



National Planning Improvement

NATIONAL PLANNING IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK

# Improvement Action Progress Update 2025 Midlothian Council



# Midlothian NPIF Annual Report (Year Two - 2025)

## Foreword

Midlothian Council were part of the final cohort of the NPIF pilot and due to the short timeframe between the Year 1 report and the follow up for Year 2 submission there has not been much progress made within this period of time. There are a few actions that are in progress however, as these actions are still within the early stages there is not a lot of detail that can be reported at this time.

In the coming months, we do expect to make further progress on the actions that are currently in progress (likely MLDP2 related ones). There will be some actions that have not been started that will be either have been started or a plan will be identified for the next steps.

## 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.](#)

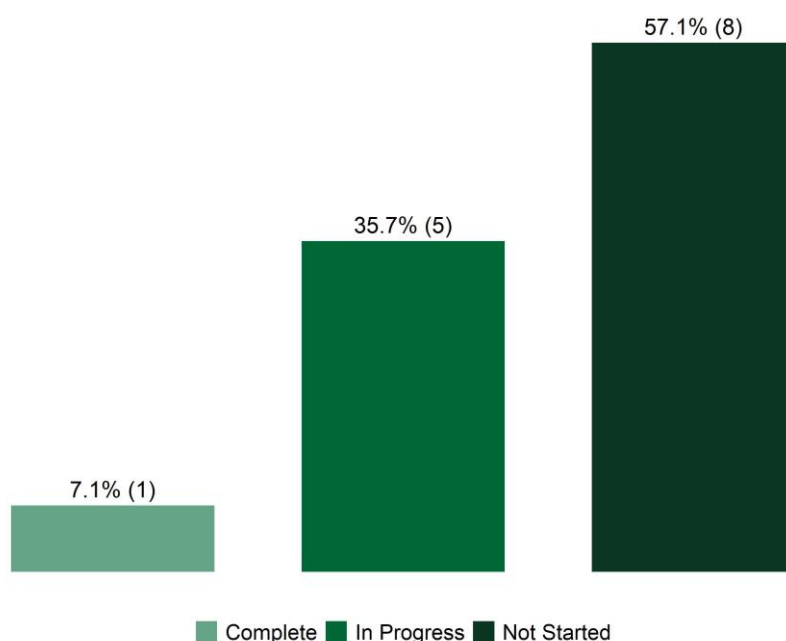
In year two of the NPIF the planning authorities are to update on their progress with the improvement actions. This report sets out the progress Midlothian has made, detailing any updates to actions, any further actions and plans for further collaboration with peer partners.



# Planning Improvement Actions Progress Update

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

**Midlothian has 14 improvement actions. The status of the actions is shown below:**



## Action 1: Review staffing structure to ensure there is sufficient staff required to carry out all tasks

### In Progress

Progress against this action: A full review of the staffing structure has not commenced since the action plan was published. Nevertheless, there is ongoing assessment of staffing levels in the council, including interim adjustments and staff expected to return from extended leave.

The following next steps are proposed: Review staffing levels and availability to maintain service delivery.

## Action 2: Look into the possibility of seeking outside help to support in the production of MLDP2

### In Progress

Progress against this action: Midlothian have secured funding from the Planning Hub the Special Land Areas Statements of Importance update. Funding has likewise been secured for



landscape architect advice on blue and green infrastructure for MLDP2 site briefs and funding has been confirmed for MLDP2 GIS support.

The following next steps are proposed: Continue to pursue all available resources available to help in the production of MLDP2.

### **Action 3: Assess the impact of discretionary charging (pre-application submission rates, workloads, timescales)**

#### **Not Started**

Reason(s) action has not been progressed:

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

The following next steps are proposed: The first step will be to retrieve the submission rates from when discretionary charging was introduced. This data will be compared with the preceding years to identify if there has been an impact on the noted factors.

### **Action 4: Introduce a staff survey to identify what is working well and internal improvements**

#### **Not Started**

Reason(s) action has not been progressed:

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

The following next steps are proposed: It is yet to be determined how this action will be progressed as this early stage.

### **Action 5: Look into increasing the number of planning staff trained in complaint handling**

#### **Not Started**

Reason(s) action has not been progressed:

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

The following next steps are proposed: It is yet to be determined how this action will be progressed as this early stage.



## **Action 6: Investigate ways to make the current consultation process more effective**

### **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: It is yet to be determined how this action will be progressed as this early stage.

## **Action 7: Work collaboratively with bordering Local Authorities to carry out work required for MLDP2**

### **In Progress**

Progress against this action: Members of the Planning Team have continued to attend the Lothian & Borders Planning Officers Group (approximately every 6-8 weeks) to discuss matters and challenges that are being faced at each stage in the production of the next LDP.

The following next steps are proposed: Meetings to continue. Other areas of collaboration TBD.

## **Action 8: Review validation rates from current reporting year and take necessary steps to increase figure (if required)**

### **Complete**

What was the outcome of completing this action?

After reviewing the validation rates from the 2024/25 reporting year, the figure has risen 37% and has returned to the average from the years preceding 2023/24.

## **Action 9: Review of current elected member training**

### **Not Started**

Reason(s) action has not been progressed:

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

The following next steps are proposed: It is yet to be determined how this action will be progressed as this early stage.



## **Action 10: Internal staff training days to develop skills (including GIS skills)**

### **Not Started**

Reason(s) action has not been progressed:

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

The following next steps are proposed: It is yet to be determined how this action will be progressed as this early stage.

## **Action 11: Update of Enforcement Charter to meet regulations**

### **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: The current charter will need to be reviewed to determine what changes will be made to bring the charter up to date.

## **Action 12: We will continue to review the feedback forms received from customers dealing with the Planning Service in addition to the Stakeholder Survey to identify areas of improvement from a customer perspective**

### **In Progress**

Progress against this action: The review of the customers feedback forms is ongoing.

The following next steps are proposed: Increase the number of Stakeholder Surveys received (aim for a wider public reach) and review the feedback received.

## **Action 13: Liaise with Key Groups in the next stages of MLDP2 policy preparation**

### **In Progress**

Progress against this action: The Key Agencies have been contacted to clarify their expectations on what input (if any) they would like to have within the next stage of drafting the Proposed Plan and other matters.

The following next steps are proposed: TBD - Early Stages.



## Action 14: Explore the possibility of including the Place and Well-being outcomes in the assessment of planning applications

### Not Started

Reason(s) action has not been progressed:

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

The following next steps are proposed: The following next steps are proposed: It is yet to be determined how this action will be progressed as this early stage.



# New Proposed Planning Improvement Actions

The table below details further improvement actions added.

<b>Improvement action</b> What action will you take? What will the outcome be?	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Importance</b> High Medium Low	<b>Timescale</b> Short term- 1 year Medium term – 3 year Long term 3+ year	<b>Resources</b>
Explore the practicality and potential advantages of utilising AI technologies within the Planning Section  Outcome: Provide a better understanding of whether there would be clear benefits, time reduction, etc. on specific planning related tasks.  Will assess that action is complete by: Once it has been determined whether the use of AI technologies will be beneficial moving forward.	Planning Authority	Low	Medium	AI Technology



# 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: Do not plan to host a follow up.

Additional information: Since we were in the final cohort, we do not plan to hold a 6-month follow-up meeting at this time. As the time passed is relatively short, and there are not significant updates to share. We anticipate providing a more substantive update in the future as additional progress and outcomes become available.

