



National Planning Improvement

NATIONAL PLANNING IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK

Improvement Action Progress Update 2025 Moray Council



Moray NPIF Annual Report (Year Two - 2025)

Foreword

Moray Council whilst making good progress on many of the actions in the Improvement Action Plan are looking forward to delivering the other actions in 2026. Council wide staff-restructuring in 2025/2027, new initiatives around ICT delivery, the Council webpage and delivery of the new Moray Local Development Plan will aid progression and help the Councils realise many of the other improvement actions. We continue to work towards improving the planning service within Moray and seeing the improvements planned delivered.

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.](#)

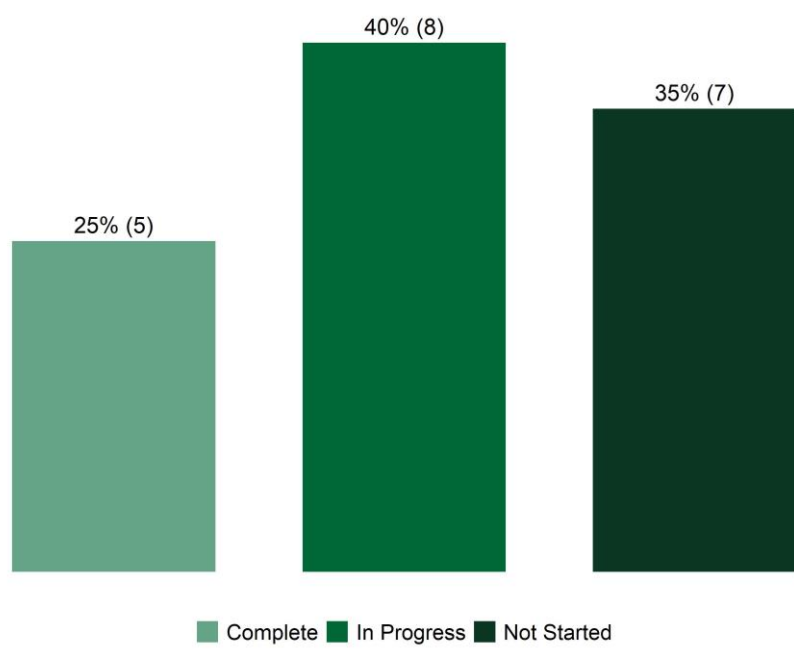
In year two of the NPIF the planning authorities are to update on their progress with the improvement actions. This report sets out the progress Moray has made, detailing any updates to actions, any further actions and plans for further collaboration with peer partners.

Planning Improvement Actions Progress Update

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



Moray has 20 improvement actions. The status of the actions is shown below:



Action 1: Update Applicant Validation handbook incorporating revised procedures and process map

In Progress

Progress against this action: Working with the Services Systems Support team to update the validation handbook to include new requirements such as biodiversity and carbon assessments at validation stage.

The following next steps are proposed: Project delayed in 2025 with retirement and new recruitment within the System Support Team, but staff now in place allows us to continue with the project throughout 2026.

Action 2: Temporary Planning Officer post (1 year)

Complete

What was the outcome of completing this action?

Successfully appointed temporary Development Management Planning officer, post expires in July 2026. This additional member of staff has helped the timeous determination of applications and assisted morale by keeping workloads amongst other staff to manageable levels.



Action 3: Performance Coordinating role within Economic Growth & Development Service

Not Started

Reason(s) action has not been progressed:

- Other

The following next steps are proposed: Wider staff re-structuring review planned for 2026 and budgetary constraints. Await re-structure and consider the role again.

Action 4: Dedicated Planning skills training plan with focus on areas for improvement. Consider shared training with other councils and Improvement Service

In Progress

Progress against this action: In house training taken place biodiversity, Climate change. Fuller use of councils wider training programme under Organisational Development Team.

The following next steps are proposed: Liaise with other local authorities about shared training opportunities, RTPi Chapter events and Brodie's legal updates.

Action 5: Future Planner training programme

Complete

What was the outcome of completing this action?

Two graduate planning posts doing distance degree course (while working) now in post within Strategic Planning and Development team. Summer Student Planner Placement also undertaken in 2025 and planned for 2026. Outcome see full complement of staff in Strategic Planning and Development Team.

Action 6: Review Pre-application advice process. Review if fast, focused advice can be provided

Not Started

Reason(s) action has not been progressed:

- We do not have the resources we need to do this.

The following next steps are proposed: Will schedule for summer 2026.



