

# The Highland Council

## Planning Performance Framework 2017-18

# Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd

## Frèam Dèanadas Dealbhaidh 2017-18

---

July 2018



# Contents

---

Foreword . . . . .	1
1. Qualitative Narrative and Case Studies . . . . .	2
1.1 Quality of Outcomes . . . . .	2
1.2 Quality of Service and Engagement. . . . .	10
1.3 Governance . . . . .	18
1.4 Culture of Continuous Improvement . . . . .	26
2. Supporting Evidence . . . . .	28
3. Service Improvements 2018-19 . . . . .	30
4. National Headline Indicators . . . . .	32
4.1 Development Planning . . . . .	32
4.2 Development Management . . . . .	32
4.3 Enforcement Activity . . . . .	33
4.4 Commentary . . . . .	33
5. Scottish Government Official Statistics . . . . .	35
5.1 Scottish Government Official Statistics . . . . .	35
5.2 Decision-making: Local Reviews and Appeals . . . . .	36
6. Workforce and Financial Information . . . . .	36
7. Planning Committee Information . . . . .	37

# Case Studies

---

A: Inshes Park Phase 2 Developer Contributions . . . . .	6
B: Lochaber Alloy Wheel Manufacturing Facility . . . . .	13
C: Inverness East Development Brief. . . . .	16
D: Small Applications Team (SAT) . . . . .	21
E: eRoad Construction Consent (eRCC) . . . . .	23
F: Developer Contributions. . . . .	27

# Foreword

---

As Chair of the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee of Highland Council I am very pleased to submit the Planning Performance Framework for 2017/18.

This Framework reflects the good work of the Service over the course of the last year, illustrated through case studies, and also highlights some key improvements we will be progressing during the course of this year.

I am particularly pleased to see an improvement in our planning performance, particularly at a time of continued financial challenges for the Council. The drive to improve efficiency by establishing a virtual small applications team is a noteworthy case study in this document. We have also implemented an eRoad Construction Consent process which is delivering a closer alignment between the different development consents and ultimately a better, more efficient service for the customer.

We continue to work closely with partners to support development and investment across Highland. The Council's role in supporting the major employment opportunity at the smelter in Fort William, again outlined in this report, highlights the vital contribution the planning system is making to ensure that Highland remains a great place to live, work and invest in.



## Councillor Allan Henderson

Chair of the Environment, Development & Infrastructure Committee  
The Highland Council

# 1. Qualitative Narrative and Case Studies

---

## 1.1. Quality of Outcomes

Throughout 2017/18 we made good progress in progressing our Development Plans including the Caithness & Sutherland LDP being taken through Examination (with the Reporters Report received in early April 2018) and the West Highland and Islands LDP being turned around from Proposed Plan consultation ending July 2017 to approvals by three Area Committees for Examination in early 2018.

These plans are providing the up to date planning framework for decision making as demonstrated in the following case studies. The second phase of a major new park has been completed to support the new communities in the Inshes area of Inverness. In addition, (and linked to the Lochaber Alloy Wheel Manufacturing Facility case study under Quality of Service and Engagement below) the emerging West Highland and Islands LDP has helped to support significant employment growth in Fort William, with planning permission granted for a major new Alloy Wheel Manufacturing Facility during the Proposed Plan stages, which is expected to commence soon. In conjunction with Scottish Government and Highlands and Islands Enterprise the Council proposes further consultation later this year to engage stakeholders on the transformation of the town and actions for delivery.

Our Development Briefs continue to guide development in the right place and assist with the delivery of strategic sites. At Ness-side in Inverness, 2017/18 saw the completion of the Inverness West Link Stage 1. As a direct consequence, and as set out in the Torvean and Ness-side Development Brief, a total of 781 houses were granted planning permission in December 2017 subject to a legal agreement for developer contributions to deliver a new school and other infrastructure. This has shown the great benefit of having a strong planning framework to deliver quality outcomes.

Meanwhile, we have prepared and adopted a Development Brief for the Inverness East area (another strategic development area for the City of Inverness) (see Case Study in Quality of Service and Engagement) which has been subject to consultation and now adopted. This will guide the delivery of over 3000 homes, and pre-application advice and the first applications for the initial phases of development have been shaped by the document. We are also working closely with Transport Scotland to support the delivery of the A9 to A96 Inshes to Smithton Scheme, linked to the Inverness City and Region Deal and to the A96 dualling project which will ultimately support the delivery of the scheme.

The Inverness Design Review Panel met five times during the 2017-18 period to review six projects including three significant regeneration projects in Inverness City Centre (two hotels and one new-build residential development), and a major housing development. The Panel also advised on a revised proposal for the new Inverness Justice Centre (IJC) influencing, in particular, the elevational approach and landscape design. The IJC is now under construction with an anticipated completion date of late 2019, marking the commencement of significant re-development at the former Inverness College campus on the northern edge of the City Centre, itself a major priority in the Inverness City Centre Development Brief.



We have dealt with over 2,500 local planning applications over the reporting period. We aim to ensure that all of these have outcomes that leave the applicant and those making representations satisfied that they have received a good service. Where complaints are received we ensure that a full response is given and that the opportunity is available for those still dissatisfied with the outcome to go to the Ombudsman. We also seek to ensure that lessons are learned from customer feedback.

Similarly, we work proactively to learn lessons from new issues arising in the determination of applications. For example, a recent SPSO case involving a breach of planning control and use of conditions has resulted in a review of conditions used to restrict activities. The case involved a condition requiring an Operational Management Plan (OMP). The enforcement and monitoring of the OMP proved limitations in implementation and gave rise to unrealistic expectations of neighbours. Lessons learned have led to a more stringent assessment of similar proposals to ensure that potential nuisance to neighbours is resolved before determination rather than by conditions requiring an OMP.

In another case, a recent appeal to DPEA advised against the use of conditions to restrict use of a house as a 'party house', a particular issue in parts of Highland. The Reporter determined restricting use by condition was not appropriate. Lessons learnt mean that for similar applications where the intention is for short term lets, that due account is taken for neighbours and potential impact and the application assessed on that basis.

The variety and quality of outcomes that we deliver through the determination of applications can be seen from the following examples and case studies. The Case Study in particular highlights an example of where a Development Brief has shaped the delivery of a major new park as an integral part of new communities developed in Inverness:



- **Design Improvements in a Conservation Area**

In Pulteney Street, Ullapool (18/01294/FUL) significant improvements secured following negotiations and addressing amenity concerns related to overlooking of a neighbouring property. The original extension proposed had a ridge higher than the existing house, with a wide bulky gable, windows overlooking neighbours and uPVC windows and doors. Following discussions amendments were secured resulting a lower than existing ridge line, narrow gable (with extra ground floor accommodation achieved by lean-to), high level roof lights to minimise overlooking and timber sash and case windows and timber doors (plus use of recycled uPVC windows from existing house in proposed garden pod).

- **17/03703/FUL – Kingshouse Hotel**

Reduction in height and change in form and fenestration to reduce impact on NSA. The refinement of the design details and siting within the site resulted in a proposal which reduced the impact of the building within the special landscape designation (NSA). This was achieved through negotiation and discussion with the applicant and case officer specifically to address third party concerns and design features to better reflect the historical context of the site and its setting.

- **Erect 18 flats, Raining’s Stairs, Hill Place, Inverness**

Residential development delivering 18 affordable homes on a brownfield site. The application involved the erection of a development comprising a total of 18 flats. This site occupies a steeply sloping site within the conservation area and historical core of the city centre. Development of this vacant site has resulted in improvements to the immediate environment, delivered affordable housing and brought a derelict site into a use to the overall benefit of the wider area. Associated streetscape improvements have made a positive contribution to an otherwise downgraded area.

- **Former Whisky Centre, High Street, Fort William – 16/00129/FUL to 16/03947/FUL (and then 17/05038/FUL) (on site at the moment)**

Following officer input this scheme was amended to provide a design more in-keeping with the streetscape, while still providing the amount of accommodation required.

- **17/03923/FUL Salen Hotel, Acharacal, alterations and erection of letting units.**

As a result of an application involving increased capacity for accommodation, negotiations resulted in the removal of an unsightly external fire escape. Although not part of the original application, negotiations were able to achieve a positive outcome and secure removal of the fire escape as part of the proposal. The resultant improvement of the visual appearance of the hotel make a positive contribution to the hotel and area in general.

- **16/03972/ FUL – Maple Court Hotel, Inverness.**

Restoration and extension of a Grade B listed building. The proposal involved securing a sympathetic design to a listed building while recognising the end user requirements as a hotel. The proposal involved partnership working with HES and securing a design which protected the amenity of adjacent residents, the character of the listed building and avoided the woodland area surrounding the site. A proactive response to parking and service requirements has led to an alternative approach securing much needed improvements to pedestrian connectivity from the site to the city centre taking advantage of the opportunity to improve the riverside walkway at this location.

