
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR INFORMATION

Title: PLANNING SERVICE PERFORMANCE UPDATE

Prepared by: Gavin Miles, Head of Planning

Purpose

To update and inform the Committee on Scottish Government feedback to the CNPA's Planning Performance Framework report for 2015/16 and the statistical performance of the CNPA Planning Service and identify changes or improvements in its delivery.

Recommendation

That the Committee:

- i. Note the positive performance of the CNPA Planning Service demonstrated by the 2015/16 Planning Performance Framework feedback from Scottish Government and 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 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 May 2016.

Scottish Government PPF report feedback 2015/16

2. The Planning Performance Framework (PPF) was developed between Scottish Government and Heads of Planning Scotland (HoPS) as a way of stimulating improvements in planning services across Scotland and assessing statistical performance and the quality of the service.
3. CNPA's 2015/16 PPF was submitted to Scottish Government on 31 July 2016 and the CNPA received feedback from Scottish Government on 25 November 2016. That feedback is included as Appendix I. The CNPA's PPF report itself is published online at www.cairngorms.co.uk/park-authority/planning/.

4. The feedback this year is the most positive the CNPA has yet achieved. The table on top of the last page of the PPF feedback shows the improvement over the last four years against the PPF key markers. For 2015/16 the CNP has been given a green status for all but one marker.
5. The only marker that the CNPA has been given an amber mark for is on decision making timescales, where our official average time for local developments was 2.3 weeks slower than the national average timescales. However, that comparison is not an effective one as the CNPA's statistics are based on only seven planning applications (those that did not have processing agreements), each of which was taken to Planning Committee for determination. The figures for Scotland are based on 15159 planning applications, of which more than 90% will have been determined by officers under delegated authority. It is unlikely that the CNPA could ever have comparable application determination timescales for this marker.
6. Most of the CNPA's planning applications take longer to determine than the national target of two months, in part, because they are all prepared for planning committee decisions. The average time across Scotland for planning applications that took more than two months was 21.3 weeks from 5729 planning applications. The average time for the six planning applications determined by the CNPA without processing agreements over two months was 16.6 weeks and the average time for the 17 planning application determined by the CNPA with processing agreements was 16 weeks. On that more comparable basis, the CNPA continues to perform well.
7. The detailed commentary against the key markers and the green 'Red-Amber-Green' scores are good feedback to have and reflect the last few years' work to improve the CNPA's planning service and to address challenges. It's good to have a positive report as reward for the hard work of the planning team and many others in the CNPA. Clearly, there remain challenges for the planning service and there will always be new challenges to address. The PPF is a framework for continuous improvement so the development of the planning service will also continue through this year and in future.

Planning Service Performance Update to Quarter 2 2016/17

Determination timescales and processing agreements

8. The CNPA's use of processing agreements continues to be a good way to provide certainty for applicants and for CNPA staff. During 2015/16, 71% of the CNPA's determined planning applications had processing agreements, with the agreed timescales met on all but one of the applications and an average time for determination of applications of 16 weeks. For the first half of 2016/17, nine of the eleven applications determined had a processing agreement. Over that last 18 months the CNPA has used processing agreements more than any other planning authority in Scotland.
9. 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 2a show a sharp increase in determination timescale

between the last quarter of 2015/16 and the second quarter of 2016/17. This is due to a single planning application that did not have a processing agreement and also required a contribution to affordable housing that was eventually secured through legal agreement. All the applications determined by the CNPA in the final quarter of 2015/16 and second quarter of 2016/17 had processing agreements so the official statistics don't record them.

