
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 and identify changes or improvements in its delivery.

Recommendation

That the Committee:

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

Background

1. The CNPA Planning Service and Management Team use quarterly performance reports to examine Planning Service performance more closely 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 Dec 2016.

Planning Service Performance Update to Quarter 4 2016/17

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 2016/17, 88% of the planning application determined by the CNPA had processing agreements. The agreed timescales were met on all but 2 applications (where staff had protracted post-committee discussions on a legal agreement). The average time for determination of planning applications with a processing agreement was 22.7 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 a sharp increase in determination timescale where

single applications that did not have processing agreements were completed with decision notices. The application in Q4 of 2016/17 was for Meadowside Quarry, where the conclusion of a legal agreement delayed the issue of the decision notice. Every other application determined in the last six months had a processing agreement.

Figure 1

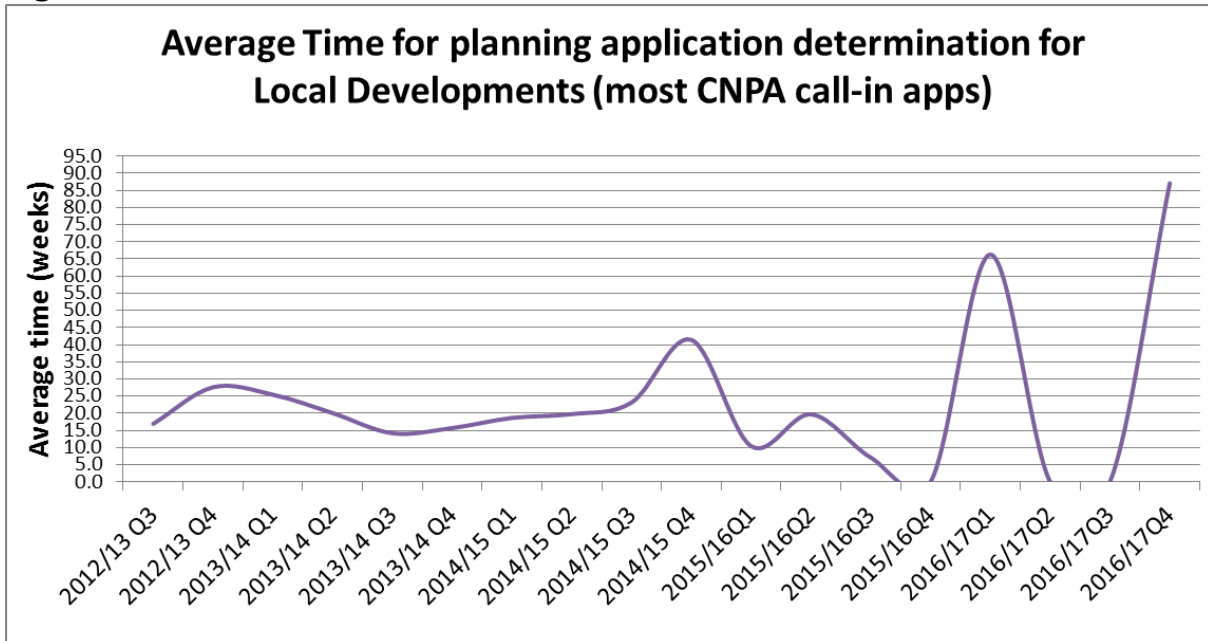
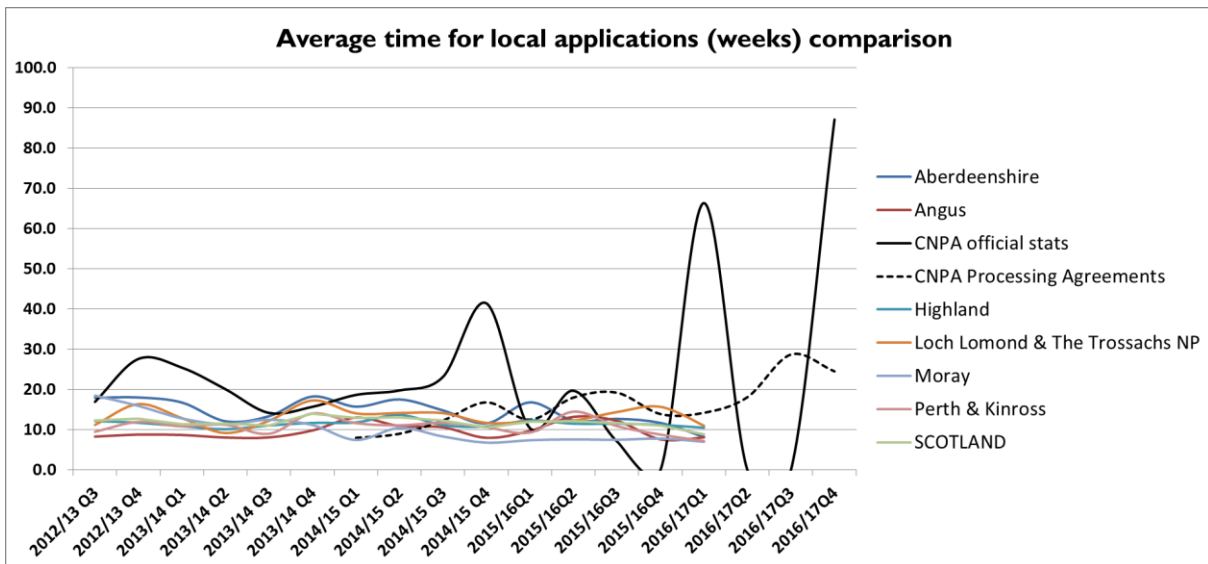


