



SHETLAND
ISLANDS COUNCIL

NATIONAL PLANNING IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK

2024 - 2025



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SHETLAND ISLANDS COUNCIL
NATIONAL PLANNING IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK
Performance Assessment
Cohort 2

FEBRUARY 2025

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INTRODUCTION

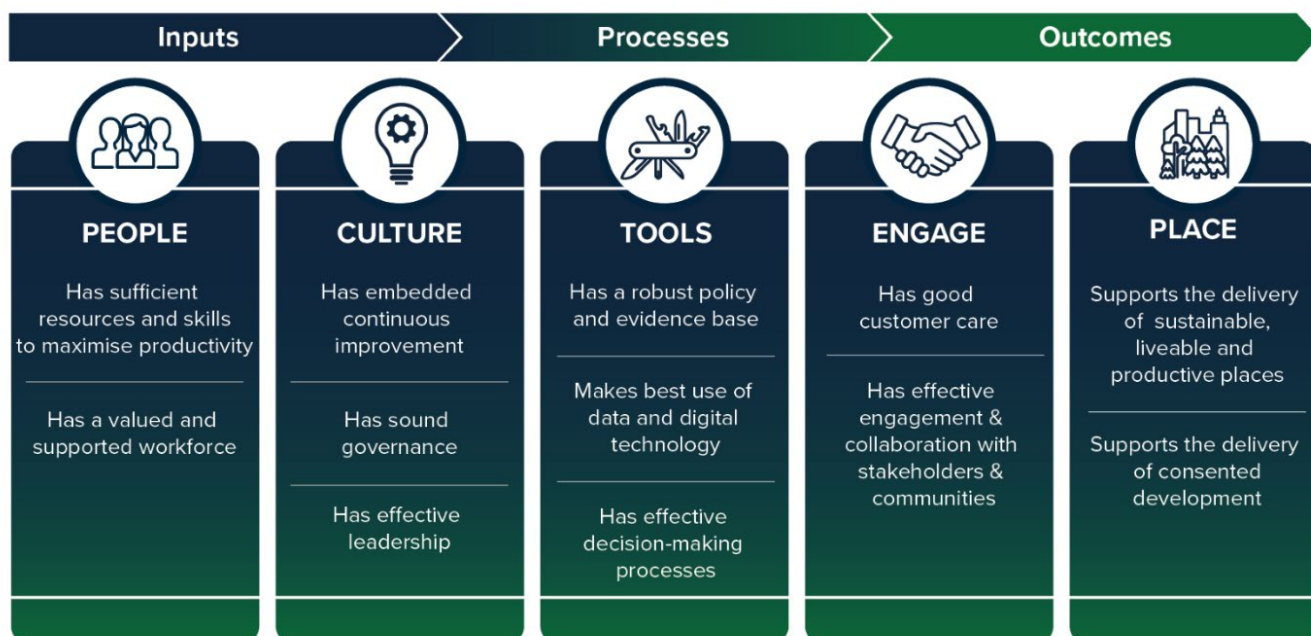
The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 introduced a new approach to measuring the performance of planning authorities. It made it mandatory for planning authorities to prepare a report on their performance as soon as reasonably practicable after the end of each financial year. This report is to be published and submitted to Ministers. A new role of National Planning Improvement Champion (NPIC) was introduced in the Act to monitor the performance of planning authorities and provide advice to them, and other people considered appropriate, on the steps that might be taken to improve.

For this first version on the National Planning Improvement Framework (NPIF) the NPIC has suggested a phased cohort approach be taken by Local Authorities. Shetland Islands Council is in Cohort 2.

The NPIF has been developed by the NPIC and the NPIF process comprises the following 4 stages:

- Stage 1 where the planning authority undertakes a self-assessment exercise and identifies improvement areas.
- Stage 2 where the improvement action plan and performance assessment arising from stage 1 undergoes peer collaborative review.
- Stage 3 where the agreed improvement action plan and performance assessment are published and sent to Scottish Ministers and the Council Chief Executive.
- Stage 4 where the improvement action plan is actioned and monitored.

Stage 1 - the self-assessment is focused on the 12 attributes of highly performing planning authority, which are grouped around 5 themes. These are:



For each of the 12 attributes a score is awarded in line with the scoring matrix below.



From this an action plan for the areas of improvement is identified and developed, specifying improvement actions, the owner of that action, priority, timescales and resources required. The improvement action plan gives an opportunity to outline the ambitions of the Planning Service in the short, medium and long term. Details of the scoring and the associated actions can be found in the document: SIC NPIF Improvement Action Plan 2024

The Council's Planning Service is part of the Development Directorate, which also includes Housing, Community Planning & Development, and Transport & Economic Development. The Planning Service contains the following teams: Development Management, Development Plans and Heritage, Coastal and Marine Planning, Building Standards, Technicians and Business Support. The Service covers predominantly statutory functions.

Development Management deals with all terrestrial planning applications and enforcement issues; Coastal and Marine Planning which deals with marine planning applications and works licence applications, marine policy, coastal planning and flood risk management. The Development Plan & Heritage Team deals with terrestrial policy and strategy, biodiversity and outdoor access.

This report details the outcomes of Stage 1 of the process and is presented to the Peer Review Group along with an Improvement Action Plan 2025 to provide them with the opportunity to assist the Planning Service improve its performance based upon their knowledge and experience of interacting with the service.

Iain McDiarmid
Executive Manager Planning
March 2025



A high performing planning authority needs to have the right number of people to do the work expected of it with the right skills set. It also needs to have a strategy to ensure that it retains and recruits the right staff in the future. It supports staff to upskill and to be prepared for changes in policy, legislation, and new circumstances.

ATTRIBUTE 1: THIS PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS SUFFICIENT RESOURCES AND SKILLS TO MAXIMISE PRODUCTIVITY

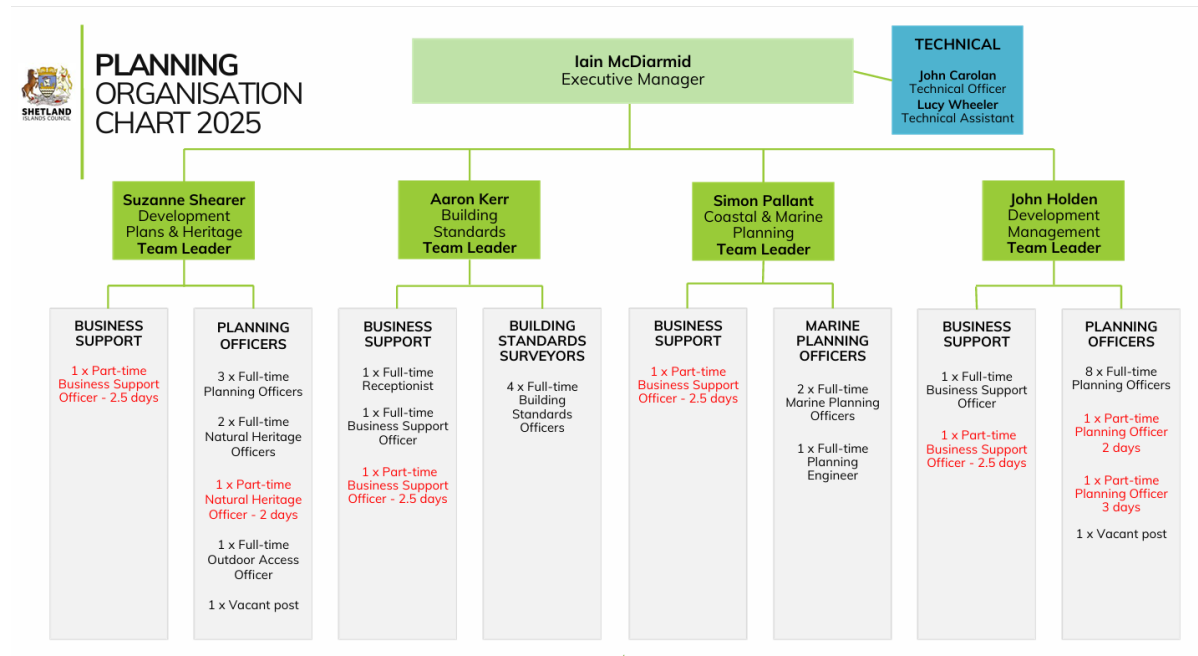
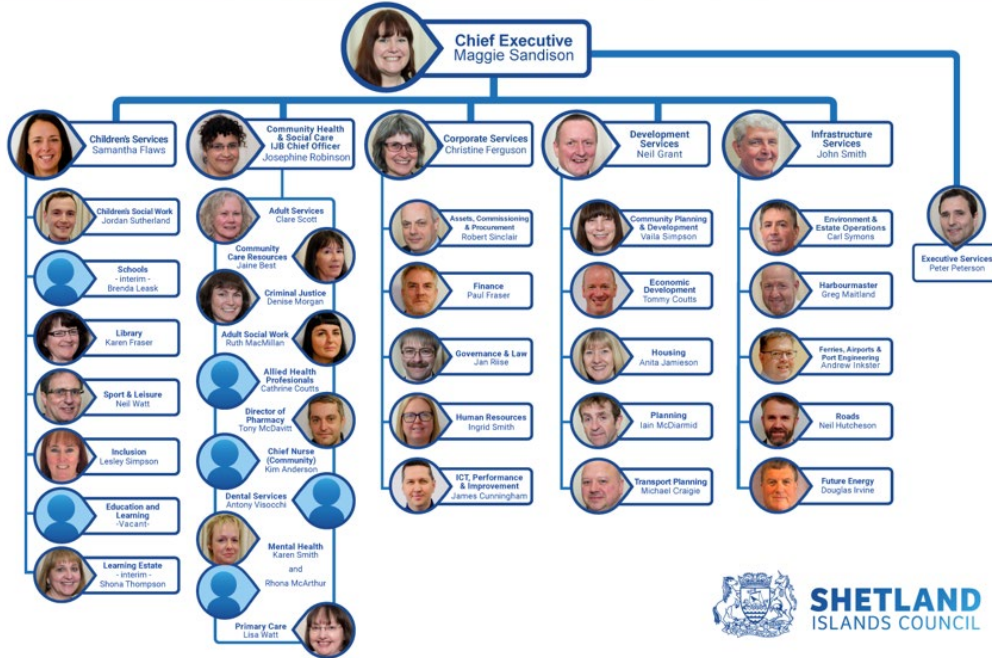
Please consider the following when thinking about this attribute and how you have performed over the last year:

- Does the planning authority have the sufficient level of staff to carry out all activities within the required timeframes?
- Does the planning authority have the ability to carry out all activities within the required timeframes with its current budget?
- Does the planning authority have the ability to carry out all activities within the required timeframes with its current income?
- Does the planning authority received responses from consultees within the prescribed timescale when assessing planning applications?
- Does the planning authority have the ability to access the appropriate advice, expertise, evidence and data it requires?