Figure 1

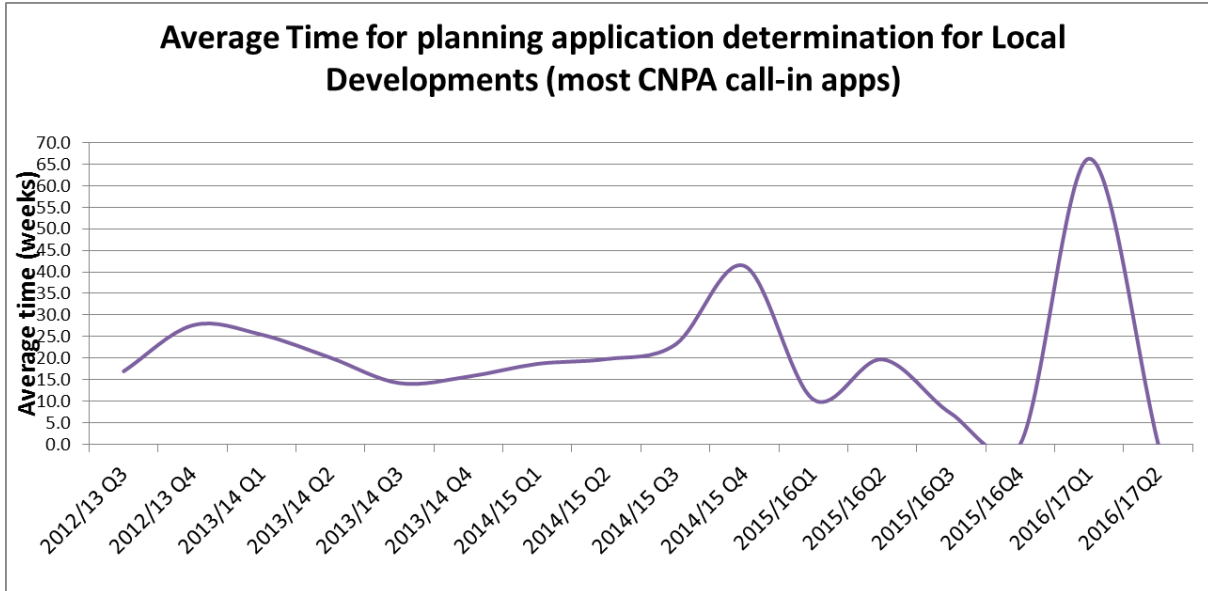
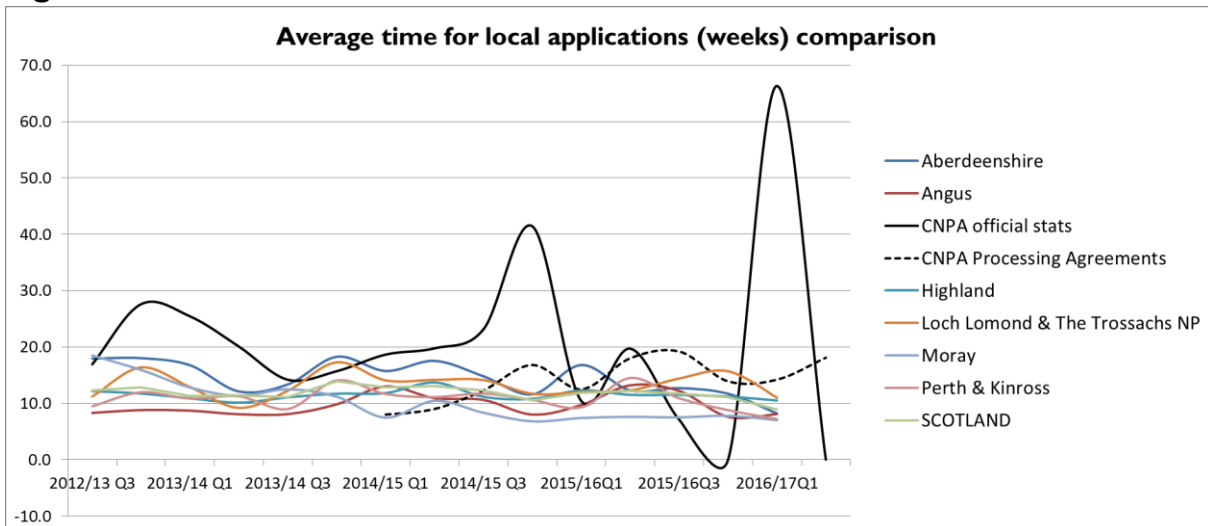


