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## Action to boost planning performance

**15/01/2013**

Planning Minister Derek Mackay will jointly with COSLA chair a group to support improved planning performance in Scotland.

The move, agreed jointly with COSLA leaders, is part of the Scottish Government's Key Actions on Planning Reform published today.

The group, which will be made up of Heads of Planning from local authorities across Scotland as well as other key stakeholders will help drive improved performance and consider the links to resourcing of the planning system.

At a debate on planning in the Scottish Parliament, Mr Mackay told MSPs that the Scottish Government will publish a Scotland-wide report on the planning performance of local authorities this Spring, under the new Planning Performance Framework agreed with Heads of Planning Scotland.

The document "Key Actions on Planning Reform" sets out the steps the Scottish Government will take to reform the planning system. As well as taking concerted action to boost planning performance, working closely with COSLA, the document includes work to promote a plan led system and refine the examination process to ensure development plans are up to date. The document also covers work to simplify and streamline the planning process, including extending permitted development rights.

Mr Mackay told Parliament that improved planning performance was key to boosting sustainable economic growth.

Planning Minister Derek Mackay said:

"Planning has an important role to play in delivering sustainable economic growth. People who want to invest in construction projects in Scotland need a planning system that is timely, reliable and fair.

"The Scottish Government is committed to improving the performance of our planning system. In 2009, we introduced the most comprehensive programme of planning reform in a generation. But there is more still to do, and last year I outlined the further ways we intend to improve that system, including a new performance framework, agreed with Heads of Planning Scotland.

"COSLA and I are determined that we should deliver the high performing planning system Scotland deserves. We are working together with planning authorities and other key stakeholders to deliver this improvement and ensure that pace towards positive change is maintained. This Spring, the Scottish Government will publish a report the progress being made throughout Scotland under the new framework.

"I know resourcing is a real issue for local authorities, and last month I announced a 20 per cent increase in planning fees. At the same time I have made clear that any increase in fees must be linked to improved performance."

Councillor Stephen Hagan, COSLA's Planning Spokesperson said:

"What the Minister has outlined to Parliament is what he agreed with COSLA Convention when he met us in December and which we broadly welcome as a step in the right direction. Whilst welcoming the Minister's recognition of the resource pressures facing planning authorities and his proposal to increase fees by 20% we maintain our current commitment to a fundamental review of planning fees which leads to full cost recovery in due course.

"To this end COSLA proposed a joint Ministerial Group to look at a review of the structure of planning fees, opportunities to improve performance, the process of measuring performance and ultimately further increase of planning fees. I am pleased to say that the Minister agreed to this suggestion.

"We are now working with the Minister to get this Group up and running as soon as possible to ensure that planning continues to support sustainable economic growth."