Staffing Levels & Structures

SHETLAND ISLANDS COUNCIL MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE / OCTOBER 2024



www.shetland.gov.uk/planning-building

The Planning service comprises 35 Officers, of this total a number of officers work part time.

	Tier 1 <i>Chief Executive</i>	Tier 2 <i>Director</i>	Tier 3 <i>Head of Service</i>	Tier 4 <i>Manager</i>
Head of Planning Service Team Leaders			1	4

PLANNING OFFICERS AGE PROFILE	Headcount
Under 30	4
30-39	4
40-49	6
50 and over	9

RTPI Chartered Staff	Headcount
Chartered staff	12

LENGTH OF SERVICE of chartered planners	Headcount
0-5 YEARS	1
5-10 YEARS	3
10 –20 YEARS	1
20 YEARS PLUS	7

The broad remit of the Planning Service means that not all posts in the service are traditional planning officer posts, some members of the Planning Service have other specialisms.

The Royal Town Planning Institute is a membership organisation and the professional body which represents planners. Of the 35 posts in the Planning Service, 12 are Chartered Town Planners. Other staff are support staff or specialists in their own field, a number of them are members of professional institutes relevant to their area of expertise e.g. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management. Where there is a requirement of the post to hold membership of a specific professional body The Council pays for the officer's professional membership fees, although the employee is required to pay the first £65.85.

Development Management Functions

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-application Advice and Enquiries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Enforcement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Validate/Register Planning Applications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Casework Database Administration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processing of Planning Applications, Householder, Local, Major and National 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Appeals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determination of Planning Applications – Conditions/Issue Decision Notices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development Monitoring
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processing/determination of other applications -Listed Building Applications, advertisement consent, prior Notifications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Statistics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Agreements/Obligations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope and Assessment of Environmental Impact Assessments

Coastal and Marine Planning Functions

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-application Advice and Enquiries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marine Planning Enforcement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Validate/Register Marine Planning Applications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marine Planning Casework Database Administration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processing of Marine Planning Applications (Aquaculture) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Appeals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determination of Marine Planning Applications – Conditions/Issue Decision Notices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development Monitoring
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Agreements/Obligations 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processing Works Licenses (Under Zetland County Council Act 1974) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Statistics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope and Assessment of Environmental Impact Assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Marine Plan and Supporting Guidance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flood Risk Management Plan, Flooding and Drainage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coastal Planning – including remit under the Coast Protection Act 1949

Development Plans & Heritage Functions

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Development Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Built Heritage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban Design
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Spatial Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural Heritage

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope and Assessment of Environmental Impact Assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masterplanning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placemaking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Place Plans
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor Access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Application Consultations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trees and Woodlands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Environmental Assessment/Habitats Regulations Appraisal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Property and Street Naming/Numbering 	

Technicians Functions

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GIS Analysis and support (ArcGIS/MapInfo/QGIS) • eDevelopment System Admin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support, upgrades and configuration of IDOX suite of systems: (Uniform/DMS/Planning Application web search)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web mapping (ArcGIS Online) and JADU - content management system – Website/Blog updates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graphic Design
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supplier Liaison 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System licensing and procurement

Budget/Income

The cost of the Planning Service for 2024/25 is approximately £1.5m excluding support services.

Fee Income

Year	Terrestrial Planning Application Fee Income	Marine Planning Application Fee Income*
2024	£314,208.27*2	£2,475.00*1
2023	£193,173.96	£89,125.00
2022	£188,932.80	£73,387.00
2021	£189,208.27	£70,923.00

Note: *We do not charge a fee for Works Licence applications although we have commenced work to examine charging and the implications during 2025.

*1 – The marine planning income for 2024 was impacted by a downturn in shellfish farm applications as a result of fee changes made by the 2022 Fee Regulations. Additionally, no large scale fish farms were received in this period, with one being submitted in December 2023 and a major application being delayed for submission from Winter 2024 to February 2025. The majority of applications processed in 2024 for aquaculture were for amendments under the prior notification process which carries a minimal fee, although they usually involve a considerable amount of officer time and resource to process. Our response to the investing in planning consultation highlighted our concerns with such nominal fees and sought an increase.

*2 – The increase in terrestrial planning income 2024 above the previous year is attributable to a £42,000 payment by the Scottish Government as a proportion of the fee paid for a section 36 application under the Electricity Act 1989, and an in excess of £88,000 payment made in respect of a substation proposal falling in the national development category in the Hierarchy of Developments.

Shetland Islands Regional Marine Plan - Shetland Islands Council commissions UHI Shetland to develop and maintain our Regional Marine Plan. Alongside Shetland Islands Council UHI Shetland form part of the Shetland Marine Planning Partnership and have Delegated Functions under the Marine Planning Act to prepare the Plan Council. Part of this service is covered under the Planning Service budget.

Consultee response times

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT Consultation Respondents	2021/2		2022/23		2023/24		
	Number	Average Days	Number	Average Days	Number	Average Days	
<u>INTERNAL</u>							
Development Plans	4	80	14	49.5	5	87.5	
Natural Heritage	30	45	62	27	49	26	
Outdoor Access	30	1.9	23	15.3	21	9.8	
Planning Engineer	177	1.4	189	1.75	174	2.1	
Transport	1	-	-	-	2	111	
Environmental Health	27	29.3	17	15	51	19.2	
Roads	158	9.2	166	12.8	168	9.5	
Marine Planning	11	1.4	10	2.3	4	5	
<u>External</u>							
NatureScot	37	9.6	47	7.7	33	11.6	

SEPA	26	10.9	24	11.3	8	4.43	
Scottish Water	80	10.5	86	13.5	61	11.5	
Historic Environment Scotland	26	15.2	21	13.6	23	16.6	
Community Councils	146	24	102	25	95	32.2	
Regional Archaeologist	73	8.5	87	8.2	83	6.7	

MARINE PLANNING – Consultation Responses	2021-2024
Internal	Average Days
Natural Heritage	34
Development Management	17
External	
RSPB	36
Shetland Shellfish Management Organisation	28
Shetland Fishermen's Association	23.4
HES	18.3
SEPA	18.3
Marine Scotland Science	15.1
NatureScot	10.9
Northern Lighthouse Board	8.1

The above Marine Planning figures for consultation response times include responses from statutory and non-statutory consultees from a sample of 40 applications submitted between 2021-24. For our next report we intend to develop our monitoring and reporting data and will also seek to provide detailed figures for all aquaculture applications and works licence applications.

Access to expertise / Evidence / Advice /Data

Access to data is key to informing the decision-making process around all elements of the Planning Service, informing our performance reporting, statutory timescales, and preparation and monitoring of the Local Development Plan, Regional Marine Plan and other Planning Policy documents.

The Council does not have a central data repository, with data being collected by Department, Service and Teams. Data is not widely shared and duplication of effort exists across the Council. Efforts are being made by the Council to work more collaboratively within the organisation to gather and share data. Officers in Development Services have recently established a data sharing working group and some early development of working with Microsoft Power BI is underway.

The lack of data sharing and an easily accessible centralised data resource means preparation of the Local Development Plan Evidence Report has taken more officer time than it potentially could have with better data sharing systems in place.

Externally the Council has a good working relationship with the Biological Records Centre and a contract with Shetland Amenity Trust to undertake natural Heritage and Biodiversity related survey work on an annual basis.

The full capability of the existing Uniform Planning casework management system to assist with information and data management and spatial analysis is currently not being fully utilised due to lack of staff resource to implement the required improvements. As well as looking at ways to make use of its capabilities, for example, automatic sending of reminders on temporary permission expiries, the Planning Service is looking at ways to improve the sharing of information that is kept and managed through the system through the use of Power BI.



ATTRIBUTE 2: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS A VALUED AND SUPPORTED WORKFORCE

Please consider the following when thinking about this attribute and how you have performed over the last year:

- Does the planning authority have a workforce planning strategy in place?
- Does the planning authority have the ability to support staff development and upskilling and send staff on relevant courses?
Does the planning authority have a deliverable commitment to support staff health and wellbeing?

Workforce Planning Strategy

The Council adopted its current workforce strategy in 2020: [Shetland Islands Council Committee Information - Submission Documents](#)

It has three key themes:

- **RIGHT PLACE**
- **RIGHT SKILLS**
- **RIGHT CULTURE**

The Workforce Strategy sets out our key areas of priority, required to meet Shetland Islands Council's future workforce needs, which are based on principles of fairness and equality. With an aim to be flexible and adaptable so that the Council can continue to serve our community with the provision of attractive and fulfilling employment opportunities, which secure the continued viability and diversity of the community of Shetland.

Staff Development & upskilling

All Planning Officer posts within the Service are Career Graded from H – L. Officers are supported to further their learning and increase their knowledge in planning with funded opportunities to undertake formal further education – Planning Degree / Post Graduate Planning Qualification through distance learning as they work towards chartered RPTI Membership and at the same time work their way up the career grade.

Officers and Managers within the Planning Service are supported by the Councils workforce development team to access appropriate and necessary training opportunities.

In the 2023/4 Year officers undertook training in the following areas:

TRAINING	NUMBER OF OFFICERS
PLANNING DISTANCE LEARNING	1
FOUNDATION CERTIFICATE IN URBAN DESIGN	4

All staff have access to the Councils online learning platforms – ilearn and Bookboon which contains hundreds of short courses on a wide variety of topics, which is free to access.

The Council operates a ‘Continuous Conversations Policy’ to encourage regular staff and Manager interaction. It encourages staff to ask for meetings with their manager to discuss staff development, health and wellbeing. A template to guide discussion and record actions and outcomes is in place. This model is now well established and has been used by the teams within the Planning Service for a number of years.

The Planning Service also promotes training through learning from others, allowing officers the opportunity to shadow more senior officers, spend time in other Planning Teams e.g. Development Management officers working with Development Plans officers. We also take advantage of learning from other Local Authorities, both through visiting and spending time in their offices and by regular meetings and online connections. The North of Scotland Development Plans Forum is a particularly useful resource for shared learning for those working in the Development Plans & Heritage Team.

