Luing faces an aging population and a big reason for this is a lack of appropriate housing for younger people and families. The process to bring an old house back to a habitable state was fairly daunting. I faced many obstacles and challenges throughout the process including finding a builder willing to take on the work. The house being situated in a Conservation Area added to the complexity of the project. The property required a total rebuild including a new roof. I did all the preparation work myself, stripping the house back and removing the old roof leaving only the 4 original walls. This helped to keep costs down before builders and joiners came to start the main renovation work. By renovating this house, I have managed to live in the community where I grew up; something which would have been very challenging if I didn't renovate the property. Not only that but I have achieved a far bigger, better-quality home than I would have been able to afford on the local market. Although a lot more work, it is a very satisfying process to take an empty property and make it into a full-time home once again."



1.3.1 Development Management and Development Policy items are reported to the centralised Planning, Protective Services and Licensing (PPSL) Committee which meets monthly (except for July) and convenes for site visits and discretionary Local Hearings as required. The PPSL Committee met on 14 occasions during 2021/22. Local Review Bodies operate flexibly to demand with 19 LRB meetings convened during 2021/22. PPSL continued to operate in a virtual format during 2021/22 and continued to facilitate public access to meetings; the successful transition to a virtual format for PPSL meetings has also facilitated 4 applications requiring discretionary pre-determination hearings to be concluded. The Council has embraced the use of virtual meetings for committees and discretionary hearings, and whilst some concerns have been raised about the prospect of digital exclusion, experience to date would indicate that conducting Committee business online provides additional opportunities for participation, particularly for populations located in remoter mainland, and island locations. The [Full Council](#) decided in 2021/22 to augment this position with improved functionality, scope for hybrid meeting formats, and functionality for live streaming/broadcasting of Council meetings through recent approval of a roll out of MS Teams to replace Skype from August 2021.

1.3.2 The Council's [Scheme of Delegation](#) to officers was reviewed by Full Council and updated in [September 2021](#). The scheme of delegation continues to operate effectively with 97.7% of decisions being made under delegated powers in 2020/21. During this period 98.0% of applications were approved demonstrating the effectiveness of a plan-led system, flexible/pro-development policies which are aligned to the corporate priority of sustainable economic growth, and a commitment to delivering positive outcomes.

1.3.3 Argyll and Bute Council's Planning Service continues to face significant budget pressures due to the requirement for delivery of savings across all Council services. The last few years have seen a downsizing of staff resource, redesign of service delivery arrangements, and introduction of a chargeable pre-application enquiry service within the Development Management Service that have cumulatively delivered budget savings of £405,000. The Development Policy team have also downsized their staff resource following retirements of experienced officers during 2019/20 and a requirement to deliver £46,000 savings in 2020/21. The Development Management Service was also under extraordinary financial pressure arising from the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic due to a significant downturn in planning application fee receipts continuing during 2021/22. The financial outcome was however a significant improvement on 2020/21 although planning fees still only amounted to 82% of pre-Covid income forecasts. The Council was however pleased to hear the Scottish Government's during late 2021/22 that a delayed reform of planning fees would be implemented from 1st April 2022 and is expected to go some way to addressing the concerns previously raised by the Council in its input to the [Costing the Planning Service in Scotland](#) project (as reported in [PPF 8](#)) which highlighted that fees associated with householder and local applications are insufficient to deliver a cost neutral position without an unsustainable reliance on a small number of high value major applications to subsidise the delivery of the Council's Development Management function. Budgets and efficiency measures are considered at management meetings at all levels with updates provided regularly to the Executive Director and elected Policy Lead. Participation in the [Costing the Planning Service in Scotland](#) project, as detailed in [PPF 8](#), has confirmed that the cost efficiency of Argyll and Bute's Planning Service compares favourably with that of other Local Authorities and has provided additional insight to assist with budget planning for future years. The outcomes of this project were [reported to the Council's PPSL Committee](#) in June 2019.

1.3.4 Planning Enforcement is currently delivered by two dedicated Enforcement Officers based in Lochgilphead and Oban covering the West of Argyll and Bute with the undertaking of enforcement duties now being combined with Development Management casework in the East of the Council area. Enforcement is delivered on a priority basis which is set out in the [Enforcement and Monitoring Charter](#) which was reviewed, updated and approved in March 2022. The Council also published an [addendum to the Charter](#) in November 2020 which remains in force until 30th September 2022 clarifying the manner in which unauthorised development arising from a necessary response / unavoidable impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic will be addressed in the planning enforcement process. The [temporary relaxation of planning enforcement in relation to town centre recovery from Covid-19](#) was adopted as a Position Statement in July 2020 under emergency powers, these provisions have subsequently been extended up until 30th September 2022 following involvement of elected members.

1.3.5 The Planning Service continue to engage with key partners to facilitate a number of significant strategic development investments in and around Oban. These include Dunbeg, SAMS and the European Marine Science Park, Saulmore Golf and Marina Development, and Oban Airport Business Park. However there is a need to prioritise co-ordination and planning of long term strategic growth in the Ona area through development and production of the [Oban Strategic Development Framework](#). This will be prioritised and progressed as and when resources are available.

1.3.6 Changes to the Council's corporate structure in 2019 included the functions provided by Planning and Regulatory Services, and the Economic Development Service being brought under a single Head of Service which is now titled Development & Economic Growth. Whilst the corporate restructure was primarily intended to deliver budget savings the new service structure provides closer alignment and co-ordination of the Council's regulatory functions, including Development Management, with the Council's plan making, business support, and project delivery activities. Increasing reliance on virtual working has had the benefit of providing improved opportunities for collaboration and partnership working across Council services with virtual project teams capable of being readily assembled without the need for extensive travel and time demands. Examples of this approach include Rural Growth Deal Working Groups, the Council's Climate Change Board, and the Care Homes and Housing Programme Board which bring together stakeholders from across a number of Council Services and other key external agencies.

1.3.7 The Planning Service continues to engage with other Council Services through Area Property Action Groups (APAGs). This award winning approach and some of its successful, high quality outcomes have been highlighted within previous PPFs, and examples of this innovative, inter-disciplinary approach to problem solving have been highlighted in [PPF 8](#).

1.3.8 The Council continues to explore the delivery of shared services with other authorities. During 2021/22 the Planning Service has re-instigated shared service delivery of Conservation and Design advice to Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority, and has delivered a small amount of charged Biodiversity consultancy. Collaboration with neighbouring authorities also remains ongoing and during 2021/22 this has included case officer discussion with the LLTNP on the administration of cross-boundary applications.

1.3.9 The Development Management Service continues to seek to review and refine existing processes to deliver efficiency savings and improve performance and outcomes for customers. During 2018/19 the Development Management Service invested and delivered an upgrade of

Public Access improving stability of this customer engagement tool and allowing greater scope to improve the customer experience. The Service also invested in the purchase of IDOX Enterprise for Uniform during 2018/19 and undertook initial development work during 2019/20 however the development and roll out of Enterprise, which will implement improved workflow processes and performance management, was postponed during 2020/21 due to resource implications arising from the Covid-19 pandemic. During 2021/22 a project has been implemented to replace the existing Document Management System (DMS) to deliver improved functionality for both officers, stakeholders and the public; Planning and Regulatory Services have engaged with the Council's ICT Service to implement a project managed approach to development, implementation and roll out across three Council Services which is programmed for completion in 2022/23. Initial implementation of Enterprise is now scheduled alongside completion of the DMS project during 2022/23. As previously reported in PPF 10, the Covid-19 pandemic has enforced a requirement to adapt to restrictions on travel and social distancing and has expedited the adoption of online working practices, including online validation and e-decision notices, which will be retained in the long term.

1.3.10 All professional staff within Planning Services are provided with laptops to facilitate their ability to travel efficiently and work flexibly across the Council area. The Development Management Service has invested in tablets which were deployed during 2020/21 to allow use of e-documents as a replacement for hard copy planning application documentation used for examination of plans outwith the office environment, and recording site visit activity. The Council's longer term investment in ICT that supports flexible working arrangements was crucial to our reaction to the Covid-19 pandemic and allowed the majority of Planning Services staff to seamlessly move to home working. Services providing frontline contact services now largely continue to provide a primarily virtual service although face to face engagement has resumed where required. In some instances this has involved the delivery of new solutions such as the utilisation of Health Service Near Me portal by the Council's Housing Service to deliver virtual face to face interviews with clients, and the further dissemination of smart phones.

