



National Planning Improvement

NATIONAL PLANNING IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK

Improvement Action Progress Update 2025 Angus Council



Angus NPIF Annual Report (Year Two - 2025)

Foreword

Progress to date on improvement actions has been limited due to available resource within the Service and recent staff changes.

Despite these pressures performance continues to remain good, and we have managed to progress some actions including activity on the preparation of a renewable energy masterplan and changes to the structure to support career development.

Introduction

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

Each improvement action plan sets out:

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

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

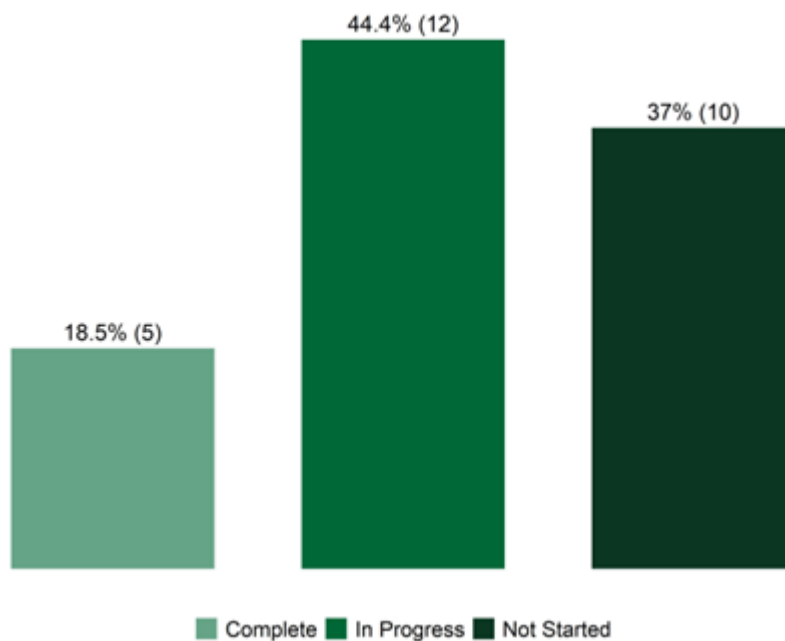
In year two of the NPIF the planning authorities are to update on their progress with the improvement actions. This report sets out the progress Angus has made, detailing any updates to actions, any further actions and plans for further collaboration with peer partners.

Planning Improvement Actions Progress Update

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



Angus has 27 improvement actions. The status of the actions is shown below:



Action 1: Work to embed workforce development and career progression, like current route, as part of an overall Council approach that is not solely dependent on vacancies arising.

In Progress

Progress against this action: The service reconfigured one of our existing officer posts to create an additional assistant planning officer and was successful in securing funding through our centralised training budget for a three-year period. This funding has allowed us to support a member of staff to undertake the undergraduate planning course at the University of Dundee, entering into Year 2 of the course. The member of staff works with us part-time during term time and full-time during the remaining months. The configuration and compressed formal study pattern on the undergraduate course at the University of Dundee has worked well to support this arrangement.

The following next steps are proposed: The service is looking to explore the potential for further entry level posts within the team. We will work with colleagues to identify options on how we may be able to secure funding to support further entry level position and support those in our employability programmes.



Action 2: Ensure staff are working in person on a regular basis both within and across teams, to improve opportunity for shared learning and development.

In Progress

Progress against this action: Our Development Standards team have a set day during the week where officers are expected to come into the office and this has been working well and the Development Planning team are also starting to have more in-person sessions in the office.

The following next steps are proposed: Monitor to ensure current practices are adhered to and look at extending further to increase the frequency of in-person days and alignment across teams to share learning

Action 3: Ensure quarterly reviews and annual appraisals are completed in line with the new process with subsequent developed training strategy.

Not Started

Reason(s) action has not been progressed:

- We do not have the resources we need to do this.
- We have not had the time given the quick turnaround for cohort two and three.

The following next steps are proposed: Current vacancies and changes within the team, coupled with a significant complex caseload has meant we have been unable to ensure that appraisals are fully undertaken. Once the teams are back to close to full complement we will ensure these are fully rolled out and diarised.

Action 4: Progress training opportunities within and across teams via lunchtime sessions where possible.