Action 7: Succession plan for Development Management and Strategic Planning and Development

In Progress

Progress against this action: New Corporate succession plan in place, giving a structure which will be utilised. Both teams incorporating succession planning with staff (planned with SP&D staff annual Employee Review and Development Process meetings). Development Management training Acting Principal Officer in Public Local Inquiry process.

The following next steps are proposed: Succession planning to be included in Development Management Employee Review and Development Process.

Action 8: Member Training Plan and Refresher or update training

Complete

What was the outcome of completing this action?

Members have received additional training on Biodiversity, Climate Change stemming from NPF4. Individual training given to new Elected Members on the Planning Committee and this training was modified to give up to date situation on Strategic planning, latest policies and Development Management processes. The outcome being new Elected Members are better informed of the material considerations and up to date policies used in decision making.

Action 9: Chief Planner Job description part of Management re-structuring

Complete

What was the outcome of completing this action?

Outcome Chief Planners status clarified and incorporated into the Head of Service role for Growth, Planning & Climate (Chief Planning Officer).

Action 10: Review how data is stored moving from existing server to share point

Not Started

Reason(s) action has not been progressed:

- Other

The following next steps are proposed: Part of wider council data storage and retention policy review. Await the wide council review.



Action 11: Review of Planning Web pages. Improve Elected Member access to GIS mapping

In Progress

Progress against this action: Elected Members now have access to GIS mapping and planning constraints maps (and guidance given where requested). Planning web pages to be done later in year as part of wider review of the Council webpages and format.

The following next steps are proposed: Await the wider review of the Council webpages. Additional staff resources given to Council IT Services to facilitate this project in 2026.

Action 12: Review committee presentations moving to power points slides to aid understanding of proposals

Not Started

Reason(s) action has not been progressed:

- We do not have the resources we need to do this.

The following next steps are proposed: Review to occur later in 2026.

Action 13: Review DM Procedures and use of Uniform

In Progress

Progress against this action: Significant number of procedures reviewed and updated in 2025, incorporating use of Enterprise within database system.

The following next steps are proposed: More to occur in 2026. Working through procedures when time allows with Systems Support Officers.

Action 14: Review of handling reports to ensure effective and efficient decision-making. Use of shorter, focused reports. Review standard conditions

Complete

What was the outcome of completing this action?

Trial of different report models undertaken for Report of Handling within Development Management. Staff training and update to the precision and brevity of reports undertaken to make best use of officer's time. Current format of report retained following trial following feedback from officers and support admin.



Action 15: Embed improved timescales for customer e-mail and phone call responses

In Progress

Progress against this action: Discussion with officers regarding timeous response to calls and emails. Review of contact arrangements for hybrid working staff and need to update some staff mobile phones noted.

The following next steps are proposed: A working group is starting immanently to review the Councils Contact Centre, how it serves the planning teams and review of scripts used.

Action 16: Annual stakeholder workshop with Agents/consultees

Not Started

Reason(s) action has not been progressed:

- We do not have the resources we need to do this.

The following next steps are proposed: Await the progression on the emerging Moray Local Development Plan and time an agent/consultee workshop at the appropriate stage later in 2026.

Action 17: Annual Community Council stakeholder workshop

Not Started

Reason(s) action has not been progressed:

- Other

The following next steps are proposed: Community council elections were delayed in Moray and formation. Liaise with Community Council Liaison staff within the Council to set up stakeholder evening meetings with the Community Council. This is anticipated to occur in the first half of 2026. and reconstitution of several community councils has only recently occurred. Therefore the training scheduled from last autumn was delayed.

Action 18: Prepare a plan to engage with Secondary schools on the role Planning plays in communities

Not Started

Reason(s) action has not been progressed:

- Other



The following next steps are proposed: To tie in with the appropriate stage of the next Moray Local Development Plan, this action has been delayed until the appropriate stage in the plan formulation. Time and resources have been set aside after the summer 2026 by the Strategic Planning and Development team to carry out school engagement.

Action 19: Prepare a plan to focus on brownfield sites, vacant land, empty homes and re-use of existing properties

In Progress

Progress against this action: Strategic Planning and Development team have begun work on this plan.

The following next steps are proposed: Continue to work in this plan in 2026 alongside relevant new local development plan formulation. Work with other council services/stakeholders to identify brownfield sites, vacant land, empty homes and re-usable existing properties.

Action 20: Re-engage with RTPI and Planning Awards to promote high quality development in Moray

In Progress

Progress against this action: Strategic Planning and Development Section engaging in several planning awards application processes.

The following next steps are proposed: Continue to engage with appropriate or relevant award applications to promote high quality development in Moray.

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 not yet set up a Peer Review Workshop but would intend to do so towards the end of 2026.

