

# The National Planning Hub

## *Delivery Report 2025/26*



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## 1. Foreword

**The National Planning Hub (NPH) is led by Scottish Government, working in partnership with the Improvement Service.**

It is a PfG commitment supporting economic growth tasked with providing direct and immediate additional support to planning authorities, with housing, renewable energy, and local development plan delivery as priorities.

Effective town and country planning strengthens the economy by directing growth and investment to the right places, supporting place making, reducing infrastructure costs, supporting local businesses, and creating well-connected, attractive communities where people want to live and work.

This is the first full year of the NPH, which evolved from and builds on the initial 'Hydrogen Hub' based in the Improvement Service.

It offers a flexible approach to support planning authorities including through providing direct additional resources and 'wrap around' support for knowledge, practice, and professional development support.

Key to this approach is building relationships with planning teams in local authorities to get under the bonnet and understand the practical issues and challenges for delivery.

The Chief Planner [wrote](#) to all Planning Authorities in May outlining the National Planning Hub offer and inviting proposals, with follow up engagement from the team to help assess, shape and make support available on a case-by-case basis. In total, the team has been in discussion with thirty-one planning authorities, with twenty receiving this additional support. This was also used along with evidence from the National Planning Improvement Framework (NPIF), to develop the Improvement Service Hub programme with Craig McLaren, National Planning Improvement Champion (NPIC).

Governance is provided by a Scottish Government internal Programme Board. While oversight is provided by the High-Level Group on Performance and Planning, co-chaired by the Minister for Public Finance and COSLA, and includes representatives from Heads of Planning Scotland, SOLACE, Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI), key agencies, and industry applicants.

## 2. Programme for Government & strategic delivery

The **2025/26** programme for government (PfG) committed to:

*“Providing local authorities, through the Planning Hub, with additional capacity and expertise, prioritising action where evidence shows they are having challenges with meeting timescales or where there are delays in producing local plans”.*

This built on the commitment from the previous PfG (**2024/25**) to:

- Establish Scotland’s first Planning Hub to build capacity and resilience, and to improve consistency and efficiency in decision-making.
- Ensure the planning system responds to the housing emergency. We will support planning authorities to allocate a pipeline of land for new homes and promote consistent monitoring of its delivery. We will also work to extend the services offered by our new Planning Hub to support housing developments. This could for example focus on the delivery of homes on larger, legacy, and stalled sites.
- Help planning authorities make quicker decisions on hydrogen planning applications, with a plan to support wider developments including good quality homes and onshore wind.

The commitment for a Planning Hub was set within a wider context of delivering fair, green, growing economy, tackling child poverty, achieving net zero, and public service reform.

The Hub’s support for housing delivery, including affordable homes, is a key enabler in tackling child poverty. Through its approach and by providing additional resource, it is supporting the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services. The support for renewable energy planning contributes to growing the wellbeing economy and tackling the climate emergency. The Hub is also exploring further scope, including to support wider public service reform objectives, building on the progress made so far.

The National Planning Hub delivers across all First Minister priorities principally supporting commitments to improve public services and is a key enabler of:

- [Scotland’s Public Service Reform Strategy](#) – Delivering Efficient Services
- The [Fiscal Sustainability Delivery Plan](#) which includes a commitment to ‘providing local authorities with additional capacity through the Planning Hub’

The progress of the Planning Hub this year can be attributed to the collaborative approach between it and our Planning Authority colleagues, together we have supported the delivery of shared priorities for the people of Scotland.

### 3. Delivery Highlights

The National Planning Hub was operationalised in May 2025 as a **low-cost, high impact, intervention to drive improvement** in Scotland's planning services as part of the wider programme of reform.

**Over £1m worth of targeted support** and related activity has been delivered to Scotland's Planning Authorities.



The National Planning Hub has **developed a web presence at [www.planninghub.scot](http://www.planninghub.scot)** which provides a library of resources which includes training and support programmes, learning materials, videos, good practice case studies, toolkits and reports. This is a first point of call for information.