1.3.11 Customer appetite for Processing Agreements remains indifferent. The Development Management Service did not determine any applications with a Processing Agreement during 2021/22 despite engaging with all applicants for Major development. Information on the availability of [Processing Agreements](#) is available on the Council's website, is highlighted in all pre-application reports, and has previously been promoted in User Forums.

1.3.12 Argyll and Bute Council has a [corporate complaints process](#); customer information is provided on the Council website and in customer Charters. All complaints are subject to performance reporting and 'Stage 2' complaints require review by senior management with the option to seek further review by the [Scottish Public Services Ombudsman](#) (SPSO) where customers are not satisfied with the outcome.

1.3.13 Legacy cases (applications which have been valid for more than 12 months) are reviewed regularly as part of caseload management however the resource required to undertake this has been reduced due to reduced staffing capacity. Ordinarily, caseload reviews on longstanding applications is undertaken weekly/biweekly at team level and monthly with involvement of a senior manager. During 2020/21, 27 legacy applications were concluded representing an improvement on the previous period. Unfortunately the continuing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic upon workflows/staff absence and difficulty in recruiting to vacant posts has reduced the capacity of the Development Management Service to determining planning

applications has resulted in 35 new legacy cases (64 legacy cases in total) remaining undetermined as of 31st March 2022. Ordinarily legacy cases are subject to regular review by the DM Management team and targeted for conclusion; however during 2021/22 a long term vacancy at Team Leader level and the impact that this has had on the wider DM Management team has precluded this activity, it is however intended to reintroduce this activity once resources allow.

1.3.14 Applications which are to be subject to planning legal agreements are flagged up on lists of undetermined applications to ensure that the progress can be reviewed on a regular basis, it is noted that a requirement to operate with long-term vacancies has reduced resources and availability of staff to undertake this activity. The average time period for processing applications with legal agreements increased from 15.5 weeks to 33.6 weeks during 2021/22.

Case Study 5 Development Management Response to Covid-19 - Update

Themes	A: Quality of Outcomes				B: Quality of Services & Engagement				C: Governance				D: Culture of Continuous Improvement		
Performance Markers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Key Areas of Work	Development Management Processes, Performance Management, Process Improvement, Staff Training, Online Systems, Interdisciplinary Working														
Stakeholders	ABC Development Management, IT, Legal and Governance														
Project Lead	Peter Bain														

In [PPF 10](#) Case Study 6 we provided an overview of the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic upon the delivery of Development Management. Whilst many of the most serious impacts and restrictions associated with the pandemic have now receded they did continue to have a significant direct and indirect effects during 2021/22 on the manner in which the Council delivered Development Management, including the availability and deployment of staff resources, the management of workflow, and the manner in which we engaged customers. This Case Study seeks to provide a summary of those ongoing impacts and arrangements.

Continuity of Critical Business:

Processes and procedures implemented to recover critical business during April/May 2020 which saw the closure of Council offices, the implementation of home working, a move to paperless systems, and the use of online meetings as an alternative to face to face engagement continued throughout 2021/22. Whilst the circumstances of the pandemic and Scottish Government guidance that necessitated the evolution of working arrangements have since been rescinded the Council has identified that future working arrangements will involve be a hybrid mixing a requirement of office and virtual attendance and has accordingly embarked on a programme to rationalise its office estate and seek to provide working arrangements which meet future requirements. In

the short-term this has resulted in the continued closure of Council offices across Argyll and Bute with limited re-opening to the public and staff being encouraged to remain home working where possible.

Longer Term Impacts:

Workflow: We reported last year that during 2020/21 the pandemic had a significant impact upon the timing of new submissions throughout the year, and that travel restrictions precluded our ability to determine a number of applications that were already in the system. April and May 2021 saw a continuation of the rebound effect experienced at the end of the previous financial year with excess demand overwhelming the capacity of the Central Validation Team to register and review the competency of applications. This position was also exacerbated by an apparent reduction in the quality/competency of submissions as developers sought to progress delayed developments. The time taken to review new submissions increased from 5 working days at the end of 2020/21 to around 20 working days in early 2021/22 and despite hiring an additional staff member and authorising overtime to increase the capacity this has only been sufficient to maintain that level of performance in light of increased absence (both Covid and non-Covid), a phased retirement, a continuing high volume of substandard submissions which require to be reviewed multiple times, and increased demand for customer contact. Delays at validation stage have also had a knock on effect on the overall time period to determine applications. The availability of a professional resource to assess and determine applications has also been significantly impacted during 2021/22, in part by an increase in Covid and stress related absence within the wider team over this period, and also as a result of the loss of number of experienced staff members and difficulties in recruiting replacements which has seen the team operate at only 75-80% staffing levels for extended periods of time.

Workflow pressures in the management of statutory activities has largely been addressed by downgrading the priority of non-statutory activities and in seeking to ensure that available resources are targeted toward the validation and determination of priority cases where the project will deliver significant employment or affordable housing, and where there are either fixed deadlines, funding cut-offs, or health issues that would be impacted by a delay to determination. This has included reducing/removing resource allocated to service improvement activities, longer time periods for responding to pre-application enquiries and has also impacted upon our ability to deliver on planning enforcement. This latter element, coupled with enforcement relaxations in town centres, continues to give rise to an 'enforcement deficit' that will not only require additional resource in the future to address but is evident in increasing customer dissatisfaction where the Council's enforcement response does not meet 'normal' expectations; a similar rise in complaints relating to the time taken to determine planning applications is also becoming evident.

Customer Communication: The Development Management Service continues to provide 'live' service updates online, newsletter/e-mail updates to regular customers, and e-mail updates to individual applicants. The Senior Management Team are kept updated on issues affecting service delivery arrangements and have in turn been supportive where customers have been unhappy to be advised that 'normal' expectations on service delivery cannot be met. It is however acknowledged that during 2021/22 there has been an increase in customer dissatisfaction due to more frequent breakdowns in communication at case officer level which has proven difficult to address due to the significant caseload pressures that officers are working under, the changing mood and reducing acceptance of customers in a post-pandemic situation, and continuing diffi-

culties with recruitment which required the Service to operate without a full quota of professional staff over extended time periods.

Finances: 2021/22 saw an improving financial position however whilst submission rates returned to and exceeded pre-pandemic levels there was still a general lack of larger scale, high fee value projects entering the system during this period and the end result was the fee receipts were still 19% under recovered for this period (which was offset by Covid funding) but nonetheless restricted the ability of the Service to respond to workflow issues and precluded any longer-term commitment to increase staff resource in response to the emerging trend of increasing case work volumes.

Home working: The Council's previous investment in technology that supported flexible working arrangements, and the resilience of its ICT infrastructure was fundamental to the success of the Development Management Service in being able to resume activity in an almost seamless manner. The enforced requirement for home working demonstrated that this is a viable option for staff and managers to consider as part of future service delivery arrangements with benefits of increased flexibility for staff, and greater potential to attract suitably qualified professional staff, particularly for work in more remote areas. There are also potential financial benefits for the Council if it is able to rationalise its office estate. The Development Management Service has engaged in corporate workstreams that are not simply looking to manage the return to office working but will seek to modernise the Council's working arrangements on a more permanent basis with options for office / hybrid / home working arrangements. Extended periods of home working has continued to have a number of adverse consequences during 2021/22 particularly with the management of communications and staff morale. Arrangements have been made to allow staff who had become isolated at home access to the office however efforts to revive physical and social interaction of staff have also seen incidents of subsequent Covid absence which suggests caution still requires to be exercised in encouraging staff to meet face to face. Home working still gives rise to difficulties in managing, training and motivating individuals and their performance. The Development Management Service has utilised MS Teams to create new channels for communication and sharing of information particularly for training and reference purposes, and has continuing to work on the development of a new workflow system which when introduced in 2022/23 will provide individuals and managers with better tools to effectively and efficiently organise and manage their workload and review performance both at team and individual level.

