

Argyll and Bute Planning Service
Seirbheis Planaidh Earra-Ghàidheal is Bhòid

**Planning Performance
Framework Annual
Report 2011-2012**
Frèam Coileanadh Planaidh
– Aithisg Bhliadhna
2011 - 2012



Argyll and Bute Council
Comhairle Earra-Ghàidheal agus Bhòid
argyll-bute.gov.uk



Planning Performance and Framework 2012

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Introduction to the Argyll and Bute Planning Service

1.1 Argyll and Bute Council area comprises of a large mix of urban, rural and island communities. Created in April 1996 it was formed by combining the former Argyll and Bute District Council area and the Helensburgh and Lomond area of the former Dumbarton District Council. With a population of nearly 90,000 and covering a large dispersed geographical area of 70,000 square kilometres, particular service delivery arrangements have been formulated to meet the needs of the diverse communities we serve.

1.2 The Argyll and Bute Planning Service is an outward looking service which seeks to harness development opportunities, support existing and new businesses, protect the public and improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the area by ensuring development takes place in a sustainable manner. The service is part of Development and Infrastructure Services (Planning and Regulatory Services, Economic Development, Roads and Amenity Services). The service in its current form has been operational from 1st April 2010 as part of the Council's Transformation/Modernisation Programme.

1.3 The planning service has a major part to play in achieving international, national and local objectives through the delivery of its statutory functions: The service also aims to play a pivotal role in the delivery of economic growth and regeneration for the benefit of future generations by providing excellent 'value added' planning services to our wide range of customers, improving economic, environmental and social conditions that are all intrinsically linked to improving the health and well-being of people who live in, visit and work in Argyll and Bute.

1.4 The main purpose of the service, through the proportionate use of its statutory functions, is therefore to positively contribute to achieving the Scottish Government's national outcomes that are also embedded in the principle aims and outcomes of the Council's Single Outcome Agreement, Community and Corporate Plans.

- **Facilitating sustainable economic growth** by ensuring speedy decision making, ensuring there is always sufficient land for potential development and that the right planning policies are in place and applied appropriately to suit local circumstances;
- **Maintaining and enhancing our outstanding Natural and Built environment** through the development of specific, up to date and fit for purpose, planning policies and guidance, and operational delivery to achieve 'added value';
- **Improving liveability in the places where we live** by supporting the Council's area regeneration activities; by applying the necessary building and design standards; by taking robust and proportionate enforcement action on development compliance and by taking a proactive response in respect of dangerous and dilapidated buildings.

- **Addressing Climate Change** by improving energy efficiency and conservation in our buildings and delivering a “climate change” ready LDP.

1.5 Development Management – facilitating the delivery of the place shaping vision for the community, environment and economy as set out in the Development Plan through the processing of planning applications and related submissions. Activities extend beyond the scrutiny and determination of planning applications to include: pre-application shaping of developments to promote desired outcomes, monitoring the delivery of proposals and evaluating their outcomes.

1.6 Development Policy – preparation, monitoring, review and implementation of the emerging Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan together with all associated supplementary guidance and strategies including the Local Biodiversity Action Plan; Woodland and Forestry Strategy; Coastal Development Strategy, Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plans and the council’s outdoor access function delivered under the Land Reform Act.

1.6.1 The above services are currently on a journey of continuous improvement, audit and review starting with a Scottish Government audit of development management in 1998; Brodies review of Planning Services in 2007, approved by the Council’s Executive in 2008; and subject to a PSIF pilot in 2010 and re-visit in 2012. The Planning Service has also undergone a comprehensive Service Review in 2011 which delivered a 21% reduction in budget without a resultant loss in performance.

1.6.2 That said, the substantial reduction in the service’s budget over recent years has resulted in a number of non-statutory functions to be lost and a lack of flexibility to undertake work without attracting external funding or recruit new members of staff as people leave the service for new opportunities. Further budget cuts are pending (2.9% for the next financial year with further year on year cuts scheduled) which have the potential to undermine improvements in service standards, staff morale and the service’s overall capacity to facilitate sustainable economic growth. This situation is further compounded by the current and sustained recession that has led to a substantial gap in projected fee income and what has actually been received. Without an increase in fees this revenue gap is very likely to increase in the years ahead which will result in further substantial cuts to the planning service and jeopardise its future sustainability as a high quality service.

1.7 Approach to Service Delivery

1.7.1 Argyll and Bute Council has a challenging topography of isolated peninsulas and 25 inhabited islands that place unique demands on service delivery that require a particular local response.

1.7.2 **The Development Management Service**, provides a devolved area based service through four teams that deal with the processing and determination of all local planning applications together with all enforcement activities; a centralised validation team that deals with monitoring work, e planning activities and the validation of all planning applications; and a major applications team dealing with major and more complex applications:

- Helensburgh and Lomond Area Team based at Blairvadach, by Helensburgh;
- Mid Argyll and the Isles Area Team based at Ardrishaig;
- Bute and Cowal Area Team based at Dunoon; OLI Area Team based at Oban;
- Major Projects Team and Central Validation Team based at Lochgilphead:

1.7.3 **The Development Policy Service** provides a centralised service through three small teams based in two offices at Lochgilphead and Oban.

- The Development Plans Team which delivers the Local Development Plan and all other terrestrial land use documents such as the Woodland and Forestry Strategy is based at Manse Brae, Lochgilphead;
- The Outdoor Access Team which facilitates the work of the Access Forum, upholds access rights and produces the Core Path Plan is based at Manse Brae, Lochgilphead;
- Marine and Coastal Planning Team which delivers all marine based plans such as the Loch Etive ICZM based at Municipal Buildings, Oban;
- Biodiversity Officer (part of the Development Plans Team) who manages the work of the A&B biodiversity partnership including the implementation of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan based at the Municipal Buildings, Oban:

1.8 **Service Performance**

1.8.1 Argyll and Bute Planning Service has a strong commitment to managing performance and this is clearly demonstrated with the publication of the annual Service Plan, annual improvement plans that are submitted annually to the Scottish Government and COSLA, regular audit and reviews such as Public Sector Improvement Framework (completed in 2010 and 2012). The link to the Single Outcome Agreement and Key Performance Indicators contained in Pyramid (Argyll and Bute Council's performance management system) are also included within business objectives and monitored on a quarterly basis.