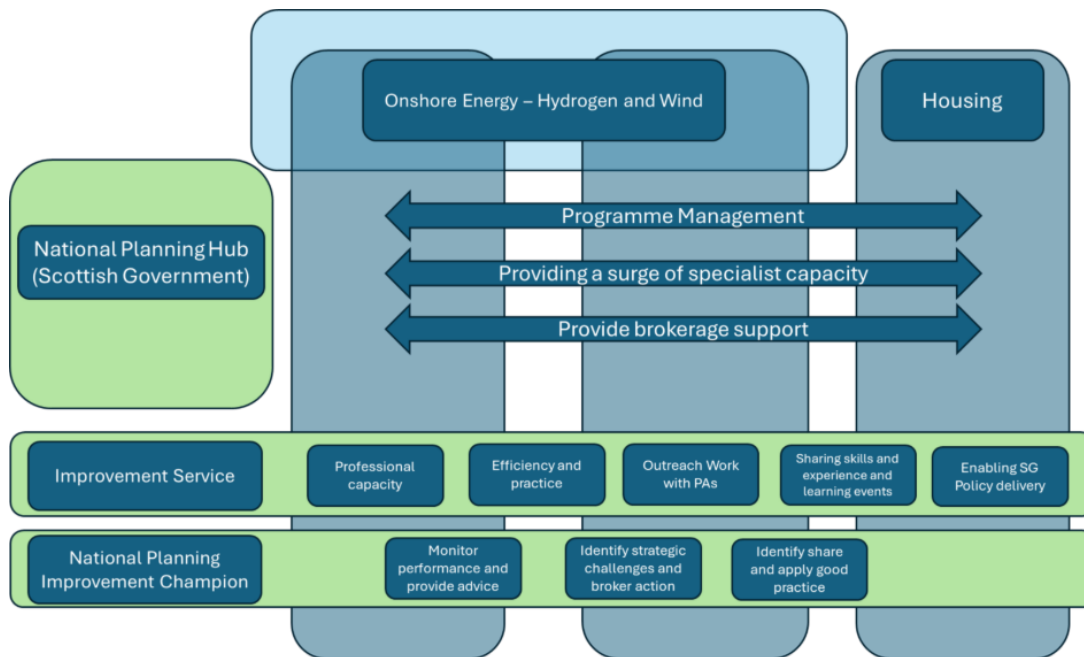
**A range of support has been put in place to help planning authorities to improve their understanding of planning for renewable energy and housing** that has led to:

- A series of webinars that have attracted attendees from planning authorities, Scottish Government and key agencies with an average registration and attendance ranging between 100-200 people.
- Publication of good practice case studies.
- Delivery of a training programme to help planning authorities on Environmental Impact Assessments.
- Development of a support programme for planning authorities on delivering local development plans; and
- A range of learning materials including toolkits, process maps, videos, diagrams and learning notes.

## 4. Operating Model

The operating model for the National Planning Hub consists of a partnership approach taken by Scottish government and Improvement Service, with SG leading on programme management and the surge and brokerage offer. The Improvement Service leads on professional capacity building and efficiency and practice. The Hub also works closely with the National Planning Improvement Champion (NPIC) and team who provide insight and evidence to inform our work.

The priorities for the Hub in 25/26 were Housing and Onshore Renewable Energy and Local Development Plans (LDPs). The Hub takes a flexible approach and has recently pivoted onto providing support for planning authorise on data centres.



## 5. Housing



The Scottish Government declared a national housing emergency in May 2024. Building on significant progress, a Housing Emergency Action Plan sets out new, enhanced, and accelerated actions - reflecting Scottish Ministers' determination to go further and faster in our commitment to tackling the housing emergency. Support by the National Planning Hub included accelerating the delivery of Local Development Plans as well as the wider programme of support offered.

Local Development Plans are a core part of the statutory development plan and guide all housing decisions.

The planning system in Scotland is plan-led, meaning decisions must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The statutory development plan includes:

- National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)
- Local Development Plans (LDPs)

LDPs determine where development should and should not happen, including identifying land for housing, infrastructure, services, and placemaking priorities. This makes them central to how quickly and effectively housing can be delivered.

A key issue hampering Scotland's response is the pace at which the first round of new-style plans is being delivered, following the introduction of NPF4 (February 2023). Ministers expect that every planning authority should have a plan in place by May 2028. We are concerned that at past the halfway point, 13 authorities are currently expecting to adopt after this date.

## How the National Planning Hub responded.

The National Planning Hub provided support which was practical, short-term, and an accelerator of key activity related to housing delivery.

	What's been delivered
<p><b>Brokerage</b></p> <p>Offering brokerage support to unlock stalled development sites.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have been working in co-ordination with the planning housing team as part of the Hub programme. The <a href="#">Housing Emergency Action Plan</a> commits us to four new planning actions to accelerate investment in new housing delivery. The team are working with authorities and industry in a shared effort to accelerate delivery of stalled sites where planning has been raised as an issue impacting delivery. Further information can be found on the Stalled Sites Short Life Working Group <a href="#">blog</a>.</li> <li>• Coastal flood risk assessments for an island planning authority to support the unlocking of development land – working with SEPA to progress this opportunity.</li> <li>• Supporting a place-based demonstrator for a city planning authority so that the demands of nature and housing could be achieved to unlock significant number of stalled housing developments.</li> <li>• The provision of new guidance for road bonds funded by the hub (<i>currently in final stages of development</i>), in response to a key ask by housing stakeholders on action to remove barriers to development.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Surge Capacity</b></p> <p>Provides surge capacity and specialist expertise to help authorities deliver.</p>	<p><b>Scottish Ministers' have been clear in their expectations for implementing the system of local development plans - so that they deliver new-style, place-based, people-centred and delivery-focussed plans. It brings together requirements from the relevant Act and Regulations and advice in relation to National Planning Framework 4.</b></p> <p>Support on resourcing, including on recruitment of a Principal Planner in a Local Authority that had no planning resource in this area, and facilitating potential for sharing of resources between planning authorities</p>

