



National Planning Improvement

NATIONAL PLANNING IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK

# Improvement Action Progress Update 2025

Loch Lomond and the Trossachs  
National Park Authority



# Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority NPIF Annual Report (Year Two - 2025)

## Foreword

We are a cohort 3 authority and as such we are in the preliminary stages of progressing our improvement actions. We have found the process of meeting with our peer, stakeholders and the community about our service to be of benefit and we hope to continue to engage more widely to adopt best practices and learn from stakeholder feedback.

We found the Customer and Stakeholder Survey results particularly encouraging as in terms of overall satisfaction with the planning service, the National Park scored significantly higher than the Scottish average.

This new NPIF reporting and review process is helping us to better organise, manage and implement our service improvements and even in this early stage we think the process will be beneficial. We also welcome the flexibility in the programme to modify and/or introduce new actions should the opportunities arise.

In terms of our improvement actions moving forward, we are due to implement an important upgrade to our systems imminently. We hope this will lay the ground to improve efficiency in handling our application caseload and thereafter to move towards making some digitally-led changes to our ways of working with the assistance of our IT and GIS teams.

We look forward to making significant progress on our identified actions by the end of our first year.

## Introduction

The National Planning Improvement Framework (NPIF) was piloted incrementally in three separate cohorts throughout the 2024/25 financial year. This was to test a new approach to measuring the performance of planning authorities. The pilot aimed to test the new framework, to explore what works and what doesn't. This resulted in each planning authority producing an improvement action plan and performance assessment.

Each improvement action plan sets out:

- What the planning authority has agreed as its priority activities
- Whether these have short-, medium- or long-term timescales
- The owner of the actions
- The resources needed



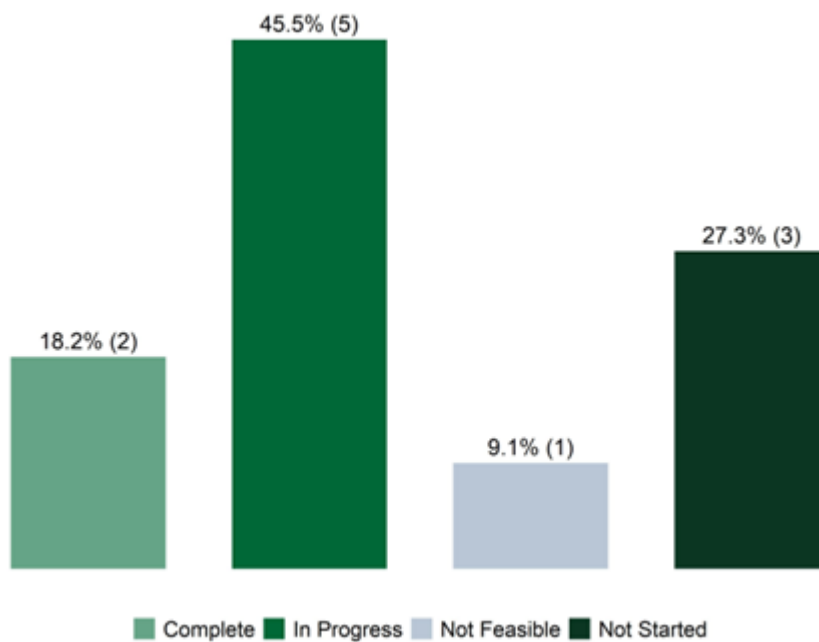
[Link to action plan for 2023/24.](#)

In year two of the NPIF the planning authorities are to update on their progress with the improvement actions. This report sets out the progress Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority has made, detailing any updates to actions, any further actions and plans for further collaboration with peer partners.

## Planning Improvement Actions Progress Update

This section details each of the improvement actions and the progress the planning authority has made.

**Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority have 11 improvement actions. The status of the actions is shown below:**



**Action 1: Continue to focus on reducing application determination times with a particular focus on householder applications and straight forward local applications where limited additional value can be added to the proposal through the planning process. This can improve the overall performance of the Planning Service by reducing the average determination time and focusing resources and staff time on applications which can deliver the outcomes of NPF4.**

### **In Progress**

Progress against this action: We have started an internal review to consider what efficiencies can be made to working practices to prioritise or expedite householder applications. Initial changes to task management, allocation and prioritisation have been trailed to free up blocks of time to dedicate additional officer time to householder casework. There will be a monthly meeting to monitor progress on this and future actions.

The following next steps are proposed: We are going to review our approach to the handling of phone enquiries to help improve the customer service experience and to manage call volumes and handing times for responding to phone enquiries. This will involve a mix of better messaging on our phonenumber, emails / letters and website to help signpost to information sources for frequently asked questions.