1.8.2 The Planning Service has performed well over the past three years by consistently meeting or exceeding national and local targets for performance over which it has control. This has been achieved despite a reduction in available budgets and a continued need for significant change instigated initially through the Scottish Government's Planning Modernisation agenda and now through the Council's own Transformation/Modernisation agenda.

1.8.3 The on-going economic downturn and consequential reduction in both private and public finance is a further challenge the service continues to face. With a focus on delivering sustainable economic growth the service recognises the compelling need to retain a core of skilled and competent workforce with sufficient capability to embrace new working practices and increased workloads.

1.9 Processes and Systems

1.9.1 The planning service has invested heavily in recent years, with some financial assistance by the Scottish Government, in its processes, systems and technical equipment in an effort to deliver greater efficiency, transparency, speed and consistency in decision making together with better outcomes on the ground. This investment continues with initiatives such as e planning, the creation of virtual teams, the introduction of customer contact points and single contact number, the introduction of agile and flexible working practices and the introduction of a comprehensive electronic document management system.

1.9.2 This investment coupled with better and more targeted training for staff, the embedding of performance management in the ethos of the service, in line with national and council expectations, and a continuous review and audit programme has helped raise performance levels and driven down costs by 21% as a result of the **2011 Planning Services Service Review**. The Planning Service is also aware that the journey of improvement it has embarked on needs to continue as budget pressures intensify and further savings are required to meet available budgets.

1.10 Customer Feedback

1.10.1 Taking a holistic approach to service delivery the service remains fully committed to providing excellent customer service, delivering a high performance service as required by the Scottish Government and maximising value for money.

1.10.2 The planning service has a wide range of customers with a number of activities attracting competing interests. In such circumstances some customers will not be satisfied even though they have received a good level of service. Notwithstanding this, the Planning Service now provides a customer focussed service that delivers national and local outcomes that meet with customer and stakeholder expectations identified through the use of focus groups, the web, customer feedback forms and regular communication events. Complaints and other enquiries are analysed to ensure that service improvements can be made where appropriate.

1.10.3 The Planning Service aims to deliver local outcomes that have been identified in our joint [Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement](#). Of particular relevance to the service are the key themes of the economy and the environment. In terms of the economy the key local outcomes for the service are:-

CPP 1 — Argyll and Bute has more new businesses operating in the area, creating more jobs.

CPP 3 — We have contributed to an environment where existing and new businesses can succeed.

These local outcomes are linked to national outcomes:-

1. We live in a Scotland that is the most attractive place for doing business in Europe.
2. We realise our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for our people.

The service aims to achieve these outcomes by ensuring that there is sufficient business land available at all times; that planning policy is both fit for purpose and up to date and that planning applications are dealt with in an efficient manner. (Planning service actions to deliver outcomes CPP 03.03 Improve the speed and determination of planning applications/70% target for the determination of applications within statutory limits);

In terms of the environment the key local outcomes for the service are:-

CPP 5 - The places we live, work and visit are well planned, safer and successful, meeting the needs of our communities.

CPP 6 - We contribute to a sustainable environment.

CPP 7 - The full potential of our outstanding built and natural environment is realised through partnership working.

These local outcomes are linked to national outcomes:-

10. We live in well designed, sustainable places where people are able to access the amenities and services they need.
12. We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations.
14. We reduce the local and global environmental impact of our consumption and production.

The service aims to achieve these outcomes by ensuring that we have robust policy in place to safeguard our environment and help Argyll and Bute to mitigate and adapt to climate change. We have improved and enhanced our access to the natural environment and green networks.

The success measures in the Service Plan for this are:-

- The adoption of the finalised core path plan by Council in December 2012 and ensuring visitors and residents can safely navigate our core path systems - 50 miles waymarked per annum.
- The adoption of LDP by Council for consultation in October 2012, Improve our supply of housing - 300 per annum, ensure generous supply of housing and business land - 1380 housing units capacity and 64ha of business land (minimum requirements).

IMPROVING OUR CONNECTIVITY



1. West Coast Motors modernised Oban Service 2. Argyll Ferries-Argyll Flyer, Dunoon to Gourock ferry 3. M.V. Finlaggan, New Caledonian MacBrayne ferry 4. Works at Kinloch Road, Campbeltown 5. HGV A83 Lochgilphead 6. Oban Airport control tower 7. New Train stock Helensburgh 8. Glasgow service, Oban Airport 9. 'Aqualibrium Way', Campbeltown 10. National Path Network-Dunbeg 11. Kinyntyre Express-Campbeltown-Ballycastle fast passenger link

PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

ANNUAL REPORT 2011-2012



1. National Headline Indicators (NHIs)

Key outcomes	2011-2012	
<p>Development Planning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> age of local/strategic development plan(s) (full years) <i>Requirement: less than 5 years</i> development plan scheme: on track? (Y/N) 	<p>3 years</p> <p>Y</p>	
<p>Effective Land Supply and Delivery of Outputs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> effective housing land: years supply effective housing land supply housing approvals effective employment land supply employment land take-up effective commercial floor space supply commercial floor space delivered <p>*Note: In rural areas take up of land for employment uses is often small scale and does not occur solely on the designated employment land sites in the Local Plan.</p>	<p>5 years</p> <p>4130 units</p> <p>730 units</p> <p>70.11 ha</p> <p>*0.3 ha</p> <p>Unavailable</p> <p>6,367m²</p>	
<p>Development Management</p> <p>Project Planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> percentage of applications subject to pre-application advice number of major applications subject to processing agreement or other project plan percentage planned timescales met <p>Decision-making</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> application approval rate delegation rate 	<p>2.2%</p> <p>none</p> <p>n/a</p> <p>95.6%</p> <p>94.7%</p>	
<p>Decision-making timescales</p> <p>Average number of weeks to decision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> major developments local developments (non-householder) householder developments 	<p>94.3</p> <p>16.8</p> <p>9.1</p>	
<p>Enforcement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> time since enforcement charter published / 	<p>47</p> <p>months/1month</p>	