Figure 2

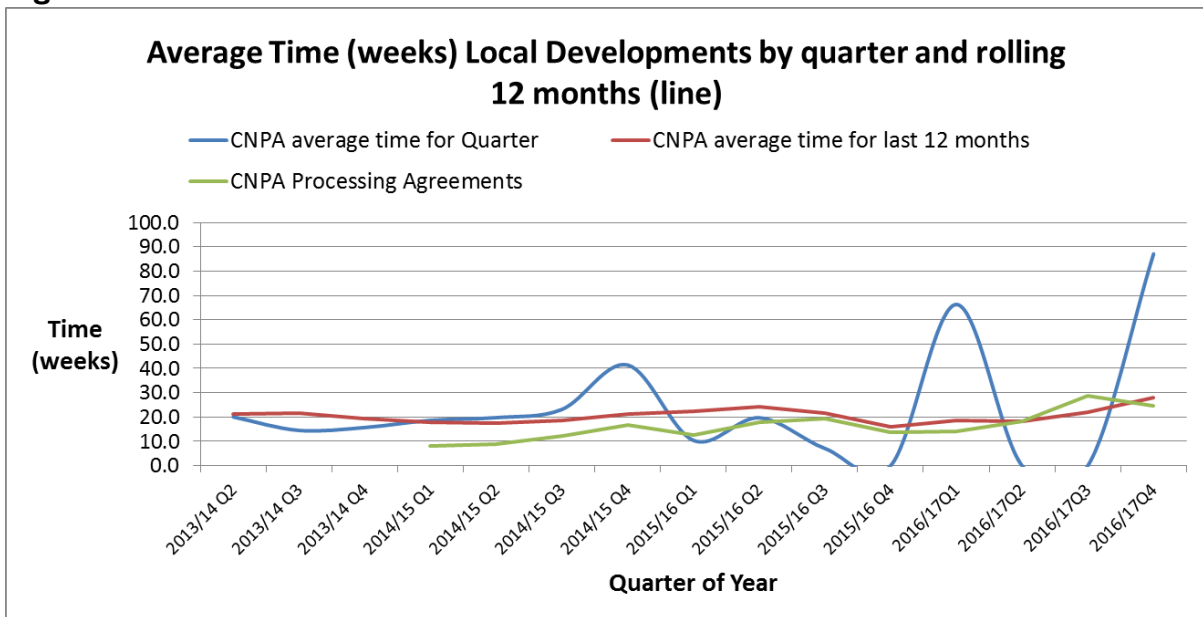


- Although the use of processing agreements has been an effective way of managing cases and providing certainty for applicants as well as the CNPA, there is a clear trend of processing timescales extending over time within processing agreements. This has been because applicants seek extensions of time 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 case where it unnecessarily extends the determination process simply because the applicant has not prepared for the planning

process. We will be looking at ways of drawing such applications to a faster conclusion over this year.