Performance: Difficulties in recruitment, increased staff absence, significant delays at validation interruption of workflow, and reduced efficiency of some ad-hoc electronic processes continues to significantly impact upon the ability of the Development Management Service to determine applications efficiently. The average time taken for determination of local (non-householder) submissions had increased by just over 1 week since 2021/22 and the volume of undetermined applications which is evident in an increase in 'legacy' applications is continuing to place the Development Management Service under considerable strain going into 2022/23 and will only be resolved once the Service is able to return to full staffing levels following recruitment to current vacancies. The Scottish Government's announcement in March 2022 that planning fees would be increased for 2022/23 has been welcomed by the Council; however the lack of notice has precluded any expectation of additional income to be factored into the budget planning process and will resultantly cause some delay in being able to secure elected member commitment on how much of this can be reinvested back into the Development Management Service particularly given that there is evidence to suggest that a significant increase in 'major' applications and complex S36/S37 consultation case work will be received in the upcoming period.

1.4 CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

1.4.1 During 2021/22 the Planning Service delivered and progressed on a range of Improvement Actions identified in [PPF 10](#). An overview of progress is set out in Part 3 of this document.

1.4.2 The Council continues to benchmark its performance on the determination of planning applications against the National average and the performance of other rural local authorities.

1.4.3 Internally, team meetings are held on a regular basis. The Executive Director attends fortnightly Strategic Management Team meetings. The Head of Development & Economic Growth attends the fortnightly Departmental Management Team meeting and monthly meetings of the Strategic Management Team, provides a regular update to Policy Leads, and holds his own Service meetings on a regular basis; a Service level e-Development group is also convened quarterly. Service level management teams also meet regularly/quarterly; within Development Management area teams also meet weekly to assign casework, and review caseload performance.

1.4.4 In January 2022 the Council replaced a corporate requirement for all staff to prepare an annual Performance Review and Development plan (PRD). The new approach seeks to recognise that an annual PRD meeting was not always the best way to approach performance and career conversations and instead now recognises that conversations about objectives, behaviours, skills and development form part of an ongoing regular dialogue between employees and line managers although this will be supported by corporate activity monitoring outcomes in an annual survey of employers and managers.

1.4.5 Since 2014, the Planning Service has delivered a series of short training events for elected Members which are intended to improve their breadth of knowledge and competence in the undertaking of planning decisions. These are normally undertaken in bite size sessions in the hour prior to a meeting of the PPSL Committee but have also previously included half day workshops and site visits. Training during 2019/20 included Competent Motions, Aquaculture Development, Oban Strategic Development Framework, Landscape Character Assessment, Low Carbon Technology, Food Growing Strategy, and an update on the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019. Training sessions have recommenced in April 2021 and the [training programme for 2021/22](#) included information on the impact of Covid-19 on the delivery of planning services, a presentation from the [Planning & Environmental Appeals Division](#) (DPEA), planning enforcement, a presentation from SEPA on their role as a statutory consultee, placemaking, archaeology and planning, material considerations, access issues, energy efficiency and the historic environment, and landscape and visual impact assessment. The Planning Service have also delivered in house training in May/June 2022 to provide members of the PPSL Committee with an overview of the planning system and processes in which they are required to participate.

1.4.6 The Annual Planning Conference was held in March 2022 both at Helensburgh Civic Centre and online as a hybrid event. This was an important opportunity for many members of staff to meet face to face for the first time since the pandemic began. Not only that, but it was also a first chance to deliver a fully hybrid conference where both attendees and presenters utilised a mix of in person and virtual attendance. This allowed the opportunity to explore the technical capabilities of hardware/software and the challenges of delivering this type of event and will be a crucial learning event in the development of strategies for future public engagements. The conference was open to professional staff across the Council who engage in or with the planning process; the conference is promoted as a CPD event to staff in addition to an opportunity to recognise and promote collaborative working not only across the Council but also

with other key stakeholders. The March 2022 event included presentations from SEPA and a private sector outlook on the housing market from Taylor Wimpey. Previous conferences have included presentations from the external partners including Nature.Scot, Historic Environment Scotland, and SEPA. Presentations have also been received from the Council's Housing, Economic Growth, and Roads Services, in addition to the Local Biodiversity Officer, Marine and Coastal Development Officer, and GIS Manager covering a range of topics including delivery of affordable housing, homelessness, SuDS, flooding and coastal erosion, Appropriate Assessments, Construction Environmental Management Plans, the Clyde Regional Marine Plan, and availability of new GIS services. The annual conference is a successful platform for exchanging ideas, working practices and knowledge between different Council Services and key stakeholders, and for fostering smarter, more efficient ways of working.

1.4.7 Planning Services representatives regularly attend meetings of [Heads of Planning Scotland](#) (inc. DM and DP subgroups), Scottish Planning Enforcement Forum, the Local Authority Aquaculture Forum, [Clyde Marine Planning Partnership](#), [West of Scotland Archaeology Service](#), and the e-Development/Digital Taskforce and have continued to do so during the Covid-19 pandemic as the majority of these moved to virtual forums. During 2021/22 the Development Management Service has continued to have quarterly meetings with Highland's and Islands Enterprise, Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks, and Forestry Scotland to discuss upcoming projects, and to identify and prioritise resource for submission and determination of applications. Whilst it is recognised that there is a downside to the removal of face to face contact there is a significant time and cost saving for authorities like Argyll and Bute through removal/reduction in the significant travel requirements.

1.4.8 In addition to benchmarking performance, the Planning Service also seeks to engage directly with other local authorities to share best practice and develop new ways of working. During 2019/20 officers visited Dumfries and Galloway Council, and Glasgow City Council to learn from their experience in the development and roll out of bespoke IDOX Enterprise workflow systems; and more recently have engaged more widely with other rural local authorities on reviewing and updating procedures for handling Prior Notification/Prior Approval submissions, have provided advice to North Ayrshire Council and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park to assist with their handling of aquaculture submissions/cross boundary applications.

1.4.9 Work to review and improve the rate of applications which are valid upon receipt is currently on hold due a lack of staff resource to progress this workstream. Officers have however continued to participate in a review of the [Scottish National Validation](#) Standards that is being undertaken by the Heads of Planning Scotland. The Development Management Service previously hosted a visit from Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority in 2019/20 to compare arrangements, experience, and resources for the validation of planning applications. During 2020/21, the closure of Council offices required the rapid development and implementation of new process to facilitate home working in the validation process; limited office presence has however been maintained to manage incoming/outgoing hardcopy mail (including issue of neighbour notifications), and for the conversion of hardcopy submissions into electronic workflow upon receipt. The increase in substandard submissions appears to be a continuing trend and the percentage of applications valid upon receipt has declined further to 18%. Abnormal workflows, particularly the glut of submissions in FQ4 2020/21 generated a backlog of case work which continues to impact significantly upon the capacity of the centralised validation service to meet performance targets of a 5 day turnaround for reviewing submissions and validation checks are currently taking significantly longer to complete despite the provision of

1.4.10 The Planning Service have engaged with Scottish Government consultations, in particular during 2021/22 to the consultations on [Local Place Plan Regulations](#), [Short Term Lets](#), [Onshore Wind Policy Statement](#), [Local Development Planning Regulations and Guidance](#), [Open Space Strategies](#), [Draft Heat Networks Delivery Plan](#), [Marine Litter Strategy](#), [A New Deal for Tenants](#) and [NPF4](#). We have also engaged with the [Independent review of the Current Regulatory Framework for Aquaculture](#) with consultations by other National agencies including SEPA's [Proposals for a Risk-Based Framework for Managing Interaction Between Sea-Lice and Wild Atlantic Salmon](#), and with the Improvement Service on [20 Minute Neighbourhoods in Rural and Island Areas](#).

1.4.11 In March 2020 the Planning, Protective Services and Licencing Committee approved the Lochgilphead Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan as non-statutory technical planning guidance. We also reported in [PPF 9](#) that draft Appraisals and Management Plans for the Tarbert, and Helensburgh Town Centre Conservation Areas had been prepared for progression in 2020/21. Public engagement on these items has been postponed in light of restrictions arising from Covid-19 and a reduced staff resource due to maternity leave during the reporting period but will be reviewed when resources become available.