<p>reviewed (months) <i>Requirement: review every 2 years</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • number of breaches identified / resolved 	<p>No data recorded</p>	<p></p>
<p>Given this is the first snapshot of statistical performance under the new framework, contextual feedback can only be provided against the historic / superseded indicators that are comparable to the new ones. In future publications we shall be able to monitor trends and assess with similarly sized local authorities.</p> <p>For this initial framework certain 'Project Planning' measures have not been completed. This is due to the module in our back office system not being in place for pre-application linkages in 2011/12 (they are now live for 2012/13) and in the case of Processing Agreements (PAs) the Council has yet to roll out PAs as the template is still awaited from the Scottish Government</p> <p>Our approval rate and delegation rate have remained consistently high around the 95% mark which highlights our keenness to make development happen and officers implementing our local plan in the vast majority of cases. Ensuring that a plan led system is at the heart of our service is also reflected in the high percentage of original decisions being upheld at both review and appeal. Notably 87.5% for the latter.</p> <p>The 'average week timescales' for Local Developments and Householder Developments is likely to be comparable with other similar sized local authorities at 16.8 weeks and 9.1 weeks respectively. 70% of Local Developments and 93% of Householder developments were determined within the statutory timescale which is an improvement from the previous year and good performance compared to the historic indicators. It is recognised that the timescale to determine Major Applications of 94 weeks is high and in part can be attributed to the cleansing of 'old / relic applications' at the tail end of 2011/12 so they did not unduly affect the new PPF which was coming into effect in 2012/13. A small number of these applications which had been mothballed by applicants or waiting legal clarification were brought to a head and caused the disproportionate increase in average weeks.</p>		

2. Defining and measuring a high-quality planning service

Open for business

Argyll and Bute Planning Service has placed the delivery of sustainable economic growth as a top priority in line with both the councils and the Scottish Government's key strategic documents. The service has adopted a culture of negotiation, improvement where necessary and approval rather than refusal. This ethos is reflected in our pre application advice protocol and consistently high approval rates in excess of **94%**.

The current Development Plan is growth orientated and contains 135 allocations for business, mixed use, housing and minerals together with 178 potential development areas for a variety of uses.

Key officers have been trained in Prince 2 (project management methodology) to help facilitate the decision making process from pre – application advice to post decision and implementation stages. Development Management operate a free formal pre-application service called 'Firm Foundations' which seeks to start every project on the right footing. Officers seek to work in partnership with developers and iron out potential conflicts or issues at as early as stage possible before too much capital is committed. We are monitored on speed of responding to pre-application enquiries and seek to correspond within 20 working days. Our officers attend site visits, video conferences, office meetings and communicate via phone or email to suit the needs of the customer and project.

Major applications are prioritised within the service through a dedicated major applications team which can utilise support from locally based development management officers together with planning policy officers and other council officers as appropriate.

We seek to ensure our customers are directed to the most appropriate officer as quickly as possible to deal with their query or pre-application proposal and have suitably graded officers to appropriately respond to them. Our Technical Officers have detailed understanding of Permitted Development legislation and householder policies and are therefore first point of contact for the general public. Officers and Senior Officers deal with the more complex applications that require more detailed scrutiny and assessment.

On major projects the service convenes a 'case conference' or sets up working groups where the applicant and other key stakeholders such as Roads Department, Environmental Health, Transport Scotland, industry representatives all sit down and discuss the merits and issues both for the single application and the wider context. Planning Gain requirements are clearly specified through the current Development Plan with an emphasis on providing essential infrastructure and appropriate levels of developer contribution linked to identified local needs such as affordable housing. The service has published a [customer service charter](#) that puts the customer first in terms of service delivery with clear targets set in terms of engagement.

Case Studies

Positive Engagement with Renewable Energy Developers

Intelligent Land Investments (ILI) have used Argyll and Bute's pre-app service and also engaged with the Council once applications had been submitted. ILI are the industry leader for medium wind in the Renewable Energy sector. This has been achieved by structuring a business strategy which puts the landowner first. Presently ILI RE is working alongside set government strategies to promote renewable energy and economic growth within the feed in tariff scheme.

ILI submitted around 30 applications for wind turbines across ABC and liaison meetings were held between officers and applicant to ensure supporting information was fit for purpose and 'issues' were raised as early as possible.

CEO of ILI Mark Wilson commented

" We initially spent several months going round all the councils in Scotland to see which were positive towards getting future applications for single turbines. We found ABC very approachable and pro-active towards Renewables, and they worked closely with us to guide our developments to the most suitable sites. We have had a great working relationship with ABC and look forward to great success on this project and many others in the foreseeable future"

Positive Engagement with the Aquaculture Industry

The Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation (SSPO) + other fin fish operators meeting with planning officials in Argyll and Bute on an annual basis to discuss strategic matters relating to this rapidly expanding and vitally important export business in our rural area. Aquaculture can be technically complex and operations have changed over a short period of time so communication and industry development become even more important as planning control has moved offshore. The dialogue with the SSPO has been positive with action points created for both parties which have resulted in better submissions, shared knowledge / skill and overall better working relationship.

Stephen Bell of the SSPO said:-

"In my dealings with A&B Council planners I have found them to be very focussed on trying to achieve what is best for their area. Their positive, open and business oriented approach is backed up with a professional pragmatism, when balancing environmental, social and economic considerations, that is appreciated by SSPO member companies operating in the area as reflected in these comments:-

"A&B's Planning Service is) refreshingly realistic, helpful, reasonable, clear and approachable."

"A&B's Planning Service has been constructive, helpful, approachable and fair."

Creating places of which we can all be proud

The service places great emphasis on the quality of outcomes on the ground either through coordinated regeneration schemes in towns such as Campbeltown and Rothesay, larger scale housing developments or business sites through to individual house sites. In many cases design improvements to schemes happen at the pre application stage and masterplans, together with associated design statements, are now a requirement for many of our larger development sites.

The current [Development Plan](#) contains detailed policies of expected design standards together with a suite of award winning [sustainable design guides](#) that deal with small and larger scales of development, design and our heritage and incorporating renewable technologies. The latest guide concerns the siting of on shore wind turbines which has been a partnership project with SNH.