- 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.

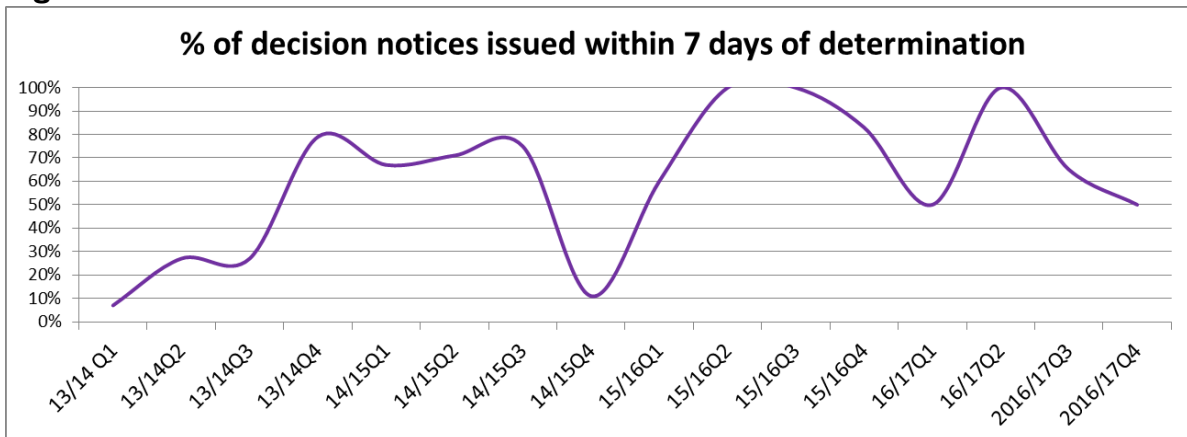
Figure 3



Issuing decision notices

- The planning service has continued to maintain a pattern of swift decision notice production following planning committee decisions shown in figure 4.

Figure 4



Planning Service Priorities

7. The Planning Committee approved 11 improvement priorities for the planning service during 2017/18 at the 24 March 2017 meeting. We will provide a more complete update on progress with the next planning service performance update in November 2017.

Proposed 2017/18 Planning Service Improvements	
1	Develop a series of standard planning conditions (completing the priority identified in 2016/17)
2	Prepare and implement standard legal agreement templates (completing the priority identified in 2016/17)
3	Consolidate delegated authority provisions (completing the priority identified in 2016/17)
4	Continue to deliver our Planning Committee training programme (learning from past cases, improving understanding of current issues and practice)
5	Prepare advice on LDP developer obligations policy (to provide more clarity to officers and developers on where developer obligations will / will not be required)
6	Develop and deliver a schools engagement / involvement programme (building on the success of the recent Planning Committee visit)
7	Enhance the customer feedback process (broadening the scope of our customer feedback and using it to inform further improvements)
8	Plan and deliver workshop on natural heritage with SNH, SEPA and Local Authorities (consolidating understanding and ensuring a consistent approach to addressing natural heritage issues within the Park)
9	Develop further materials to raise awareness, understanding and expectations of good design in the Park (building on the success of the Design Awards 2016 competition)
10	Review the way we report monitoring and enforcement activity in public (to improve public understanding of the system, awareness of consented developments and of the prioritisation of cases.)
11	Review the effectiveness of established Cairngorms planning engagement forums (Planning Representatives Network & Developers Forum)

Next report

8. The next planning service monitoring report will be in November 2017.

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