- **EE Telecommunications**

There has been significant investment in the Highlands to upgrade mobile and emergency network coverage in some of the most environmentally sensitive and beautiful landscapes in Britain. We have been actively involved in fast tracking such applications. However where issues or concerns arise we have actively sought to resolve these through dialogue and securing better designs eg through the use of telegraph pole style of mast rather than lattice towers where appropriate the installation of deer fencing rather than barbed wire around the sites.

- **18/01920/FUL Erect of replacement extension at Altonhill, Tradespark Road, Nairn**

Original application for a modern box extension to house was withdrawn by the applicant following discussion with the case officer, new application submitted with a more appropriate extension which relates better in design terms to the original house. Positive result with an approval for the revised scheme (18/01920/FUL)

- **16/01105/FUL Erection of house with integral garage and outbuildings, formation of vehicular access (reapplication of 15/00915/FUL) at Land 55M West Of Newton House Lybster**

Significant design betterment secured by case officer through negotiation from the original pre-application and then refused application to now what is (almost) finished on the ground. Gateway site on entrance to village on A99. Design changed from long suburban-esque anywhere modern single storey ill-considered bungalow to a 1¾ storey contemporary house with a design relationship to the other older properties on this southern approach into the village.

- **13/04185/FUL Erection of 33No holiday apartments at Royal Golf Hotel Grange Road Dornoch**

Significant reduction in the number of units and the building design from 2013 to 2017. Following effective pre-application discussions between case officer and new developer, design now far more traditional in form, massing and materials, and currently being built out on site.

- **18/00293/FUL and 18/00294/LBC - 52 Henrietta Street, Avoch**

Applications were submitted for a large rear extension (1+2-storey) and box-dormer. Challenging at the best of times, however the building is part of a B-listed terrace within Avoch Conservation Area, the proposal was unacceptable on almost every level. Clear advice was given to the agent on February 2018 that the proposal would not be supported, and advising withdrawal and further discussions. Subsequent to this, following agreement on a re-design (discussed on-site), the applications were re-submitted with a more sensitive design inside and out, closely following officer advice (18/02025/FUL (approved 02.07.2018) and 18/02026/LBC (target 01.09.2018)).

- **18/00828/FUL + 18/00829/LBC - Carbisdale Castle**

Applications were submitted following previous consents, amending the basement swimming pool which was previously contained within the ramparts wall; these new proposals had the pool 'box' projecting beyond the wall, which was now a concrete structure. The impact on the character of the listed building was significantly adverse and the agent was advised that it could not be supported. On officer advice the apps were withdrawn and a more sensitive re-design was agreed prior to re-submission [18/02610/FUL + 18/02613/LBC].

# A: Inshes Park Phase 2 Developer Contributions

## Location and Dates:

Inshes Park: 2003-present

## Elements of a High Quality Planning Service this study relates to (please select all that apply):

- Quality of outcomes ✓
- Quality of service and engagement
- Governance
- Culture of continuous improvement

## Key Markers (please select all that apply):

15 Developer Contributions

## Key Areas of Work (please select/delete all that apply, as appropriate):

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Design                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Collaborative Working |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environment               | <input type="checkbox"/> Community Engagement  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Greenspace                | <input type="checkbox"/> Placemaking           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Masterplanning            | <input type="checkbox"/> Project Management    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interdisciplinary Working | <input type="checkbox"/> Active Travel         |

## Stakeholders Involved (please select/delete all that apply, as appropriate):

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> General Public   | <input type="checkbox"/> Authority Planning Staff |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local Developers | <input type="checkbox"/> Authority Other Staff    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Key Agencies     | <input type="checkbox"/> Residents' Association   |

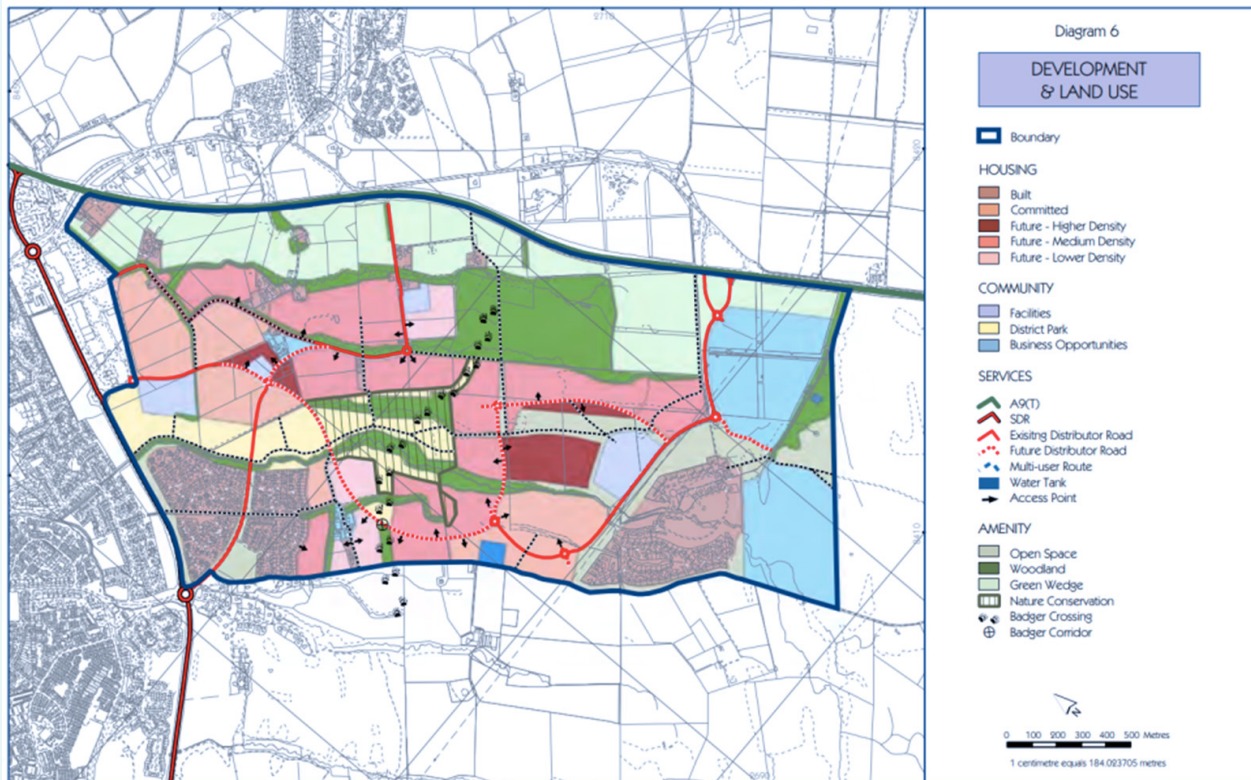
## Overview:

For the last 25 years, land at Inshes and Milton of Leys has been allocated as a significant expansion area for the city. Land was allocated for housing as well as community and commercial facilities. Throughout this period, a significant area of green space (around 22 hectares) in the centre of the site has been allocated for a District Park. This was formalised in the Inverness Local Plan of the time and further details brought forward through the Inshes and Milton of Leys Development Brief (2004) which set out a structure for collecting developer contributions from the various landowners and developers to deliver a number of neighbourhood facilities including the District Park. Contributions towards the Park covered three aspects – the purchase, laying out and maintenance of the Park.

The Brief divided the Park into three phases linked by a central footpath/cycleway – Phase 1 being the lowest section earmarked to be the most “designed” with recreational parkland including playing fields, through Phase 2 with an informal events space and parking to Phase 3 on the upper slopes with open grassland, native woodland and other habitats managed for nature conservation.

Purchase of the park was envisaged in stages and Phase 1 acquired through a combination of an excambion arrangement with the landowner and purchase from early developer contributions. Phases 2 and 3 were negotiated and purchased as part of the developer contributions associated with the Parks Farm development in 2011.





Following the purchase of the land, it took some time before sufficient funds were amassed to lay out Phase 1 of the Park. Developer Contribution funds covered the central footpath/cycleway and a number of secondary paths linking into neighbouring housing and Inshes Primary School as well as culverts, planting, picnic benches and kick pitches. The local community also wanted play equipment for which funds were raised locally and provided during the construction period. Inshes Park was officially opened in August 2012 and is a well used facility by the Inverness community.



Having acquired the land in 2011, it has taken a further six years to amass the required sums of money to lay out Phases 2 and 3 of the Park. However, work commenced in early 2018. This phase accommodates the central spine footpath that incorporates a series of steps to the wooden bridge that was negotiated for as part of the Inshes Road planning application linking Inshes with Milton of Leys. A meandering path takes pedestrians and cyclists more gently down the slope to the car park and plaza at the bottom adjacent to Stevenson Road and opposite the entrance to Phase 1.



As with Phase 1, the local community were consulted on the Park designs and asked for a scooter park to be incorporated into the designs for Phase 2. A planning application for a scooter and wheeled sports facility was granted in May 2018 and will be paid for by funds raised locally.

Inshes Park is a popular place for people across the city of Inverness whether it is in play, dog-walking, exercise or as a gathering place and it has been made possible by the careful strategy of gathering of developer contributions and partnership with the local community.