1.4.12 Aquaculture is an area of planning that relatively few authorities have expertise in. Argyll and Bute is one of five Scottish Local Authorities that deal with the majority of fin fish planning applications. The aquaculture industry is currently seeking to expand into new locations across Scotland to meet national growth targets. In [PPF 8](#) we reported that we had provided assistance to colleagues in North Ayrshire Council and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park following receipt of EIA Screening and Scoping requests for aquaculture development within their respective areas and informal support has continued to be provided during 2021/22 as these projects progressed to formal applications. In 2020/21 Argyll and Bute took up the role of Chair within Local Authority Aquaculture-working group, an online event was held last year however a resumption of the group as a physical meeting with site visit learning opportunities is scheduled for September 2022. Officers also continue to participate in the Fish Welfare Multiagency group which is hosted by the Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and includes Marine Scotland, SEPA, and Local Authority representatives from both a planning and animal welfare perspective.

1.4.13 We reported in [PPF 8](#) and [PPF 9](#) of investment in updated software/systems to deliver a more resilient Public Access service resulting in the availability of the Public Access system rising to 99.9% for the second half of 2018/19. Whilst issues with the day to day resilience of this service have been addressed there is now a focus on delivering improvements to the usability of the Public Access System. It has been identified that delivery of the desired improvements are very much dependent on providing improved compatibility with back office Document Management Systems (DMS) and accordingly work has been progressed with IT, Building Standards and Regulatory Services a project has been planned and initiated during 2021/22 to move to the IDOX DMS that will enable improvements to Public Access but also to the functionality of other existing back office workflow systems across a range of Council services. The project is due for completion in 2022/23.

1.4.14 Internal processes for handling pre-applications and the management of e-mail correspondence and file attachments were subject to review and updating throughout 2019/20 having regard to the implications of [GDPR](#) with updated data retention policies, procedure notes

for staff and training sessions delivered, and deletion of data/documents that no longer required be held from systems was undertaken during 2020/21. Enforced homeworking arrangements implemented in response to Covid-19 restrictions have resulted in new workflow processes that remove/minimise the requirement for hardcopy process in mail handling, issuing of decision being expedited in their development in order to allow the planning process to continue operating during 'lockdown', a lack of staff resource has however to date precluded the further development of a number of temporary processes put in place.

1.4.15 We reported in [PPF 8](#) that the Planning Service has successfully attained [Customer Service Excellence](#) Standard during 2018/19. Retention of CSE accreditation requires continued engagement with customers to develop and inform the ways in which we deliver our services in the future and the standards to which we deliver them. The reaccreditation assessment was held in March 2021 as a virtual event and re-accreditation was confirmed in early April 2021. The assessment included a specific focus on how Planning and Regulatory Services had reacted to the Covid-19 pandemic and maintained customer service levels despite the limitations imposed by home working, contact and travel restrictions during this period.

1.4.16 The online and mobile capabilities of the Council's Geographic Information Systems (GIS) continue to be developed saving officer time and providing customers with quicker access to information. In PPF 9 we reported that the GIS team [developed the 'story map' for the proposed LDP 2 public consultation](#), and enhanced the photographic data layer in the [online map](#) based footpath guide to include key view points from an increasing number of paths. The GIS team also played a valuable role in the Council's response planning to the Covid-19 pandemic and have assisted with a great many of the planning and logistical challenges that have arisen. During 2021/22 the team have continued work to enhance the [Strategic Housing Investment Plan](#) (SHIP) with [enhanced GIS functionality](#) which is now being used to facilitate easier and earlier identification of impediments to development within the SHIP programme. The GIS team has developed a GIS based Storymap which allows spatial analysis of all RSL stock, new builds, ongoing and future development sites. This is an invaluable input to updating and planning the annual SHIP. As this is further developed it will also be launched online. Going forwards the service is seeking to replicate this for all housing tenures in order to further inform our understanding and analysis of the housing market within Argyll and Bute.

1.4.17 Engagement with Forestry Scotland was initiated during 2020/21 on a review of the effectiveness of consultation with the Council on proposals for new plantations, forest accesses, and long term forest plans. This workstream has however been put on hold during 2021/22 due to a lack of resources. Once completed it is expected to deliver a streamlined consultation process with improved quality of consultation response that is tailored to meet the requirements of Forestry Scotland officers in their assessment of planning proposals. The publication of technical note on Upland Hill Tracks has been progressed and was intended to be completed for publication concurrently with completion of this workstream but has been placed on hold indefinitely following announcement by the Scottish Government in November 2019 that related 'permitted development rights' would be subject to an upcoming review.

1.4.18 The Planning Service has engaged with consultation on both planning controls and licencing for short-term letting, and form part of the Council's working group involving Legal, Regulatory Services, Housing and external stakeholders which will initially seek to implement a licencing scheme from 1st October 2022 and then consider the requirement for planning control areas in the medium to longer-term. In the short term it has been identified that, in the absence of national guidance, local advice requires to be provided by the Council for both officers and the public on planning requirements for short-term lets outwith control areas.

Case Study 6

CCDC Masterplan for Scalasaig

Themes	A: Quality of Outcomes				B: Quality of Services & Engagement			C: Governance				D: Culture of Continuous Improvement			
Performance Markers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Key Areas of Work	Interdisciplinary Working, Collaborative Working, Masterplanning, Housing Supply, Affordable Housing														
Stakeholders	Argyll and Bute Council, Colonsay Community Development Company, Communities Housing Trust, Scottish Land Fund, HIE, MOWI														
Project Lead	David Love / Peter Bain														

[Colonsay Community Development Company \(CCDC\)](#) has identified that a significant proportion of the housing stock on the Island is utilised as second homes or for self-catering holiday accommodation and as a consequence young people and families who wish to stay or relocate to Colonsay are priced out of the local property market. Like many other rural and island communities, the resident population of Colonsay has decreased significantly with a consequent impact on the availability of working age residents and young people threatening the [sustainability of life line services](#) and community facilities. It is nearly twenty years since the last affordable housing development on Colonsay, however CCDC has been working efforts to deliver affordable homes to both retain existing islanders and to attract new residents.



The establishment of a new marine fish farm off of the north-east coast of Colonsay by [MOWI](#) further highlighted the lack of availability of accommodation on the island to support employment and inward investment. A fish farm creates jobs for local people living on the island and can also attract new people or enable people to return; however a fish farm is not viable without housing for its employees.

Argyll and Bute Council had recognised the demand to deliver new housing on Colonsay through the identification a Potential Development Area (PDA 8/1), originally in the 2009 LDP, and retained this in the Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan 2015. The PDA is intended to deliver low to medium density housing including provision of an affordable housing component of at least 25% of the overall development. Whilst the identified site offered the prospect of consolidating new housing around existing infrastructure within the settlement of Scalasaig the LDP also highlighted a number of constraints relating to the historic and natural environment, and sewage infrastructure that would require to be addressed and promoted a masterplanned approach as a means of delivering development of the site. Guidance on the masterplan process has been published as a [Technical Note](#).

In April 2020, CCDC secured community ownership of two sites in Scalasaig with funding from the Scottish Land Fund, Highlands & Islands Enterprise, Argyll and Bute Council, and MOWI. One site relates to the PDA and is intended to deliver affordable housing within a development of up to 24 units. The second site will be used to develop new commercial units and workshop space.

Early engagement between CCDC and the Development Management and Development Policy teams facilitated the submission of both a masterplan for the PDA and a planning application for the first phase of the development by January 2021. The submissions were assessed concurrently and positively determined at the [April meeting of the Council's Planning Protective Services and Licencing \(PPSL\) Committee](#). The Masterplanning process provided a means of addressing biodiversity issues relating to Corncrake habitat and ensuring protection for the setting of two category B listed buildings within the wider proposals for development as well as ensuring that infrastructure proposals for the site were appropriate to deliver longer-term aspirations for development, and as a means of providing a degree of flexibility to the boundaries of the site as originally defined in the LDP to be adapted as further information on ground conditions and their suitability for development was provided.