The Council has a Flexible Working Policy which supports flexible, remote and hybrid working allowing us to be as flexible as possible to attract and retain employees. Currently we have four members of staff who have a place of work that is off island.

Commitment to Support Staff Health & Wellbeing

The Council’s Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy is in place and there is a Workplace Wellbeing Officer in post to coordinate employee wellbeing support service, and promote workplace wellbeing information and activities. The officer was invited to a recent Planning Team Meeting, which is attended by all Planning staff to explain the support on offer and provide details of how to access it.

Employees of the Council are all able to access a number of free online resources which can help support mental health. The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) provided by Care First gives access to practical information through the Care First information service as well as to emotional support and counselling available 24/7 through Care First Counsellors.

There are also a number of other policies in place designed to support the workforce:

- Substance Misuse Policy
- Continuous Conversations Policy

- Sexual Harassment Prevention & Action Policy
- Carer and Compassionate Leave Policy
- Display Screen Equipment Policy
- Workplace Eyecare
- Employee benefits including cycle to work and other financial benefits

In addition to this the Planning Service are part of a pilot project promoting Walking Meetings and developing a guidance note which it is hoped can be rolled out to all Council Departments.

The Outdoor Access Officer works with other Council departments and external organisations to promote the wellbeing opportunities from spending time outdoors. With Nature prescriptions, Wellbeing walks, Access for all routes and walking challenges all currently being promoted.

VIEWPOINT Survey

The Council undertakes a staff survey on a regular cycle, the last survey entitled the Viewpoint Survey was completed by staff in 2024. Over 1000 staff completed the survey and 2467 comments were received. The compliments, criticisms and suggestions for improvement have been categorised into subject areas, reviewed and will help the Council develop new initiatives aimed at continually improving the Council as a place to work. Scores within the Planning Service were high, indicating a team that is broadly content in the workplace and with their line management, which was encouraging, but as always, there is opportunity for improvement.





A high performing planning authority has a positive culture through ensuring it has sound governance, effective leadership and a commitment to continuous improvement. The authority has an identified chief planner, who is supported by a strong leadership group to advise on decision-making, policy and operational management.

ATTRIBUTE 3: THIS PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS EMBEDDED CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT.

Please consider the following when thinking about this attribute and how you have performed over the last year:

- Has the planning authority undertaken an annual assessment of its performance and acted upon areas previously identified as in need of improvement?
- Has the planning authority achieved recognition at relevant awards or through performance accreditation frameworks?
- Has the planning authority engaged in peer review, good practice exchange or improvement activities?
- Has the planning authority addressed any complaints upheld by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman and have evidence of this and that it has learned from valid cases?

Annual Performance Assessments

In the Last Planning Performance Framework, the following improvements were identified for 2023/4:

- **ACTION:** Update and publish improved guidance on the Planning Service's Quality Audit process and engage with our development industry and key stakeholders to promote further uptake of this.
- **OUTCOME:** The Updated guidance is published on the Councils website and officers regularly reference it when in discussion with applicants, agents and developers.
- **ACTION:** Implement ways to improve our reporting and monitoring of enforcement breaches and monitoring of consents and conditions for marine development – this will include the production of an annual monitoring summary report.

- **OUTCOME:** This action is complete. Enforcement breaches are now covered in our annual monitoring report of aquaculture sites and information is being recorded in our office-based application handling system (uniform).
- **ACTION:** Produce proportionate guidance to support the implementation of policies contained in the Shetland Regional Marine Plan. Namely: Waste Minimisation, Climate Change Mitigation & Adaptation and Decommissioning.
- **OUTCOME:** The Marine Planning Team drafted three separate pieces of guidance on the above policy areas in October 2023 and we shared this with the aquaculture industry for comments and feedback. As our Regional Marine Plan is currently with Scottish Ministers for adoption this guidance will be issued once the plan is in place to support the Marine Plan policies.
- **ACTION:** Continue to provide direct input into the Scottish Government's Aquaculture Review, principally through our involvement in the Aquaculture Consenting Task Group and developing new approaches to joint-pre application. As part of this we intend to work with industry, SEPA and others to pilot new approaches in our planning authority area.
- **OUTCOME:** Shetland Islands Council Marine Planning Team has continued to provide input into this process. We, along with Highland Council, are the first two planning authorities in Scotland to pilot a new 4 stage approach to pre-application. More info on this is provided in a Case Study 'Developing New Approaches to Joint Pre-Application for Marine Fish Farm Applications'.
- **ACTION:** Improve the Planning Service's understanding of the Council's complaints procedure, by ensuring that all staff undertake training during 2023 to identify, log and respond to complaints in an effective and efficient manner.
- **OUTCOME:** All staff who handle complaints are required to undertake our Council's online complaints training. In addition to this, and although not mandatory, all staff in our planning service were requested to undertake this training to help they identify and handle complaints in line with the Council's [Complaints Handling Procedure](#).
- **ACTION:** Continue to engage and communicate with elected members, community councils, key agencies and our development industry on our next LDP and NPF4 in a variety of ways including blogs, member seminars and meetings/workshops.
- **OUTCOME:** The Planning blog has been created and is regularly updated with content from all teams within the service. Members are sent briefings when appropriate on key workload areas and have been invited to

seminars which are focussed on key aspects of the LDP delivery process such as the OUR PLACE YOUR SAY Place Standard engagement

- **ACTION:** Work alongside our housing service to understand issues which are impacting upon housing delivery in Shetland
- **OUTCOME:** We share data and research with our housing colleagues in order to better understand the current issues. We also meet with the islands Housing Association (Hjaltland) to understand the issues from their perspective. We await the instigation of the Housing Market Partnership by our housing colleagues and have expressed our desire to be part of the core group.
- **ACTION:** Contribute to future departmental meetings on to help develop and establish understanding of the roles and responsibilities of officers employed with our Directorate. This will reduce duplication to enable joined-up approaches to service provision, sharing of data, knowledge and skills.
- **OUTCOME:** Development Services is working towards a Strategic Framework. This project has included workshops with the Wider Management Team of Development Services , activity mapping and aims to identify the most effective priorities with the assistance of external consultant

Internal Audit / External Audit

The Council is currently commencing an internal audit on performance reporting, but this is at an early stage.

Development Services has embarked on a Strategic Framework, aimed at addressing one of the necessary changes, which is to develop a more strategic approach for Development Directorate. The aim is to develop a more collaborative approach to increase efficiency and make the most of limited resources by prioritising where we can be most effective.

Awards

The Planning Service have not submitted projects / strategies for awards in recent years. The Service should think more about what we can put ourselves up for as a demonstration of staff skill and a value of their input and expertise.

Good Practice

Members of the Planning Service actively participate in Heads of Planning Group, the Sub groups and short term working groups when they are relevant and appropriate to planning in our islands

The Service also participate in:

- North of Scotland Development Plans Forum
- National Enforcement Forum
- The joint Local Authority Aquaculture Planning group (see case study).
- The Scottish Government Aquaculture Consenting Task Group (see case study)
- The Local Planning Liaison Group with Salmon Scotland
- Shetland Flood Risk Plan Management Plan - Development Partnership Group with Council Services, SEPA , Scottish Government and Scottish Water.
- The lead local authority group for developing the National Flood Risk Management Plan.

The Coastal Zone Manager also participates in the National Marine Planning Forum to support the development of National Marine Plan 2, and is also a member of the Regional Marine Planning Forum which supports the development of regional marine planning in Scotland. The Council's Marine Planning team, along with marine spatial planners at UHI Shetland, have significant experience and expertise in marine spatial planning and marine planning policy. Together we play an active role in sharing good practice and knowledge with stakeholders, including the Scottish Government, Scottish Coastal Forums (Local Coastal Partnerships) and other Marine Planning Partnerships.

The Team Leader Development Plans and Heritage and one of the Natural Heritage Officers visited our colleagues in Orkney to exchange ideas, learn from peers undertake joint site visits. It is hoped that this face-to-face connection can be continued, and that Orkney will visit Shetland.

Complaints

The Council has a Complaints Handling Procedure which provides a standard approach for dealing with customers who are unhappy with the service that they have received: [Make a Complaint – Shetland Islands Council](#)

In addition to the Council procedure any Ongoing complaints are added to the agenda at team meetings so we can discuss, learn from them and improve on our processes and procedures.

During 2023/24 there was one complaint received by the Planning Service that was handled and resolved at the Frontline Stage 1 process of the Council's procedure. It concerned the publicising of personal data and communication of change in confidentiality status when what has been an enforcement case moves forward to a planning application which seeks to regularise the planning position. It was established that the manner in which personal data are used and handled could be improved and clarified. As a result, a Planning specific, Privacy Notice was produced and notices and planning pages of the Council's website reviewed and updated.

During 2023/24 there were two complaints submitted to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). One of the complaints related to, in the complainant's view, the

key actions/decisions taken by the Planning Service in relation to the processing of a planning application. The SPSO, having taken advice from an independent planning adviser, concluded that the Council, as planning authority, had provided a reasonable explanation of their treatment and assessment of the application and the approach that was taken with respect to the nature of the proposal concerned. In concluding, the SPSO informed the complainant that in the circumstances they considered that further investigation would be unlikely to add anything of any further significance or result in meaningful outcomes for themselves or the Council. The SPSO decided that the complaint would not be considered further, but stressed that their assessment focused on the Council's investigation and response, and did not form a view about the issues being complained about or whether the complaint was upheld or not upheld.

Lessons Learnt - Complaint Shellfish Fees

Background

In 2023/24 we received a complaint which related to the Council's interpretation and application of 'The Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications) (Scotland) Regulations 2022' for calculating fees for shellfish farm applications.

The Council considered that changes in the 2022 Regulations meant our calculation methodology for shellfish farming, as adopted in respect of the previous 2017 Regulations, was no longer appropriate and noted that this resulted in a higher fee (approx. 100%) when compared to previous legislation.

We communicated this to the shellfish industry at the time of the 2022 Regulations coming into effect, however, following this the number of shellfish applications being submitted to the Planning Service reduced significantly, thereby impacting upon our overall fee income.

The complaint was escalated to Stage 2 'Investigation' in the Council's complaints procedure and a response was sent from the Director of Development. Following this, the complainant went to the SPSO, 'Stage 3' in the Council's complaints procedure, who took the decision not to uphold the complaint.