### Goals:

Twenty years ago, the main park provision for the city was located within city centre areas. With large swathes of land being allocated for future expansion around the south side of the city, it was necessary to consider how best to provide for their open space needs and ensure the countryside remained part of city. With a large number of developers and landowners who would benefit significantly from the Inshes and Milton of Leys expansion area, it was important to have a robust methodology to ensure that every house or flat built paid a fair contribution to the future Park. In return the local community, once in place, had the opportunity to be involved in the development of that Park. This approach has meant that the sense of ownership of this Park is spread across a wide range of stakeholders.

### Outcomes:

The Council's approach to creating a high quality facility that is enjoyed by people across the city of Inverness, funded almost entirely through the various developers that have built in the local area has been a long term vision that is now coming to

fruition. Setting out this vision in detail in the Inshes and Milton of Leys Development Brief has allowed all developers and landowners to catch the vision and be clear about the Council's intentions in this area. It has provided a robust method for collecting contributions over the years and ensuring the burden is shared equally.

The design and details for the Park have come about through internal Council expertise and community engagement through the local schools, Community Council, Residents' Association and local Members. This collaborative approach over the long term has resulted in a collective community enthusiasm for everything the Park provides and has met no opposition in its development.

Phases 2 and 3 of Inshes Park are almost complete. The structural elements will be completed in the coming months with the final elements of planting taking place over the following months.

**Name of key officer:**

Elaine Watt

## 1.2. Quality of Service and Engagement

Our Highland-wide Local Development Plan (adopted 2012) and associated Supplementary Guidance, along with the Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan (adopted 2015), continue to provide certainty for future growth and a consistent overarching policy framework across the Highlands and for the Inner Moray Firth area. Whilst we would ordinarily have progressed a review of these plans, it is our view that they remain fit for purpose, and through the Development Plan Scheme our elected members have agreed to delay these reviews until such time as more is known about the implications of the Planning Bill.

For the ongoing review of our LDPs for Caithness and Sutherland and West Highland and Islands and our other major projects we have taken a proactive approach to project management with 4 weekly Project Board meetings to scrutinise progress and redirect resources accordingly. Alongside, project management for particular projects includes preparation of Project Initiation Documents to agree how partners, members, and stakeholders will be engaged throughout the preparation and implementation of our projects.

Although none of our Local Development Plans have formally been through the pre-MIR stage during the reporting period, we closely monitor our performance and ensure that Members are fully up to date with issues within their area. We engage through briefing sessions, attendance at Ward Business Meetings and in individual meetings as and when issues arise. We are beginning to start to collate evidence and monitoring information for our future plan reviews. We continue to make a concerted effort to engage people, especially elected members, early on in projects.

For example, projects such as the Inverness East Development Brief, the City Centre Development Brief and numerous regeneration projects have involved Ward Business Meetings, private briefings and informal site visits to ensure members are kept informed. These are an effective way of keeping elected Members up to speed with progress on projects within their wards and are used on a very regular basis.

We place a strong emphasis on engaging cross-service stakeholders, and ensuring that place planning has a strong influence on wider corporate work. For example, the Inverness East Development Brief, described in the case study below, has been prepared in collaboration with Council Services, elected members and Transport Scotland but also local communities and other interested parties. Following consultation in late 2017 the document has now been adopted and will guide the delivery of over 3000 homes, transport infrastructure, schools and a new local centre. The draft document was taken through consultation stages with high levels of engagement, particularly with young people, and has already been used in pre-application advice and in shaping the first applications for the initial phases of development. It is also informing discussions with Transport Scotland on the delivery of the A9 to A96 Inshes to Smithton Scheme, linked to the Inverness City and Region Deal and to the A96 dualling project which will ultimately support the delivery of the scheme.

The Development Plans Team is also helping to undertake a site search for a new Materials Recovery Facility in the Inverness area which will be a key part of the Council's preparations for implementation of the ban on landfilling of household waste. This work is engaging stakeholders in the early stages of a project which will ultimately inform the preparation of a new development brief for the area to be selected.

Our Developer Contributions Supplementary Guidance has been under review during the year which will provide up to date and clear methodology for developer contributions. This is described further in the case study under Culture of Continuous Improvement.

The planning team regularly attend the Highland Housing Hub which is made up of all local affordable housing providers to ensure that issues are identified early. We also engage regularly with property colleagues to identify the planning and building warrant implications of the Council's capital and maintenance programme.

The success of the Inverness West Link, which opened in November 2017, was in part due to the co-ordinated input of a project board made up of colleagues from across the Council, including the planning team. The role of the planning process in ensuring that a development brief was in place early with full involvement of the wider community has ensured that the road, sports facilities and housing developments that have now received planning permission in the area were set within the wider context. Stage 2 of the project is now underway and will form a very important part of our work going forward.

Pre-application advice remains a really important part of the service we offer. During the 2017/18 period we issued 33 major development pre-application packs. The major development pre-application process involves a meeting at which the prospective applicant attends and presents to a group of officers from across the Council, as well as from relevant key agencies. SEPA and SNH in particular attend on a regular basis and this partnership working is hugely beneficial to all parties as and when the applications come forward. We also issued 587 local pre-application packs.

Processing Agreements remain central to the way we work. All of our pre-application advice packs contain the following standard paragraph, clearly offering a Processing Agreement to all prospective applicants (Marker 2). In addition, the availability of Processing Agreements as a key project management tool is clearly set out on our [Major Developments web-page](#)<sup>1</sup>.

### Processing Agreements

A processing agreement is a way of helping developers, the Council and relevant stakeholders work together through the planning process. It involves setting out the key stages involved in deciding a planning application, identifying what information is required from whom and setting time scales for the various stages of the process.

The Council actively encourages the [use of processing agreements for major applications](#)<sup>1</sup>. You are advised to contact the Development Management Case Officer with a view to agreeing a Processing Agreement at the earliest possible opportunity. Contact details are provided in section 18 towards the end of this pack.

In response to customer feedback we held a Customer Engagement event in early 2018 that was attended by over 80 representatives from local landowners, developers and agents. In the build-up to the event we invited participants to identify issues for discussion at. As a result various topics were presented on issues covering the full breadth of services provided ensuring that customers were up to date on the issues

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/180/planning\\_-\\_applications\\_warrants\\_and\\_certificates/579/major\\_developments/2](https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/180/planning_-_applications_warrants_and_certificates/579/major_developments/2)



they felt to be important and topical. A Meet-the-Team session was also held after the formal presentations to discuss detailed issues. Feedback was gathered in the form of a paper and online survey and this has helped to inform future events and service improvements. We have offered to roll out this approach to other parts of the Highland area to ensure customers feel engaged and able to influence our Service Improvement Plan.

Positive feedback received from Peter McCann of Ptarmigan Homes following the event:

*May I take this opportunity to thank your staff and yourself for hosting yesterday's Customer Engagement Session. It was evident from the presentations that significant time and effort had been taken by the teams to be prepared for the event and deliver information that was relevant to customers across the region. Ptarmigan Homes appreciated this and very much welcomed the opportunity to meet the people who on a day to day basis we are in communication with. It was obvious from the presentations that Highland Council (HC) are being proactive in ensuring that you have structures and mechanisms in place to facilitate effective customer engagement. This empowering of customers will undoubtedly improve the services provided by HC and create robust accountability within a framework of co-regulation and service delivery/improvement.*

These customer sessions were hugely beneficial in ensuring we understood some of the common issues experienced by customers. One of the follow up actions was to meet with one of our largest local planning consultancies to review processes for the registration and consultation on planning applications, helping us to identify areas for further development.

The expansion of the Fort William Smelter has been one of the key economic development projects being supported over the last year. The team have worked together with the owners and public sector partners to deliver the planning permission necessary to progress a 2m tonne per annum alloy wheel plant (see following case study). The development of the smelter will have much wider implications than just around the site – the planning team has been working with transport planning colleagues on preparing a Case for Change (STAG) Pre-assessment Report and with housing colleagues to assist in the delivery of additional housing.

## B: Lochaber Alloy Wheel Manufacturing Facility

### Location and Dates:

Liberty Aluminium Lochaber Ltd, Fort William: Planning project 17-18

### Elements of a High Quality Planning Service this study relates to (please select all that apply):

- Quality of outcomes
- Quality of service and engagement ✓
- Governance ✓
- Culture of continuous improvement

### Key Markers (please select all that apply):

2: Driving improved performance - Project Management

3: Driving improved performance - Early collaboration with applicants and consultees

12: Simplifying and streamlining – working across services

### Key Areas of Work (please select/delete all that apply, as appropriate):

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Design                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Planning Applications     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environment                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Interdisciplinary Working |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Economic Development             | <input type="checkbox"/> Collaborative Working     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Development Management Processes | <input type="checkbox"/> Project Management        |

### Stakeholders Involved (please select/delete all that apply, as appropriate):

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> General Public   | <input type="checkbox"/> Planning Committee       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local Developers | <input type="checkbox"/> Authority Planning Staff |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Key Agencies     | <input type="checkbox"/> Authority Other Staff    |

### Overview:

In February 2017 a Proposal of Application Notice was submitted to the Highland Council for the provision of an Alloy Wheel Plant and Rolling Mill to expand facilities at the existing Lochaber Aluminium Smelter.