Part 2: Supporting Evidence & Performance Markers

Wherever possible weblinks have been provided within the body text of the report.

This report was compiled drawing on evidence from a variety of sources including:

- [Argyll and Bute Outcome Improvement Plan 2013-2023](#)
- [Argyll and Bute - Economic Development Action Plan 2016 - 2021](#)
- [Argyll and Bute—Renewable Energy Action Plan](#)
- [Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan 2015](#)
- [Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan 2 Development Plan Scheme March 2022](#)
- [Argyll and Bute - Main Issues Report 2017](#)
- [Argyll and Bute Council Website](#)
- [Argyll and Bute Council Monitoring and Enforcement Charter March 2022 & Covid-19 Addendum](#)
- [Argyll and Bute Council Planning Performance Framework Online Publication/Archive](#)
- [Argyll and Bute Council, PPSL Committee Minutes](#)
- [Argyll and Bute Council Scheme of Administration and Delegation](#)
- [Argyll and Bute Council, Development & Economic Growth Service Plan 2020-23](#)
- [Argyll and Bute Housing Land Audit 2021](#)
- A range of committee reports
- Customer feedback
- Reports from IDOX Uniform
- [Scottish Government Statistical Returns](#)

Case Study Topics	Issue covered by Case Study No.	Case Study Topics	Issue covered by Case Study No.	Case Study Topics	Issue covered by Case Study No.
Design	3	Economic Development		Performance Monitoring	5
Conservation	1	Enforcement	5	Process Improvement	5
Regeneration	1	Development Management Processes	5	Project Management	
Environment	2	Planning Applications	2, 5	Skills Sharing	
Greenspace		Interdisciplinary Working	1, 2, 4	Staff Training	5
Town Centres	1	Collaborative Working	1, 2, 3, 4, 6	Online Systems	5
Masterplanning	3	Community Engagement	1	Transport	
LDP & Supplementary Guidance	6	Placemaking	3	Active Travel	
Housing Supply	3, 6	Charrettes		Other:	
Affordable Housing	3, 6	Place Standard			

PERFORMANCE MARKERS REPORT 202/21

	PERFORMANCE MARKER	EVIDENCE / COMMENTS
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 under Part 5 C and also within Case Study 5.
2.	Project management: Offer of processing agreements (or other agreed project plan) made to prospective applicants in all major applications <u>and</u> availability publicised on planning authority website.	Part 1—1.3.11 Processing Agreements for major and 'locally significant' developments are promoted through pre-application discussion, user forums and online. Argyll and Bute Council - Processing Agreements
3.	Early Collaboration with applicants and consultees on planning applications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability and promotion of pre-application discussion for all prospective applications. • Clear and proportionate requests for supporting information. 	Part 1—1.2.12 Case Studies 2, 3, 4 & 6, & Part 4 - Table B The Development Management Service provides a pre-application advice service . This is promoted on the Council website, through user forums, and by officers when engaged by prospective applicants. Pre-application assessment of proposals seeks to identify all relevant issues which will be material to the determination of a subsequent application, and will involve engagement with consultees where appropriate. The report template issued to applicants was revised during 17/18 to include a dedicated section identifying the requirement for supporting information - this list is populated following a review of relevant planning constraints and the advice of consultees (including other Council Services) to ensure that any request for further information is specific and proportionate to the development proposed. Where applicants do not engage at pre-application stage a similar approach is undertaken to identify issues and any requirement for further information at an early stage in the handling of the application. 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. This document is also promoted and published on the Council website to assist applicants in the preparation of their application. During 2021/22 updated guidance on the submission and processing of applications under S64 of the Act was prepared and published.
4.	Legal agreements: Conclude (or reconsider) applications within 6 months of 'resolving to grant'.	Part 1—1.3.14 & Part 5—Table A Applications subject to legal agreements were determined with an average time period of 30.3 weeks during 2021/22. Applications requiring a legal agreement are reviewed regularly and are highlighted on officers outstanding items case lists.

	PERFORMANCE MARKER	EVIDENCE / COMMENTS
5.	Enforcement charter: updated / republished.	Part 1—1.3.4 Part 4—Table C, Case Study 5 The Planning Enforcement and Monitoring Charter was been reviewed and updated in March 2022. During 2020/21 this was augmented by a Position Statement on the temporary relaxation of planning control within town centres, and an addendum to the Charter covering more general Covid-19 related issues which remain in place until 30th September 2022.
6.	Continuous improvement: <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. 	Part 4—Tables A, B, C & Context D, Case Study 5. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and a lack of availability of planning professionals has had a significant adverse effect upon performance of decision-making timescales during 2021/22. Part 3 details previous and committed Service Improvements. Contextual commentary on delivery/identification of improvements is included within: Part 1—1.1.4, 1.1.5, 1.2.2, 1.2.4, 1.2.15, 1.3.9, 1.3.11, 1.3.13, 1.3.14, 1.4.9, 1.4.11, 1.4.13, 1.4.15, 1.4.17 and Part 5 Table A
7.	Local Development Plan: Less than 5 years from adoption.	The Local Development Plan was adopted in 2015. Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan 2015
8.	Development plan scheme: Demonstrates next LDP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On course for adoption within 5 year cycle. Project planned and expected to be delivered to planned timescale. 	LDP2 is project planned with careful management and reporting of any adjustments, LDP 2 is currently at Examination stage and is currently scheduled for adoption in 2023. Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan Scheme March 2022
9.	Elected members engaged early (pre- MIR) in development plan preparation: <i>if plan has been at pre-MIR stage during reporting year.</i>	N/a
10.	Cross sector stakeholders, including industry, Agencies and Scottish Government, engaged early (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation - <i>if plan has been at pre-MIR stage during reporting year.</i>	N/a

	PERFORMANCE MARKER	EVIDENCE / COMMENTS
11.	Production of regular and proportionate policy, advice, for example through supplementary guidance, on information required to support applications.	<p>The Make a Planning Application section of the Council website provides applicants with information that they need to consider before making an application.</p> <p>Argyll and Bute - Planning Application Info</p> <p>The Central Validation Team contributed to the development of and have subsequently adopted the National Validation Standard published by HoPS in 2017. Officers have participated in HoPS ongoing review of this document during 2020/21. Part 1—1.4.9</p> <p>HoPS National Validation Standard</p> <p>Supplementary non-statutory planning guidance is reviewed and updated regularly. Current publications include Houses in Multiple Occupation, and Advertisements, Masterplanning, and Biodiversity. During 2021/22 the Council has published updated guidance on S64 submissions and Local Place Plans.</p>
12.	Corporate working across services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit (for example: protocols; joined up services; single contact; joint pre-application advice.)	Part 1—1.1.6, 1.2.1, 1.2.3, 1.2.4, 1.2.5, 1.2.6, 1.2.8, 1.2.9, 1.2.10, 1.2.11, 1.2.12, 1.2.13, 1.2.14, 1.2.15, 1.3.1, 1.3.4, 1.3.5, 1.3.6, 1.3.7, 1.3.12, 1.4.3, 1.4.5, 1.4.6, 1.4.12, 1.4.13, 1.4.15, 1.4.16, 1.4.18 & Case Studies 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6
13.	Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge between authorities.	Part 1—, 1.1.4, 1.1.6, 1.2.7, 1.2.15, 1.3.8, 1.4.2, 1.4.6, 1.4.7, 1.4.8, 1.4.9, 1.4.10, 1.4.12, 1.4.17, 1.4.18 & Case Studies 2 & 5
14.	Stalled sites / legacy cases: Conclusion / withdrawal of planning applications more than one year old.	<p>Part 1—1.3.13, & Part 4—Table B.</p> <p>During 2021/22 27 legacy cases were cleared. At 31st March 2022 there were 65 'live' legacy applications undetermined.</p>
15.	Developer contributions: Clear expectations set out in development plan and in pre-application discussions.	<p>The adopted Local Development Plan sets out expectations in respect of Developer Contributions for affordable housing and green / play space and is supported by Supplementary Guidance which sets out that the Council will seek appropriate elements of planning gain proportionate to the scale, nature, impact and planning purposes associated with the development.</p> <p>Where Developer Contributions are required these will be flagged up at pre-application stage where applicable, or where no pre-application engagement is sought then officers will seek to make the developer aware of the requirement and justification for any developer contribution as soon as such a requirement is identified in the assessment process.</p> <p>The Council is continuing to review its approach to Developer Contributions in the production of LDP 2 and where appropriate the Council shall seek appropriate developer contributions in liaison with participating partners and developers which are proportionate to the nature, impact and planning purposes associated with the development, and shall be in accord with the Policy Tests set out in Circular 3/2012.</p>