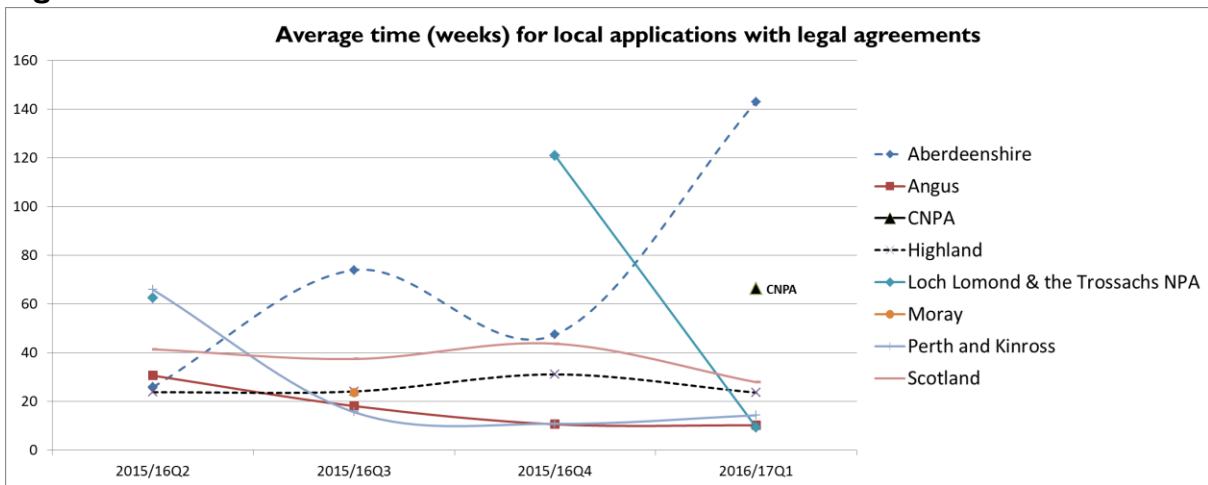
Figure 2a



10. Figure 2b has been included to show a comparison of the timescales for planning applications that have legal agreements between different planning authorities. The single application the CNPA determined with a legal agreement in the first quarter of 2016/17 was the only one during the previous 12 months. Planning authorities who deal with many complicated planning applications generally determine more with legal agreements. The single application the CNPA determined was within the range of timescales recorded by other planning authorities. However, speeding up the

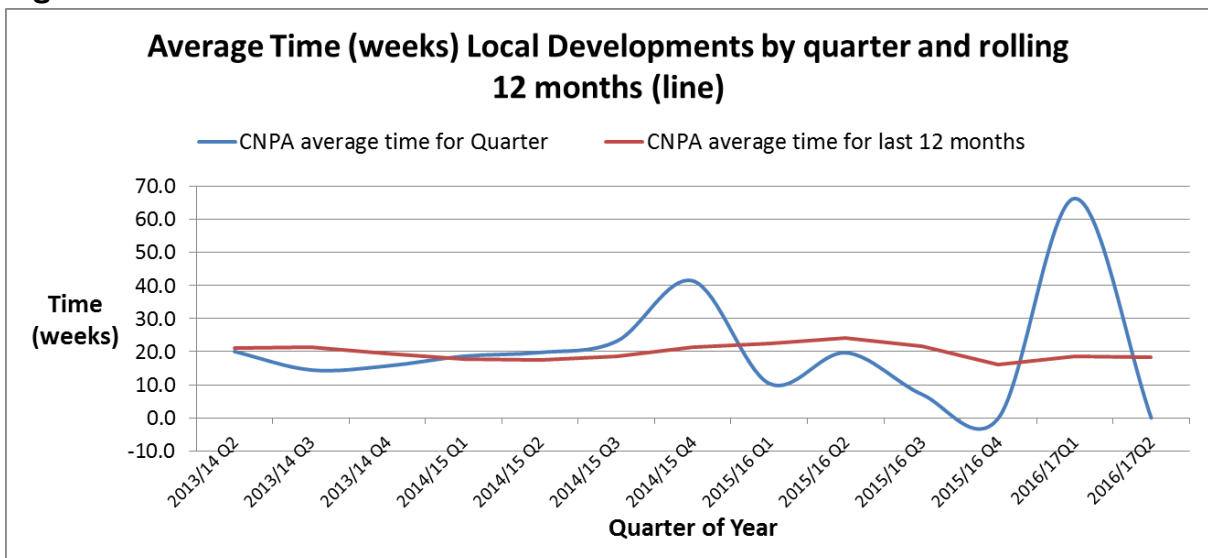
conclusion of legal agreements is already a planning service priority for the CNPA that we are starting to address.