Lessons learnt

In spite of the SPSO not upholding the case, we decided to take the following actions to improve our service:

- We now seek to improve awareness, wherever possible, with regards to changes in planning fee regulations with industry.
- We made the Scottish Government aware of the concerns raised by industry as a result of the 2022 fee regulations. We also made them aware that by increasing the fees in this manner our fee income reduced substantially as a result of applications not being submitted.

- We now seek to raise awareness of other relevant Scottish Government consultations with industry stakeholders, wherever possible, whilst being mindful that being informed of and responding to such consultations is a matter for industry.

Shellfish Fees – Subsequent Changes to Fees December 2024

- In December 2024, the Scottish Government introduced by [The Town and Country Planning \(Fees for Applications\) \(Scotland\) Amendment Regulations 2024](#) This resulted in fees for ‘the placing or assembly of equipment in any part of any marine waters for the purposes of shellfish farming’ being reduced.
- Shetland Islands Council responded to the prior ‘Investing in Planning’ consultation which included a question on shellfish fees. Our response to this consultation suggested appropriate fees for ensuring cost recovery. We also made industry aware of this consultation so that they could respond on this matter.



ATTRIBUTE 4: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS SOUND GOVERNANCE

Please consider the following when thinking about this attribute and how you have performed over the last year:

- Does the planning authority have an effective scheme of delegation in place?
- Have all councillors who exercise a planning function undergone statutory training and is there is evidence of ongoing training for members?
- Have more than x % of officer recommendations have been overturned by councillors at committee or Local Review Body.

Scheme of Delegation

The Council approved the current scheme of delegation in 2022 : [Shetland Islands Council](#)

The number of planning applications determined by the Planning Committee and reviews determined by the Local Review Body over the last 3 years are detailed below. 97.7% of applications were delegated to officers to determine in 2023/24, which is above the Scottish average of 96.5% and compares with a delegation rate of 93.3% in Orkney .

	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22
Planning Committee	7	5	6
Local Review Body	2	2	3

Overtured Officer Recommendations

	2023/24 (no, %)	2022/23 (no, %)	2021/22 (no, %)
Overtured at Planning Committee	7, 29%	5, 20%	6, 33.3%
Overtured at Local Review Body	2, 100%	2, 100%	3, 66.6%
Overtured by DPEA	1, 100%	0	2, 100%

Elected Member Training

Member training is managed and coordinated by the Corporate Services Department of Shetland Islands Council. Planning Aid Scotland are engaged to provide training and all members who sit on the Planning Committee are required to attend training.

Training is also offered to other Members such as those who sit on the Development Committee where Planning Policy decisions are made.

When there is a by election or a new Member becomes part of the Planning Committee an opportunity for training is provided.

In addition to formal training Members are invited to attend Planning related learning events such as Members Seminars, visiting training / speakers as appropriate. The Planning service operates an open door policy and members are welcome to visit the team or arrange to meet to learn more about specific topics. The Director Development Services holds a fortnightly meeting with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Development Committee, The Executive Manager Planning attends to brief the Chair and Vice Chair when Planning matters are on the agenda.



ATTRIBUTE 5: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

Please consider the following when thinking about this attribute and how you have performed over the last year:

- Does the planning authority have an identified Chief Planning Officer in place?
- Does the Chief Planning Officer advise on corporate decision making and policy within the broader organisation?
- Is the planning authority's Chief Planning Officer a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute?
- Does the Chief Planning Officer advise and support external bodies through engagement in organisations' committees, advisory groups or working groups?
- Does the planning authority have a strong leadership team that supports a culture of continuous improvement?

Chief Planner

A new duty for planning authorities to appoint a Chief Planning Officer came into force on 1 April 2024 with the Scottish Government publishing guidance on the role of an authority's Chief Planning Officer which provided clarity on the role and responsibilities. The Chief Planning Officer is to help strengthen leadership on planning and corporate recognition of the importance and positive influence of planning within their authorities. The Chief Planning Officer should possess a degree in town planning, or an associated discipline and it is highly desirable for the Chief Planning Officer to hold chartered membership of the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI).

The Council has undertaken a job evaluation process. The Director of Development Services has committed to the Chief Planning Officer being in place by March. The intention is that the Chief Planning Officer will attend the Councils Corporate Management Team when relevant items are on the agenda.

Advice & Support to External Organisations and Bodies

The Head of Planning is supported by 3 Team Leaders (Building Standards, Development Management & Development Plans & Heritage) and 1 Coastal Zone Manager Coastal and Marine Planning). The Planning management team meet on a regular basis to consider a variety of matters affecting the service including performance and improvement.

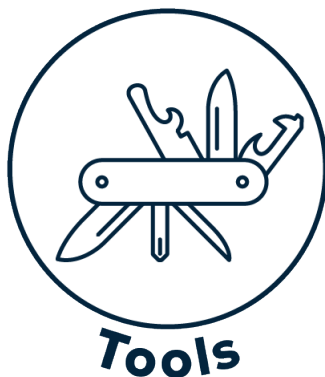
Members of the Leadership team also participate in the Heads of Planning Scotland Development Planning and Development Management Committees. Within the team the Head of Planning is a former Chair of the HOPS Executive Committee and the Team Leader Development Plans and Heritage is an former Chair of the HOPS Development Plans Sub Committee. The Coastal zone manager was the chair of the

Aquaculture Authorities working group during 2024 and participates in the Scottish Government's National Marine Planning Forum and Regional Marine Planning Forum to support the Scottish Government development of National Marine Plan 2 and regional marine plans.

SOTEAG / SWEAG - the Coastal Zone Manager is a member of the Sullom Voe Oil Terminal Advisory Group and Monitoring Group, which was established to assess and monitor the environmental effect of the Sullom Voe Oil Terminal. Membership includes industry, academia and nature conservation bodies. The group meets on a regular basis to discuss seabird and species monitoring outputs and community engagement on these matters.

ScotWind the Head of Planning and Coastal Zone Manager are members of the Heads of Planning ScotWind group. The group engages closely with the Scottish Government on a variety of matters related to offshore wind farm development including consenting, licensing, streamlining and community benefits.





A high performing planning authority needs to have an effective local development plan and other strategies in place to provide a vision for the future of the area. It needs to be able to set and deliver on policy ambitions and priorities by clearly informing decision making and providing certainty and predictability for communities, developers and investment. The authority's development management systems need to be effective in making the right decisions about development and be efficient as possible in doing this. The planning authority makes best use of digital technology and how it manages and uses data.

ATTRIBUTE 6: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS A ROBUST POLICY AND EVIDENCE BASE

Please consider the following when thinking about this attribute and how you have performed over the last year:

- Does the planning authority have an up to date Local Development Plan in place and/ or is on track to adoption?
- Does the planning authority have an up to date Regional Spatial Strategy in place/ or on track to adoption?
- Has the planning authority's Local Development Plan Evidence Report been approved by the Department of Planning and Environmental Appeals and/ or on track for approval?
- Have the application of the Local Development Plan's policies been found to be deficient at appeal or judicial review?

Local Development Plan

Our current Local Development Plan (2014) was anticipated to be replaced by LDP2, following consultation on the Main Issues Report and Call for Sites in February-March 2022, but due to circumstances out with our control work on this plan was halted following the coming into effect of revised development plan regulations. We now have an approved programme of works for our replacement, new style, Local Development Plan. The latest approved Development Plan Scheme can be viewed here: [development-plan-scheme-2024-25](#)

Regional Spatial Strategy

The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 introduced a new duty requiring the preparation of Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS). A planning authority or authorities acting jointly will prepare these long-term spatial strategies for the strategic development of an area. RSS are not part of the statutory development plan, but have an important role to play in informing future versions of the NPF and LDPs.

The Scottish Government Guidance on preparing a RSS has not yet been published. As part of Local Authorities' input into the NPF4 plan making process, we were required to produce an Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy (IRSS).

The Shetland iRSS published in 2021 can be viewed online here: [shetland-indicative-regional-spatial-strategy](#)

Local Development Plan Evidence Report

The Evidence Report is a new element in the preparation of the LDP where evidence must be gathered to show why a new LDP is needed and evidence provided that supports the aims and aspirations for development planning in Shetland

Evidence to be provided to the Scottish Government formally through a Gate check process will include:

- Geographical Demographics (school rolls, birth and death rates, healthcare statistics, inward migration).
- Housing Need and Demand Assessment.
- Economic Change (Agriculture, Energy, Tourism, Food and Drink, Retail).
- Digital Connectivity.
- Sustainable Transport Data.
- Environmental baseline and issues (Historical and Natural).
- Evidence of Community Engagement and Consultation.
- Open Space Strategy and Play Sufficiency Assessment.
- Self-Build Housing Demand Register.
- Evaluate whether the previous plan has delivered on its outcomes, and allocations and consider appropriateness of previous strategy.
- Infrastructure such as communications, transport, drainage systems, supply of water, energy, health care and education facilities of the county and how it is used.

Work on the Local Development Plan Evidence report is well underway, we are currently working towards a deadline of submitting the Evidence report to the Government Gate check in late 2025.

One of the key parts of our evidence gathering research is to obtain community based / lived experience evidence. We are running the Our Place Your Say consultation during

the month of February. This is based on the Place Standard survey. We have worked collaboratively with across the Council to produce this ambitious survey. The results will inform a number of other Council policies and plans and be available to other organisations and community groups to use as relevant to place making and place based approaches to service delivery.

Local Development Plan Policies

The National Planning Framework 4 was adopted and published in February 2022 shortly after that time the Planning Service undertook to review and assess the relevance of the polices included in the existing LDP (20214). The results of this confirmed that our LDP, while now 10 years old is relevant and current in its policy content.

The relevance of our Policies can be tested by appeals. There have been 3 no. planning related appeals (including enforcement notice appeals) and 2 no. notified and called in applications determined by the Scottish Government Planning and Environmental Appeals Division. Albeit all three appeals were allowed, and one of the notified and called in applications was refused permission when the Council had been minded to grant. In all cases the policies in the development plan were found to be relevant and given account to by the Reporters and Scottish Ministers.

Marine Planning Policy

We have an established approach to marine spatial planning in Shetland dating back over 20yrs. This includes the production of Marine Spatial Plans, of which the current version is adopted as supplementary guidance to our current Local Development Plan (2014). The Council was the first Regional Marine Planning Partnership in Scotland to draft a Regional Marine Plan, which was submitted to Scottish Ministers for adoption in April 2021. As of early February 2025, the plan remains with Scottish Ministers for adoption, as unlike development plans Scottish Ministers adopt the plan. The time taken to get the plan adopted is very much to the frustration of the Shetland Marine Planning Partnership (SIC and UHI Shetland), our planning service, elected members, industries and communities. Over the last few years in particular we have been working very closely with the Scottish Government to get our Regional Marine Plan to the point of adoption so that we can begin to implement the policy and also monitor its effectiveness.

