



Heads of Planning Scotland

Newsletter
Autumn 2013

Planning Roadshows

This summer, as COSLA Spokesperson for Development, Economy & Sustainability I was invited by the Planning Minister to take part in some planning roadshows around the country. I attended as many as I could, to talk about local government's role in planning reform. I also took the opportunity to thank HOPS and planners for their work on promoting performance improvement and to hear first-hand about planners views on the reform agenda.

There are four pillars of reform, the first being the **Plan Led System**. There has been good progress in updating LDPs and our collective efforts to continue towards an up-to-date planning framework for Scotland are important.

Effective planning helps economic recovery. **Delivering Development** is part of that process. It extends beyond planning to involve colleagues from across the whole council. Innovative practices to facilitate development need to be publicised so we can share what works and what doesn't.

Whilst we cannot solve the current economic situation on our own we can all play our part. As far as planning goes, effective and early member engagement can help. Anything that enhances

our collective understanding of development viability will also help improve outcomes for our communities. This will of course require resourcing and training for both elected members and officers and possibly for some a new way of working.

The High Level Group that I co-chair with the Minister, with the involvement of HOPS, SOLACE and the Key Agencies is looking at how to **simplify and streamline** planning to improve performance. This work will be informed by the outcomes of various pilots that HOPS and others are undertaking.

At the roadshows the Minister mentioned the powers the Regulatory Reform Bill will give him to penalise poor performance by reducing fees. COSLA opposes any proposal that cutting resources will improve planning performance.

However we do agree that we should always strive to **improve performance** within the resources available to us and in the context of the wider range of pressures that we face.

When looking at performance we also need to take account the role of others, both within and beyond the council, including the key agencies and developers themselves. All have a role in



making the system as effective as it can be. This requires continued partnership working, not the imposition of punitive measures on hard-pressed councils who are already coping with competing demands for local services with dwindling finances at our disposal.

To get good performance you need the right tools. The recent fee increase is a step in the right direction but it is only a start in addressing the funding gap. The work of the HOPS pilot on the costs of Development Management will be very useful as we continue to discuss fees with the Government. I would like to thank those taking part in that pilot and to reassure you that the outcomes will be extremely valuable alongside the work you are already doing on performance improvement.

Cllr Stephen Hagan
COSLA Spokesperson
Development, Economy & Sustainability

Costing the Planning Service in Scotland



The purpose of this project is to collect robust data from a sample of Scottish planning authorities which will provide information on the cost of providing a planning service, with particular emphasis on development management. The methodology that is being used was developed by the Planning Advisory Service in England, and is suitable for use in Scotland, with a few adjustments, despite technical differences between the statutory planning processes.

The project is being led by the Performance & Practice sub-committee and a working group has been formed to manage the project, with assistance from the Improvement Service.

The methodology involves detailed time recording by staff against planning activities and application types for a period of four weeks. Overheads are recorded against the same activity codes with help from internal finance colleagues. This produces cost information which can then be correlated against performance data and used to benchmark with other authorities.

There are a total of sixteen authorities participating: Aberdeen, Angus, Argyll & Bute, Dundee, East Dunbartonshire, Edinburgh, Fife, Glasgow, Highland, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, Perth & Kinross, Renfrewshire, Shetland Islands, South Lanarkshire and West Dunbartonshire.

A summary report will be prepared for each participating authority by CIPFA. This will set out the results of the data analysis. An overall report will also be prepared by the Improvement Service which will look at results and conclusions across the participating authorities. The information produced will cover cost of handling applications by activity and by application type.

The data collection period commence on Monday 23 September and finished on Friday 18 October. The target for completion of this project is the end of December.

The Scottish Government has kindly agreed to cover the costs of CIPFA's involvement in this project.

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- Cathy Johnston, Glasgow City Council is representing HoPS on the Historic Environment Working Group and all of the papers from this group will be uploaded onto the HoPS Knowledge Hub group.
- Fraser Carlin, Renfrewshire Council, will continue to be the HoPS representative on the Local Economic Development (LED) Senior Officers Group and Partnership Forum.
- Gillian Dick, Glasgow City Council, attended the STEP Low Emission Zone meeting in Edinburgh on 25 July and a summary is available on the HoPS Knowledge Hub group.
- David Littlejohn, Perth & Kinross Council, is representing HoPS on the Regeneration Capital Fund Grant.
- Construction Scotland are holding an event on Designing Streets and aligning consents in November – Daniel Lewis, Aberdeen City Council, will represent HoPS at this event.
- HoPS were given three free places at the Waterfront conference on 3 October, 'Planning for Economic Growth: Delivering Scotland's Infrastructure'. These places went to Steve Rogers (Dumfries and Galloway Council), Pam Ewen (TAYplan) and Forbes Barron (Glasgow City Council).
- HoPS recently collected information for the High Level group on how planning authorities have spent the increase in planning fees. A total of 19 planning

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Benchmarking

The six Large Rural Authorities have recently submitted their benchmarking data to the Improvement Service (Aberdeenshire, Argyll & Bute, Dumfries & Galloway, Highland, Perth & Kinross and Scottish Borders). This has been collated and currently being analysed.