The applicant was invited to use the Council's Pre Application Advice Service for Major Development. This provided a platform for the applicant's representatives to present an outline of the proposals and to facilitate the early engagement with the consultees. The first Major Development Pre-Application meeting was held on the 5 April 2017 and following the presentation and discussion a detailed written response was provided to the applicant on the 2 May 2017. This response provided details of the policy background and highlighted the issues which would need to be addressed during the scheme design, EIA preparation and subsequent planning application. As the scheme was at an early stage at the time of

the first Major Development Pre-Application meeting, and due to the significance of this proposed development to the Lochaber area, the applicant was invited to attend another meeting once the scheme was more advanced to present an update. It was also agreed that the applicant's representatives contact the consultees direct during the design process to discuss specific issues and continue the pre-application dialogue.

The applicant's representatives attended a second Major Development Pre-Application meeting on 30 August 2018. Following this presentation and update the written responses from the consultees were used to aid the Council's preparation of the EIA Scoping Opinion.

A Processing Agreement was secured for this application. Due to the significance of this major development and the nature of the investment, there were time pressures on all involved to secure the certainty that a planning permission brings to a planned investment. This was recognised in the Processing Agreement which agreed to determine the application in less than the usual four months allowed for a major development with EIA. This Agreement required that all planning issues were satisfactorily addressed by the applicant by a certain date to ensure the application could be directed to the Planning Committee on the 30 January 2018. This required commitments from the applicant's representative to address issues quickly and also required positive engagement from the consultees to provide their responses by set deadlines.

Following pre-application consultation with the public, the planning application for the proposed Alloy Wheel Manufacturing Plant was submitted to the Council on the 6 November 2017.

The Council hosted a meeting with the applicant's representatives and the consultees on the 29 November 2017 in advance of the consultees' response deadline to allow issues to be discussed and clarifications sought. This allowed key issues to be identified and prioritised.

As part of the Council's commitment to major developments, a list of potential and current major developments is reported to the Planning Applications Committee Meetings with updates for information. At the December 2017 meeting of the South



Planning Applications Committee, one of the Local Ward Members identified that they considered a site visit was likely to be required for the Allow Wheel Plant application which was targeted for the January 18 Committee Meeting. Although the need for a site visit would usually be identified at the Committee at which the application is being heard, this advance warning by Members of the need for a site visit was useful as it allowed for the site visit to be undertaken prior to the January 2018 Committee which prevented delays to the determination of the application.

The submission of additional information allowed the planning issues to be positively addressed and the application was reported to the South Planning Applications Committee on the 30 January 2018, where the Committee resolved to grant the application in accordance with the officer's recommendation. The planning permission was issued on the 6 February 2018, meeting the terms of the Processing Agreement.

**Goals:**

The main goals of this process were to facilitate the delivery of an economically important development within the Lochaber area quickly and efficiently, whilst ensuring the development met with the requirements of the Development Plan. This included ensuring the development was not harmful to all aspects of the environment, was of a high quality design and could be suitably serviced.

**Outcomes:**

The proposal for the alloy wheel manufacturing facilities located in Fort William was recognised as an extremely significant and economically important development for both the Lochaber area and wider Highland area. Ensuring early engagement and identification of issues was essential for developing the proposal and determining the planning application. This co-operation and ongoing dialogue with the Council and stakeholders throughout the design process, facilitated through the Council's Major Development Pre-Application Service, allowed for these key issues to be addressed early and the scheme designed to take account of the issues affecting the development.

As a result of the design process taking account of the detailed planning issues and the input from the consultees, the planning application submission and the accompanying Environmental Impact Assessment was able to take account of all issues at the outset. This reduced the amount of additional information requested during the processing of the planning application and negated the need for significant changes to the proposal during the planning application process.

Due to the economic significance of this proposal, interest in the application extended to a national level. The use of a processing agreement for this application provided certainty for not only the applicant, but those other bodies with an interest in the development, as to the time period and process for the determination of the application. It provided clarity for all parties involved as to individual responsibilities in meeting the targets.

The co-operation and support from the consultees, together with the proactive approach of the applicant's representatives were essential in delivering a positive decision on the application in the constrained timescale. The application was an excellent example of all parties within the planning system co-operating to deliver an economically significant development which does not compromise environmental factors.

**Name of key officer:**

Susan Macmillan



## C: Inverness East Development Brief

### Location and Dates:

Inverness, 2017-18

### Elements of a High Quality Planning Service this study relates to (please select all that apply):

- Quality of outcomes
- Quality of service and engagement ✓
- Governance
- Culture of continuous improvement

### Key Markers (please select all that apply):

9 Elected members engaged early

10 Stakeholders engaged early

12 Corporate working across services

### Key Areas of Work (please select/delete all that apply, as appropriate):

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Design                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Collaborative Working |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environment                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Community Engagement  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Greenspace                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Placemaking           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Masterplanning                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Place Standard        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local Develop Plan & Supplementary Guidance | <input type="checkbox"/> Project Management    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Housing Supply                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Skills Sharing        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Economic Development                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Online Systems        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interdisciplinary Working                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Transport             |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Active Travel         |

### Stakeholders Involved (please select/delete all that apply, as appropriate):

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> General Public       | <input type="checkbox"/> Planning Committee                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hard to reach groups | <input type="checkbox"/> Authority Planning Staff            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local Developers     | <input type="checkbox"/> Authority Other Staff               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Key Agencies         | <input type="checkbox"/> Other – Young People, Local Schools |

### Overview:

Inverness continues to be a focus for growth in Highland, with nearly 1,500 more people living here between 2011 and 2016. To tackle increasing demands for housing, facilities and infrastructure that present our Highland Capital, a generous supply of land is [allocated](#)<sup>1</sup> across the city. We prepared a Development Brief to guide the next city growth area. With major employment destinations like Raigmore Hospital, LifeScan and Inverness Campus on its doorstep and great active links to the city centre,

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/178/local\\_and\\_statutory\\_development\\_plans/202/inner\\_moray\\_firth\\_local\\_development\\_plan/1](https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/178/local_and_statutory_development_plans/202/inner_moray_firth_local_development_plan/1)



[Inverness East](#)<sup>1</sup> is well placed to accommodate significant city growth.

**Goals:**

We aimed to prepare a Development Brief in collaboration with other Council services, elected members, surrounding communities, interest groups and prospective developers. We held Ward Business Meetings undertook a suite of public engagement and consultation exercises including a Place Standard workshop and online survey to inform early stages of preparing the Brief. We spoke to over 500 people during the consultation on the Draft Brief, including at youth forum and high school discussions and workshops; exhibition drop-ins at places like Tesco Extra and Inverness College UHI, and we focused our energy using online resources to promote the consultation.

**Outcomes:**

We reported comments and feedback received through social media to [committee](#)<sup>2</sup> and promoted our online posts through Facebook. On average, 11,500 Facebook users saw our promoted posts and 16% actively engaged with them. We used Google Analytics to monitor our consultation portal's use, which showed over 4,000 users visited the [Brief's consultation pages](#)<sup>3</sup>. Despite this extensive level of engagement, we received a relatively low number of comments, which we believe reflects a strong degree of consensus with the Brief among stakeholders.

Throughout the process we worked closely with Transport Scotland on their [East Link project](#)<sup>4</sup> to ensure this major road scheme and new development around it were compatible for creating a great place to live, work and visit. We believe the success of the Brief is in the broadly [supportive comments](#)<sup>5</sup> we received and the limited number of objections made. By front-loading our engagement and developing a partnership approach with the local community, Council services and Members and other stakeholders we identified what the community aspirations for the area were, what the major opportunities for development were, and a vision and strategy to achieve these.

**Name of key officer**

Craig Baxter.

---

1 [https://www.highland.gov.uk/directory\\_record/712056/inverness\\_east\\_development\\_brief](https://www.highland.gov.uk/directory_record/712056/inverness_east_development_brief)  
2 [https://www.highland.gov.uk/meetings/committee/30/inverness\\_city\\_committee](https://www.highland.gov.uk/meetings/committee/30/inverness_city_committee)  
3 <http://consult.highland.gov.uk/portal/iedb?pointId=s1491983418113>  
4 <https://www.transport.gov.scot/projects/a9a96-inshes-to-smithton/project-details/>  
5 <http://consult.highland.gov.uk/portal/iedb?tab=list>

## 1.3. Governance

In recognition of the changing workload across the planning service, we have planned and implemented a major reconfiguration of development management functions and responsibilities over the last year. The Case Study below describes the introduction of our Small Applications Team which has involved the creation of a dedicated team for the determination of various categories of smaller applications, thereby freeing up time for officers to deal with other more substantial applications.

