**REGISTERING AND USING THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL PUBLIC ACCESS WESBITE –**

**HOW TO GUIDE**

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# USEFUL INFORMATION

1. An email address can only be used ONCE to register on the Highland Council Public Access site. The email address that is supplied will be used as your username once the registration process has been completed. It is not possible for more than one person to use the same email address to register (this would lead to an error message appearing when you attempt to validate as part of registration).
2. Your account will only become valid once you have clicked on the verification link, this is sent after registration via email from the following email address [eplanning@highland.gov.uk](mailto:eplanning@highland.gov.uk). It is only after this stage that your email address will be registered with the system. If you do not click on the link, you will be unable to log in, and it would be possible for your email address to be re-used in a new registration process.
3. Public Comments - once you have searched and selected an application, it will take you to the applications ‘Summary’ page. To view public comments, you must click on the ‘Comments’ tab, then the ‘Public Comments’ tab. Please be aware that public comments will not be made available on the website as soon as they are submitted. The submission will be reviewed at the eProcessing centre. The eProcessing centre will read and redact sensitive information i.e. telephone/mobile numbers, email addresses or any other sensitive information on the letter. If this information contravenes our policies on publishing information, the redacted part of the comment will be replaced with a series of ‘X’s. This can take up to two days to be processed. **There is a 10-minute timeout on pages.**If this time passes and you are still typing, any information you try to submit will be lost. If you have a large amount of text to be typed, we advise using Microsoft Word (or similar) to compose your statement, and then copy and paste this into the text box on the website. Comments submitted are also limited to 5000 characters, and you are unable to add file attachments.

If your comment exceeds the 5000 character limit or you need to add an attachment, please email your comment directly to [eplanning@highland.gov.uk](mailto:eplanning@highland.gov.uk) or post your comment to ePlanning, eProcessing Centre, Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, IV3 5NX.

Public Comments that include attachments or are submitted via post will appear on the ‘Documents’ tab of the ‘Application Summary’ page. Further details stating this, will be found under the ‘Public Comments’ tab.

1. Planning Applications will only appear on the website once they have been validated by a member of the Infrastructure, Environment and Economy team. If you cannot find details of an application online, it is usually because an application has not been validated yet.
2. Everyone can use the site to view and search for planning applications but to make a comment, save searches and/or track applications, you must [Register (external link)](http://wam.highland.gov.uk/wam/registrationWizard.do?action=start) on the Public Access page. Please see the following guidance on how to Register.
3. Technical Support

If you have any technical difficulties when using:

The Highland Council Public Access Site (<http://wam.highland.gov.uk/wam/>)

[Please use this form to tell us about it (external link) (external link)](https://self.highland.gov.uk/AchieveForms/?form_uri=sandbox://AF-Form-c044dbad-4a35-4af3-9715-d924e4e8c3f6&category=AF-Category-077725b3-f5d9-49f1-b8d0-839d170fd668&isPublished=false).

To help resolve the problem, please include:

* Screenshots of the issue (desirable) – These can be pasted into a word document and attached to the online complaints form. These help us to resolve issues quicker.
* A description of what you were trying to do on our site when the issue occurred (essential)
* Date and time the issue occurred (essential)

# HOW TO REGISTER ON THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL PUBLIC ACCESS WEBSITE

The site will allow you to view and search for planning applications but to make a comment, save searches and/or track applications, you will need to register a valid email address. Please follow the below steps:

1. To register, click on <https://wam.highland.gov.uk/wam/>
2. A screenshot of a computer

   Description automatically generatedFrom this page, click on ‘Register’ at the top of the screen.
3. Complete the registration fields with your details, as noted on the screenshot below (please note that all fields marked with an \* are compulsory fields). Once complete click the ‘next’ button at the bottom of the screen. **Passwords must be between 8 and 24 characters long, contain at least one uppercase, one lowercase and one numeric character.**

A screenshot of a computer

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1. A screenshot of a computer

   Description automatically generatedFill in your postcode then click the ‘next’ button.
2. A screenshot of a computer

   Description automatically generatedSelect your address from the drop-down list, then click the ’next’ button.
3. Check your details are correct on the system. If all correct, please read our ‘terms and conditions’. Once you are happy tick the ‘I agree to the terms and conditions’ checkbox then click ‘next’.