Part 3: Service Improvements

SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS TO BE DELIVERED IN 2022/23

COMMITTED SERVICE IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS
1. Retain Customer Service Excellence Award
2. Delivery of LDP 2 (<i>ongoing - see Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan Scheme March 2022</i>)
3. Run Sustainable Design Awards (<i>ongoing - launched Feb 2020</i>)
4. Production of Short Term Letting Planning Guidance (<i>programmed for 2022/23</i>)
5. Production of Hill Tracks Guidance (<i>subject to Scottish Government review of 'PDR'</i>)
6. Implement improved workflow and performance management systems within the Development Management Service (<i>project initiated 2021/22 to replace existing systems with IDOX Enterprise and DMS</i>)
7. Review of Validation Processes (<i>on-going engagement with regular customers and review/promotion of HoPS National Validation Standards to improve proportion of applications valid upon receipt</i>)
8. Deliver Dunoon CARS (Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme) project (<i>ongoing - 90% delivery complete</i>)
9. Deliver Rothesay TH (Townscape Heritage) project (<i>ongoing - completion due 2022/23</i>)
10. Deliver Ardrishaig Public Realm Works (<i>programmed to commence 2022/23</i>)
11. Deliver Lochilphhead CARS (Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme) (<i>project ongoing - 15% complete</i>)
12. Deliver Lochgilphhead Front Green Public Realm Works Project (<i>ongoing - completion due 2022/23</i>)

DELIVERY ON SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS ACTIONS FOR 2021/22

SERVICE IMPROVEMENT	STATUS
1. Retain Customer Service Excellence Award	Delivered - see Part 1 - 1.2.4, 1.4.15
2. Deliver 2 pilot Simplified Planning Zones	Discontinued - see Part 1 - 1.2.16
3. Prepare 2 Conservation Area Appraisals	On Hold - see Part 1-1.4.11
4. Deliver LDP 2	Progressing - Adoption planned 2022 - see Part 1 - 1.2.2, Part 2 - KPI Table (8), Part 4 - Table A & C
5. Run Sustainable Design Awards	On Hold - Launched Feb. 2020 but currently on hold due to Covid-19 - Part 1 - 1.1.4
6. Production of Hill Tracks Non-Statutory Technical Guidance	On Hold - Awaiting outcome of Scottish Government review of 'Permitted Development Rights' - see Part 1 - 1.4.17
7. Implement improved workflow and performance management systems within the Development Management Service.	Progressing - Part 1 - 1.3.9, 1.3.10, 1.3.13, 1.3.14, 1.4.2, 1.4.3, 1.4.8, 1.4.9, 1.4.13, 1.4.14
8. Review of Validation Processes	On Hold - see Part 1 - 1.4.9
9. Deliver Dunoon CARS	Progressing - see Part 1 - 1.1.6
10. Deliver Rothesay TH (Townscape Heritage) project	Progressing - see Part 1 - 1.1.6
11. Deliver Tarbert and Ardrishaig Regeneration Fund project	Progressing - see Part 1 - 1.1.6
12. Deliver Lochilphhead CARS (Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme) project	Progressing - see Part 1 - 1.1.6

Part 4:

National Headline Indicators (NHI's) 2021/22

A: KEY OUTCOMES—DEVELOPMENT PLANNING	2021/22	2020/21
Local and Strategic Development Planning		
Age of local / strategic development plan(s) at end of reporting period. <i>Requirement: less than 5 years.</i>	7 years	6 years
Will the local / strategic development plan(s) be replaced by their 5th anniversary according to the current development plan scheme?	No	No
Has the expected date of submission of the plan to Scottish Ministers in the development plan scheme changed over the past year?	Yes	Yes
Were development plan scheme engagement / consultation commitments met during the year?	Yes	Yes
Effective Housing Land Supply		
Established housing land supply	5406 units	5310 units
5-year effective housing land supply	2684 units	2889 units
5-year effective land supply total capacity	5162 units	4998 units
5-year housing supply target	1500 units	1500 units
5-year effective housing land supply (<i>to one decimal place</i>)	8.95 years	9.63 years
Housing approvals	507 units	509 units
Housing completions over the last 5 years	1201 units	1084 units
Marketable employment land supply	85.0 ha	85.7 ha
Employment land take-up during the reporting period ¹	0.7 ha	0.7 ha
B: KEY OUTCOMES—DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT	2021/22	2020/21
Project Planning		
Percentage and number of applications subject to pre-application advice ²	7%(84)	11.9%(126)
Percentage and number of major applications subject to processing agreement	-	-
Decision Making		
Application approval rate	98.0%	97.9%
Delegation rate	97.7%	98.5%
Validation	19.2%	21.5%
Decision-making Timescales		
Major Developments ³	40.8 weeks	40.4 weeks
Local Developments (non-householder)	13.6 weeks	12.5 weeks
Householder Developments	10.3 weeks	9.1 weeks
Legacy Cases		
Number cleared during reporting period	27	17
Number remaining	65	57

C: KEY OUTCOMES—ENFORCEMENT	2021/22	2020/21
Time since enforcement charter published / reviewed	1 months	12 months
Complaints lodged and investigated	228	224
Breaches identified - No further action taken	177 - 51	170 - 54
Cases Closed	109	119
Notices served	18	22
Direct Action	0	0
Reports to Procurator Fiscal	0	0
Prosecutions	0	0

D: NHI KEY OUTCOMES COMMENTARY:

1. It is noted that this NHI is not wholly reflective of the uptake of employment land within Argyll and Bute where the rural nature of the Council area and local economy stimulates demand for development in locations that are not readily addressed through take up of allocated land. The Council's settlement strategy seeks to promote sustainable economic development and focuses allocation of employment land in and around existing key settlements where there is demand of employment, existing housing provision and infrastructure to support new development. The LDP does however recognise that the requirements of traditional rural industries, particularly those which are island based including the whisky industry and aquaculture, will give rise to occasional demand for development in countryside locations - our settlement strategy is sufficiently flexible to accommodate this demand but it also means that take up of land for employment purposes is not wholly captured in the NHIs.
2. It has been established that this data set is incomplete and does not currently provide an accurate reflection of the number of planning applications that have been subject to pre-application advice. 582 pre-application enquiries were received during the reporting period, this figure is representative of 52% of the volume of statutory determinations within the same period.
3. It is noted that the data subset for 'major' applications is small and easily skewed. Contextual commentary on other factors affecting decision-making timescales are set out within Part 5 C of the report.

Part 5: Official Statistics

A: DECISION-MAKING TIMESCALES (based on ‘all applications’ timescales)					
Timescales	2021/22 No of Cases (%)	2021/22 Weeks		2020/21 Weeks	
Overall					
Major developments	6	40.8		40.4	
Local developments (non-householder)	621	13.6		12.5	
• Local: less than 2 months	275 (44.3%)	7.1		6.8	
• Local: more than 2 months	346 (55.7%)	13.6		15.0	
Householder developments	350	10.3		9.1	
• Local: less than 2 months	179 (51.1%)	7.0		6.6	
• Local: more than 2 months	171 (48.9%)	18.8		13.5	
Housing Developments					
Major	1	76.3		19.5	
Local housing developments	287	13.1		12.1	
• Local: less than 2 months	121 (42.2%)	7.2		6.9	
• Local: more than 2 months	166 (57.8%)	18.8		16.1	
Business and Industry					
Major	1	9.7		-	
Local business and industry developments	15	11.9		12.7	
• Local: less than 2 months	5 (33.3%)	7.3		7.0	
• Local: more than 2 months	10 (66.7%)	14.2		17.1	
EIA Developments	2	25.2		-	
Other Consents	142	13.0		9.0	
Planning / Legal Agreements	14	33.6		15.5	
• Major: average time	1	76.3		-	
• Local: average time	13	30.3		15.5	
B: DECISION-MAKING: LOCAL REVIEWS AND APPEALS					
Type	Total Number of Decisions	Original Decision Upheld			
		2021/22		2020/21	
		No.	%	No.	%
Local reviews	8	6	33.3	6	75.0
Appeals to Scottish Ministers	5	1	20.0	1	33.3

Development Management Service:

Argyll and Bute Council's Development Management Service continues to process planning applications with the aspiration to deliver positive outcomes in all cases. This approach is reflected in our high approval rates but is often achieved by providing applicants with additional time beyond prescribed statutory determination periods where this is required to negotiate and address resolvable deficiencies in their submissions. Whilst it is recognised that this approach can have a negative impact upon performance in decision-making time periods it is contended that this is outweighed by the economic benefits of delivering on improved development proposals which might not otherwise have obtained permission had the Council sought to determine within prescribed statutory time periods; additionally resources required to handle amended applications, appeal and LRB work is minimised.