In Progress

Progress against this action: Limited progress has been made to current resourcing with the team however a more proactive approach has been taken to share existing learning and CPD opportunities, encourage attendance and sharing learning with the wider team.

The following next steps are proposed: We will continue to proactively encourage attendance at sessions



Action 5: Maintain staff access to electronic resources including DCP, IDOX and Linets to allow opportunities for self supported learning and development.

Complete

What was the outcome of completing this action?

Staff across the team continue to have access to the resources and will be supported by information sessions to ensure they are fully utilised.

Action 6: Further Councillor training to support them in decision making and in application of NPF4.

Complete

What was the outcome of completing this action?

Elected members received additional training using a number of case studies to talk through both the decision-making process and need for sound reasons and decision notices. The in-person session was led by James Findlay KC and was supported by our Legal Service. We recorded the session, so it is available for any refresher training and/or new councillors. This has resulted in more careful consideration in decision making.

Action 7: Work closely with the complaints team to better monitor the number and response times of complaints, and to review the nature and content of complaints to try and learn from them to reduce complaints in the future where possible.

Not Started

Reason(s) action has not been progressed:

- We do not have the resources we need to do this.
- We are relying on a partner or stakeholder to action this.

The following next steps are proposed: A new corporate complaints system is to be introduced at the start of the 2026/27 financial year which is designed to improve reporting and provide greater visibility for managers of complaints.



Action 8: Completion of Service Plan, linked to performance measures to assist in monitoring delivery.

Not Started

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

- We do not have the resources we need to do this.
- We have not had the time given the quick turnaround for cohort two and three.

The following next steps are proposed: Completion of the Service Plan is dependent on the formal review of the Economic Development function of the Service which is due to complete at the start of the 2026/27 financial year.

Action 9: Establish a member and officer working group to review our section 43A scheme of delegation based on experience and learning to ensure it is up to date and fit for purpose.

Complete

What was the outcome of completing this action?

The s43A reviewed scheme of delegation was reviewed by the member and officer group reported to committee. It was subsequently, submitted to and agreed by Scottish Government. The existing scheme of delegation has worked well with only a small proportion of application reported to committee. Minor changes were proposed to clarify that objections must be based on competent planning grounds.

Action 10: Review LDP timescales and project management to identify opportunities to expedite key areas.

In Progress

Progress against this action: A review of timescales has been undertaken however a number of challenges have further increase timelines.

The following next steps are proposed: Continue to explore options including discussion with the Planning Hub on support.



Action 11: Direct additional resource to expedite LDP preparation.

In Progress

Progress against this action: We have secured some part-time support to assist with the review of the evidence report chapters. Additional funding was secured to allow the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment to be undertaken by external consultants.

The following next steps are proposed: Continue to explore further opportunities to secure additional resource working with the Planning Hub.

Action 12: Reintroduce Developers/Agents Forum.

Not Started

Reason(s) action has not been progressed:

- We have not had the time given other priorities.
- We do not have the resources we need to do this.

The following next steps are proposed: Current vacancies and changes within the team, coupled with a significant complex caseload has meant we have been unable to commence this action. Once the team is close to a full staff complement, we will look to introduce these sessions.

Action 13: Review procedures for enforcement cases to publish update position statements on public access at milestones

Not Started

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

- We do not have the resources we need to do this.
- We have not had the time given the quick turnaround for cohort two and three.

The following next steps are proposed: Once the team is close to a full staff complement the intentions is to progress this work.

Action 14: Progress better use of case management to track enforcement cases

In Progress

Progress against this action: Initial work has been undertaken to develop the existing baseline information and provide a short-term solution to management of cases.

The following next steps are proposed: Introduction of dashboards to manage cases



Action 15: We will work to review and progress our GIS data library and layers to support the corporate approach to Place.

In Progress

Progress against this action: Initial work has commenced to evaluate and categorise all the existing data layers.

The following next steps are proposed: Continue to progress in the context of the place framework structure working with our performance and data team to embed corporately

Action 16: We will investigate opportunity to implement Power BI to support project management.

In Progress

Progress against this action: We have scheduled and conducted some initial training on the use of Power BI with IDOX/Uniform in conjunction.