A screenshot of a computer

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1. A screenshot of a computer

   Description automatically generatedYou will be directed to the page below; it will state that an email has been sent to your chosen email address and confirms that you will be unable to use the features of having an account until the email address is verified.
2. A screenshot of a computer

   Description automatically generatedYou will have received an email from [eplanning@highland.gov.uk](mailto:eplanning@highland.gov.uk) that contains a link that you must click on to verify your email address. Click on this link to be redirected back to the Public Access webpage.
3. The final step in completing your registration is to log in, using the email address and password you set up in your initial registration screen.

Once this is complete, you will be able to use all the features of the website available to registered users. In the following notes, we will explain how to access the main features that a user may wish to access.

**FORGOTTEN PASSWORD**

1. If you have forgotten your password, click on the ‘Forgotten Password?’ link.

A screenshot of a computer

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1. A screenshot of a login page

   Description automatically generatedYou will be asked to enter your email address and a new password then click on ‘Change password’.
2. You will be directed to the page below; it will state that an email has been sent to your chosen email address confirming your update.

A screenshot of a computer

Description automatically generated

1. A screenshot of a computer

   Description automatically generatedYou will have received an email from [eplanning@highland.gov.uk](mailto:eplanning@highland.gov.uk) that contains a link that you must click on to confirm your identity and password change. You will now be able to log in with your new password.

# MY PROFILE PAGE

Once you have logged in, you will be able to access ‘My Profile’ page. This allows you to manage your personal details as well as manage your ‘Saved Searches’ and ‘Tracked Applications’. There are 4 sections on this page:

* **PROFILE DETAILS –** To view and change (if necessary) your personal details that you used to register.
* **SAVED SEARCHES –** To view and delete (if necessary) your saved searches. Saved searches are discussed further on in this guidance.
* **NOTIFIED APPLICATIONS –** To view notifications of applications that you are tracking, subject of saved searches or that have been modified. Applications that you have tracked will appear at the top of the list of notifications, and applications that fall under your saved search parameters will be below these. To view an application, you have been notified about, simply click the ‘view’ button next to the application description. You will also be notified by email when you have a new notification.
* **TRACKED APPLICATIONS –** To view and remove (if necessary) any applications that you have marked for tracking. Tracked applications are discussed further on in the guidance.

# SEARCHING FOR A PLANNING APPLICATION

A screenshot of a web page

Description automatically generatedWhen you log in, you will automatically be directed to ‘My Profile – Profile Details’ page.

To Search For An Application

* Click on the ‘Search’ button at the top left of the page, a drop-down menu will appear.
* A screenshot of a computer

  Description automatically generatedYou can search for ‘Planning’ or ‘Building Warrant’ Applications. When you have selected Planning or Building Standards a further menu option will appear, offering you the choice of ‘Simple Search’, ‘Advanced Search’, ‘Weekly/Monthly Lists’, ‘Property Search’ or ‘Map Search’. Further guidance will be given on these individually.

# SIMPLE SEARCH

* The ‘Simple Search’ function can be used when you know the application reference number.
* A screenshot of a search box

  Description automatically generatedTo search, you simply type the reference number into the search field, and then click on the ‘Search’ button. If the reference number exists, this will lead you directly to the application you are looking for.
* Once you have clicked on ‘Search’, you should see a similar screen to the below.

A screenshot of a computer

Description automatically generated

# ADVANCED SEARCH

* The ‘Advanced Search’ option allows you to find applications that you know may exist, but you may not know the application reference number.
* A screenshot of a computer

  Description automatically generatedThere are numerous fields you can search by, such as ‘Applicant Name’, ‘Application Type’, ‘Date Received’, or ‘Address’.
* By using this search method, you may bring up more than one application that meets the criteria set out by you in your search.
* From this list, you should be able to identify the application you are searching for (or you may be using it to bring up all the applications that meet certain criteria, in which case, you will be able to take the information you require from the list that appears).
* Wild card searching can be performed using the \* character in the search criteria. For example, to find cases in Elm Street, Elm Road, or Elm House: Elm\*

# WEEKLY/MONTHLY LISTS

* The ‘Weekly/Monthly Lists’ search function allows you to bring up all applications that are validated or decided for specific areas during specific timeframes.
* A screenshot of a calendar

  Description automatically generatedTo bring up the Weekly or Monthly Search function, click on the ‘Weekly/Monthly Lists’ tab, and click on either the ‘Weekly List’ or ‘Monthly List’ button as highlighted below.
* Enter the criteria that you wish to search for then click the ‘Search’ button. This will lead you to a list of all applications that meet the criteria you have searched for in the above screen.
* This function is particularly useful if you wish to view any applications that have been made within your area and are used more as a general search tool than the previous 2 methods.