	<p><b>Funding specialists to deliver a range of projects in support of delivering the LDP, examples of which include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transport appraisal</li> <li>• Conservation area appraisals</li> <li>• Countryside belts / green belt reviews</li> <li>• Landscape character assessments</li> <li>• Landscape sensitivity studies</li> <li>• Landscape advice</li> <li>• Play sufficiency assessments</li> <li>• Review of employment land</li> <li>• Employment land audit</li> <li>• Conservation area appraisals</li> <li>• Historic environment and archaeology assessments</li> <li>• Biodiversity impacting</li> <li>• Historic town conservation area appraisal and management plan</li> <li>• Short term lets in a National Park</li> <li>• Flooding mitigation study in a National Park</li> <li>• Rural housing deliver pilot in a National Park area</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Professional Capacity and Efficiency:</b></p> <p>Led by the Improvement Service, this includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to professional skills and training.</li> <li>• Sharing of resources and good practice.</li> <li>• Use of support tools and templates to improve efficiency</li> </ul>	<p><b>Case Studies</b></p> <p>We published several case studies, co-created with local authorities to share knowledge and good practice and to improve their understanding. Examples of support included:</p> <p><b>Place Promotion and Housing Delivery in the South of Scotland</b></p> <p>Dumfries and Galloway (D&amp;G) and Scottish Borders Council (SBC) - This case study provides an example of collaborative, partnership working across SBC, D&amp;G, South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE) and a range of key stakeholders, to produce the Housing Action Plan for the South of Scotland.</p>
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**Commitment to Delivering Development:  
Durieshill and South Stirling Gateway**

Stirling Council - The planning team utilised the recently introduced Masterplan Consent Area (MCA) approach as a mechanism to support the delivery of the Durieshill development. Through this process, the planning team advised the senior management and elected members on how the MCA could ensure the delivery of a high-quality place for Stirling.

**Open for Business: Minimum All Tenure  
Housing Land Requirement & LDP2 Allocation  
of Housing Sites**

East Ayrshire Council - This case study considers the process that East Ayrshire went through to determine the MATHLR and allocate housing land.

**Stakeholder Engagement in North Lanarkshire  
Council's Housing Land Supply Review**

North Lanarkshire Council - This case study discusses the process North Lanarkshire's Development Planning team took to review the council's existing housing land supply. The process involved an online mapping tool and surveys to assist with consultation and engagement. The process resulted in identifying a clear pathway for removing no longer deliverable sites from the housing land supply and a move towards having a more robust housing pipeline which can be relied on to deliver housing over the next LDP period.

**Webinars**

**Place Promotion and Housing Delivery**

We delivered a webinar on Place Promotion and Housing Delivery – the event identified ways of working that enabled public sector planners to lever their influence to drive investment and development delivery, particularly in response to the housing emergency. The video of this is on the NPH webpages and can be viewed [here](#).

	<p><b>Embedding Customer Care in Planning Services</b></p> <p>We delivered a webinar on how to embed customer care in planning services – exploring what good customer experience with planning services looks like and what can be put in place to support this. The video of this event can be viewed <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p><b>Local Development Plan Support Programme</b></p> <p>We have started to implement a new programme to accelerate plan preparation to meet the May 2028 deadline through supporting planning authorities to strengthen LDP project planning and resourcing and to facilitate shared learning from evidence and engagement. It is being designed to tackle the needs and challenges evidenced by planning authorities. This consists of several different activities that will mutually support one another, including events, online discussion, facilitated action learning, matchmaking and mentoring. These activities will support the development of learning and support materials such as case studies, learning points, templates etc.</p>
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## 6. Renewable Energy Developments



The planning system is a key enabler to Scotland's renewable energy ambitions.

NPF4 places climate and nature at the centre of our planning system and makes clear our support for all forms of renewable, low-carbon and zero emission technologies, whilst ensuring that potential impacts on our communities and natural assets, including cumulative impacts, are important considerations in the decision-making process.

NPF4 also designates Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure (including 'on and offshore electricity generation, including electricity storage, from renewables exceeding 50 megawatts capacity') as a National Development. National development status does not grant planning permission for the development but means that the principle of the development does not need to be agreed in later consenting processes, providing more certainty for communities, business and investors.