After several months of positive impacts resulting from this change we have made a further significant change with the creation of a Major Housing Applications Team. This change has involved the transfer of the determination of larger housing applications mainly in the Inner Moray Firth area to this new team which has been set up within and linked more closely to the Development Plans Team. This approach seeks to capitalise on the knowledge gained by Development Plans officers through Development Plan preparation to better inform decision making. This is aimed at streamlining and bringing greater consistency in the determination of applications, and freeing up time for other officers to deal with other types of application. It is also hoped that this will improve communication and coordination of the Council departments and other partners involved in infrastructure delivery to support new development.

In the coming months this change will also lead to better engagement of Development Management officers in the preparation of Development Plans. As such, this combination of changes is essentially blurring the boundaries and responsibilities between our Development Management and Development Plans teams and allowing our planning officers to evolve and become more diverse and flexible to respond to challenges as they arise.

During 2017/18 the skills and knowledge of both planning officer and elected members has been developed through dedicated training events. In May 2017 PAS were appointed to assist the Council in delivering planning training for all elected members following the May local elections. This helped to ensure a good awareness of planning issues from the outset prior to any planning-related Committee meetings taking place. Members were presented with a combination of background policy and process but also real life examples of planning issues. A follow up session specific to aquaculture applications was arranged and a series of more informal training events are planned over the coming year.

Community Councils are very important to the operation of the planning process. We attend meetings as requested and will continue to engage as appropriate. Examples include ongoing close liaison with various Community Councils for the Inverness East Development Brief, which proposes significant new development and transport projects to be delivered through City Deal. Despite extensive engagement and publicity, we received a relatively low number of objections to the draft Development Brief, which we believe reflects a level of consensus among stakeholders. We have also provided briefings to Community Councils on major development projects. In early 2017 we collaborated with HIE and potential investors in the town to provide a combined briefing and discussion with Community Councils in the Fort William area. This is a pre-cursor to further consultation on the future growth of Fort William and its role within the wider Lochaber area – to be known as FW2040 – further information on which will be provided in next year's PPF submission. There has been attendance at numerous other Community Council meetings including the Lochardil Community Council meeting in

September 2017 to discuss planning applications at Ness-side.

Staff training has been well supported with a re-run of our successful annual training day. In 2017 the focus was on developer contributions (linked to service plan improvements), ICT system improvements, Historic Environment and Wild Land. Alongside, tailored training has been commissioned on topics such as Permitted Development and the use of planning conditions and S75. Staff have also been encouraged to engage with other CPD and networking opportunities such as the RTPi Highlands and Islands Chapter which has a strong network across the Highland and Islands region.

### **LEAN and Agile Development**

When undertaking Service Improvement projects we have adopted the LEAN Six Sigma approach to process improvement. The model promotes the use of a five-phase problem-solving method of Define, Measure, Analyse, Improve and Control (DMAIC) and the use of process improvement 'tools' such as process mapping, brain-storming sessions and listening to the 'voice of the customer'.

With a focus on people and process, the Service's use of the LEAN model works with well the Agile approach to development of systems adopted by the Systems & Change Team, which involves working closely with multi-disciplinary project teams (end users) to ensure the most workable solution possible for end users of the system and process requirements is found. This approach was adopted in the implementation of Road Construction Consent (see case study below) and currently, further improvements to Developer Contributions (see case study under Continuous Improvement).

### **Extensions of time**

From Q2 18/19 we will be implementing new arrangements for putting in place extensions of time where it is clear that planning applications are not going to meet the statutory period for determination. This will allow us to reach agreement with the applicant on an agreed alternative timescale and reinforces [our commitment to the use of processing agreements in the determination of applications](#)<sup>1</sup> while helping to improve our performance statistics.

### **Scottish Quality in Planning Award**

In 2017 the Highland Council won a Scottish Quality in Planning Award in the Process Category, where the Service was recognised for its effort to adapt processes and ways of working in order to work digitally. Adopting a digital approach has enabled the service to make its services more accessible to customers, avoid paper and printing costs being transferred to the council and make best of use of case officer resource across the Highland area. This has been achieved through a number of improvement projects such as adapting back office processes from being paper-based to fully electronic (including assessment of applications) in response to the introduction of the [eDevelopment.scot Portals](#)<sup>2</sup>, issue of tablets to case officers for viewing drawings electronically on-site and the effective implementation of Enterprise workload management tool which has enabled the creation of virtual teams such as Validation and Small Applications Teams. The Judges could see how this project had increased

1 [https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/180/planning\\_-\\_applications\\_warrants\\_and\\_certificates/579/major\\_developments/2](https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/180/planning_-_applications_warrants_and_certificates/579/major_developments/2)

2 <https://www.edevelopment.scot/eDevelopmentClient/>

efficiency and had high transferability. There was emphasis on integrating into local systems as well as looking towards integrating Road Construction Consent. Press release can be accessed [here](#)<sup>1</sup>.

### **Sharing of best practice/liaison with other councils**

In February this year, the service was invited to share our experience of implementing digital ways of working at the Breaking Digital Ground conference at COSLA Conference Centre in Edinburgh – Presentations can be accessed [here](#)<sup>2</sup> for info. The event was attended by digital representatives from other public sector bodies such as the NHS, ICO and Scottish Government's Digital Office. The Service has also been liaising with Fife and City of Edinburgh Council regarding the development of the Uniform system for managing the collection and spend of developer contributions and also the processing of RCC applications and the management of associated road bonds.

We have been actively involved in the North of Scotland Development Plans Forum and are represented on all of the HOPS Working Groups. We are users of the Improvement Service's Knowledge Hub and regularly both seek or input responses on current issues. Highland Council is also represented on the HOPS Digital Planning Group which enables us to liaise with both Scottish Government and other local authorities on the future direction of digital planning services.

## **1.4. Culture of Continuous Improvement**

As can be seen from the case study below, a key focus has been on the management and monitoring of developer contributions. The Service has recently appointed a

1 [https://www.highland.gov.uk/news/article/10600/success\\_at\\_national\\_awards\\_for\\_councils\\_planning\\_service](https://www.highland.gov.uk/news/article/10600/success_at_national_awards_for_councils_planning_service)

2 <http://bit.ly/2nOEOiz>

## D: Small Applications Team (SAT)

### Location and Dates:

Highland Council – from November 2017

### Elements of a High Quality Planning Service this study relates to (please select all that apply):

- Quality of outcomes
- Quality of service and engagement
- Governance ✓
- Culture of continuous improvement ✓

### Key Markers (please select all that apply):

1: Reducing average timescales for all development types

6: Continuous improvements

### Key Areas of Work (please select/delete all that apply, as appropriate):

- Development Management Processes
- Staff Training
- Planning Applications
- Online Systems
- Process Improvement

### Stakeholders Involved (please select/delete all that apply, as appropriate):

- General Public
- Authority Planning Staff
- Local Developers

### Overview:

In November 2017, the Council's Development and Infrastructure Service established the Small Applications Team (SAT). Previously all householder and other small applications and enquiries were dealt with within our area office structure and were allocated to any of our team of around 40 planning staff.

### Goals:

The purpose of SAT is to process routine and straightforward applications (typically in Development Type categories N01, N04B, N06B, N10B, N11, N11A, N15, N17A-C) efficiently and timeously in order to focus on meeting the Key Performance targets set by Scottish Government, and improve the Service's Corporate Performance.

Management of SAT is by a seconded Team Leader from the Golspie office, responsible for leading 16 staff, including 3 Planners, four Graduate Planners and nine Professional Support Officers

SAT is innovative with casework allocated, assessed and issued electronically, with work flowed across and between the seven offices, at Wick, Golspie, Dingwall, Portree, Kingussie, Fort William and Inverness, covering an area the size of Belgium, and is on target to process around 2000 applications and enquiries per year. Within this, the SAT targeted Development Types make up around 40% of Highland's planning applications.

Workloads are flowed using Uniform Enterprise, with caseloads monitored electronically by its Team Leader, permitting cases to be electronically transferred between officers



and locations, to allow for changing workloads and staffing pressures; moving work to the best placed officers to maintain and improve performance.

SAT has established a virtual, geographically distributed team of officers, using technology to work remotely to achieve a substantial and sustained improvement in performance, in response to the challenging geography of Highland Council. The need for site visits has been reduced through the use of other technology or where a more detailed assessment is required, by ensuring that colleagues in other parts of the Service, who may be located closer to the site, are able to carry these out on the team's behalf and pass the information electronically. The establishment of SAT has resulted in other efficiency benefits and savings, including reduced travel costs and fleet mileage, and lowered CO2 emissions.

### **Outcomes:**

The SAT process model of a virtual team targeting routine and straightforward applications is considered to be particularly effective for Planning Authorities with a distributed offices network, or those with a significant degree of remoteness or homeworking. Furthermore, the focus on improving and sustaining better Officer performance as a result of changing the casework flow, reducing the need for site visits, use of mobile technology and targeted management reporting in Uniform Enterprise has resulted in clear Service improvements for our customers.