We are also in discussions to create other benchmarking groups. With the Large Rural Authorities and the Large Cities already established, others benchmarking groups are being proposed as follows:

Small Rural Authorities – Cairngorms, Clackmannanshire, Eilean Siar, Loch Lomond & Trossachs, Moray, Orkney Islands, Shetland Islands, Stirling

Others (East/Central) – Angus, East Lothian, Falkirk, Fife, Midlothian, North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire, West Lothian

Others (West) – East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Inverclyde, North Ayrshire, Renfrewshire, South Ayrshire, West Dunbartonshire

For further information, contact the Improvement Service.

Onshore Wind Data



The Scottish Government has commissioned a study into Onshore Wind Energy – the before and after impacts, which is particularly looking at visual impact, noise and shadow flicker. HoPS gathered data on behalf of the working group and ClimateXChange and we would like to thank all 22 authorities that replied. The first results will be an announcement about which sites (8-10) will be chosen to be studied in more detail and the after results will be published summer 2014.

There is information available on the HoPS Knowledge Hub group which shows the 47 wind farms under consideration, and whether they have been nominated for noise, visual impact or shadow flicker.

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authorities responded and this information is available on the HoPS Knowledge Hub group.

- The report from SNOOK after their session at the Conference is now available on the HoPS Knowledge Hub group.
- HoPS will be attending the Scottish Government annual meeting and have been given an hour-long slot at the event, this will be held on 14 and 15 November.

Planning - the earliest intervention?

At a recent Improvement Service event on Planning & the Outcomes Agenda, Colin Mair set out some thoughts on the significance of planning's role in delivering 'foundational' outcomes. These are outcomes that are easily taken for granted in the developed world – basic infrastructure such as roads, pavements and sewers, safe housing etc.

Going back to the roots of planning in public health and housing improvements, planning can easily be understood as 'the earliest intervention' in tackling inequalities. Given the huge significance of where you live to your educational, health and other life outcomes, creating places in which people can succeed is where planning is most relevant to the outcome agenda.

We are in the process of exploring what the IS can do to support the planning community in engaging with the outcome agenda, so watch this space.

High Level Performance Group

Malcolm MacLeod represented HoPS at the High Level Performance Group on 26 September with Derek Mackay, COSLA and SOLACE. Also in attendance were reps from SOLAR, the Key Agencies and Scottish Government. Feedback on performance was good, with a recognition that "legacy cases" were taking time to come out of the system. Time was spent on discussing proposals for procedures for engaging Members in pre-application advice – so watch this space for guidance to be issued on that topic!

Dates for your diary

1 November

Executive Committee meeting

14/15 November

Scottish Government & HoPS Meeting

29 November

Performance & Practice sub committee meeting

3 December

Development Planning sub committee meeting

31 January

Development Management sub committee meeting

Join the HoPS Knowledge Hub Group!

<https://knowledgehub.local.gov.uk/group/headsofplanning-scotlandmembersforum>

Update from the Sub-Committees

Development Management Sub Committee

At the last meeting, the DM sub committee welcomed presentations by Judy Sadler, Investigations Manager, SPSO as well Lindsey Nicoll, Chief Reporter, DPEA. Both discussions were very interesting and beneficial, and the minutes from this meeting are available on the Knowledge Hub, as well as the presentation from SPSO.

Development Planning Sub Committee

The DP sub committee is focusing on three main work streams this year: Benchmarking in development planning; marine planning consultation; and strategic development planning review. There will also be work done on the definition of the 'five year land supply' effectiveness. The sub committee will also be working closely with Scottish Government to deliver a 'National Development Planning Forum' early in 2014.

Performance and Practice Sub Committee

'Costing the Planning Service' project is being overseen by this sub committee. Following the analysis of results the sub committee will consider how to relate the findings to options for fee structures for planning applications.

The submission date for PPF2 has now passed and the submitted PPFs will be analysed by Scottish Government with feedback being published before the end of the year. It was agreed that 'follow up workshops' will be held in February. These will coincide with completion of the review of the recent PPFs and look to the next year, as well as being a platform to share good practice between authorities.