### Onshore wind

The [Onshore Wind Policy Statement \(2022\)](#) introduced a new ambition for a minimum installed capacity of 20 GW of onshore wind in Scotland by 2030.

## Hydrogen: A Strategic Growth Sector

The Scottish Government's [Hydrogen Action Plan](#) (HAP), published in December 2022, outlines the strategic approach and actions required to support the development of the hydrogen economy in Scotland. The HAP recognises the role that renewable and low-carbon hydrogen production could play in supporting Scotland's future energy system flexibility and decarbonising sectors that are hard to electrify.

On 5 February 2026 the Scottish Government launched its comprehensive planning and consenting guidance for hydrogen projects. This guidance can be found here: [Hydrogen: planning and consenting guidance](#).

## Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS): Enabling Grid Flexibility

BESS have an important role to play in the development of a flexible, resilient, and decarbonised energy system for Scotland. BESS provide flexibility, balance variable generation, and enable efficient use of surplus energy. There is currently a small amount of BESS operational with approximately 0.5 GW of projects. However, as we move towards a net zero energy system, Scotland will need increasing levels of energy storage.

Due to the increasing role of BESS, we are undertaking a range of work, including the recent publication of [planning guidance](#) and [independent scoping report](#) on the environmental impacts of BESS. We are also intending to rollout further training support to Planning Authorities through the National Planning Hub. To help us consider future policy development, the Scottish Government is also planning to publish a BESS call for evidence later in 2026, which will explore a range of related topics.

## How the National Planning Hub responded.

	What's been delivered
<p><b>Surge Capacity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide surge capacity and specialist expertise to help authorities deliver</li> </ul>	<p>Funding specialists to prepare reports to support development of the local development plan, the following topics were funded:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landscape sensitivity studies</li> <li>• Blue green infrastructure landscape support</li> <li>• Special landscape area statements of importance</li> </ul> <p>These types of specialist studies provide a high-level assessment of landscape sensitivity to the following development typologies as an example allowing them to be considered in strategic planning terms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Wind energy development</li> <li>○ Solar energy development</li> <li>○ Battery storage infrastructure</li> <li>○ Green data centres</li> </ul> <p><b>National development – Grangemouth</b></p> <p>Funding specialists to further update flooding and drainage data to allow better management of risks in this area.</p> <p><b>National development – Inverness</b></p> <p>Funding three Master Plan Consent appraisals</p> <p><b>Wind</b></p> <p>Funding to provide specialists to handle complex planning applications related to a wind farm and an HVDC (High Voltage Direct Current) substation.</p>

<p><b>Professional Capacity and Efficiency:</b></p> <p>Led by the Improvement Service, this includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to professional skills and training.</li> <li>• Sharing of resources and good practice.</li> <li>• Use of support tools and templates to improve efficiency.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Planning for Hydrogen: Building Confidence Through Stakeholder Engagement</b></p> <p>University of the Highlands and Islands - This case study discusses the value of taking a proactive multistakeholder approach to engagement for hydrogen developments providing examples from the Orkney Islands.</p> <p><b>Bespoke Training event</b></p> <p>A bespoke training event was organised for Falkirk Council – which hosts the Grangemouth National Development - to improve the understanding of planning for hydrogen amongst elected members and officers. This included contributions from the National Planning Improvement Champion, Debbie Harper, Director at Arup and Sarah Baillie, Partner in Addleshaw Goddard.</p>
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<p><b>Data Centres</b></p>	<p>As Scotland positions itself as a leading destination for data-centre investment, we recognised that it is essential that town and country planners understand the strategic importance, infrastructure needs, and environmental considerations of data-centre development.</p> <p>Planners play a critical role in enabling suitable land allocation, power and connectivity planning, and low-carbon design—factors that global investors prioritise when selecting locations.</p> <p>We delivered two events to equip planners with strong awareness of data-centre requirements, to help ensure Scotland can compete internationally, accelerate sustainable economic growth, and attract high-value digital infrastructure that underpins the country’s long-term innovation and productivity ambitions.</p>
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## 7. Public Service Reform

The Public Service Reform Strategy sets out commitments to change the system of public services - to be preventative, to better join up and to be efficient - to better deliver for people. It also sets out how we will tackle systemic barriers to change.

Public services are critical to delivering a fairer future and the Government’s priorities of eradicating child poverty, growing the economy, and tackling the climate crisis.

The National Planning Hub has supported opportunities in its programme of work that deliver service improvement which will create wider benefits to Scotland’s Planning Authorities.

This supports the government’s vision of a Scotland where everyone has access to services that are efficient, good quality and effective.