# PROPERTY SEARCH

* The ‘Property Search’ function can be accessed by clicking on the ‘Property’ tab, by selecting either the ‘Address Search’ or ‘A-Z Street Search’ buttons, as highlighted below.
* The Address Search function allows you to search for applications linked to a particular Address, Town, or Postcode. This is a useful tool to identify current and historical applications for a specific location.
* The ‘A to Z Street Search’ function shows you a full list of streets within the Highland region.

When you select the street that you are looking for, a new list of all properties within this street will then appear on screen. By clicking on a particular address, you will be able to view any applications that are linked to this address.

* A screenshot of a search page

  Description automatically generatedThis is particularly useful for seeing what work has been done on properties that you may be interested in purchasing, or just to see the Planning/Building History of a particular property.

# MAP SEARCH

* The ‘Map’ search function allows you to focus on a particular area of the Highlands and probe further down until you can view the property/location you are looking for.
* Once you are at this level, clicking on the area of the map you wish to look at should bring up the Planning/Building Standard application reference/s related to this property/area.
* A map of the united states

  Description automatically generatedYou can then either use this reference to search in the ‘Simple Search’ tab or click the ‘Application Details’ link at the bottom of the pop-up, which will lead you to the application.
* You can also access the ‘Map’ tab when viewing an application from a search and view the surrounding area.
* When viewing an application, click on the ‘Map’ tab:

A screenshot of a web page

Description automatically generated

* You can click on the map and zoom in to the surrounding area.
* A screenshot of a computer

  Description automatically generatedYou can enable the filters on the left-hand side to search for different types of applications and/or over what period.
* Any planning application will be identified with a red line.

A map of land with red lines

Description automatically generated

# TRACKING AN APPLICATION

* This allows you to ‘track’ applications of your choice, to keep note of any changes or updates on specific applications.
* To allow you to track, you must start by searching for an application, once you have opened the particular application you are looking for, click on the ‘Track’ button on the right-hand side of the screen, highlighted below.
* The website will then link this application to your profile and will notify you via email of any updates on that specific application.
* A screenshot of a search engine

  Description automatically generatedThis allows you to keep track and be notified of any updated plans, documents and decisions that are logged on the application file without having to keep logging in to check.
* If you wish to stop tracking a particular application, go to ‘My Profile’ – ‘Tracked Applications’, and click the red ‘X’ under the column ‘Stop Tracking’.
* A screenshot of a computer

  Description automatically generatedThis will stop all email alerts.

# SAVING SEARCHES

* This allows you to save any applications you have searched. This is a useful tool if you don’t wish to track a certain application but feel that you may refer back to an application at a later date.
* By saving a search, it eliminates the need to keep a note of an application reference or details, as you can use the saved search at a later date.
* You can save a search using any of the methods described above. The method below sets out how to save a search when using Simple, Advanced, Weekly/Monthly and Property searches.
* A screenshot of a web page

  Description automatically generatedClick on the ‘Save Search’ button located near the right-hand side of the screen which is highlighted below.
* You will then be presented with the following screen. This will allow you to change the search title and to select whether you want to be notified about new search results or not.
* Once you click the ‘Save’ button, your search will be saved, and you will be able to locate it under ‘My Profile - Saved searches’.

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* This method can be used to save searches when using the Simple, Advanced, Weekly/Monthly and Property searches. Further details on how to save searches when using the Map search option can be found below.