Service delivery arrangements continue to be impacted by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic; in particular the Service is experiencing a high volume of demand as a wide range of developments delayed by the pandemic have sought planning permission during 2021/22. This period of high demand has coincided with a period of high staff turnover, difficulties in recruiting in a market where there is a lack of available planning professionals (an issue known to be a national rather than local issue and are discussed by Heads of Planning Scotland and the RTPi in their [Future Planners Project Report July 2022](#)) and higher absence rates attributable in a large part to Covid and stress related illness. During this period the Service has lost a number of experienced professional officers and required to operate with vacancies in key positions for extended periods of time in some cases for 12 months or longer. The resilience of the Service to operate efficiently with reduced resource and high volume of casework had already been eroded through previous requirements to make budget cuts and reduce staffing numbers in previous years. Whilst temporary measures have been taken to maintain a critical level of service delivery through use of overtime and use of external resources to process planning applications it is expected that overall performance will remain impacted until staffing issues are addressed through filling of vacancies. The Scottish Government's reform of statutory planning fees from 1st April 2022 is welcomed but came too late to address resource issues arising in 2021/22.

Development Policy Service:

Following approval of Schedule 4's by Council it took the Development Policy team approximately 4 months to prepare all documentation in the required electronic format for submission to the DPEA.

The LDP2 along with associated documents was submitted to the DPEA in January 2022. Reporters have now been appointed and it is anticipated that the Examination will run until the end of 2022.

It should be noted that until the new Local Development Plan is adopted, the current Local Development Plan's statutory status remains, including that of the associated Supplementary Guidance. The current LDPs made plans for ten years from adoption, so until 2025, and are still considered to be robust. The LDP contains an effective land supply with the latest [Housing Land Audit](#) showing an effective supply of 3738 units or 5.02 years supply as at 1 April 2022, thus taking us to 2026 well beyond the proposed adoption date of LDP2. The proposed growth areas of Tobermory – Dalmally and Helensburgh and Lomond have sufficient supply to take us beyond the adoption of LDP2. Planning applications will continue to be processed as normal during the delay period, being assessed against the Adopted plan. An updated [Development Plan Scheme](#) was approved by elected members in March 2022 that re-programmes the planned adoption date to early 2023.

Part 6: Workforce Information (at 31.03.21)

	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			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

RTPI Qualified Staff	Number	Staff Age Profile	%
Head of Service	1	Under 30	7.4
Development Management	9	30 - 39	51.9
Development Policy	3	40 - 49	33.3
Enforcement	1	50 and over	7.4
Projects and Regeneration	3		

Staff Structure Diagrams as at 31.03.2022

Service Overview

Planning Services includes:

Development Management;

Development Policy & Housing; and

Projects and Regeneration.

Planning Services sit within the Development & Infrastructure Services Department, and within the portfolio of the Head of Development & Economic Growth which also includes responsibility for the complimentary activities of:

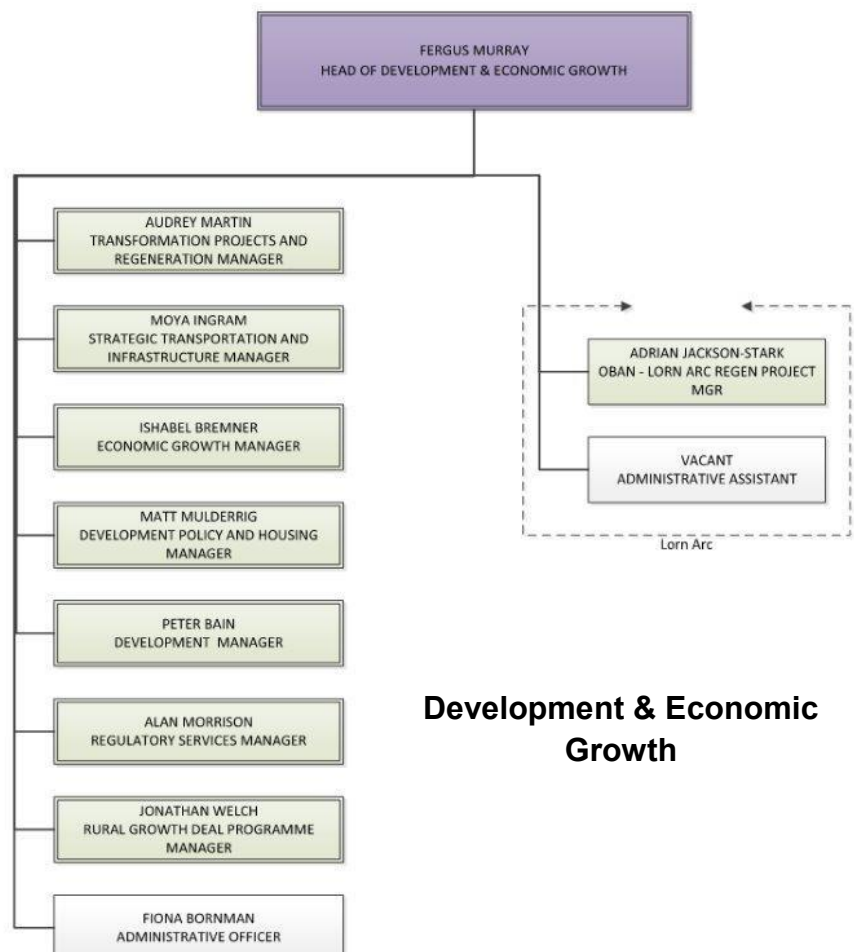
Regulatory Services;

Economic Growth;

Rural Growth Deal Programme;

