
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR INFORMATION

Title: PLANNING SERVICE PERFORMANCE UPDATE

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Purpose

To update and inform the Committee on the statistical performance of the CNPA planning service to Quarter 4 of 2017/18.

Recommendation

That the Committee:

- i. Note the internal planning service monitoring results outlined in this report**

Background

1. The CNPA Planning Service and Management Team use quarterly performance reports to examine planning service performance and implement improvements and changes to the service. Officers take performance updates to the Planning Committee every six months for information and as a way of supplementing annual Planning Performance Framework (PPF) reports and the Scottish Government's feedback on PPF reports. The Planning Committee's last planning service performance update was in December 2017.

Planning Service Performance Update to Quarter 4 2017/18

Determination timescales and processing agreements

2. The CNPA's use of processing agreements continues to be a good way to provide certainty for applicants and for CNPA staff. During 2017/18, 91% of the planning applications determined by the CNPA had processing agreements. The agreed timescales were met on all of these applications. The average time for determination of planning applications with a processing agreement was 43 weeks.
3. The use of processing agreements is reflected in the official statistics produced by the Scottish Government, which exclude timescales for applications with processing agreements. Figures 1 and 2 show sharp increases in determination timescales when

single complex applications that did not have processing agreements were completed with decision notices.

Figure 1

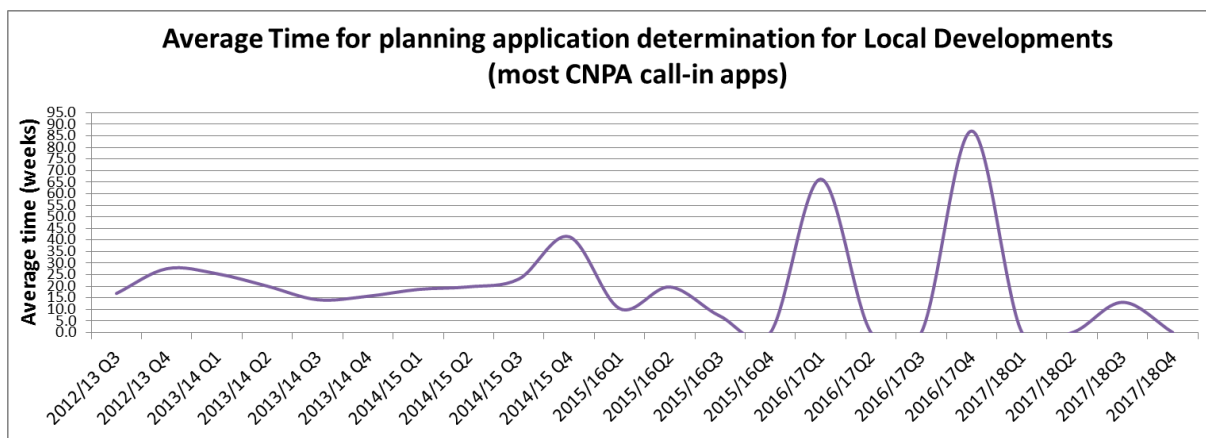
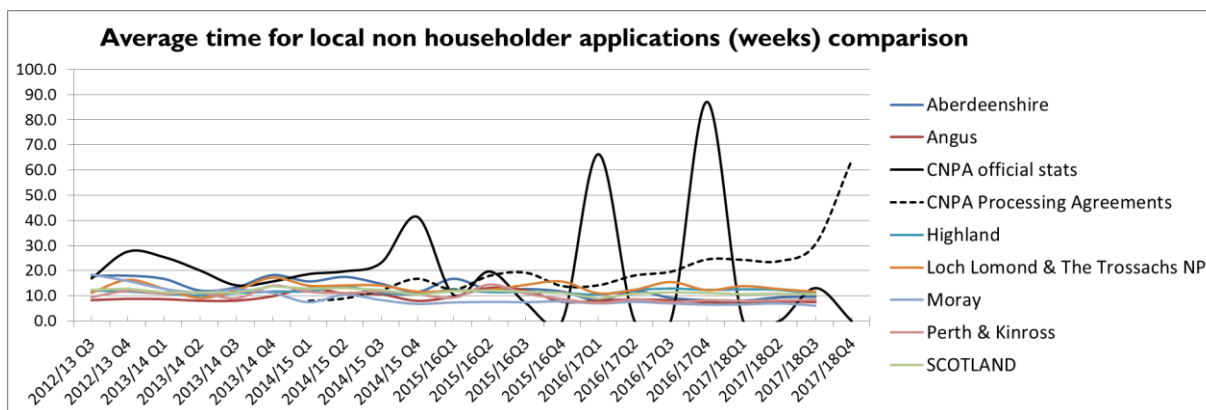
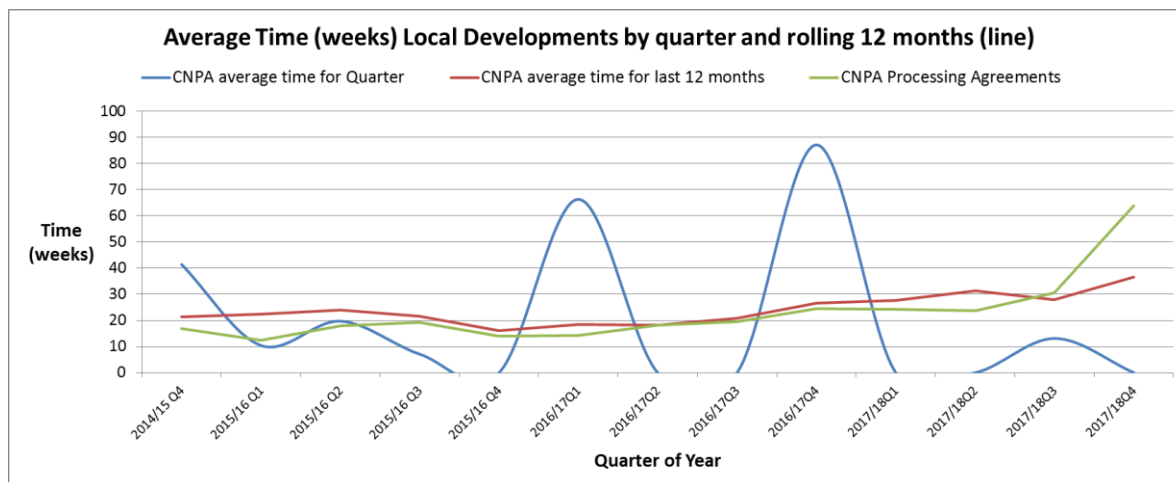