The service has also established a design forum that aims to promote good design at a community level including the hosting of our Argyll and Bute [Sustainable Design competition](#) that is held every two years. Examples of good design achieved in Argyll and Bute can be found on our [exemplar design web page](#).

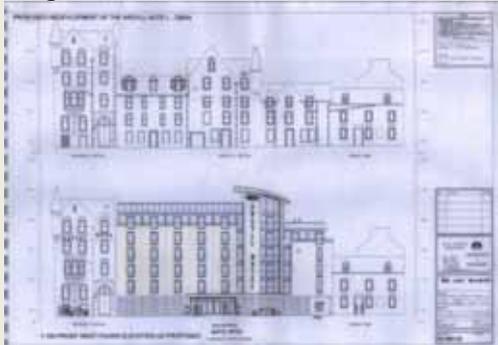
The service seeks to 'add value' to every proposal they determine when appropriate by improving design, orientation and siting in partnership with the applicant. We use negotiation techniques, our unique Area Capacity Evaluation (ACE) tool and our Council Design Guides and design policies to improve the quality of development on the ground.

We deliver Development Management from area based offices to ensure a professional knowledge with the area is built up and officers appreciate local buildings styles, settlement patterns, materials and history so new proposals integrate with the existing locale.

Case Studies

Adding value to submitted designs Argyll Hotel, Oban

Original

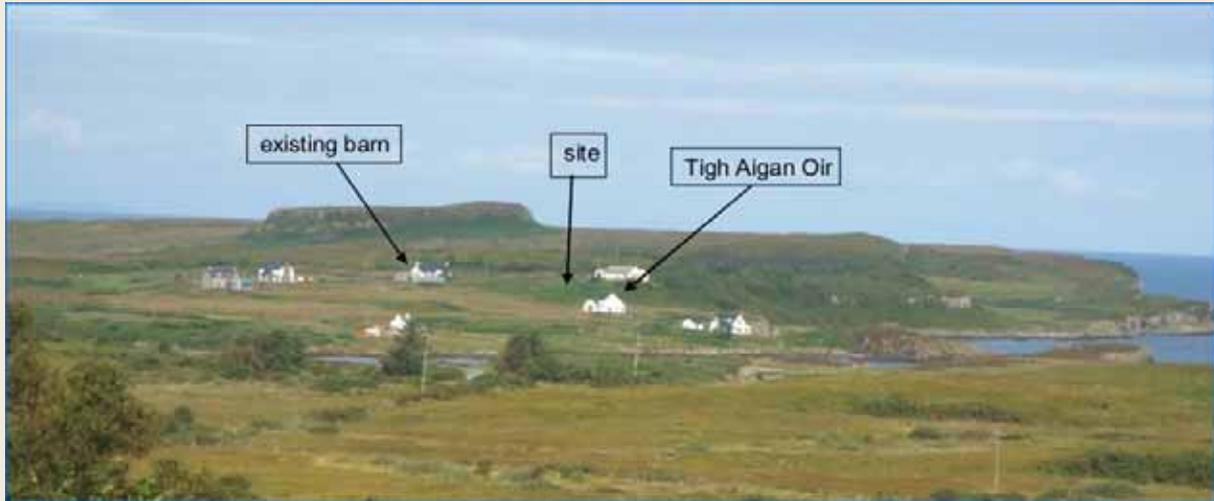


Added value through negotiation



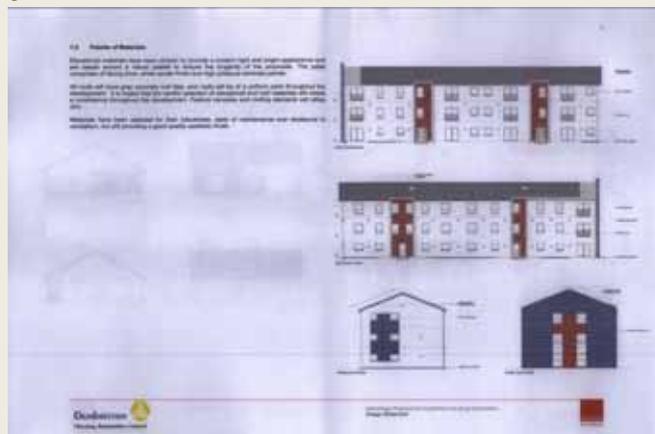
This application related to a site at a prominent location in the town centre of Oban. It involved the replacement of a derelict hotel building with a new larger hotel. The key issue in the determination of the case was to ensure that a sufficiently high standard of design was produced to justify replacement of the existing derelict category C(s) listed Argyll Hotel, which was located immediately adjacent to three different category 'B' listed buildings within a Special Built Environment Area. Development Management worked extremely to try and secure a high standard of appropriate design in accordance with the design principles set out in the Local Plan. The design of the proposed hotel evolved significantly from those which were originally presented. The final design which was approved, is a building with modernistic pretensions, respectful of its neighbours, and to the scale of neighbouring buildings (particularly the much smaller Oban Inn), comprising 'three bays' thus reflecting the historical 'three' stage development of the original Argyll Hotel.

**Finding the best site using Area Capacity Evaluation (ACE)
Ardtun from Knockan, Mull, looking west**



In response to a planning application for a croft house in an area where policy did not generally support new housing, the Planning Service undertook a broader survey of the area beyond the application site. The survey confirmed that the settlement was almost at capacity and further development could adversely affect the settlement, including key views across the settlement identified for protection in the local plan. However, the survey also identified an alternative site within the applicant's ownership where a house could be accommodated (redevelopment of existing barn) without altering the character of the existing settlement or impact on the key views identified for protection. This alternative was proposed through the Area Capacity Evaluation process where we consider both natural and built landform and features to deliver the best result.

Creating better places to live - Dunbritton Housing Association (DHA), former Hermitage Academy Site Original Submission



DHA submitted a planning application for 49 units at a former secondary school site in Helensburgh. The proposal comprised a mix of flatted blocks and houses. The planners had particular concerns over the design of the flats which would be located in a prominent position close to the eastern entrance to Helensburgh. It was considered that the original design was too regimented and lacked any sense of place. The applicant was encouraged to consult the Council's Sustainable Design Guide and revise the design to add interest through the palette of materials and to add variation to the main element of the flatted blocks. It was suggested to the applicant that this could be done by varying roof heights, changing the shape of the roof and adding, for example, additional features, shapes, indents and different window patterns on the principal elevations combined with different finishes. The applicant acted upon this advice and the application was withdrawn and a vastly improved design was ultimately resubmitted and approved by the Council.