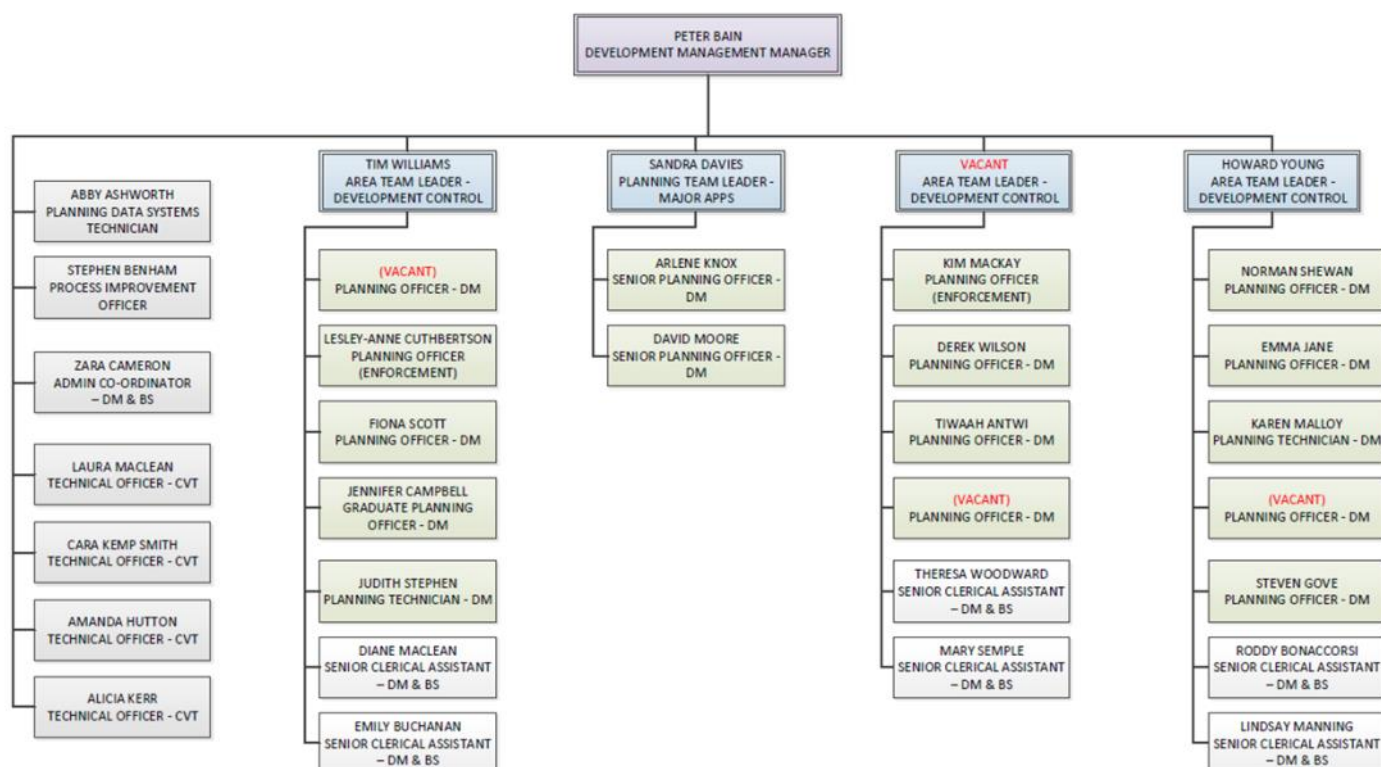
Strategic Transportation & Infrastructure; and,

project specific activity relating to Oban Strategic Development Framework including Lorn Arc regeneration activities.

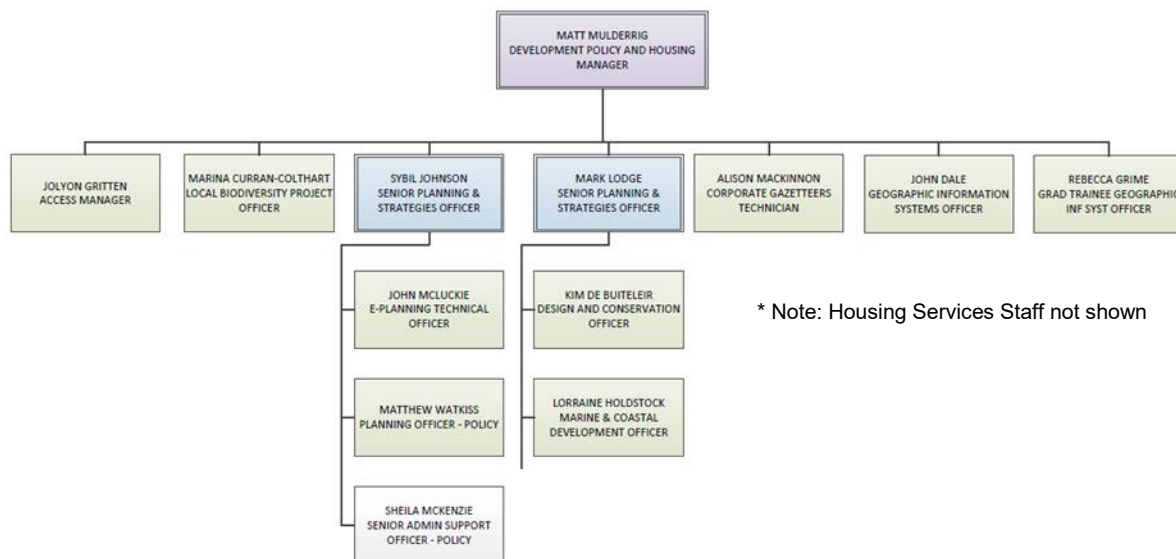


Development & Economic Growth

Development Management

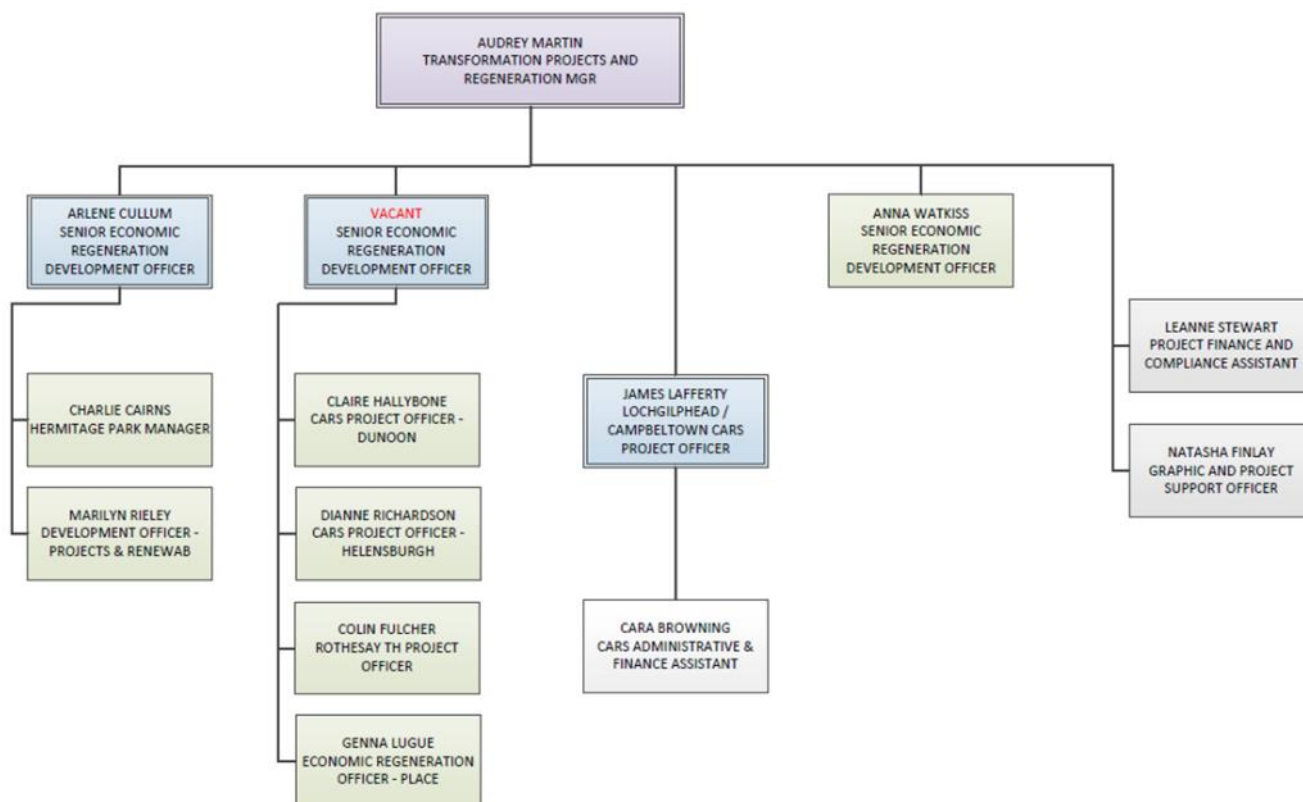


Development Policy & Housing



* Note: Housing Services Staff not shown

Projects and Regeneration



Part 7: Planning Committee Information

Committees & Site Visits	Number
Full Council Meetings	7
Planning Committees	14
Area Committees	12
Local Review Body	19
LRB Site Visits	0



Argyll and Bute Council
Development and Infrastructure Services
Executive Director: Kirsty Flanagan
www.argyll-bute.com
Chomhairle Earra-Ghàidheal is Bhòid