In addition to our Regional Marine Plan we have also developed a Masterplan for Marine Development in the Sullom Voe Harbour Area. This was adopted as non-statutory planning guidance in 2023, and includes the identification of areas of potential development for uses such as aquaculture, seaweed farming and renewables. It is one of the first types of marine master planning at such a detailed level in Scotland.

ATTRIBUTE 7: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY MAKES BEST USE OF DATA AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

Please consider the following when thinking about this attribute and how you have performed over the last year:

- Has the planning authority encouraged and promoted planning applications to be submitted through the e-development portal?
- Does the planning authority have a data governance strategy in place for the management of planning data?
- Does the planning authority have the ability to use interactive web-mapping, GIS and spatial data?
- Does the planning authority have the ability to use digital approaches to engagement, including website, social media and other platforms?

Online Submission of Planning Applications

The Planning Service has promoted the submission of planning applications on-line since the ePlanning Scotland portal was launched in April 2009.

100% of applications were submitted on-line in 2023/24 compared with the estimated Scottish average of 90%.

All marine aquaculture-planning applications are submitted electronically by email. However, applicants are unable to use the e- development portal to do this. This is something we have raised on a number of occasions with the Scottish Government as it requires additional officer and business support time to register applications and process payments for applications.

Data Sharing Agreements

We have a number of data sharing agreements in place with organisations such as UHI Shetland and the Scottish Government Marine Directorate for our Regional Marine Plan and the Sullom Voe Oil Terminal Advisory Group (SOTEAG) for marine planning application data.

Interactive Web Mapping and Data Usage

There are two dedicated technical staffing support within the Planning Service to support Interactive Web Mapping, GIS, Spatial Data graphic design, website updates and document publication

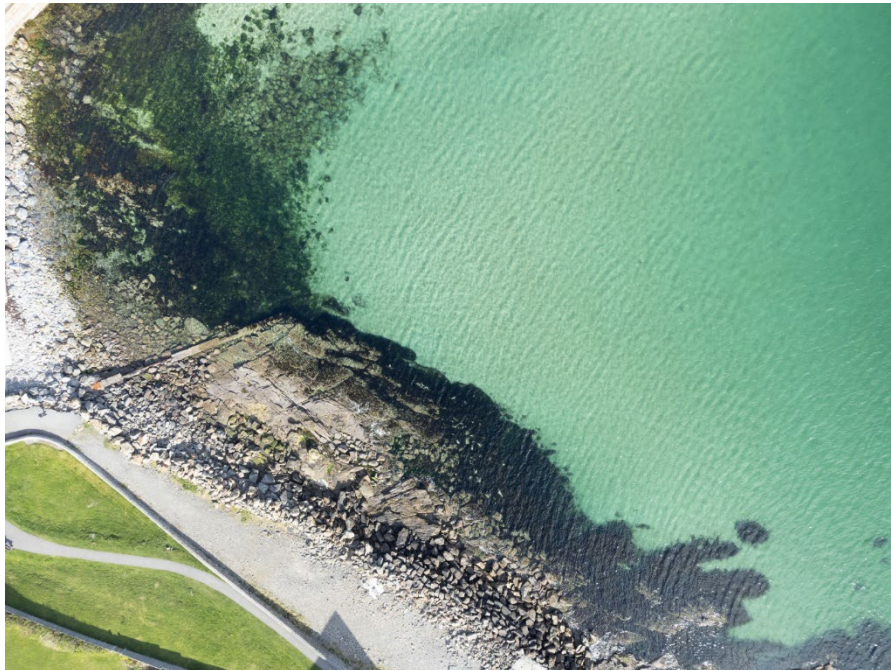
The majority of the data the Planning Service holds is spatial data. All planning constraints are digitised and officers have the ability to interrogate the mapping. Constraints for individual planning applications are automatically pulled into the Uniform system.

The Planning Service is in the process of transitioning its GIS mapping software package from MapInfo to ArcGIS.

Digital Approaches to Engagement

Engagement in remote rural locations with dispersed communities such as we have in Shetland means a variety of different methods of engagement are required. The Planning Service has used several methods of digital engagement including the following:

- ESRI story MAPS
- MS TEAMS Meetings and drop in sessions
- Online Survey tools such as Smart Survey and Microsoft equivalent
- Online 'Virtual Town Hall'



ATTRIBUTE 8: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT DECISION MAKING PROCESSES

Please consider the following when thinking about this attribute and how you have performed over the last year:

- Does the planning authority planning have the ability to make decisions on planning applications within the required timeframes?
- Are less than x% of planning decisions overturned at appeal or judicial review?
- Does the planning authority have an up to date Enforcement Charter in place?
- Does the planning authority have the ability to resolve enforcement cases?

Decision Making Timeframes

Development Management:	2023/4	2022/23	2021/22
Project Planning			
Percentage and number of applications subject to pre-application advice	72 – 36%	54 -17 %	40 - 13%
Percentage and number of major applications subject to processing agreement	0%	0 %	0 %
Decision Making			
Application approval rate	98.0%	98.5%	99.3%
Delegation rate	97.7%	98.7%	99%
Validation	60%	18%	20%
Decision-making Timescales			
Major Developments	11.3 weeks	29.1weeks	54.1 weeks
Local developments (non-householder)*	13.8 weeks	17.5weeks	16.1 weeks
Householder developments	6.5 weeks	18.1weeks	12.6 weeks
Legacy Cases			
Number cleared during reporting period	3	7	3
Number remaining	5	2	3

*The Councils Marine planning decision timescales for local marine fish farming applications for 2023/24 was an average of 16.9 weeks. This timescale was impacted by one particular application that took 35.1 weeks to determine. This was a complex case with natural heritage and biodiversity issues (extraction of water from a loch with associated impacts on a protected species (red throated diver). Due to this, the

applicant required was required to undertake monitoring in the bird-breeding season through extensive consultation with RSPB, our natural heritage officer and the Shetland Amenity Trust. The development was subsequently approved following amendments made to the application by the applicant and the inclusion of planning conditions to ensure protection for the species involved.

Decision making timescales for works licenses which are processed by the Marine Planning Team are also provided in the table below. Under the Zetland County Council Act 1974 we have 3 months to determine a works license. If we fail to determine the application within these timescales the application is automatically refused, with a right of appeal to the Scottish Government. Works licenses also include a third party right of appeal.

Works Licence Decision Timescales

YEAR	AVERAGE TIME (in weeks)
2024*	8.5
2023	12
2022	11.6
2021	12.5

As can be seen above the majority of decisions are taken within 12 weeks, and all were made within the 3 months of the application being validated. The type and complexity of works licence applications can vary considerably from small scale development such as sea outfalls to seaweed farms, interconnector cables and marine renewables (wind and wave). There is no fee for a works licence application or pre-application, although this is something we will be looking into in order to ensure some type of cost recovery for the time and resource taken to process applications.

*In 2024 a total of 13 applications were withdrawn. This included 12 seaweed farm applications in the Sullom Voe harbour area that were withdrawn just a few weeks before the 3 month determination deadline.

Appeal Decisions

Over the past three complete financial years there have been 3 no. appeals determined by Reporters of the DPEA acting for Scottish Ministers. All three determinations that became the subject of appeal were for cases where the Planning Committee made the determination to refuse planning permission going against officer recommendation. All three appeals were allowed, but at the same time none of the decisions found that policies in the development plan were not applicable. Over the course of the same period the Local Review Body, in relation to proposals that fell in the local development category in the Hierarchy of Developments and where the initial determination had been

made by the Appointed Person in accordance with the Council’s approved Planning Scheme of Delegations, considered seven planning appeals. In all but one case the Local Review Body decided to uphold the appeals that had been lodged.

Enforcement Charter

Our Enforcement Charter was last updated in May 2023 – [planning-enforcement-charter](#)

Enforcement Cases

	2023/4	2022/23	2021/22
Time since enforcement charter published / reviewed Requirement: review every 2 years	10 months	3 years 6 months*	2 years 6 months
Complaints lodged and investigated	71	37	84
Breaches identified – no further action taken	4	4*	1
Cases closed	57	50	74
Notices served	0	0	0
Direct Action	0	0	0
Reports to Procurator Fiscal	0	0	0
Prosecutions	0	0	0

Marine Planning Monitoring & Enforcement

Our first monitoring summary report for the 2023/24 monitoring period sets out from the 227 sites monitored by the Marine Planning Team, 14 breaches were identified of which two remain unresolved, but action is being taken to remedy these. We intend to publish the report on our website and share this with stakeholders. A copy of the report has been included to provide supporting evidence.



A high performing planning authority should ensure a wide range of people are involved in shaping their future places. Engagement should be fair and inclusive, early, collaborative, meaningful and proportionate and should include difficult to reach groups. The authority should engage with a wide range of partners at a national, regional and local level to ensure a joined-up approach and that links are made across policies and programmes. The planning authority should demonstrate good customer care, transparency and effective communication.

ATTRIBUTE 9: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS GOOD CUSTOMER CARE

Please consider the following when thinking about this attribute and how you have performed over the last year:

- Does the planning authority have the ability to offer pre-application advice where it is requested?
- Has the planning authority held regular engagement events with developers and communities?
- Do the results from the customer and stakeholder survey show that customers are satisfied with the service offer by the planning authority?

Pre Application Advice

The Planning Service currently offers free pre-application advice. The service encourages submission and promotes this in discussions with developers and on our website. The table below gives numbers of pre applications submissions over the past 3 years. The size, scale and level of detail in these pre application queries varies and therefore so does the amount of officer time spent responding.