The impact of SAT is that when comparing April 2017 to April 2018, of the application types which SAT deals with, those meeting the 2 month target for determining applications has increased from 73% to 98%. Average timescales are also reducing.

In addition to this increase in performance, the focus on SAT casework by a small team has resulted in the time of other non-SAT Officers being freed up for non-SAT casework. For comparison in this same April 2017 to April 2018 period, the overall performance in Highland Council of applications meeting the 2 month target has risen from 55% to 72%. . Average timescales are also reducing.

The SAT process model has expanded its application and scope since its inception, taking in a broader range of application types, and this process of continual evolution and improvement of process is expected to continue as the team reflects on its success, consolidates its caseload and its Officers build on their experiences with regular focused CPD training seminars.

This reflection on the governance of SAT is demonstrated through a regular mix of in-person and virtual meetings of the team, as well as continual performance management by the Service Senior Management Team.

### **Name of key officer**

Malcolm Macleod – Head of Planning and Environment

## E: eRoad Construction Consent (eRCC)

### Location and Dates:

Highland - January 2017 to January 2018 - Subject to Post Go Live Review

### Elements of a High Quality Planning Service this study relates to (please select all that apply):

- Quality of outcomes
- Quality of service and engagement ✓
- Governance ✓
- Culture of continuous improvement

### Key Markers (please select all that apply):

3 Early collaboration on planning applications

6 Continuous improvements

### Key Areas of Work (please select/delete all that apply, as appropriate):

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| ● Housing Supply                                     | ● Placemaking            |
| ● Development Management Processes                   | ● Performance Monitoring |
| ● Aligning model set out in Designing Streets Policy | ● Process Improvement    |
| ● Planning Applications                              | ● Project Management     |
| ● Interdisciplinary Working                          | ● Staff Training         |
| ● Collaborative Working                              | ● Online Systems         |
| ● Community Engagement                               | ● Transport              |

### Stakeholders Involved (please select/delete all that apply, as appropriate):

- |                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| ● Local Developers | ● Authority Planning Staff               |
| ● Key Agencies     | ● Authority Other Staff (Roads, Housing) |

### Overview:

A cross-service project team including staff from Transport Planning, Planning, Finance, Legal and Community Services was assembled to work collaboratively and set about reviewing the entire Road Construction Consent (RCC) Process from pre-application stage right through to Adoption. Facilitated and project managed by the Systems and Change Team, this review involved a series of AS IS and TO BE process improvement workshops with participation from all of the internal key stakeholders associated with each of the following processes:

- Engagement with Transport Planning at Planning Pre-application Advice stage
- RCC Submission and Approval
- Case Handover to Community Services and Pre-commencement
- Construction Phase – Inspections and Stages of Completion
- Road Bond Management (evaluation and release)
- Adoption

In April 2017 a series of engagement events were held with local agents and developer, including the Council's Housing Development section and Housing Associations who deliver affordable housing developments to seek their views on the current process and suggestions as to how the process could be improved overall. This session was a rotating workshop-style event, facilitated by Transport Planning and Community Services staff. The event was well attended and extensive feedback was received from all who attended. On the lead up to go live in January 2018, staff in Transport Planning, Business Support and Community Services were all provided with comprehensive training by the Systems and Change Team and there was a further Customer Briefing Session for Agents, Developers and other relevant stakeholders on the new submission process in December 2017 ahead of the go live date.

### Goals:

In 2016 the Chief Planner intimated to all Heads of Planning that, effort should be made by all authorities to better [align planning and RCC](#)<sup>1</sup> to improve certainty and consistency for developers and applicants by following a structured and streamlined approach to processes and through earlier and more productive engagement.

Over time and due to changes in the Council's Structure, the process had become fragmented and roles responsibilities between Services unclear. Scottish Government's eDevelopment Team had also indicated that they would be prioritising the development of online forms on the ePlanning.scot Portal but unfortunately this was not progressed. Despite this, Highland Council fully embraced the direction provided by the Chief Planner and progressed this improvement project to review all aspects of the process. With this in mind and drawing on feedback from our Customer Engagement Event and AS IS process improvement workshops, the aim was to implement processes and ways of working that promote and help us achieve:

- Earlier engagement between developers and Transport Planning at planning pre-application stage
- Consistency of response from Planning and Transport Planning in relation to acceptable road layout
- Clearer submission requirements and documentation consistent with ePlanning and eBuilding Standards
- The submission of higher quality RCC applications received first time.
- Clear roles and responsibilities between Transport Planning, Business Support and Community Services
- A more cohesive and comprehensive approach to case management of applications and associated road bonds.
- Improved reporting information
- A more proactive approach to the management of road bonds

### Outcomes:

In January this year, the Highland Council implemented new processes following a LEAN review of the Road Construction Consent process – This has seen the Highland Council move from an entirely paper-based process to a mainly electronic one, which utilises the connector functionality available on the [ePlanning.scot Portal](#)<sup>2</sup> for the submission of documents and a

1 <http://www.creatingplacesscotland.org/designing-streets/process/aligning-consents>

2 <https://www.eplanning.scot/ePlanningClient/default.aspx>

combination of email and [Public Access](#)<sup>1</sup> for the issue of approved documents. In an effort to improve the quality of submissions, Highland has also implemented a [new submission checklist](#)<sup>2</sup>, revised forms and [new RCC web pages](#)<sup>3</sup> and a validation procedure.

RCC's being administered via the Planning system (Uniform and Idox) enables a much more consistent and cohesive approach to managing and monitoring RCC applications and associated road bonds. Over time the new submission process, which includes the implementation of a checklist and validation procedure, consistent with ePlanning, will improve the quality of submissions received and hopefully reduce turnaround times. RCC applications are registered in the same module of Uniform as planning applications and when received, are linked to any prior planning pre-applications and subsequent applications. This enables a more joined up picture of consents associated with a particular development to be built up in the system. Associated road bonds are administered in Uniform, in the Uniform Development Conditions Monitoring module, which is directly linked to and easily accessible from Development Management module of Uniform. Bond case information was previously stored elsewhere in the Council and became disjointed from the RCC approval. The associated bond file being stored in the same system along with the use of Enterprise Tasks and Access Reports, enables much more co-ordinated, proactive and effective management of bonds by Community Services. Staff involved in all aspects of the process have access to the same case file held in Idox, the document management system.

Since go live in January, 33 applications have been registered on the Uniform system, 21 validated and 16 with first response issued at Technical Review. Road Bond register has also been migrated from a spreadsheet on to Uniform and monthly access reports are being run as part of improved monitoring measures.

We are currently piloting an approach to enable earlier engagement with Transport Planning at the pre-planning stage, especially for larger housing developments through the Planning Pre-application Advice Plus Street Engineering Review (SER) pilot, which is highlighted [here](#)<sup>4</sup> on our Pre-application Advice web page. This involves there being the option of an additional Street Engineering Review meeting as a follow on the first Planning Pre-app meeting, to enable developers to engage with and get agreement with Transport Planning on the road layout prior to submitting planning permission. So far, a housing development at Stratton has been through this process and we await SER submissions from other developers who have expressed interested at Planning Pre-app in participating in the pilot.

The Systems & Change Team has provided ongoing support and training to all staff who engage with the process at any stage, which has been key to ensuring the processes become well established.

We are already seeing positive results of the improved monitoring measures being put in place, with enhanced inspection records and the proactive monitoring of bonds by way of monthly access reports being provided to Area Roads Teams by Business Support.

The next stage of the project is to carry out a post go live review and further establish the Pre-application Advice plus Street Engineering Review Service along with final updates to internal and external guidance documents when processes have bedded in.

### **Name of key officer**

Laura Williamson – Systems and Change Team Leader

1 [https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/180/planning\\_-\\_applications\\_warrants\\_and\\_certificates/143/planning\\_permission/6](https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/180/planning_-_applications_warrants_and_certificates/143/planning_permission/6)

2 [https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/18675/cc9\\_-\\_road\\_construction\\_consent\\_submission\\_checklist\\_-\\_v10](https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/18675/cc9_-_road_construction_consent_submission_checklist_-_v10)

3 [https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/20005/roads\\_and\\_pavements/767/road\\_construction\\_consent](https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/20005/roads_and_pavements/767/road_construction_consent)

4 [https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/205/planning\\_-\\_policies\\_advice\\_and\\_service\\_levels/785/](https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/205/planning_-_policies_advice_and_service_levels/785/)

Developer Contributions Officer who has been undertaking staff training and circulating updates to guidance digitally via email, telephone and desktop sharing software.

Alongside, a review of our Developer Contributions Supplementary Guidance has involved direct engagement of elected members, and also representatives of infrastructure providers and the development industry, including Homes for Scotland, on the emerging draft. This was followed by full public consultation on a draft which is expected to be finalised in 2018/19.

Legacy cases (planning applications that are more than 1 year old) continue to be reduced. This year the number of planning applications that are more than one year old was 33. This represents a very small proportion of the overall caseload. We actively manage such cases by discussing them at our regular management meetings.