## Map tap – Circular Search

* Once logged in, and on the map tab, click the ‘show on map’ checkbox and adjust the scale to the required scale. Once you have navigated to the location, you may wish to save this search. You can do this by clicking on ‘Save a circular search’.
* A screenshot of a map

  Description automatically generatedThis only works up to certain scale which may not be large enough to cover the whole area although multiple searches can be saved. An error message may appear if the scale is too large, so you would need to zoom in to an appropriate scale before the system will allow you to save this search.
* A screenshot of a search box

  Description automatically generatedThe search can then be given a new title and the ‘Notify me via email about new search results’ option should be set to ‘Yes’ before clicking ‘Save’.

## Map tab – Rectangular Search

* Once logged in, and on the map tab, click on the ‘show on map’ checkbox and adjust the scale to the required scale. Once you have navigated to the location, you may wish to save this search. You can do this by clicking on ‘Save a rectangular search’.
* A map with a red circle

  Description automatically generatedThis only works up to certain scale which may not be large enough to cover the whole area, although multiple searches can be saved. An error message may appear if the scale is too large, so you would need to zoom in to an appropriate scale before the system will allow you to save this search.
* The search can then be given a new title and the ‘Notify me via email about new search results’ option should be set to ‘Yes’ before clicking ‘Save’.

A screenshot of a search box

Description automatically generated

# NAVIGATING THE APPLICATION DETAILS

Once you have selected an application to view, you will be directed to the ‘Application Details’ page. This is where the information of the application will be visible. The ‘Details’ tab is split into 4 sub-sections, ‘Summary’, ‘Further Information’, ‘Contacts’ and ‘Important Dates’.

1. **SUMMARY –** The summary tab contains the general details of the application, such as the application reference number, the date the application was received, the date the application was validated by the area office, the site address, the proposal of the application and the current status of the application.
2. **FURTHER INFORMATION –** The further information tab contains more in-depth details of the application, such as the application type, the case officer assigned to the application, the Community Council and Ward the application falls under along with applicant/agent details.
3. **CONTACTS –** The contacts tab contains contact details supplied for any agents on the application, and the names of the Ward Councillors for the area the application falls under.
4. **IMPORTANT DATES –** The important dates tab contains details of various dates that relate to the specific application you are viewing, such as the received and validated dates, advertisement dates, the deadline date for public comments and the date a decision was made (if the case has already been decided).

# SUBMITTING AND VIEWING PUBLIC COMMENTS

You must only use your own details and express your own views when submitting comments on a planning application. Do not include personal information about another third party (including family members) unless you have told the individual concerned and they consent to it being supplied. If you falsely represent yourself as someone who you aren't, you could be charged with a criminal offense.

**There is a 10 minute timeout on pages.** If this time passes and you are still typing, any information you try to submit will be lost. If you have a large amount of text to be typed, we advise using Microsoft Word (or similar) to compose your statement, and then copy this into the text box on the webpage. Comments submitted are also limited to 5000 characters, and you cannot add file attachments.

* If a registered user wishes to make a comment on a particular planning application, they will first have to locate the relevant application by searching using one of the methods mentioned above.
* Once they have opened the relevant application, they can click on the ‘comments’ tab, and click ‘make a comment’ as highlighted below. This will allow the registered user to make a comment on the application. The website will pull through the contact information you supplied when registering, but this information will not show on the website once your comment has been made available for public viewing.

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A screenshot of a computer

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* Once your comment has been submitted, it will then be reviewed by the eProcessing Centre. Once reviewed, it will then appear on the website. It can take up to 3 working days for your comments to appear on the portal as each comment has to be reviewed before publication. In periods when we receive a high volume of comments this may be longer.
* Comments submitted through the public access website, and comments submitted via email to [eplanning@highland.gov.uk](mailto:eplanning@highland.gov.uk) (without attachments) will appear on the ‘Comments’ tab, under the ‘Public Comments’ tab as highlighted below.
* A screenshot of a computer

  Description automatically generatedIt is possible that your comment may be redacted by the eProcessing Centre, if they feel any comments supplied contravene our policies on publishing information. If this is the case the redacted part of the comment will be replaced with a series of ‘X’s.
* If your comment exceeds the 5000 character limit or you need to add an attachment, please email your comment directly to [eplanning@highland.gov.uk](mailto:eplanning@highland.gov.uk) or post your comment to ePlanning, eProcessing Centre, Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, IV3 5NX. These will appear slightly differently to comments submitted electronically.
* Public Comments that are submitted via post or include attachments will appear on the ‘Documents’ tab of the ‘Application Summary’ page. Further details stating this, will be found under the ‘Public Comments’ tab as below.