### How the National Planning Hub responded

	<b>What’s been delivered</b>
<p><b>Surge Capacity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides surge capacity and specialist expertise to help authorities deliver.</li> </ul>	<p>Both examples relate to Planning Authorities who are taking a lead in implementing their new LDP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting a Local Authority to develop the key design principles for the new local development plan along with the accompanying design templates.</li> <li>Supporting a Local Authority with Sketchup licences and relevant training to allow them to inhouse the design of the new local development plan.</li> </ul> <p>Both examples will be showcased to other Planning Authorities to provide different options to deliver on their own LDP.</p>

	<p>Further opportunities involved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The development of guidance to growth or start-up businesses in a town centre setting</li> <li>• Processes and templates to better manage s.75 planning obligations.</li> <li>• Updating processes for managing contaminated land in planning applications. This activity alone would speed up the release of 1,400 residential units and over 2,000 purpose-built student accommodation bedspaces</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Professional Capacity and Efficiency:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to professional skills and training.</li> <li>• Sharing of resources and good practice.</li> <li>• Use of support tools and templates to improve efficiency.</li> </ul>	<p>The provision of new guidance for battery energy storage systems commissioned through the hub</p> <p>The provision of new guidance for road bonds funded by the hub (<i>currently in final stages of development</i>)</p> <p>A hydrogen planning <a href="#">process map</a> and <a href="#">visual flowchart</a> for consenting hydrogen projects in Scotland to be read in conjunction with planning policy, legislation and guidance. Work is also ongoing developing a new resource to allow planning authorities to better understand the impacts of hydrogen development and the mitigations that can be put in place to minimise these.</p> <p>We've encouraged the sharing of services across Planning Authorities and stood by to support it financially when possible</p>
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## 8. Improvement Service



**Led by the Improvement Service**, the Hub has supported Planning Authorities and indeed wider industry with a range of products and services:

- **Professional capacity** - supporting planning authorities to be better equipped to deal with planning applications, e.g., by accessing professional skills, expertise, and capacity through facilitated collaboration between planning services; being provided with targeted upskilling; and being able to access data and intelligence.
- **Practice and efficiency** - supporting planning authorities to be more efficient and effective, e.g., through being provided with support tools, resources, and templates; attending learning events; and accessing good practice examples.

New webpages have been included in the Improvement Service website that provides a first point of contact by outlining the work that is being undertaken by the NPH and hosting the range of resources that are being developed. They can be found at [www.planninghub.scot](http://www.planninghub.scot).

A range of support has been put in place to help planning authorities to improve their understanding of planning for renewable energy and housing that has led to a number of webinars for planning authorities being held, good practice case studies published, the delivery of a training programme to help planning authorities on Environmental Impact Assessments, the development of a support programme for planning authorities on delivering local development plans and a range of learning materials including toolkits, process maps, videos, diagrams and learning notes.

## 9. Working with others

In this past year, the National Planning Hub has engaged with industry representatives and our public and local authority sector in the delivery of a programme of work – **we attended 17 events across the year** working with the following:

- **Heads of Planning Scotland (HOPS)** - who is the representative organisation for senior planning officers from Scotland's local authorities and national park authorities.
- **Homes for Scotland** – who represent 200 member organisations, their key objective is to deliver more homes for Scotland by making an unequivocal case for an increase in housing supply.
- **Hydrogen Scotland** – who brings together a unique network of hydrogen expertise with energy companies, hydrogen design & engineering consultants, specialist support & advice, academic institutions, research and development bodies, city and local authorities, and our regional enterprise agencies involved in growing Scotland's hydrogen economy.
- **The Key Agencies Group** - established in 2008 and comprises a group of public bodies that are recognised as supporting the delivery of culture change in land use planning through improved joint working. The group's aim is to work together to deliver great places for Scotland.
- **Prosper Scotland** – where the Hub joined senior leaders from government, industry, and academia at the Aviemore Summit 2025, a national forum shaping Scotland's Green Industrial Future
- **Scottish Renewables** – the voice of Scotland's renewable energy industry who have a vision for Scotland leading the world in renewable energy.
- **Tech UK** – who champion technology's role in preparing and empowering the UK for what comes next, delivering a better future for people, society, the economy and the planet.

## 10. Showcasing our offer – housing viability

Using a collaborative approach we worked with a social housing developer, the council, and other stakeholders to **identify and remove barriers preventing stalled housing sites from progressing**.

**The Hub has been actively involved in:**

- Diagnosing why this site was not moving forward.
- Facilitating multi-party problem solving

This involved working with:

- planning, housing, and biodiversity teams
  - a nature partner.
  - a social housing developer
  - with NatureScot
- Using our capacity surge to ensure specialist resources were provided to support the site to become “development ready. The funding included:
    - An ecological study
    - A topographical study
    - Digitisation of nature records
    - Report and recommendations on potential relocation sites for wildlife
    - Updated habitat suitability model and mapping (with the University of Glasgow)

This hands-on, site-specific support is an example of how the Hub can directly unlock housing delivery that would otherwise remain stuck.