Revised Design



Certainty

Consistency of advice, process and decision-making

Our Officers aim to provide consistent and pragmatic advice to all customers from pre-application to final decision. The suite of area and topic based policies in the plan provides considerable certainty in the decision making process which allows officers to bring forward proposals through negotiation and general discussion with applicants. There is a low departure rate from the plan at **2.5%** given the robustness of policy and only **6%** of decisions contrary to officer recommendation with a current **94%** approval rate. In addition to the certainty obtained from consistent officer advice we also have an **87.5%** appeal record for the original decisions being upheld and **72%** from the Local Review Board (LRB).

To ensure customers have a clear understanding of what we expect from them we have developed a Validation Checklist so the appropriate scale of plans, supporting documentation and surveys can be prepared in advance of submission.

The current up to date Development Plan seeks to provide certainty in the decision making process through the use of a zoned approach linked to clearly identifiable criteria for different forms of development.

STRENGTHENING OUR COMMUNITIES



1. Historic Portnahaven, Islay 2. Energy efficient houses, Gigha 3. Sea plane service 4. Hermitage master plan, Helensburgh 5. Newly opened Community Centre, Isle of Coll 6. Newly opened Craignish Community Hall 7. CHORD Colquhoun Square, Helensburgh

Communications, engagement and customer service

Communications strategy for engagement and positive customer experience

Taking a holistic approach to service delivery the service remains fully committed to being a customer focussed service that delivers high quality outcomes on the ground. Key stakeholder expectations are identified and regularly updated through the use of focus groups, the web, individual customer feedback forms and regular communication events with specific groups.

The planning service has published a customer service charter that puts the customer first in terms of service delivery with clear targets set in terms of engagement. This document also contains information on how complaints are dealt with together with a complaints procedure that is available on our website and leaflets at our office reception areas. Complaints are investigated thoroughly and outcomes are communicated directly to the complainant. Complaints and other enquiries are analysed to ensure that service improvements can be made where appropriate. All our documentation is available in alternative formats or language and is subject to testing for the use of plain English.

The service produces an annual [information consultation and engagement plan](#) (ICE) as an integral part of the service planning process.

In line with Scottish Government expectations the planning service is moving to on-line delivery with **40%** of applications currently being submitted through the e-planning portal. Comprehensive customer information on a wide range of planning services can also be found on our council website including the ability to search for all planning applications, appeals and enforcement actions.

Placing the Customer at the heart of service delivery Case Studies

Every decision notice that we issue is accompanied with a [customer satisfaction form](#) which we request is filled in and sent back to provide feedback on how our customers perceive our service. Our customer satisfaction levels increased from **67%** in FQ1 to **93%** in FQ4 2011/2012.

In addition to our mainstream customer satisfaction survey we also hold [User Forums](#) and Focus Groups with agents and architects so we can obtain verbal feedback, exchange ideas, tackle issues and ultimately shape the service for our most frequent customers. User forum topics have included validation requirements, increasing the use of e-planning and affordable housing policy.

Community Council [training and consultation events](#) are also held throughout Argyll and Bute where staff seek to provide the community councillors with a 'toolkit' to get involved in planning and good practice techniques how to make a representation and manage their resource. The service also offers regular training events for our key stakeholders including community representatives. , A recent and successful example of this approach was the holding of an all-day seminar with community groups, renewable energy firms agents and representatives together with elected members on the new on shore wind landscape capacity study and design guide. This seminar was facilitated by council staff and the authors of the study.

Efficient and effective decision-making

Ensuring structure and processes are proportionate

The planning service has invested heavily in recent years, with some financial assistance by the Scottish Government, in its processes, systems, training and technical equipment in an effort to deliver greater efficiency, transparency, speed and consistency in decision making together with better outcomes on the ground. This investment continues with initiatives such as e planning, the introduction of customer contact points, the creation of a central PPSL committee and the successful implementation of a comprehensive [scheme of delegation](#) that is regularly revised (most recently in 2012), the introduction of agile working (shortlisted for a Scottish Government Planning 2012 award) and a comprehensive document management system to help track performance and improve efficiency in service processes.

This investment coupled with better and more targeted training for staff, the embedding of performance management in the ethos of the service, in line with national and council expectations, combined with a continuous review and audit programme has helped raise performance levels and drive down costs in recent years despite increasing budget pressures.

Effective management structures

Targets and performance indicator standards are set to be achievable based on trends, budgets, importance and realistic prospect of attainment. The planning service is a member of various benchmarking groups such as the 'Rural 9', e-planning northern alliance in order to share good practice and compare experience. The 2011 service review identified the planning service as being cost effective and performing well - often the best – when compared to the benchmark partners. In addition, following on from the Shared Services Diagnostic Project in 2008 flexible, agile and home working is currently being undertaken as part of the Council's Process for Change Programme within the Improvement Plan. This initiative is being supported by improvements to ICT which has enabled the creation of "virtual" teams helping to reduce costs and allow staff to be readily deployed to where they are needed most.

The planning service is also proactive in forming partnerships to undertake work in order to maximise resources and share skills. Examples include the Strategic Housing and Community Forum, the Sustainable Design Forum, WOSAS, FLAG, the concordats with Scottish Power, Scottish Water and SEPA. Officers also attend numerous external forums to seek examples of best practice and assist in the benchmarking process.

Financial management and local governance

The 2011 Service Review that delivered **21%** budget savings without any loss of performance established that we were a cost effective service with a strong sense of direction and governance. Further efficiencies are delivered through the annual

service improvement and efficiencies programme which is submitted to the Scottish Government Built Environment Department as part of the requirement of the new Planning Act. In addition, an annual performance review is now required by the council which in turn is informed by scorecard reports that are published quarterly on Pyramid, the council's performance management system that has been in place for the last five years. Budget monitoring takes place on a monthly basis with individual managers and reviewed quarterly via the departmental management team.