Figure 2b



11. 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

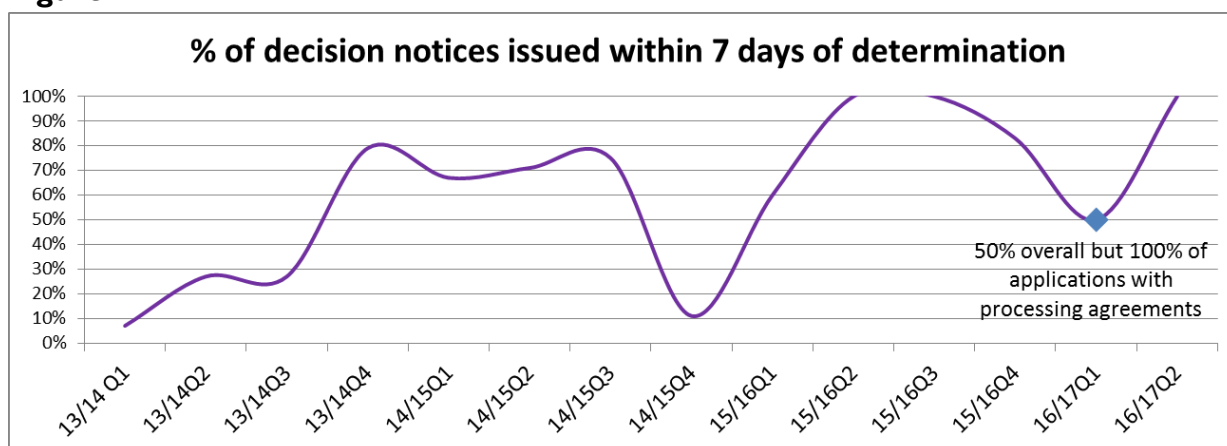


Issuing decision notices

12. The planning service has continued to maintain a pattern of swift decision notice production following planning committee decisions (where there are not legal agreements to be concluded), shown in figure 4. It can still take a long time to conclude legal agreements following a planning committee decision, leading to delays in

the issue of decision notices but a quick decision notice is now the norm for the planning service.

Figure 4



Planning Service Priorities

13. The Planning Committee approved 10 improvement priorities for the planning service during 2016/17 at the 15 April 2016 meeting. Work has started or been completed on all 10 priorities.

Planning Service Priority		status
1	Consolidate existing processes and procedures (making sure past improvements become established practice and behavior)	work underway
2	Review internal consultation procedures for specialist advice (completing the priority identified in 2015/16)	work underway
3	Support move to an electronic/paperless Planning Committee (reducing costs and improving efficiency)	work underway
4	Plan and deliver a Planning Committee training programme (learning from past cases, improving understanding of current issues and practice)	work underway
5	Consolidate delegated authority provisions (to provide certainty for Committee and officers and ensure efficient operation of service)	work underway
6	Carry out a review of infrastructure requirements for allocated development sites (improving the CNPA's ability to deliver the Local Development Plan and Action Programme)	1 st phase complete
7	Complete the Design Awards 2016 competition (raising awareness, understanding and expectations of good design)	complete
8	Undertake a programme of Town Centre Health checks (building on lessons learnt through Grantown Town Centre Pilot Project)	complete
9	Develop a series of standard planning conditions (to provide consistency for development management, monitoring and enforcement)	work underway
10	Prepare and implement standard legal agreement templates (to improve efficiency in concluding legal agreements)	work started

14. As well as holding a successful Design Awards competition with an awards ceremony in November, the CNPA itself won an award in November at the Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning with the Speyside Way Extension this year, reflect the work across the CNPA and other partners to deliver the route.
15. The Planning Committee training programme this year included sessions in Braemar, Tomintoul and Glenlivet as well as Aviemore that looked at developments that had been built or were in construction. An informal training/awareness session on housing and local development planning is scheduled and there will be a further session on design using material from the Design Awards before the end of this year.
16. It's worth noting too that the planning service has facilitated much of the work to prepare the next National Park Partnership Plan as well as start the process for the next Local Development Plan. That work is less obvious most of the time but critical to the CNPA's effective forward planning. The successful consultation on the Partnership Plan big issues and the collation and analysis of all the necessary evidence gives a good foundation to build on in the next Local Development Plan.

Next report

17. The next planning service monitoring report will be in May 2017.

Gavin Miles
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gavinmiles@cairngorms.co.uk