The following next steps are proposed: We are investigating options for additional resource, in conjunction with Building Standards, to support development of the system and will progress further when the team is back to close to a full complement of staff.

Action 17: Review and digitise customer satisfaction approach associated with development standards.

Not Started

Reason(s) action has not been progressed:

- We do not have the resources we need to do this.
- We have not had the time given the quick turnaround for cohort two and three.

The following next steps are proposed: Once the team is close to a full staff complement the intentions is to progress this work.

Action 18: Review validation standards across the team to ensure consistency in application.

Not Started

Reason(s) action has not been progressed:

- We have not had the time given other priorities.
- We do not have the resources we need to do this.
- We have not had the time given the quick turnaround for cohort two and three.



The following next steps are proposed: Once the team is close to a full staff complement the intentions is to progress this work.

Action 19: We will implement a regular review of legacy cases to ensure there is continued progress.

In Progress

Progress against this action: We have commenced work through an informal review of legacy cases at staff 1:1s.

The following next steps are proposed: We will benchmark the volume of legacy cases across the service to prioritise when the team is back to full complement.

Action 20: Develop a consultation and engagement strategy to support activity around the approach to Place.

In Progress

Progress against this action: A draft of the strategy has been prepared and awaiting input from other service areas, due for completion Summer 2026. Thereafter it will be reported to our Corporate Leadership Team and the relevant Committee. This will complement engagement support from Vibrant Communities to rollout across Services.

Action 21: Support implementation of Council wide engagement portal.

Complete

What was the outcome of completing this action?

Members of the Planning Service supported colleagues in Vibrant Communities team to undertake an assessment of potential options and undertaken product testing. A portal has now been procured, and members of the team are now using to support LDP activity.

In 2025, a number of draft Evidence Report chapters have used this portal to engage and consult with a wide variety of stakeholders and the public on the draft chapters. Also, we have put out a high-level survey to gather the views of our communities on how they view their place under a number of place-based questions to help inform the Evidence Report and wider place-based work under the Council's approach to place.

Action 22: Provide area officer telephone numbers to Community Council planning contacts.

Not Started

Reason(s) action has not been progressed:

- We have not had the time given other priorities.



- We have not had the time given the quick turnaround for cohort two and three.

The following next steps are proposed: Undertake in the next quarter.

Action 23: Introduce annual community council forum.

Not Started

Reason(s) action has not been progressed:

- We have not had the time given other priorities.
- We do not have the resources we need to do this.
- We have not had the time given the quick turnaround for cohort two and three.

The following next steps are proposed: Continue when resource allows.

Action 24: Consider reintroduction of pre-application service follow review of the approach and discretionary charging schedule.

In Progress

Progress against this action: As part of the budget process, we have discussed the potential re-introduction of pre-application and other discretionary charging.

The following next steps are proposed: The new Development Standards manager starts in post in January 2026 so we will review once as part of the work programme and existing pressures and resource to balance against existing performance.

Action 25: Consider preparation of a renewable energy masterplan to support the evidence base for the LDP and to provide a proactive approach to future decision making.

Complete

What was the outcome of completing this action?

The Renewable Energy Masterplan and Infrastructure Delivery Plan was successfully commissioned in 2024. Stage 1 of the commission was completed in 2025, with Stage 2 of the commission starting in December 2025. The masterplan and delivery plan will be completed in 2026.



Action 26: Progress work to embed approach to Place and local governance at a corporate level.

In Progress

Progress against this action: The approach was agreed at a meeting of Full Council in June 2024 and a draft route map and responsibilities has been developed.

The following next steps are proposed: Progress work on communications strategy, engagement and consultation strategy for place-based working and moving forward with the approach and in the pilot areas of Brechin and Montrose.

Action 27: Consider publication of information on Public Access to record which planning conditions have been discharged.

Not Started

Reason(s) action has not been progressed:

- We have not had the time given other priorities.
- We do not have the resources we need to do this.
- We have not had the time given the quick turnaround for cohort two and three.

The following next steps are proposed: We currently have significant resource pressures within the team and priority applications so will review later in the year.

Peer Collaborative Review Follow Up

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

Status of the peer review follow-up meeting: We are planning to update via email on progress.