The planning service is also continuously reviewing performance and associated targets through [benchmarking](#) at a number of different levels across the service – measuring/auditing/comparing performance and process. Service delivery in Planning is planned and managed in a way to ensure that service aims have measurable targets which meet customer needs. Service Plan targets are set having taken into account of customer feedback (through user forums, web based and paper questionnaires, focus groups, complaints monitoring); national statutory performance indicators; project management methodology (PRINCE 2); Corporate Plan/Community Plan targets.

The planning service is fully compliant with the [Council's procurement strategy](#) and has also entered into a [joint procurement framework](#) with all Highland and Islands based Councils in 2011. The Framework is essentially a means by which you can request quotations for Work Packages from the three preferred Consultants for the appropriate Lot and instruct your requirements.

Culture of continuous improvement

The Service recognises the need for continuous improvement and takes a pro-active approach to staff and elected member development and growing our own to help achieve this. The service employs a number of mechanisms to drive forward improvements in service delivery. These include submission of annual service improvement plans to the Scottish Government, COSLA and the council together with the completion of a biennial [Public Service Improvement Framework \(PSIF\)](#). The first PSIF was held in 2010 and the last one in 2012.

On an individual level improvements are taken forward through the Performance Review and Development (PRD) process which is also the principle tool to help identify people's knowledge, skills and capabilities. Flowing from the PDR returns are service training plans/programmes which are fully costed and programmed which allows for targeted, efficient and budgeted delivery of training to staff. Professional staff are required to undertake at least 50 hours CPD every two years to ensure that they retain their professional memberships. The Council assist this process by



paying for and allowing staff to attend training events linked to council and service priorities.

Training priorities are linked to corporate and service outcomes that have been identified in the pyramid performance management system.

The planning service has also introduced a '[grow our own](#)' policy that aims to help retain good staff by assisting them with career progression from admin in some cases to technician and from technician through to professional officer. Mentoring of staff is also undertaken as they undertake professional courses. In 2009 (Design Forum and our suite of design guides), 2011 (UK Rural Authorities and Strategies award for our Woodland and Forestry Strategy) and in 2012 (Scottish Government-Woodland and Forest Strategy; Craignish Community Plan) the service has received four national awards for work undertaken by its staff.

Shona Strachan

I currently work as a European and Policy Assistant in Argyll and Bute Council and since 2009 I have been working towards an MSc in City and Regional Planning. The course has been 50% funded by the Council and 50% funded by the Planning Development Programme. As part of my formal training agreement with the Council I undertook a 12 week training placement in the Council's Planning Service which was split between 6 weeks in the Planning Policy Team and 6 weeks in Development Management.



I found both elements of my training placement inspiring and I believe the benefits of the placement are many. However, I think the biggest benefit has been to help 'bridge the gap' between the academic theory I have learned on my MSc course and the practical knowledge and experience needed to work in a planning authority and this will undoubtedly stand me in good stead for the future. Indeed as a result of my training placement I will be returning to Development Management on a secondment basis to cover Maternity Leave in the

Area Team I undertook my placement with, an opportunity I am very much looking forward to.

I believe the opportunity to gain practical experience in the Planning Service will mean I am better placed to apply for planning jobs in the Council in the future. This in turn should also mean that the Planning Service will be able to maximise the investment which has been made in my career development in line with the principles of Growing Our Own.

Bill Langdon

After a successful first year studying Planning and Property Development at Heriot Watt University, I welcomed the opportunity to spend the summer as a Student Planner in Argyll and Bute's Development Policy Department. For 8 weeks, I carried out various tasks including site visits and research for Argyll and Bute's Built

Heritage website as well as data research for the Housing Land Audit.

Not being local to the area, my time was split between the Policy office in Lochgilphead and the Development Management office in Helensburgh. This gave me the chance to be more familiar with the area. Geographically speaking, I found Argyll and Bute to be a very unique region and a great place to spend some time. As a student, it was good to be in the company of and be influenced by professional planners on a daily basis. Through discussion and a number of debates, I was able to get a better sense of the profession and I feel I have come away with a new learning experience that I wouldn't get in a classroom.

I will continue to enjoy my university life for the time being, however I am now looking forward to the beginning of my planning career and will certainly be on the lookout for similar summer posts until then.

Rory MacDonald

I have received a tremendous amount of support from the Council in my career so far. From the moment I expressed an interest in studying Planning the department backed me, providing funding for me to complete a Foundation course in Town and Country Planning. Subsequently, when I was accepted on to an MSc programme at the University of Glasgow, the Council agreed to pay 50% of my tuition fees whilst giving me the necessary time away from work to participate in my studies and paying my travel expenses. Having completed the first year I have been awarded a Post Graduate Certificate in Spatial Planning and recently accepted an award from the RTPI for a Spatial Planning Strategy I prepared with two other students.

Most recently, when I applied for the role of Planning Technician within the MAKI Area Office I received a lot of support from colleagues across the department who were all extremely encouraging and assisted in my preparation. Fortunately, having been chosen as the successful candidate I will be taking up my new position within the coming weeks. I would most certainly not have achieved this progression without the support of the department and the Council as a whole and I am extremely grateful for this. Looking towards the future, I should obtain my Masters Degree next year and aim to continue my progression towards a role as a Planning Officer and chartered membership of the RTPI.



DELIVERING SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH



1. SkyCon Plant, Machrihanish 2. Wind turbine blades 3. Domestic Solar panels 4. New Marina and tourist complex, Portavadie 5. Harvest, Isle of Bute 6. Town Centre Shopping, Lochgilphead 7. European Science Park, Dunbeg 8. Award winning design, Portavadie

3. Supporting evidence

Part 2 of this report was compiled, drawing on evidence from the following sources.