Figure 2



4. Although the use of processing agreements has been an effective way of managing cases and providing certainty for applicants as well as the CNPA, there is a clear trend of processing timescales extending over time within processing agreements. This has been particularly evident during the latter part of 2017/18. This has generally been because applicants seek extensions of time from the original agreement in order to provide the information needed to determine their application. There are many cases where this is justified, but there are also cases where it unnecessarily extends the determination process simply because the applicant has not prepared for the planning process. We are continuing to look at ways of drawing such applications to a faster conclusion.
5. The internal audit of the planning service that reported during 2015/16 recommended that the CNPA use a rolling annual average indicator for service performance monitoring. Figure 3 shows the CNPA's quarterly average against a rolling annual average figure. In simple terms, if the average time for a quarter is lower than the rolling average figure, then performance should be improving, but given the small number of applications that are being recorded in this way, the data is easily misunderstood.

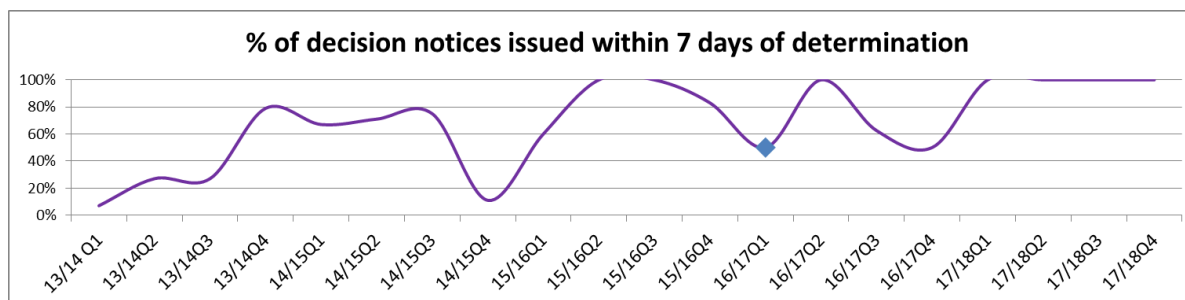
Figure 3



Issuing decision notices

- The planning service has continued to maintain a pattern of swift decision notice production following planning committee decisions. As shown in Figure 4, all decision notices in 2017/18 were issued within 7 days of committee determination.

Figure 4



Planning Service Improvements 2018/19

- The Planning Committee approved 6 improvement priorities for the planning service during 2018/19 at the 20 April 2018 meeting. We will provide an update on progress with delivering these priorities in the next planning service performance update in November 2018.

2018/19 Planning Service Improvements

1	<p>Simplify mechanisms for securing planning obligations and reduce need for planning agreements Establishing simpler, cheaper and faster ways of securing necessary planning obligations</p>
2	<p>Develop and deliver a schools engagement / involvement programme As part of the CNPA’s approach to involving young people during the year of young people</p>

2018/19 Planning Service Improvements	
3	Plan and deliver workshop on natural heritage with SNH, SEPA and Local Authorities Sharing good practice and ensuring consistent application of policy and practice across the National Park
4	Increase participation and engagement in the consultation on the proposed Local Development Plan Using what we have learnt from recent consultations to increase informed comment on important issues
5	Consolidate past improvements and procedures For the past two years, the planning team has set ambitious service improvement priorities. At a time when we have also recruited a number of new staff, embedding changes requires consistent work and effort. We think that there is more work to do to gain the full benefit of the past years' service priorities such as our Planning Committee training programme, approach to monitoring and enforcement activity, using our new customer feedback processes etc
6	Explore efficiencies in delivery of the CNPA's planning monitoring and enforcement role and outdoor access authority roles There are clear comparisons between some of the work of the planning team and outdoor access teams and this work will explore whether shared systems or procedures can create efficiencies in cost or time

Next Report

8. The next planning service monitoring report will be in November 2018.

Gavin Miles

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