We operate a policy of seeking to conclude legal agreements within 4 months. We work closely with colleagues in legal services to ensure that instructions are received by them timeously and that regular monitoring is carried out on progress. Where we feel that progress is not being made we do encourage the applicant to resolve the issue or face having the report brought back to the relevant planning applications committee (for major developments).

The Council's Planning Enforcement Charter was updated in August 2017, and is being maintained in line with Scottish Government requirements and is available online. The charter is the engine for the processes and procedures adopted by the council and it is reviewed and updated regularly. The primary aim of the charter is to provide clarity on how the Council actively investigates complaints and explain the other considerations that are taken into account when investigating planning enforcement complaints. The charter also details the timescales for responses and outcomes. Whilst the council will seek to regulate breaches of planning control through negotiation, other powers are available to seek compliance.

Given the geography of Highland, we have put a lot of effort into ensuring that the team are given the tools to work in a mobile and flexible way in carrying out their duties. We have issued all officers with tablets to reduce the amount of paper used and this is an area we will continue to develop as our ICT strategy develops. Our improvement plan has an action to build on the success of our mobile working by ensuring that the case management system can enable much more work to be done on site to avoid unnecessary duplication.

Workforce planning is a key corporate priority for the Council, and the planning team has contributed to developing the strategy for the service focussing on a number of key areas including the need to develop a more agile workforce and ensuring transition and succession planning. The report to Committee is available [here](https://www.highland.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/3894/environment_development_and_infrastructure_committee)<sup>1</sup>. These priorities are reflected in our Service Improvement Plan. We have continued to support colleagues who want to develop career opportunities in planning by offering support for distance learning and the transition from Professional Support Officers to Planners.

---

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.highland.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/3894/environment\\_development\\_and\\_infrastructure\\_committee](https://www.highland.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/3894/environment_development_and_infrastructure_committee)



## F: Developer Contributions

### Location and Dates:

Highland-wide – April 2017 to March 2018 and ongoing

### Elements of a High Quality Planning Service this study relates to (please select all that apply):

- Quality of outcomes
- Quality of service and engagement
- Governance ✓
- Culture of continuous improvement ✓

### Key Markers (please select all that apply):

- 3 Early collaboration
- 4 Legal agreements
- 6 Continuous improvement
- 11 Regular and proportionate policy advice
- 12 Corporate working
- 13 Sharing good practice
- 15 Developer Contributions

### Key Areas of Work (please select/delete all that apply, as appropriate):

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local Develop Plan & Supplementary Guidance | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Placemaking            |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Development Management Processes            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Performance Monitoring |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Planning Applications                       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Process Improvement    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Interdisciplinary Working                   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Project Management     |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Collaborative Working                       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Staff Training         |
|   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Online Systems         |

### Stakeholders Involved (please select/delete all that apply, as appropriate):

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> General Public       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Planning Committee       |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hard to reach groups | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Authority Planning Staff |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local Developers     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Authority Other Staff    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Key Agencies         |  |

### Overview:

We have taken a holistic approach to modernising the way we secure, manage and monitor developer contributions in Highland. This has involved developing more efficient procedures and processes and updating our methodology for the financial contributions associated with development. This has created a more robust and accountable approach to developer contributions, leading to greater consistency and transparency for all types of development across the Highland area.

**Goals:**

Our 2017-18 Service Plan set out “introduce further improvements to our approach to developer contributions including updated supplementary guidance and the implementation of the IDOX monitoring module”. The main theme behind these priorities was to improve consistency of both the methodology for securing contributions and in monitoring, managing and coordinating their collection and spending across Council services and partners. It was equally important to provide certainty to developers from the initial stages of development through to determination of applications and negotiation and agreement of legal agreements.

Furthermore, we have gone beyond these goals by introducing further enhancements based around:

- resourcing and coordination of Council officers for timeous spend and delivery of associated benefits; and
- the use of technology to provide a more cohesive approach to managing and monitoring contributions directly linked to our development management cases.

**Outcomes:**

There has been significant work so far with Phase 1 now complete with a revised Supplementary Guidance due to be finalised in the next few weeks, and a more effective and transparent protocol for managing and monitoring contributions for all stages from pre-application advice through to delivery of development and associated infrastructure. The improvements in developing a transparent process has also provided clarity to developers and landowners on the expectations for the level of contributions to support services and infrastructure from an early stage in land assembly and delivery negotiations. This has also benefitted legal procedures particularly for the drafting of legal agreements and improving auditing.

To accompany these improvements we have appointed a Developer Contributions Officer who is tasked with leading the coordination of the receipt and spend of contributions, and building relationships with key stakeholders such as developers and partners associated with delivery of Council projects and infrastructure. In tandem, this new officer will play a pivotal role in a newly reconfigured Developer Contributions Action Group. The remit of this group is aimed specifically at reinforcing the coordinated approach to collecting and spending contributions, which provide the opportunity to explore and wherever possible utilise match funding sources.

Having introduced these improved procedures and seen significant benefits, we are optimising our approach by developing our planning case management system to manage developer contributions via a module that is directly linked to related planning cases. This will result in improved reporting information and be further complemented by the introduction of Enterprise Tasks for use with the development conditions monitoring module. Use of Enterprise Tasks will enable more proactive monitoring of obligation and will result in a much more streamlined and co-ordinated approach to the monitoring of collection and spend.

By embracing modern technology, engaging staff and partners and improving consistency we have created a stronger framework for supporting our customers to deliver growth across Highland.

**Name of key officer**

Laura Williamson and Scott Dalgarno

## 2. Supporting Evidence

Part 1 of this report was compiled by drawing on evidence from the following sources:

- local and major pre-application advice service feedback questionnaire results;
- feedback from our customers through the Development Management and Development Plans processes and in particular feedback received from our Developer Workshop held in early 2018;
- a broad range of Council committee reports;
- results of both formal and informal monitoring, data and information gathering and internal auditing, primarily undertaken by our Performance and Systems team; and
- various in-house reports, minutes, meeting agendas and briefing notes

These are the key sources of supporting evidence but the list is not exhaustive. Wherever supporting evidence used is publicly available it has been hyperlinked in the body of the report. Planning Teams across the Service have provided input to the report, including regular reviews at fortnightly management meetings, and a draft version was subject to review through the wider Managers & Team Leaders Meeting.

The following table provides an overview of the issues covered in the case studies set out in Part 1. In addition, the accompanying text in Part 1 covers the majority of the topics listed below.

Case Study Topics	Issue covered in PPF7	Case Study Topics	Issue covered in PPF7
Design	✓	Interdisciplinary Working	✓
Conservation		Collaborative Working	✓
Regeneration		Community Engagement	✓
Environment	✓	Placemaking	✓
Greenspace	✓	Charrettes	
Town Centres		Place Standard	✓
Masterplanning	✓	Performance Monitoring	✓
LDP & Supplementary Guidance	✓	Process Improvement	✓
Housing Supply	✓	Project Management	✓
Affordable Housing		Skills Sharing	
Economic Development	✓	Staff Training	✓
Enforcement		Online Systems	✓
Development Management Processes	✓	Transport	✓
Planning Applications	✓	Active Travel	✓
Other: please note			

## 3. Service Improvements 2018-19

---

In the coming year we will:

- Develop our mobile working technology to enable more work to be done on site  
– This project will aim to get the best out of our forthcoming Corporate ICT refresh by ensuring case officers are swapped out with a sim-enabled laptops. Moving to sim-enabled laptops will better complement their current tablet devices, making document transfer slicker and faster. It will also enable case officers to have improved connectivity and access to Uniform and Idox, our back office casework systems while still on-site, saving time and travel costs back to the office.
- Implement our workforce planning strategy to ensure training and development opportunities for teams across wider functional and geographic areas
- Carry out a review of our Website structure to more closely reflect the customer journey for a planning perspective and drawing on Scottish Governments aspiration of 'Aligned Consents'. This will also include a review of planning-based online services that The Highland Council offers.
- Implement further focussed Member training sessions as part of continuous improvement programme
- Implement a strategy of piloting Local Place Plans in advance of the Planning Act and Regulations

Delivery of our service improvement actions in 2017-18:

Committed improvements and actions	Complete?
<p>Introduce further improvements to our approach to developer contributions including updated supplementary guidance and the implementation of the IDOX monitoring module</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● We have undertaken a full review of our approach to developer contributions, As well as employing a new Developer Contributions Officer to oversee the collection, monitoring and spend of the contributions, we have revitalised the internal Developer Contributions Action Group to ensure that all projects are being monitored by spending services.</li> </ul>	<p><b>YES</b></p>
<p>Improve the role and function of the LDP Action Programme with increased cross service involvement in its delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● We have published our first new-style Action Programme for the Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan, which we have re-branded as a Delivery Programme, which clearly sets out the actions required to implement the plan and the information for monitoring its implementation. We have coordinated its preparation and publication with the Housing Land Audit, School Roll Forecasts and Delivery Programme so we can monitor and respond to changes in circumstances for infrastructure delivery. Partners are being engaged in the process of monitoring and implementation through the recently reconfigured Developer Contributions Action Group. This is therefore providing a template approach for future Delivery Programmes which will ultimately be amalgamated to form a single document for monitoring activity,</li> </ul>	<p><b>YES</b></p>
<p>Implement a project to align all of the consents required for all development proposals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● We have implemented our eRCC project (see case study on page 21), and are closely aligning pre-application advice with a street engineering review.</li> </ul>	<p><b>YES</b></p>
<p>Establish a ‘virtual’ small development applications team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● We have established the team and it is operating well (see case study on page 19)</li> </ul>	<p><b>YES</b></p>
<p>Set up a Housing Delivery Team which will include staff from Development Management, Building Standards, Transport Planning, Development Plans (Policy and developer contributions)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● We have set up a major housing delivery team which is based in our HQ, providing a co-ordinated service and strong links to colleagues in other services. We believe this will build on the successful approach we have had in delivering planning permission for over 955 housing applications during 2017/18.</li> </ul>	<p><b>YES</b></p>

## 4. National Headline Indicators

### 4.1. Development Planning

Key Outcome	2017-18	2016-17
<b>Development Planning</b>		
● Age of local/strategic development plan(s) at end of reporting period. (Requirement: less than 5 years)	4 years and 4 months	3 years and 4 months
● Will the local/strategic development plan(s) be replaced by their 5th anniversary according to the current development plan scheme?	N	N
● Has the expected date of submission of the plan to Scottish Ministers in the development plan scheme changed over the past year?	Y-later	Y-later
● Were development plan scheme engagement/consultation commitments met during the year?	Y	Y
<b>Effective Land Supply and Delivery of Outputs</b>		
● Established housing land supply	30136 units	29117 units
● 5-year effective housing land supply programming	4965 units	4496 units
● 5-year effective land supply total capacity	TBC units	n/a units
● 5-year housing supply target	4472 units	5714 units
● 5-year effective housing land supply	5.5 years	3.9 years
● Housing approvals	1738 units	1681 units
● Housing completions over the last 5 years	4140 units	4530 units
● Marketable employment land supply	?? ha	2384 ha
● Employment land take-up during reporting period	NA	NA

### 4.2. Development Management

Key Outcome	2017-18	2016-17
<b>Development Management</b>		
<b>Project Planning</b>		
● percentage and number of applications subject to pre-application advice	505	362
● number and number of major applications subject to processing agreement or other project plan	17.1%	12.36%
<b>Decision-Making</b>		
● application approval rate	96.3%	96.5 %
● delegation rate	97.1%	96.4 %
● validation <sup>1</sup>	25.5%	58.36 %

<sup>1</sup> [http://ntsp2010web/sites/DIServiceSupport/pandss/PerfInfo/Apps invalid on Receipt 17\\_18 workings.docx](http://ntsp2010web/sites/DIServiceSupport/pandss/PerfInfo/Apps%20invalid%20on%20Receipt%2017_18%20workings.docx)



### Decision-Making Timescales

● Average Number of weeks to decision:		
○ Major Developments	14.7	22.8
○ Local Developments (non-householder)	11.7	12.4
○ Householder Developments	6.9	7.7

### Legacy Cases

● Number cleared during reporting period	62	49
● Number remaining	33	43

## 4.3. Enforcement Activity

### Enforcement

● Time since enforcement charter published/reviewed (Requirement: review every 2 years)	8 months	21 months
● Complaints lodged and investigated	450	374
● Breaches identified – no further action taken	207	117
● Cases closed	432	390
● Notices served	74	29
● Direct Action	0	0
● Reports to Procurator Fiscal	0	0
● Prosecutions	0	0

## 4.4. Commentary

The Council has a Local Development Plan Framework that covers a vast geographical area based on a Highland wide Local Development Plan setting the policy context and three area local development plans dealing with place specific allocations and local infrastructure requirements. Although the Highland wide Local Development Plan will not be updated within the five year period, we have carried out a monitoring exercise and we believe it remains fit for purpose until we are clear what the requirements from the new Planning Act will look like. Of our three area Local Development Plans, one was adopted in 2015, one is going through the final steps to adoption and the third is currently under Examination. As such they are considered to be up to date and relevant as evidenced by their use in decision making and pre-application advice including the examples set out in this report.

Keeping our Development Plan up to date is a high priority. For our Caithness & Sutherland LDP we met the timescales for its submission to Scottish Ministers for Examination. However, the duration of the Examination was extended by reporters meaning that the timescales in our 2017 Development Plan Scheme were not met. For our West Highland and Islands LDP the date for submission to Scottish Ministers was postponed by a few months during 2017/18 because of changes to the timescales for reporting to the three relevant Area Committees who each meet only 4 times a year.

Compared to our 2017 Development Plan Scheme we met the timescales for consultation on a draft Inverness East Development Brief and were very efficient in analysing comments and reporting a finalised version to Committee for approval in

early 2018. The Inverness East Development Brief has now been adopted following ministerial approval. There was a two month delay in reporting the City Centre Development Brief to our City Committee for adoption due to officer time being redirected to major regeneration projects leading to a slight delay in the finalisation of the Development Brief for adoption.

In line with [planning legislation](#)<sup>1</sup> and internal audit requirements, we do not make applications valid unless payment is received with the planning application. The reason that there is a fall in numbers of applications made valid on first receipt is mainly down to payment reconciliation, particularly when payments are made by BACS or over the telephone via our Service Centre. When these payment options are used, payments are not received with the online application and coupled with internal finance processes, are not as straight-forward to reconcile. Adding to this is that Agents prefer not to make/handle payments on behalf of their clients and so they direct their clients to these payment options as opposed to the ePlanning.scot portal before finally submitting the application. We continue to encourage our customers to use the ePlanning.scot Portal to make payment when submitting their application which means the payment will be received with the application itself. The Council's 'PAY' Button is the next best option which is promoted clearly following the ePlanning.scot Portal on our [Planning Payment Options](#)<sup>2</sup> web page.

In relation to the marketable employment land supply and take-up figures whilst we do not have a reliable monitor of employment land we are currently formulating a methodology for monitoring this information.

---

1 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2013/155/regulation/14/made>

2 [https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/180/planning\\_-\\_applications\\_warrants\\_and\\_certificates/143/planning\\_permission/3](https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/180/planning_-_applications_warrants_and_certificates/143/planning_permission/3)

## 5. Scottish Government Official Statistics

### 5.1. Decision-making timescales (based on 'all applications' timescales)

Category	Total number of decisions 2017-2018	Average timescale (weeks)	
		2017-2018	2016-2017
<b>Major developments</b>	8	14.7	22.8 weeks
<b>Local developments (non-householder)</b>	1815	11.7	12.4
● less than 2 months	55.6 %	6.5	6.8
● more than 2 months	44.4%	18.1	19.9
<b>Local developments (householder)</b>	765	6.9	7.7
● less than 2 months	86.8%	5.8	6.2
● more than 2 months	13.2%	13.7	15.7
<b>Major housing developments</b>	3	18.4	44.0
<b>Local housing developments</b>	952	12.7	13.4
● less than 2 months	49.7%	6.6	7.0
● more than 2 months	50.3%	18.8	20.7
<b>Major business and industry</b>	1	12.4	20.9
<b>Local business and industry</b>	265	11.4	10.2
● less than 2 months	58.5%	6.6	6.5
● more than 2 months	41.5%	18.2	16.5
<b>EIA developments</b>			
● Local developments subject to EIA	0	0	0
<b>Other consents</b>	301	9.7	9.9
<b>Planning/legal agreements</b>			
● Major (average time)	2	21.6	22.8
● Local (average time)	18	21.6	11

## 5.2. Decision-making: Local Reviews and Appeals

Type	Total number of decisions	Original decision upheld			
		2017-18		2016-176	
		No.	%	No.	%
Local reviews	42	30	71.4	32	56.3
Appeals to Scottish Ministers	19	11	57.9	17	11.8

## 6. Workforce and Financial Information

	Tier 1 Chief Executive	Tier 2 Director	Tier 3 Head of Service	Tier 4 Manager
Head of Planning Service			1	

RTPI Qualified Staff	Headcount	Number
Development Management	35	31
Development Planning	10	10
Enforcement	2	2
Specialists		
Other (including staff not RTPI eligible)	16	14.2

Staffing age profile	Number
Under 30	2
30-39	27
40-49	13
50 and over	21

# 7. Planning Committee Information

The template below allows the information on the number of meetings and site visits during 2017-18 to be recorded in a consistent format, additional guidance on what to include is within the template itself.

Committees and site visits		Number per year
Full Council committees		9
Planning committees	Strategic Committees (Policy and Strategic matters)	5
	Planning Applications Committee (North)	8
	Planning Applications Committee (South)	8
Area committees		28
Committee site visits		5
Local Review Body		8
LRB site visits		1



**The Highland  
Council  
Comhairle na  
Gàidhealtachd**

---