- The "[Lorn Arc](#)" project is an ambitious £20million proposal to extend Oban's North Pier and construct road infrastructure in Dunbeg/ Dunstaffnage.
- The [Local Development Plan \(LDP\)](#) is an updated and combined version of the [Structure Plan](#) and [Local Plan](#) that will eventually replace these two documents.
- The Council operates a formalised pre-application system called Planning for Firm Foundations. You can find out more information in our [leaflet](#), or use the [Pre-Application Enquiry Form](#) or [Householder Pre-Application Enquiry Form](#) to submit an enquiry.
- [Examples of Good Design](#). Within Argyll and Bute we have a design strategy which aims to achieve high quality new development that respects the local environment and provides a sense of place.
- One of the main objectives of our sustainable design strategy is for the Council to lead by example and demonstrate sustainable design by providing case studies to illustrate the principles of the Council's sustainable [design guides](#).
- Argyll and Bute Council has agreed to an ambitious and forward-looking programme to assist regeneration and economic development in five of its waterfront towns - Campbeltown, Helensburgh, Oban, Rothesay and Dunoon. In November 2008, the Council unanimously agreed to allocate more than £30 million to the programme, since named '[CHORD](#)'
- The Argyll and Bute [Design Awards](#) are intended to recognise, promote and celebrate examples of exceptional design quality within both an urban and rural context across the whole of the Argyll and Bute Council Planning Area.
- [Planning and Regulatory Services' Customer Service Charter](#) is part of our annual improvement plan aimed at further improving customer service standards.
- Guidance and advice on [making a planning application](#)
- Argyll and Bute Council actively encourage online submission of planning applications via the [Scottish Government ePlanning Portal](#).
- Our [online planning information system](#) holds records of all planning and building standards applications, appeals and enforcement notices.
- Detailed information regarding the Council's [Planning and Building Standards Service](#) can be found on our website.

- [Grow-our-own Case Studies](#)
- A copy of the [Customer Satisfaction Questionnaire](#) is sent out with every decision notice.
- [Feedback from our User Forum - March 2011](#)
- Community Council [training and consultation events](#) have been held.
- The Council's comprehensive [Scheme of delegation](#)
- The [Council's procurement strategy](#)
- The Council has also entered into a [Joint Procurement Framework](#) with all Highland and Islands based Councils.
- [Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement](#)
- [Validation Check sheet](#)
- [Self-Assessment Report for Public Service Improvement Framework \(PSIF\)](#)
- [Public Service Improvement Framework \(PSIF\) Assessment Score](#)
- [Performance Review and Development plan \(PRD\) Form](#)
- [Performance Review and Development plan \(PRD\) Procedure](#)
- [Planning Services Review – Benchmarking Report](#)
- [Planning Validation Process Map](#)
- [Background to land supply figures](#)
- Staff Survey Results
(The link to these documents have been deactivated due to the personal nature of the contents)
 - Communications Survey
 - Questionnaire Summary
 - Questionnaire Summary – Workshop responses
 - [Staff Workshop Agenda](#)
 - [Questionnaire Response Figures](#)

4. Service improvements: 2012-13

In the coming year we will:

IMPROVEMENT AREA 1 - DEVELOPING SKILLS

- Carry out annual performance development review (PDR) for all staff aligned to continuous professional development training programmes to ensure Planning officers have relevant skills for job
- Continue to implement "Grow Our Own" policy to enable administrative and Technical staff to gain relevant qualifications to participate in career grade progression which is part of our succession planning strategy
- Develop a robust scheme of staff job satisfaction and monitoring
- Undertake landscape capacity training for key planning staff involved in determining renewable energy applications.

IMPROVEMENT AREA 2 - IMPROVING PERFORMANCE AND OUTCOMES ON THE GROUND

- Implement the Coastal Development Strategy to help improve economic performance
- Implement joint working agreement with aquaculture industry to improve efficiency of processing aquaculture applications and to realise sustainable development opportunities.
- Implement Historic Scotland Joint Working Agreement

IMPROVEMENT AREA 3 - EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT BUSINESS PROCESSES

- Undertake a full Service Improvement Project for Development Management in partnership with Performance and Business Improvement Manager
- Update and standardise model planning conditions and Section 75 legal agreements.
- Implement the areas of improvement identified in the 2012 PSIF for Planning Services
- Update and standardise model planning conditions and Section 75 legal agreements.
- Introduce a time recording system for all planning staff to help measure performance and value for money.

IMPROVEMENT AREA 4 - BETTER AND MORE EFFECTIVE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

- Hold LDP awareness sessions with key plan stakeholders
- Undertake a series of Developer days for vacant listed buildings in council ownership
- Produce a Built Heritage Strategy to address current issues and realise new opportunities with our built heritage

IMPROVEMENT AREA 5 - PROPORTIONATE AND PRACTICAL PLANNING POLICIES AND ADVICE

- Produce Finalised LDP and all associated supplementary guidance for 3 month consultation.

Delivery of our service improvement actions in 2011-12:

Committed improvements and actions	Complete?
<p>[Commitment]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Implementation of e-planning consultation regime with external and internal consultees.</i> 	Yes
<p>[Commitment]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Development and implementation of a pro-forma and registration system for dealing with pre-application enquiries.</i> 	Yes
<p>[Commitment]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Increase Customer satisfaction levels (increased from 67% in FQ1 2010/2011 to 90% in FQ1 2011/2012.)</i> 	Yes
<p>[Commitment]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Customer Satisfaction Better and more effective public engagement – (publication of Development Policy newsletter and commencement of online Local Plan.)</i> 	Yes
<p>[Commitment]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>% of valid planning applications registered and notified within 5 days' (highest level ever recorded at around 83% consultees.)</i> 	Yes
<p>[Commitment]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Approval of key Development Policy strategic documents: Loch Etive ICZM, Sound of Mull spatial Plan, Woodland and Forestry Strategy, Local Biodiversity Action Plan, Core Path Plan Final Draft.</i> 	Yes
<p>[Commitment]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Increase the efficiency and speed of processing of planning applications. (78% of all applications determined within 2 months (64% for 2009/10) set against a target of 65%. Around 20% above Rural Benchmark.)</i> 	Yes
<p>[Commitment]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Complete the overhaul of our standard conditions and S75 processes – (work underway)</i> 	No

IMPROVING OUR ENVIRONMENT



1. Blarbuie Woods, Lochgilphead 2. Atlantic woodland trail 3. Light house, Sound of Mull 4. Kilchurn Castle, Loch Awe 5. T.H.I. Renovation, Campbeltown 6. Westport Bay, Kintyre 7. Archway, Inveraray 8. Award winning new build at Whitehouse 9. Wild flowers meadow, Gigha