## 11. Showcasing our offer – flooding constraint

The issues in this area are:

- Development has been constrained by a flood risk assessment resulting in objections to further development.
- Recent flood risk investment experiencing potential threat from a changing climate.

### Opportunity

- Engaging with colleagues in SEPA to bring their support to the project.
- Testing flood infrastructure against anticipated weather and sea level scenarios
- Identify future long term infrastructure investments to address future flood risk scenarios.
- develop policy options and decision-making frameworks which can support more positive risk-based decision making, based on an accurate assessment of flood risk scenario and impact assessment.

Clearing the pathway to allow stalled sites to move into delivery

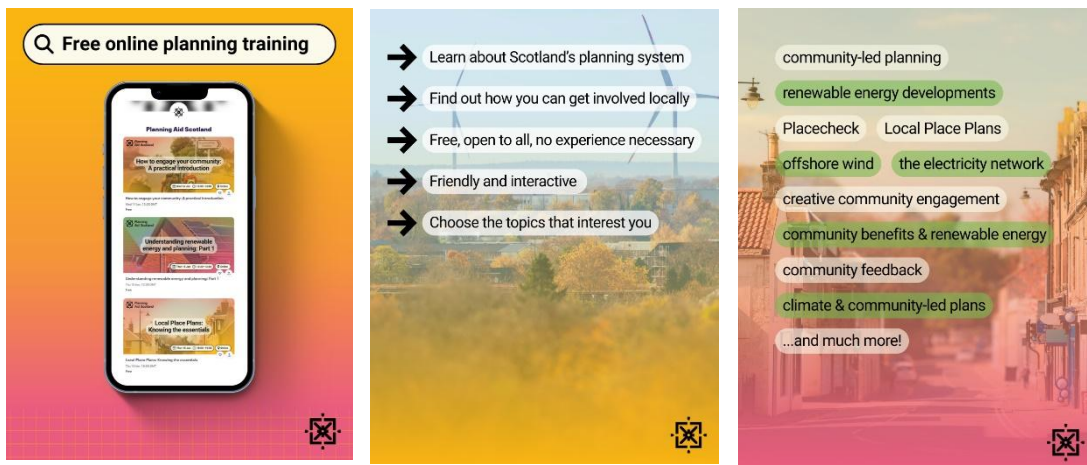
## 12. Showcasing our offer – surging planning resource

Delivery of the Local Development Plan was in difficulty.

Quickly building an assessment of where 'Planning' staff could be sourced – good working relationship developed with Venesky Brown – tier 1 provider on the SG procurement framework.

- Establishing speedy procurement processes
- Supporting the recruitment of a Principal Planner through an employment agency
- Hub provided funding (annual salary)

## 13. Showcasing our offer – supporting Scotland’s communities – our work with Planning Aid Scotland



“Planning Aid Scotland is a leading national charity and social enterprise recognised for delivering high-quality training, capacity-building support, and expert guidance across all areas of the Scottish planning system. PAS works with public bodies, community groups, community councils, planning professionals, consultants and third sector organisations to strengthen participation, improve understanding and help people to shape the future of their place.”

### Our opportunity

We took the opportunity to boost community capacity around two key topics, renewable energy developments and related infrastructure and community-led plans, in particular Local Place Plans with a focus on sustainability and climate considerations. Bespoke sessions were delivered on:

- How to engage effectively with the planning system, particularly around electricity and renewable energy applications, understanding the process, knowing where your voice fits in and how to make it count.
- How to prepare strong community-led plans (including Local Place Plans and Community Action Plans), with sustainability at the heart of your approach.

Planning Aid Scotland, with over 30 years’ experience in community planning and placemaking, was well placed to support this ambition.

## How the National Planning Hub responded.

The webinars included:

- 5 sessions on Local Place Plans and community-led planning and,
- 5 sessions on renewable energy.
- They also delivered a joint session with Community Energy Scotland on using community led planning to deliver community owned renewable energy.

In person attendance was more than 750 people. Due to the events being hosted on [YouTube](#) we anticipate double this number again viewing the session in their own time.

Attendees have highly rated the events. Due to high demand, PAS have since re-run some of the sessions.

## 14. Showcasing our offer – Environmental Impact Assessment bootcamp



### Our opportunity

Core information related to Environmental Impact Assessments was identified as a learning need to support planning authorities dealing with renewable energy and housing developments. The training products needed to be an essential starting point for those new to EIA, those returning to those undertaking elements of the assessment in their work.