**Action 2: Develop an ongoing review of Personal Development Plans (PDPs) to support individual staff needs and training requirements across the service. The preparation of these can be used to develop a formal training plan for the service and identify areas where internal knowledge/best practice can be shared among officers and where external expertise is required.**

### **In Progress**

Progress against this action: New Objective setting is being rolled out across the DM Planning Teams. This is all about investing in and valuing our staff.

The following next steps are proposed: Complete the cascade of objective setting and Personal Development Plans. The review process will help support our development management team in their job roles, identify training needs and support staff development with the aim of delivering positive outcomes for staff and a better-quality service overall. The exercise will assist with identifying capacity pressures and needs across the planning



service and the opportunities to flexibly deploy staff skills where they can best be utilised and where their personal development can best be supported.

**Action 3: Explore how we can better use digital solutions to improve the accessibility of our planning data. Design and implement effective recording, analysis and monitoring across Development Planning and Development Management Functions. For Example, for caseload management to monitor determination timeframes, development trends and policy monitoring.**

**In Progress**

The following next steps are proposed: This Action requires collaborative working with our IT and GIS departments. We have secured resource within our IT team and have met with our in-house IT Power Apps Developer to discuss our requirements and how adoption of digital solutions can assist us. It requires a review of our development and policy monitoring and reporting.

The following next steps are proposed: We are currently working with our GIS to implement back-system programming to test the potential to link Power BI with Uniform (due before the end of 2025). Following that we are intending to develop a workload management tool using Power BI integrating with our Uniform database to track staff caseload and determination times. This data will help staff to manage their own caseload and provide real-time data to managers to allocate caseload effectively and identify where delays are occurring as well as provide a baseline standard for continual improvement. We will continue to investigate what is possible to achieve in terms of delivering service improvements using Power BI looking at best practice from other planning authorities. We have started a review of digital solutions to help bring improvements or efficiencies in policy monitoring, information / document management and consultation associated with our work to prepare a new Local Development Plan. will also explore opportunities for digital assistance with Local Development Plan

Note that this is a year 2 target.



**Action 4: Produce a Fee Charter to include discretionary fee charging. This should include consideration of charging for pre-application advice services, discharge of conditions and reduction in planning fees for community development trusts. The outcome of this is that the planning service can potentially recover more fees helping to cover the costs associated with assessing, determining, and monitoring applications.**

### **Complete**

Progress against this action: We have We have adopted a Fee Charter (approved by our Planning Committee in November 2025) and this has now been published on our website. We are in the final stages of implementing administrative changes to procedure to support the associated requirements (such as ensuring reasons for any fee reductions are included in decision notices).

**Action 5: Review of validation requirements at national level to require the submission of information noted at pre-application stage and overall increase in quality requirements for planning application.**

### **Not Feasible**

This action was not feasible for the following reason: This relies on the Scottish Government to update National Legislation to recognise that there is often a need for more information to be submitted with modern planning applications than specified currently in the regulations. i.e. it could refer to Local Validation Checklists where one has been adopted.

In response, the following changes to the action are proposed: We are actively involved with the Scottish Government to design and implement their 'Apply Service' which will replace ePlanning Scotland. When complete this project should mean that validation is handled at the national level and remove the issue of validation and handling invalid applications from officer workstreams. We are considering making our own local validation checklist to try to improve the quality of application submissions and will engage with the Apply Service project to understand whether it would be feasible to integrate local checklists into the national project.

**Action 6: Enforcement charter review and update.**

### **Not Started**

Reason(s) action has not been progressed: We have not had the time given other priorities.



The following next steps are proposed: We will review the existing charter with a view to having this updated as necessary and approved by our Planning and Access Committee by the end of the reporting year.

**Action 7: Collaboration with the NP Communications Team to consider how customers interact with the planning service and how we can best serve their requirements. Consideration will be given to the ability for applicants to submit other applications, (nonmaterial variations, condition discharge, preapplication enquiries etc) via an online form. Website development project: easier way to navigate planning information pages to respond to common enquiries, such as permitted development rights.**

### **In Progress**

Progress against this action: We have already implemented some changes including a new Non Material Variation Form which has been updated and uploaded to our website. The webpage has also been modified to make this form easier to find and to note there is now a fee for this service. We intend to turn this form into an integrated web-form however this is on hold pending a National Park-wide website revamp. We have also updated our householder pre-application form to be more universally user friendly and to remove planning jargon. It is also being brought up to date with the Data Protection and Freedom of Information caveats. There will be associated web-page text updates to go with the new form, and we hope to integrate this into the website similarly post re-vamp. We have also created flow charts as an aid for householders to understand whether they need planning permission and are considering how best we can use these. It may be that we need to turn them into an interactive web-based flowchart, but we need to investigate how that might be achieved technically.