Pre- Application Submissions Received	2022	2023	2024
No.	125	164	147

The marine planning team have an established [pre-application advice service for aquaculture planning applications and works licenses](#) which also includes a [pre-application form](#). Almost all of the planning and works licence applications that are submitted to the marine planning have benefited from prior pre-application advice. The pre-application service is well used by our fish farm and shellfish farm companies and

also for works licence developments such as seaweed farms, cables and discharges into the marine environment. On average, the number of pre-applications usually correspond with the amount of applications subsequently submitted and we are currently looking at ways to record this and improve on the data reporting we currently have. The figures are as follows for aquaculture and works license pre-applications:

	Total Marine Pre-apps	Aquaculture	Works Licence
2022	31	25	6
2023	40	38	2
2024	34	12	22

The planning service operates on an “open for business basis” and is willing to engage with developers of significant projects in the early stages of project planning and development, prior to formal planning application submission. [Pre-application advice – Shetland Islands Council](#)

The Planning Authority has developed a Quality Audit process which it promotes to developers. It is a developer led process and Planning Officers are available to help support developers to establish this process. A guidance note on the Quality Audit process is available to view online. [quality-audit-guidance-note-2024-25](#)

Engagement with Developers & Communities

The Planning Service publishes a Blog where planning news and updates are posted regularly: [Planning News](#)

We maintain a developers mailing list and emails with updates or links to updates are sent out regularly. In the past we have held regular Developers Workshop sessions however these have become less regular of late due to a variety of reasons including limited staff resources we are therefore exploring more effective ways of engaging with our Developers as we realise that providing an opportunity for face to face engagement is desirable.

The Development Plans & Heritage Team is establishing a number of regular stakeholder engagement sessions, at the moment the focus is on supporting geographical communities who are working towards delivering Local Place Plans. So far, a number of online and in person meetings and workshops have taken place, and an all-day seminar session is planned for the Spring of 2025.

Recognising the need to have more meaningful engagement with the islands young population we are working with officers in the Youth Services team and external consultants APiC to undertake a programme of engagement with our school age population on the topic of Place Making aiming to engage with school age children in every school cluster across Shetland by Autumn 2025.

The Marine Planning Team attend regular meetings of the Council's Fisheries and Aquaculture Working Group which is organised by the Council's Economic Development Service and chaired by the Council's Development Committee Chair. The group includes industry representation from Salmon Scotland (fish farming) and Seafood Shetland (shellfish farming) as well as economic development, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, fishery organisations, UHI Shetland and elected members. Additionally, the Marine Planning Team holds regular meetings with our 2 main fish farm companies (Scottish Sea Farms and Cooke Aquaculture) and with the mussel farm industry (through Seafood Shetland). This enables discussion on a range of matters including future development proposals, planning policy and guidance, our regional marine plan and relevant Scottish Government consultations.

Customer Feedback Survey

Customer survey forms are provided to service users in the format of a link provided for online completion. The change to electronic completion took place relatively recently with the aim being to not just be more sustainable but make it easier for customers to complete. It has to date only been sent to applicants who receive approvals, but in spite of the majority of decisions the Council issues being for approval, and the ease with which completion can take place in the 2023/24 year, only one return was made. The Customer Questionnaire has been devised for completion by those who use the Planning Service in relation to all types of planning decision notices, pre-application advice provided and those receiving notification having made representation to an application. It is therefore to be rolled out for full utilisation. The responses received are to form part of the feedback for reporting to the Scottish Government PPF (now NPIF) and part of the annual review presented to the Council's Development Committee.

Other opportunities for feedback happen on an ad hoc basis and include Developers workshops, and smaller focus groups as appropriate.

Shetland Islands Council has a Customer Charter approved in June 2018 and reviewed again in 2022. The last customer survey as undertaken in 2022 and it is likely that the next refresh of the Customer Charter will be after the publication of the new Corporate Plan which is currently in review.

[Customer First – Shetland Islands Council](#)

ATTRIBUTE 10: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT AND COLLABORATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS AND COMMUNITIES

Please consider the following when thinking about this attribute and how you have performed over the last year:

- Does the planning authority have a community engagement strategy and infrastructure in place to ensure engagement is early, collaborative, meaningful and proportionate?
- Has the planning authority undertaken community engagement, for example consistent and effective use of the Place Standard Tool, to inform decision-making processes? Has the planning authority encouraged and promoted planning applications to be submitted through the e-development portal?
- Has the planning authority engaged with a good representation of the community including young people, gypsies and travellers, people with protected characteristics, including disability, race, age, sex and sexual orientation, and including people from a range of socio-economic backgrounds?
- Has the planning authority supported the production of Local Place Plans when requested?
- Do the results from the customer and stakeholder survey show that stakeholders are satisfied with their collaboration with the planning authority?

Community Engagement Strategy

As part of our Development Plan Scheme we have published a Participation Statement which sets out clearly when, how and with whom we will engage as part of the Plan making process. [development-plan-scheme-2024-25](#).

The Regional Marine Plan also has a participation statement which can be read here: [REGIONAL MARINE PLAN FOR THE SHETLAND ISLES Statement of Public Participation \(SPP\) - August 2022](#) In addition to this the development of the Regional Marine Plan is guided by an [Advisory Group](#) that covers representation from community, economic and environmental interests and is chaired by the Coastal Zone Manager. The Marine Planning Team also contribute to a regular [Newsletter](#) that is published by the Shetland Marine Planning Partnership and sent to a wide distribution list including community councils.

Community Engagement Activity

Shetland Islands Council ran a Shetland Wide Place Standard Consultation in 2016. The Community engaged well with this and we received in the region of 900 responses with around 4000 Individual comments. The responses went on to inform a number of plans and policies including the Local Housing Strategy and Transport Strategy as part of the evidence gathering for the next Local Development Plan the

Development Plans and Heritage Team have recently launched a second Place Standard based consultation 'OUR PLACE : YOUR SAY' which we hope will have a similar level of community response.

As part of the Place-Based approach and also to support the Play Sufficiency Assessment workload the Service has enlisted the support of APiC (A Place in Childhood) to undertake engagement with school age children on the topic of place, Initially this was a trial in one school cluster but in 2025 there has been a commitment to undertake this work across all school clusters in Shetland.

The service works with the Community Planning colleagues to attempt to ensure all sectors of Shetland society have the opportunity to engage in consultation and engagement events.

The service has used innovative ways of engaging with a remote and dispersed community as part of our Local Plan preparation process. In 2021 we used an online Virtual Town Hall portal to engage on our MIR report and we intend to use the Virtual Town Hall concept again in our current plan making processes.

The Council has encouraged and promoted the use of online submissions for planning applications. Close to 100% of all planning submissions are received online for both terrestrial and marine planning.

Local Place Plans

Shetland Islands Council was part of a Scottish Government Pilot project on Local Place Plans, as a result of this pilot the Scalloway Local Place Plan was produced in 2019. [Scalloway-Action-Plan-v3r.pdf](#)

The Planning authority supported by PAS (Planning Aid Scotland) has set out a programme for support and engagement of Communities wishing to undertake Local Place Plans. At the time of writing this report circa 30 communities have expressed an intention to produce a Local Place Plan, none have reached the stage of registration.



A high performing planning authority should demonstrate place leadership by taking a collaborative place-based approach in line with the Place Principle. It should use the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes in decision-making processes, to achieve the three spatial principles outlined in NPF4: Sustainable places, where we reduce emissions, restore and better connect biodiversity; Liveable places, where we can all live better, healthier lives; and Productive places, where we have a greener, fairer and more inclusive wellbeing economy. The planning authority should seek to ensure that there are no impediments to delivering agreed development.

ATTRIBUTE 11: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY SUPPORTS THE DELIVERY OF SUSTAINABLE, LIVEABLE AND PRODUCTIVE PLACES

Please consider the following when thinking about this attribute and how you have performed over the last year:

- Is the planning authority aware of the [Place and Wellbeing Outcomes](#), the evidence that sits behind them and is it using them in decision-making processes?
- Has the planning authority identified tools and approaches to delivering sustainable, livable and productive places and is implementing them?

Place & Wellbeing Outcomes

The Planning Authority is aware of the Place and wellbeing outcomes and intends to use these outcomes as part of our plan preparation process. The team working with our Community Planning colleagues coordinated a training event in 2024 with Irene Beautyman – Lead of the Shaping Places for Wellbeing Programme at the Improvement Services for relevant officers within the Council.

The Planning service supported our Community Planning Colleagues with the development of a 'Draft Place Based Approach Framework'. The purpose of the document is to set out an agreed Place-Based Approach for Shetland and establish a framework for local and national organisations to work within to achieve better outcomes for people and communities. A period of consultation has recently closed and it is hoped that this will be adopted by the Shetland Partnership

Tools to Aid the delivery of Sustainable, Livable Places

Shetland Islands Council ran a Shetland Wide Place Standard Consultation in 2016. The Community engaged well with this and we received in the region of 900 responses and approximately 4000 Individual comments. It went on to inform a number of Plans and polices including Local Planning Policies, The Local Outcomes Improvement Plan The Local Housing Strategy, The Transport Strategy and the Health and Social Care Partnership: Joint Strategic Commissioning Plan. The results of the Place Standard survey undertaken in 2016 can be viewed here: [OUR PLACE](#)

As part of the Evidence gathering for the next Local Development Plan the Development Plans and Heritage Team have recently launched a second Place Standard based consultation 'OUR PLACE : YOUR SAY' which we hope will have a similar level of community response. A link to the website page and online survey can be found here: [Our Place – Shetland Islands Council](#)



ATTRIBUTE 12: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY SUPPORTS THE DELIVERY OF CONSENTED DEVELOPMENT

Please consider the following when thinking about this attribute and how you have performed over the last year:

- Has the planning authority provided clear and proportionate expectations of Section 75 agreements and set these out in the LDP and pre-application discussions and they are concluded within 6 months of resolution to grant?
- Does the planning authority take a proportionate approach to imposing conditions?
- Does the planning authority have an ambitious local housing land requirement that exceeds the Minimum All Tenure Housing land requirements in NPF4 and is it on track to support delivery?
- Are the number of processing agreements the planning authority has agreed with applicants increasing?
- Does the planning authority have an effective delivery programme in place that supports the delivery of development on the ground?

Section 75 Agreements

A Section 75 agreement, is a contract which can be entered into between a developer and the Council, as part of the planning application process. The agreement may restrict use of the land and/or regulate activities on the land being developed. The agreement may also oblige the developer to make a financial contribution to the Council which must be used for the purposes that are outlined in the section 75 agreement.

The Council rarely makes use of this power which is available through the principal Planning Act, since by following Scottish Government Policy relating to both their use and that on the use of conditions in planning permissions it is found that conditions are generally preferable to a planning or legal obligation, not least as they save time and money for all concerned.