### How the National Planning Hub responded.

The NPH sourced and commissioned EIA experts (Josh Fothergill and Neil Collar at Brodies) to develop and deliver an EIA training capacity building programme and materials were designed and delivered to help officers gain a core understanding of the role of EIA in the consenting process. The programme consists of:

- 2 surveys all the start and end of the programme to gauge knowledge gained.
- 2 stakeholder sessions to inform Phase 2 of the programme

- 7 webinars for planning officers and senior planning officers looking at:
  - Introduction to EIA
  - Understand the core aspects of EIA process and legal compliance
  - EIA Screening
  - Learn about how a PA determines if a proposed development requires an EIA
  - EIA Scoping
  - EIA from application to consent decision
  - Other aspects of EIA
  
- A glossary of key words and phrases used in EIA
  
- Learning materials including process maps, learning notes and explainer articles
  
- Video recordings and presentation of each webinar
  
- Case studies of EIA in practice

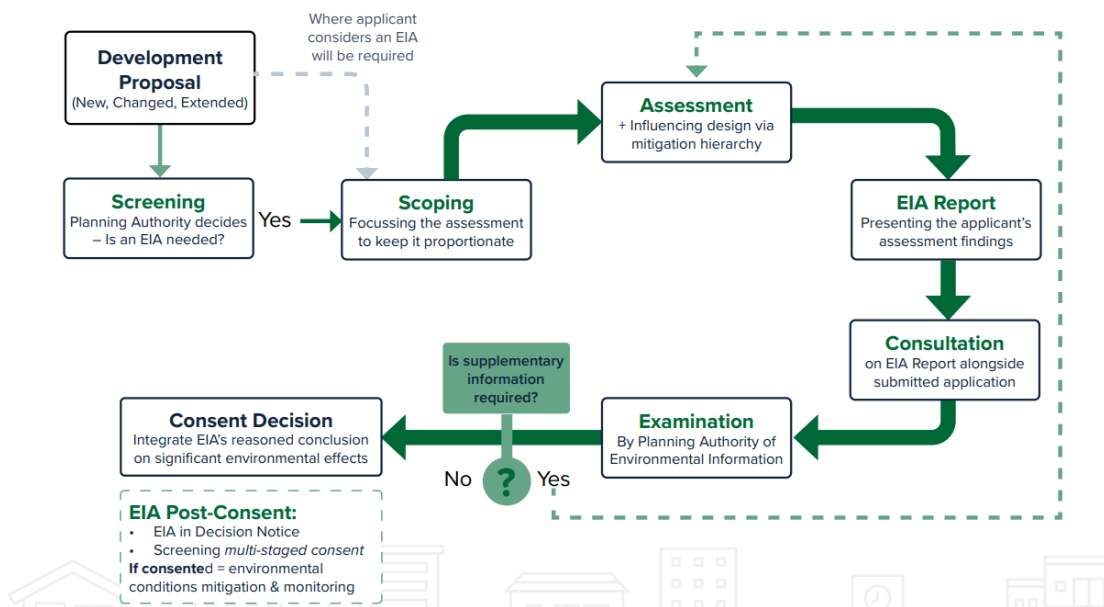
The webinars have attracted between 100-150 attendees from planning authorities, Scottish Government and key agencies.

We also provided initial information on the different activities (stages) within the EIA process (through process maps), showing where planning authorities must lead and where various other parties (developers, consultation bodies and the public) are involved in the process. Finally, the legal compliance aspects of an EIA were explained.

## Core EIA Process Diagram



Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba  
gov.scot



## 15. Showcasing our offer – supporting hydrogen development

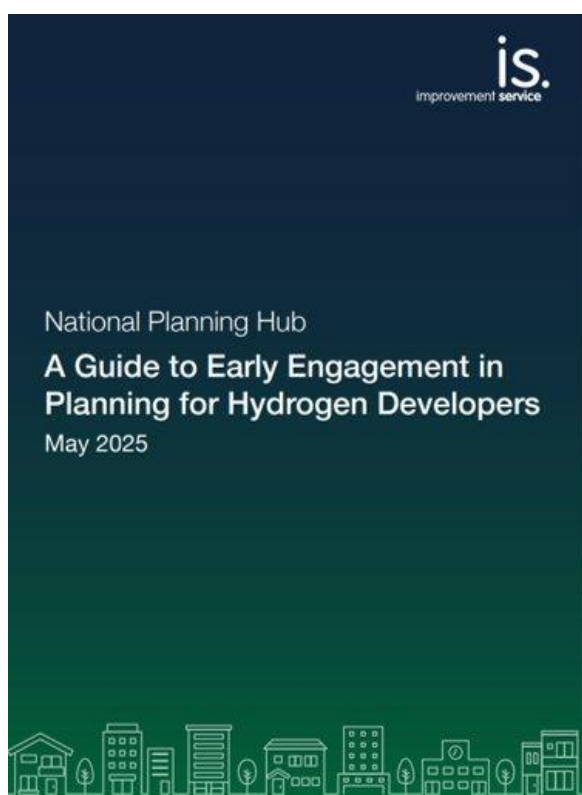
### Our opportunity

The hydrogen stream of the NPH began in September 2024. The NPH engaged directly with planning authorities and the hydrogen industry to ascertain if any specialist expertise or additional capacity was required for hydrogen projects they are dealing with or that are coming down the line.