The following next steps are proposed: We are reviewing how we administer the Non-Material Variation applications to improve timeframes for issuing decisions on non-material variation applications. This will involve changes to our procedures for registering and handling these applications by bringing them into the officer and manager workstreams (at the present they are handled by a single Monitoring Officer).

We require the assistance of our GIS team to set up the new NMV application types in uniform so the timeframe for implementation is reliant on their capacity. We will then create a new procedure for the NMV application process and provide awareness training to staff.

We will finalise and upload amended preapplication forms (both for householder and non householder development) and update the web page information.

In response, the following changes to the action are proposed: Make this high priority in view of the significant improvements this Action could make to NMV determination



timeframes and efficiencies in regards to pre-application enquiries and day to day operations.

## **Action 8: Implementation of Retention Schedule. The outcome of this is to ensure that the Authority is operating with Data governance requirements.**

### **Not Started**

Reason(s) action has not been progressed: The action was set as a low or medium priority.

The following next steps are proposed: This is a year 3 priority. Implementing and running the retentions programme to delete old records requires a sample to be tested for accuracy of data input (to avoid deleting files that have file types entered incorrectly in the system). This is very labour intensive and with limited resources available this work needs progressed over a longer period. Our focus will be on training to make sure officers are entering correct file types and to run the first 'deletion' batch for older applications on the e-system.

## **Action 9: Organise an Agents and Architects Forum and seek feedback as to how best to engage with them going forward, and the frequency of such events and communication.**

### **Not Started**

Reason(s) action has not been progressed:

- The action was set as a low or medium priority.
- We have not had the time given the quick turnaround for cohort two and three.

The following next steps are proposed: We will compile a list of agents and consider an appropriate timeframe to meet to coincide with announcing completion of other service improvements.

## **Action 10: Planning Awareness sessions with Community Councils linked with LDP engagement.**

### **Complete**

What was the outcome of completing this action?

We have engaged all community councils within the National Park (between May and June 2025) as part of our evidence gathering for the review of the Local Development Plan. Separately we have also met with four community councils to listen to their specific development management issues and to also explain the role and function of the planning department. The following next steps are proposed: We will continue to meet community councils annually on an ongoing basis to maintain positive engagement.



**Action 11: Implement recording of added value on applications to reach, or exceed, policy and guidance requirements to create an evidence base to assess performance against place and wellbeing outcomes and biodiversity gains. This evidence base will then inform a monitoring and evaluation process to ensure these are being effectively embedded into decision making and review processes.**

### **In Progress**

Progress against this action: We have a shared data source for input by officers and our in house ecologist, tree and landscape advisors in which to note any added value they have secured. Effectiveness appears limited as it relies on colleagues to identify and input the data and does not quantitatively capture value. Value is also generally only secured at decision stage and delivered on implementation of the permission and we need records of developments that have commenced and or have completed in order to effectively measure this outcome.

The following next steps are proposed: We are hopeful that Power Bi technology will enable us to record and extract better data for such analysis. This is a year 3 project.



# New Proposed Planning Improvement Actions

The table below details further improvement actions added.

<b>Improvement action</b> What action will you take? What will the outcome be?	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Importance</b> High Medium Low	<b>Timescale</b> Short term- 1 year Medium term – 3 year Long term 3+ year	<b>Resources</b>
<p>Action: Prepare a delivery plan for a pilot housing stakeholder delivery initiative.</p> <p>This is a new multi-agency initiative with the aim of unlocking rural housing delivery within the National Park. It seeks to draw together landowners, funding and delivery partners to bring forward stalled and new housing sites to address the housing emergency as it relates to the National Park.</p> <p>Outcome: To accelerate rural housing delivery within the National Park.</p>	Development Planning and Communities	High	Short Term	External consultant funded through a grant from the National Planning Hub with staff time from Park Authority who will lead this work and support staff time / advice from Stirling Council, Rural Stirling Housing Association.



Will assess the action is complete by:  
End of April 2026

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# Peer Collaborative Review Follow Up

As part of the pilot, each planning authority held a peer collaborative review workshop. This brought together key stakeholders and customers to discuss and provide constructive feedback on the improvement action plan.

Status of the peer review follow-up meeting: We are planning to organise a follow up meeting.

Additional information: We have touched base with the lead at Moray Council to arrange a meeting for early October 2025.