Processing Agreements

A processing agreement is a project management tool. Processing agreements can set out the key processes involved in determining an application, identify what information is required and from whom, and set the timescales for the delivery of various stages of the process. Their use is recommended and it is the Planning Service's practice to offer them for all major development planning applications during pre-application engagements with developers, as well as for those local development proposals that it identifies at the outset will be complex or contentious.

On the Council's website the Service directs users to the Scottish Government's report on the benefits of their use and the processing agreement template. To help manage

the pre-application process for a major fish farm development that is subject to a Scottish Government Pilot (see case study 2) we drafted a processing agreement with the applicant. The application was submitted in spring 2025 and the processing agreement will be used to help project manage decision making timescales. We are also looking to use processing agreements for any future aquaculture developments that will come through the Pilot process.

Minimum All Tenure Housing Land Requirement

The Minimum All Tenure Housing Land Requirement (MATHLR) represents the minimum capacity of housing land that the Council must allocate for residential development during the 10-year period of the Local Development Plan period. The MATHLR is set out by the Scottish Government in National Planning Framework 4 for each local authority area, and the local housing land requirement is expected to exceed this requirement. The MATHLR figure set out in NPF4 for Shetland is 850. The 5-year Housing Supply Target set in the 2014 Local Development Plan for Shetland was 710 homes. Our Shetland Local Housing Strategy 2022-2027 Framework is working to deliver on the 850 homes required by the MATHLR figure and sets out some key actions to support delivery.

Our Current Local Development Plan has sufficient land identified to deliver on the required 5 year available lands supply. As we work towards producing the next Local Development Plan we will undertake a further Call for Sites and hope that we get sufficient response to meet the MATHLR figure. We do however, continue to face challenges with housing delivery, of which many aspects are out with our control and have been further exacerbated by COVID, cost of living increases, economic pressures, resource/material shortages and pressures on workforce capacity.

Delivery Programme

Local Development Plan Action/Delivery Programmes identify what is required to implement the policies and deliver the proposals contained in the Local Development Plan, it should identify those who are responsible for delivery and the expected timescales for doing so.

The Planning Authority is yet to convert its existing Local Development Plan Action Plan to a Delivery Plan. This is part of a workload plan for 2025, and the Scottish Government has set a deadline of end of March 2025 for production of a Delivery Plan, Shetland Islands Council is unlikely to meet this deadline due to limited resources and prioritisation of the Evidence report Local Development Plans Workload.

Our most recent Action programme can be viewed here: [action-programme-2018-2019](#)

APPENDIX 1 CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY 1: Local Authorities Aquaculture Group – Shetland Meeting June 2024

Which attributes of a high performing planning authority does this relate to:

- Attribute 1: The Planning Authority has sufficient resources and skills to maximise productivity
- Attribute 2: The Planning Authority has a valued and supported workforce
- Attribute 3: This Planning Authority has embedded continuous improvement**
- Attribute 4: This Planning Authority has sound governance
- Attribute 5: This Planning Authority has effective leadership
- Attribute 6: This Planning Authority has a robust policy and evidence base
- Attribute 7: This Planning Authority makes best use of data and digital technology
- Attribute 8: This Planning Authority has effective and efficient decision making processes
- Attribute 9: This Planning Authority has good customer care
- Attribute 10: This Planning Authority has effective engagement and collaboration with stakeholders and communities**
- Attribute 11: This Planning Authority supports the delivery of sustainable, livable and productive places
- Attribute 12: This Planning Authority supports the delivery of consented development

Planning Authority: Shetland Islands Council

Title: **Local Authorities Aquaculture Group – Shetland Meeting June 2024**

Context

Established collaborative working with local authorities and seeking ways to ensure continuous improvement

In June 2024 the Shetland Islands Council Marine Planning Team hosted the annual meeting of the local aquaculture authorities. The meetings took place in Lerwick over a 2-day period.

The annual meeting forms a key part of a well-established group that includes planning authority representatives from Shetland, Orkney, Highland, Argyll and Bute and the Western Isles. Aquaculture leads from the Scottish Government's Marine Directorate also attend the events.

We took over as Chair of the group from Western Isles Council in September 2023 and responsibility fell to our Council to hold regular meetings with the authorities and organise the annual event in our local authority area.

What happened?

The event was organised over a 3-day period, with the annual meeting on Wednesday 12th June, and a separate meeting with Salmon Scotland on Thursday 13th June. The meeting agenda has been included (Case Study 1: Annex A) in this case study to provide an indication of the topics and items that were discussed. This main areas are summarised below:

Areas of collaboration

Wednesday 12th June

- The Coastal Zone Manager provided a presentation (see: Case Study 1 - Annex B) to attendees on marine planning and economic development in Shetland. This included an overview of where the planning service sits in the Council along with the key strategies the service contributes towards. A background to marine planning in Shetland was provided which covered our developed role in Regional Marine Planning, aquaculture development and works licensing. The presentation also focused upon the economic value of our aquaculture and fishing industries, along with emerging industries and innovation, energy development and the ORION Clean Energy Project, which forms part of NPF4 National Development 1 'Energy Innovation Development on the Islands'.
- The morning session focused on updates from individual authorities and the Scottish Government on current work and key issues. This included an overview of planning authorities responses to the Scottish Government consultation 'Investing in Planning' and discussion of progress made on the Aquaculture Consenting Task Group (CTG) pilots that Shetland and Highland Councils are involved in. The Executive Manager of planning attended the morning session and there was in depth discussion on a range of matters.

- It was agreed at the meeting that the Chair of the group would provide a joint response on behalf of the aquaculture authorities to particular questions in the investing in planning consultation on fees for shellfish development and prior notification fees for fish farm development. This demonstrates the close working relationships we have developed over the years and effective collaboration. In particular, the response focused on raising our collective views on three main areas of the consultation:
 - The fee for fish farm prior notification/approval applications (£100) being insufficient in terms of time and resource taken to process the application. This is principally because in the marine environment there is a greater complexity of marine interests and users, as well as a range of environmental designations/protected areas. Due to this, the majority of prior notifications require prior approval due to potential impacts on protected areas, which subsequently take extra time and staff resource to process and determine.
 - The need to increase the fee for (Class 21A) 'replacement, relocation or installation of an additional finfish pen'. Our joint response highlighted that this class allows for the whole cage/grid system of a fish farm to be changed for only £500. Applications such as this require detailed assessment and significant officer time and resource to process. Furthermore, and in support of a fee increase, we highlighted that applications can cover multiple classes (changing cages/barge/top nets/moorings) but we can only currently charge £500 for this.
 - What we considered to be a reasonable fee for shellfish farm applications. The 2022 fee regulations resulted in a change to the calculation method for shellfish farm applications. Aquaculture authorities' interpretation of these regulations resulted in the fee for shellfish farms nearly doubling in cost. This subsequently led to a dearth of new applications and concerns were also raised over by our local shellfish industry. We therefore welcomed the opportunity to input towards the consultation question on amending the fee calculation and collectively agreed that a fee of £125 per 0.1 hectare would be appropriate and represent a proportionate fee increase of 27% based on previous calculation methods.
- The afternoon session provided the opportunity to discuss future improvement work to examine streamlined and proportionate approaches to EIA/HRA with Scottish Government colleagues. This work has been identified through the Scottish Government as part of the draft opportunities to complement and expand on current regulatory reform work on fish farm consenting. The discussion focused the need for further meetings on this topic and a specific workshops, with authorities, key agencies and industry on fish farm EIA screening and scoping.

- The remainder of the afternoon was spent discussing a range of emerging topics and sharing thoughts and experience on approaches. The event finished with an update from Crown Estate Scotland.

Thursday 13th June

- Day two of the event incorporated an in person liaison meeting with Salmon Scotland who had travelled to Shetland. The meeting was very useful in discussing current and emerging matters and issues with them and provided the opportunity for open and frank discussion.
- The afternoon of the event was spent undertaking site visits to various finfish and shellfish farm locations in Shetland, including areas of more intensive development and the Sullom Voe Masterplan area. It also provided the opportunity for attendees to view the viking windfarm development, transmission infrastructure and sub-station.

What was the overall result?

The aquaculture industry provides a significant contribution to our rural and island economies. In Shetland, the industry is worth £400 million per year, and the fish farm company Scottish Sea Farms is the largest private sector employer on the Island. The established fish farms and mussel farms, including their supporting industries, which operate in Shetland employ people in rural and remote areas where opportunities for employment are scarce.

In spite of the value of this industry to Scotland, planning officers who specialize in aquaculture are in short supply. We therefore use the established aquaculture authority group as a close 'community' of planners who have many years collective experience in this field.

We work collaboratively amongst ourselves but also with other stakeholders including the Scottish Government, industry and key agencies. In addition to the annual meeting we hold regular meetings throughout the year to cover current and emerging topics.

As can be seen from the agenda the event in Shetland demonstrates our close working relationship and how we are working together to drive improvements in planning process and practice, including pre-application (please see case study) and EIA. We also seek to provide a collective voice in response to Scottish Government consultations as can be seen from our input into the Investing in Planning Consultation.

Lessons learned

Successes

- Collaborative working between local authorities.
- Developing and agreeing shared approaches.
- Working together to problem solve.
- Sharing good practice and ways of working.
- Direct engagement with Scottish Government officials and well-developed working relationships.
- Embedding continuous improvement through various workstreams such as the Consenting Task Group Pre-Application Pilot and identifying future improvement work through Environmental Impact Assessment.

Challenges

- A key challenge of continuing to work collaboratively in the manner above is affording the time and resources to do so. This is not always easy to achieve and it can be difficult to find the time to meet, provide effective focus and input towards the many topics and issues that come before us, including consultations and improvement projects.
- Another key challenge, as mentioned above, is that specialisms and working knowledge of marine and aquaculture planning in Scotland is finite. We therefore need to be pro-active in developing future planners in local authorities and interest in this area of planning. As a result, we have looked to engage with the RTPI, SG and HOPS as part of the 'future planners' programme but are aware that this forms only one aspect of a wide-ranging programme where there are skills shortages in many other areas.

Lessons Learned

- The real value of having the time to meet, work together to identify issues and solutions is immeasurable. Finding the time to do this is a challenge though so we need to develop improved mechanisms to help this happen.
- Working collaboratively can make a real difference in outcomes and provide better certainty for developers, communities and key agencies.
- The shortage of marine and aquaculture planners is an issue for authorities. We need to work with others to look at ways we can contribute to improving this.

What contribution will it aim to make towards delivering outcomes?

Please tick all the outcomes below that this example aims to work towards.

