

NATIONAL PLANNING IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK

Improvement Action Progress Update 2025

West Dunbartonshire Council



West Dunbartonshire NPIF Annual Report (Year Two - 2025)

Foreword

West Dunbartonshire Planning Authority have made good progress on implementing the improvement actions in the 3 months since endorsement. A highlight has been the progress with the procurement of the full IDOX solution, and the service looks forward to its implementation. The drive for improvement is embedded within all officers in the service and process enhancement, and customer experience is at the forefront of all improvement actions.

Whilst working at full headcount capacity, day to day workload remains challenging, particularly in the Development Planning and Place Team around LDP preparation, and this impacts the speed of service improvement. The Development Management Team, along with Building Standards, had also been impacted by significant outage of the current back office system and Business Continuity Measures had to be implemented. Whilst this brought a backlog, normal service was restored. Despite these challenges, the service is committed to ensuring sufficient time is allocated to improvement actions and we look forward to sharing more with our customers and stakeholders as they are implemented.

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.](#)

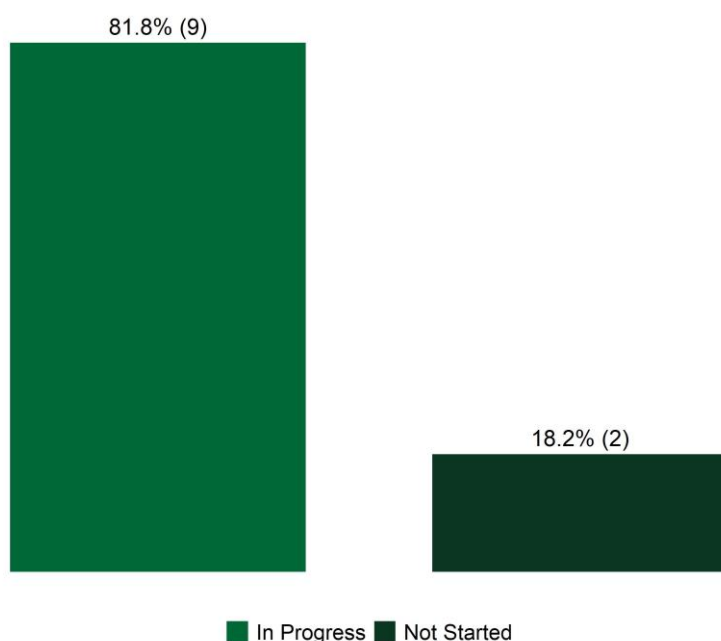
In year two of the NPIF the planning authorities are to update on their progress with the improvement actions. This report sets out the progress West Dunbartonshire has made, detailing any updates to actions, any further actions and plans for further collaboration with peer partners.



Planning Improvement Actions Progress Update

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

West Dunbartonshire has 11 improvement actions. The status of the actions is shown below:



Action 1: Implement the new back-office document management system and carry out a full end-to-end review of all workflow processes

In Progress

Progress against this action: The IDOX document management system has been procured. A project plan meeting will take place in October.

The following next steps are proposed: Preparation work for the migration continues and the project plan will confirm timescales for implementation. Substantial progress is expected by end of March 2026.



Action 2: Develop a workforce strategy and service training plan, including any options/opportunities for restructure or cases for investment

In Progress

Progress against this action: Early work has commenced on a workforce strategy. Existing workforce planning actions highlight hard to fill roles across the wider service. Whilst both planning teams are at full capacity, work has commenced on a career grade structure for a hard to fill Building Standards vacancy, with an officer from the Technical Support team currently undergoing training to fulfil this role.

The following next steps are proposed: The lessons learned from the Building Standards career path will inform discussions around the opportunity for a similar path to be created within the planning structure.

Action 3: Complete review of Scheme of Delegation to ensure it is proportionate

In Progress

Progress against this action: Draft changes to the current Scheme of Delegation and Standing Orders are complete at service level.

The following next steps are proposed: The draft changes require to be shared with our Chief Officer and to discuss next steps in terms of consultation and approval.

Action 4: Finalise review of committee and delegated Reports of Handling Templates to ensure that they are proportionate and are clear and easy to be understood by a variety of audiences

In Progress

Progress against this action: Not all templates have been reviewed or created but a new general delegated template is in progress. The work programme has been altered to introduce a phased approach.

The following next steps are proposed: Progress has been delayed on this action due to wider system issues the service experienced and resources had to be diverted from service improvement work to business continuity and then business recovery work to focus on day-to-day operations. The delegated template is being prioritised and then the committee template.



Action 5: Produce detailed team improvement plans, focusing on improvements that increase efficiency and are clear, including increasing the quality of our customer communication

In Progress

Progress against this action: Detailed Team Improvement Plans have been started for Development Management and updated on a rolling basis.

The following next steps are proposed: Technical Support and Development Planning and Place improvement plans are to follow, many actions are however tied to process improvements expected as a result of the implementation of the new back office system.

Action 6: Undertake review of the Development Management and Enforcement Charters and processes to ensure they remain fit for purpose

In Progress

Progress against this action: Early work has taken place around a review of the charters, including scoping out issues, challenges, and opportunities for changes to procedures and approach, taking account of feedback we have received to date.

The following next steps are proposed: A full review is expected to commence towards the end of 2025.

Action 7: Set up regular agent's forum, in conjunction with Building Standards

In Progress

Progress against this action: Whilst this action was set as a lower priority action and the service hopes to organise a forum meeting in early 2026, an interim newsletter to update stakeholders is to be considered.

The following next steps are proposed: Scoping out of content of newsletter, providing an update on improvement actions and what changes agents can expect to see from service improvements as they are implemented. A formal agents forum in conjunction with Building Standards will be organised.



Action 8: Carry out wider Service Day (with Building Standards and Environmental Health) to share good practice and workstream updates. This will inform detailed Team Improvement Plans

Not Started

Reason(s) action has not been progressed: We have not had the time given the quick turnaround for cohort two and three.

The following next steps are proposed: No steps have yet been taken at a service level

Action 9: Implement Project Management approach within Development Management

In Progress

Progress against this action: This approach is being embedded and was a short/medium term priority. Actions to date include a revamp of performance reporting and monitoring, which is now captured monthly, and training and system changes are being rolled out to allow better capture, recording, and monitoring of Extension of Time Requests and Planning Performance Agreements. It is expected that this project management approach will lead to enhanced customer care and clearer priorities for officers.

The following next steps are proposed: System changes require to be completed but are anticipated to be fully in place by the end of 2025.

Action 10: Explore how Added Value can be better captured and reported on

In Progress

Progress against this action: This action was intended to be looked at as part of the report of handling review, however, as a stop gap measure, a temporary recording measure is being set up in the case management system to allow future refinement and reporting.

The following next steps are proposed: The temporary measure and guidance is expected to be in place by the end of 2025 whilst a more permanent and refined process is developed.

Action 11: Review Development Management Conditions

Not Started

Reason(s) action has not been progressed:

- The action was set as a low or medium priority.
- We have not had the time given the quick turnaround for cohort two and three.
- We are relying on a partner or stakeholder to action this.



The following next steps are proposed: We are aware that standard conditions are being looked at by HOPS.

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 send an email to update on progress.

Additional information: As a cohort 3 authority our plan only received endorsement in June 2025. Given timescales and capacity it was not practical to organise a follow up meeting for the September deadline of this return. We do however plan to provide stakeholders with a newsletter update as indicated in the improvement actions above.