Appendix I

PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK OFFICIAL STATISTICS

Decision-making timescales

Category	Total number of decisions 2011-2012	Average timescale (weeks)	
		2011-2012	2012-2013
Major developments	8	94.3	
Local developments (non-householder)	775	16.8	
• Local: less than 2 months	541 (69.8%)	7.5	
• Local: more than 2 months	234 (30.2%)	38.2	
Householder developments	426	9.1	
• Local: less than 2 months	394 (92.5%)	6.8	
• Local: more than 2 months	32 (7.5%)	38.0	
Housing developments			
Major	2	129.4	
Local housing developments	439	17.9	
• Local: less than 2 months	310 (70.6%)	7.8	
• Local: more than 2 months	129 (29.4%)	42.2	
Business and industry			
Major	1	67.4	
Local business and industry	66	12.1	
• Local: less than 2 months	49 (74.2%)	7.2	
• Local: more than 2 months	17 (25.8%)	26.1	
EIA developments	0	n/a	
Other consents*	236	11.6	
Planning/legal agreements**	27	72.8	
Local reviews	14	10.6	

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

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

Decision-making: local reviews and appeals

Type	Total number of decisions	Original decision upheld			
		2011-2012		2012-2013	
		No.	%	No.	%
Local reviews	14	10	71.4		
Appeals to Scottish Ministers	8	7	87.5		

Enforcement activity

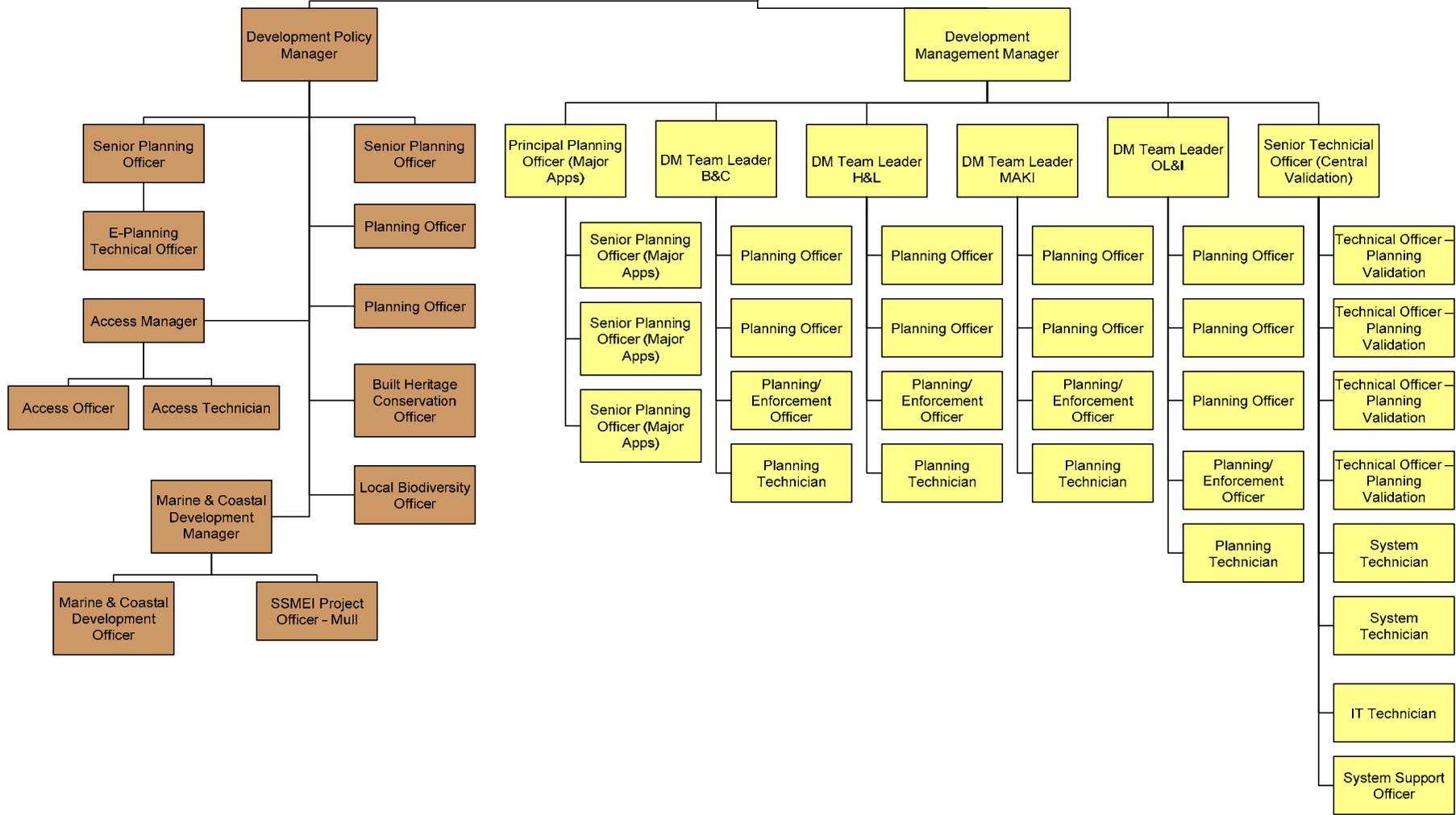
	2011-2012	2012-2013
Cases taken up	262	
Breaches identified		
Cases resolved		
Notices served***	63	
Reports to Procurator Fiscal	0	
Prosecutions	0	

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

Context

In terms of improvements from 2011/12 we have now implemented a new Enforcement Charter, created linkages in back office for pre-application monitoring and shall be rolling out opportunities for entering into processing agreements once the draft template has been released by the Government.

Head of Planning and Regulatory Services



REDUCING OUR CONSUMPTION



1. Timber harvester 2. Hydro Electric dam, Glen Fyne 3. Paper recycling 4. Bio mass energy plant, Lochgiphead Pool 5. Cruach Mhor Windfarm 6. Mineral extraction, Furnace 7. Ashfield Hydro Scheme, Achnamara 8. Tigh Na Cladach Pic c/o 'Fyne Initiatives Ltd' photos by Andrew Lee 9. Community windfarm, Gigha 10. Community wind turbine, Tieve