A screenshot of a computer

Description automatically generated

* A screenshot of a computer

  Description automatically generatedThe comment will appear on the ‘Documents’ tab as below, stating whether it is an objection, support, or general comment under the ‘Document Type’ column, and noting the name of the person making the comment under the ‘Description’ column.

# PUBLICATION AND REDACTION

The comments you submit will be published online along with your name and address, while signatures and other personal information will be redacted (blacked out). Our full Redaction Policy of what types of data will be redacted is shown below.

**All information will be published unless it includes specific circumstances as noted below.**

We will take extreme care when publishing personal data or sensitive personal data on public access.

The following types of data will be redacted (blacked out) so that it cannot be seen, in all instances, whether through electronic means or by withholding the document. Discretion will be employed to redact any comments or information deemed derogatory or defamatory in character, including the use of salacious, slanderous or erroneous words or phrases.

We refer to unredacted copies of all information when considering a planning application.

**We redact**

* handwritten signatures
* personal telephone numbers including mobile phone numbers (excluding commercial or business phone numbers)
* personal email addresses (excluding commercial or business email addresses)
* photographs and images of vehicle registration plates included in a submission
* identification of vulnerable individuals, including children and youths. Such as disability registrations, certificates or medical documents
* any medical or other data about someone’s health and wellbeing or carer requirements
* personal financial information, for example bank statements
* business plans
* protected characteristics, including nationality and religious beliefs
* details of any criminal convictions
* information identifying specific sites or locations of protected birds and mammal species, sections within studies, design statements, reports

**We don’t redact**

* addresses
* stock images (which include vehicle registration plates, faces etc)
* related financial, business and operational information unless stated to be confidential
* developer contributions figures
* electronic signatures
* initials

It can take up to **3 working days** for your comments to appear on the portal as each comment requires review prior to publication. In periods when we receive a high volume of comments this may be longer.

Please note that comments from individuals living at the same address will be linked together on the comments page, further information regarding this can be found within [the Council’s Scheme of Delegation](https://www.highland.gov.uk/a_to_z/service/388/scheme_of_delegation).

Due to the volume of correspondence we receive on planning applications, we cannot enter into detailed correspondence or discussions with individual objectors on the points they raise. The Council's statutory duty is to take account of comments received within the statutory period, not to reply to them**.** Accordingly, comments should not be in the form of questions but should be clear statements about areas of concern. You may however wish to support or oppose an application on conditional terms.

There are restrictions in place. The use of inappropriate words and phrases are prohibited. Salacious, malicious and defamatory comments are unacceptable. Any comments which are considered to defamatory or to be inappropriate will be redacted. The online comment facility is for your use, to increase your input into the planning process. Please do not abuse it.

Only comments which raise material planning considerations will be taken into account. However, other representations we receive (that are not necessarily material planning considerations) are also likely to be made public on our Public Access site.

Comments are only available for 3 months from the decision date. When an application has been withdrawn, no associated documents or comments are visible.

# THE DOCUMENTS TAB

The documents tab is where you will be able to view all the documents associated with the application that are for public viewing. This can include the drawings submitted with an application (or amended plans requested by the case officer). This tab also includes public comments submitted via post and those that include attachments, consultation responses, environmental statements, and any photographs or supporting information that has been submitted by the applicant and/or agent.

A screenshot of a computer

Description automatically generatedAll the documents that are visible on the ‘Documents’ tab can be opened by clicking the ‘view’ icon on the right-hand side of the screen under the ‘view’ column. This will open the document in a separate tab/window (usually in pdf format, but documents can also be submitted in picture format (JPEG), or Microsoft Word or Excel documents depending on what has been submitted by the applicant). Depending on the size of the file, it may take a few seconds for these documents to load. If for any reason the document fails to open, please refresh the page. If the page still does not show, please contact [eplanning@highland.gov.uk](mailto:eplanning@highland.gov.uk) with details of the application and the document you are trying to open, and we will endeavour to resolve the issue.