NPF4

Sustainable places

- Climate change and nature crisis
- Climate mitigate and adaptation
- Biodiversity
- Natural Places
- Soils
- Forestry, woodland and trees
- Historic assets and places
- Green belts
- Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings
- Coast development
- Energy
- Zero waste
- Sustainable transport

Liveable places

- Design, quality and place
- Local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods
- Quality homes
- Rural homes
- Infrastructure first
- Heat and cooling
- Blue and green infrastructure
- Play, recreation and sport
- Flood risk and water management
- Health and safety
- Digital Infrastructure

Productive places

- Community Wealth Building
- Business and industry
- City, town, local and commercial centres
- Retail
- Rural development
- Tourism
- Culture and creativity
- Aquaculture
- Minerals

Place and Wellbeing Outcomes

- Movement
- Spaces
- Resources
- Civic
- Stewardship

Contact/ Further details:

Simon Pallant

Coastal Zone Manager

Annex A: Local Aquaculture Authority Group – Shetland Meeting June 2024

WEDNESDAY 12th June

9.30am	Arrival Tea / Coffee – Islesburgh Community Centre Room 16
10 am	Welcome & Presentation – Marine Planning in Shetland and Economic Development
10.30am	Local Authority Updates Current work, key issues, resourcing
11.15am	Scottish Government Update
11.45	Aquaculture Consenting Task Group: Update on Pilots, Process, Next Steps Regulators Liaison Group
12.30pm	Recent SG Consultations - Responses Investing in Planning Facilitating Marine Nature Restoration Through Legislation
13.00pm	Lunch
13:45pm	Proposed EIA/HRA workshop
14:15pm	Emerging /Topical issues - industry evolution/innovation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed containment to include ‘Rochdale Envelope’ • Offshore Aquaculture beyond 3NM • Marine Fish Farm Developments in Scotland: Working Arrangements • SEPA Sea Lice Framework
15:00pm	Marine Plans, Development Plans and Masterplans Sullom Voe Harbour Masterplan Update Development Plans/Regional Marine Plan Updates NPF4 Policy
15.45	AOB Crown Estate Scotland Update
16.00/16.30pm	Close

THURSDAY 13th June

9.30am	Arrival Tea / Coffee – Islesburgh Community Centre Room 10
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10 am	Local Authority, Scottish Government and Salmon Scotland Liaison Meeting
11.45pm-6pm	Site Visits West, North and East Mainland (Lunch at Cake Fridge 1pm)

Annex B – See separate document (Coastal Zone Manager Planning Presentation).



Case Study 1 - Local Authorities Aquacul

CASE STUDY 2: Developing Joint Pre-Application for Fish Farming

Which attributes of a high performing planning authority does this relate to:

- Attribute 1: The Planning Authority has sufficient resources and skills to maximise productivity
- Attribute 2: The Planning Authority has a valued and supported workforce
- Attribute 3: This Planning Authority has embedded continuous improvement
- Attribute 4: This Planning Authority has sound governance
- Attribute 5: This Planning Authority has effective leadership
- Attribute 6: This Planning Authority has a robust policy and evidence base
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- Attribute 8: This Planning Authority has effective and efficient decision making processes
- Attribute 9: This Planning Authority has good customer care
- Attribute 10: This Planning Authority has effective engagement and collaboration with stakeholders and communities
- Attribute 11: This Planning Authority supports the delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places
- Attribute 12: This Planning Authority supports the delivery of consented development

Planning Authority: Shetland Islands Council

Title: Developing Joint Pre-Application for Fish Farming

Context

Since August 2022, Shetland Islands Council have been leading on planning authority input, along with Highland Council, and HOPS into the Scottish Government's Aquaculture Consenting Task Group. This group is one of a number of groups that were formed following the Independent Review into Aquaculture, and subsequent recommendations report that was published in February 2022.

Shetland Islands Council provided considerable input into the review and have carried this forward into the consideration of new ways of working to help improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and transparency of Scotland’s aquaculture regulatory regime.

During the last few years, the Council has been involved in regular meetings and workshops with Scottish Government officials, the development industry, SEPA and Crown Estate Scotland to develop a streamlined consenting process, based on a joint-working and collaborative approach to pre-application.

Our last Planning Performance Framework covered the work to date and included the action to:

- Continue to provide direct input into the Scottish Government’s Aquaculture Review, principally through our involvement in the Aquaculture Consenting Task Group and developing new approaches to joint-pre application. As part of this we intend to work with industry, SEPA and others to pilot new approaches in our planning authority area.

This case study provides an update of the progress that has been made and the role we have played in progressing improvements to planning and aquaculture.

What happened?

Shetland Islands Council’s involvement in the work of the Consenting Task Group (CTG) has contributed to developing new and improved ways of working with other regulators and industry. The group has worked alongside improvement specialists in the Scottish Government to develop and pilot a new process for pre-application activities within the existing aquaculture consenting process, with a view to exploring alignment and processes beyond pre-application in future work.

During 2024 the pilot for providing joint pre-application advice with SEPA for a new fish farm at Fish Holm in Shetland was progressed. The proposal is for a major application with EIA for what will be the largest fish farm in Scotland. The planning application for this development was subsequently submitted to the Council in February 2025 following completion of the pilot.

Areas of collaboration

The Fish Holm redevelopment/expansion proposal has been progressed through [the Scottish Aquaculture Council Consenting Task Group \(CTG\) pre-application pilot process.](#)

Central to the pilot process was piloting a 4-stage approach to providing joint pre-application advice with SEPA.

The pilot involved a four-stage process:

- Stage 1: Request for pre-application advice
- Stage 2: Provision of joint pre-application advice
- Stage 3: Community and Third Party Engagement
- Stage 4: Screening/ Scoping Opinion Request and Issue of a Joint Scoping Opinion Report and Advice

The key regulators and consultees involved in the pilot include:

- Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA);
- The relevant local Planning Authority;
- NatureScot;
- The relevant District Salmon Fisheries Board (where applicable);
- Scottish Government Marine Directorate (SGMD) Fish Health Inspectorate;
- SGMD Licensing Operations Team;
- SGMD Science;
- Northern Lighthouse Board;
- Maritime and Coastguard Agency;
- Historic Environment Scotland.

Shetland Islands Council had extensive involvement throughout the process but in particular at stages 1,2 and 4. **Annex A sets out the 4 stage process in more detail and local authority input and collaborative working, with SEPA in particular.**

To help guide the process we also drafted a processing agreement with the applicant. In summary, the process involved a greater amount of time and resource when compared to our standard pre-application approach. This included a of joint meetings with regulators and we also included a new approach, a draft scoping opinion meeting, with the applicant and agencies.

The marine planning team as a whole were involved in the pilot, but the pre-application process was led by an identified officer in the team who is now processing the application. Details of stakeholders are provided above.

As the proposal is for a major application it was subject to a statutory pre-application process, including Proposal of Application Notice, required meetings with communities and a PAC Report upon submission.

What was the overall result?

We worked closely with the Scottish Government, the applicant, SEPA and other regulators and consultees as part of the pilot. In 2024 we inputted into an independent evaluation of the pilot process that was commissioned by the Scottish Government.

We are of the general view that the pilot process has in the main been a success and from our viewpoint and has led to clearer and more effective pre-application advice and EIA scoping being undertaken. It has also improved our working relationships with the developer and SEPA in particular.

We entered into the pilot in a good position in Shetland by already having a dedicated marine planning team and marine planning officers. This relates to NPIF Attribute 1 'Having the skills to maximize productivity'.

We also feel that this work directly links to Improvement Activity in NPIF Attribute 3 and provides an excellent example of working collaboratively (Attribute 10) and improved customer care through pre-application advice (Attribute 9).

As with any improvement project, lessons are learnt through real-time testing/implementation and further ways to improve and refine have been identified along with additional opportunities and areas to improve. The Shetland Islands Council Marine Planning Team shall continue to work closely with all involved to help achieve this.

Lessons learned

Please detail here what worked well and what did not work and on reflection what you would do in future under the following headings:

Successes

- Collaborative working, problem-solving and identifying improved ways of working.
- Greater understanding of each other's roles and input into the process. Including SEPA, applicants/agents.
- More detailed and effective pre-application advice from ourselves as planning authority, other regulators and consultees.
- Opportunity to highlight potential issues and 'showstoppers' early in the pre-application process.
- Greater level of certainty for applicants/developers.

- Clearer process to sharing and publishing information.
- Improved and refined discussion on EIA. Further work has been identified here.

Challenges

- Time and resource implications required to effectively contribute to the pilot.
- Capturing information and making sure these are reported back at the time.
- Our pre-application service is currently free, but as this a much enhanced level of service provision we will need to consider pre-app charging in the future.
- Piloting approaches may not always proceed as envisaged and needed revisiting and explaining during the process.

Lessons Learned

- The decision has since been taken to refine the 4 stage process to 3 stages (stages 1 and 2 combined) to save time and effort.
- The pilot took longer to complete than originally envisaged. Time and resource is therefore needed to make it work.
- The need to widen the pilot to other authorities so that they can also test and we can learn how to improve further and implement.
- There may be need for future legislative change (e.g. fees, charging, EIA) to help improve some processes rather than just relying on new ways of working.

The final lesson learnt is that by looking at one particular area to improve (joint pre-application), we have identified additional areas which need improved. Improvement is a continuous process after all!

What contribution will it aim to make towards delivering outcomes?

Please tick all the outcomes below that this example aims to works towards.

NPF4

- Sustainable places
- Climate change and nature crisis
- Climate mitigate and adaptation
- Biodiversity
- Natural Places
- Soils
- Forestry, woodland and trees

- Historic assets and places
- Green belts
- Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings
- Coast development
- Energy
- Zero waste
- Sustainable transport

Liveable places

- Design, quality and place
- Local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods
- Quality homes
- Rural homes
- Infrastructure first
- Heat and cooling
- Blue and green infrastructure
- Play, recreation and sport
- Flood risk and water management
- Health and safety
- Digital Infrastructure

Productive places

- Community Wealth Building
- Business and industry
- City, town, local and commercial centres
- Retail
- Rural development
- Tourism
- Culture and creativity
- Aquaculture
- Minerals

Place and Wellbeing Outcomes

- Movement
- Spaces
- Resources
- Civic
- Stewardship

Contact/ Further details:

Simon Pallant

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Annex A: The Pilot 4 stage process to pre-application



Case Study 2 -
Developing Joint Pre



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