### How the National Planning Hub responded.

#### A Guide to Early Engagement in Planning for Hydrogen Developers

This paper was written to inform hydrogen developers on why early engagement matters, what good early engagement looks like, when early engagement should take place, and how early engagement will be made to work effectively.



National Planning Improvement  

### Planning for Hydrogen: Building Confidence Through Stakeholder Engagement



#### Context

Scotland's commitment to achieving net zero by 2045 places hydrogen at the heart of its energy transition. Green hydrogen, produced using renewable electricity, offers a practical solution for decarbonising sectors that are difficult to electrify, such as heavy transport, marine operations, grid balancing, and industrial heat. For planning authorities, this means new types of infrastructure will emerge, often in coastal or rural locations, requiring careful integration with existing land use policies. Understanding hydrogen's role helps planners anticipate applications that support local and national climate objectives while ensuring developments align with safety and environmental standards and continue to support National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) policy 11 principles of expanding renewable, low carbon, and low emissions technologies.

The Orkney Islands has hosted a number of new innovative hydrogen developments, including Surf'n'Turf, BIG HIT and HySeas3 projects since 2015. Each project was developed to be successive

## Hydrogen Planning Process Map

Arup was appointed by the National Planning Hub (NPH) to produce a process map for consenting hydrogen in Scotland.

The purpose of this report, alongside the visual process map, is to set out the process of dealing with planning applications on hydrogen, the timelines, associated parties, and information required for planning applications and associated licences and permits.

It is envisaged that this report and process map will provide clarity on the planning and consenting process for hydrogen in Scotland. This report will provide key information on planning for hydrogen and will be used to build knowledge, capacity and resilience within the determining authorities and consultees.

The visual flowchart provides a route map for consenting hydrogen projects in Scotland and should be read in conjunction with planning policy, legislation, and guidance.

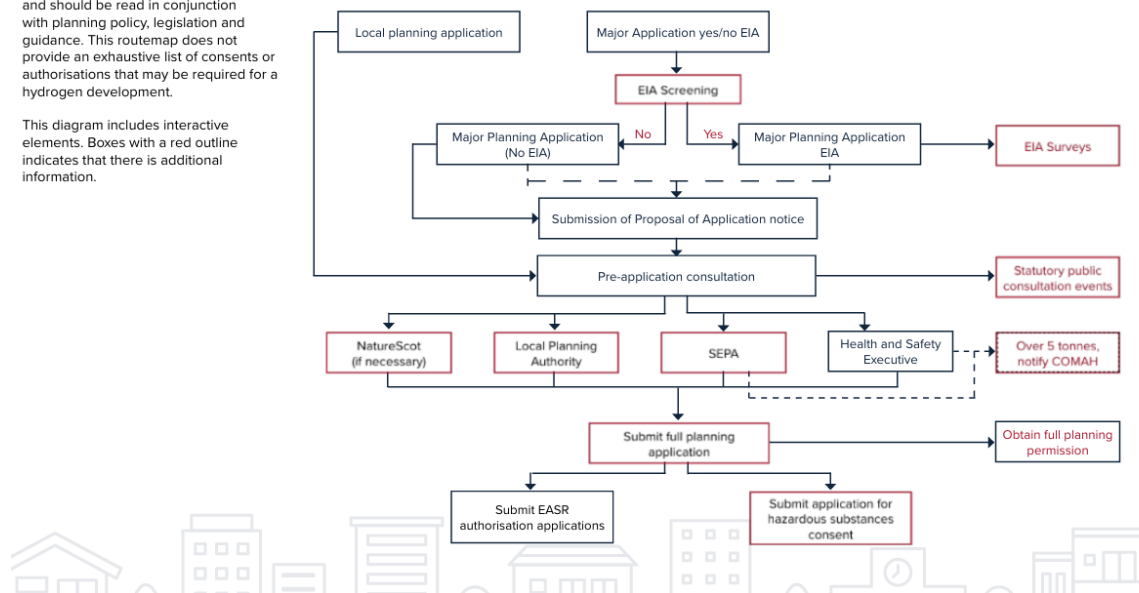
It does not provide an exhaustive list of consents or licences that may be required for a hydrogen development but includes interactive elements. Boxes with a red outline indicate that there is additional information. An updated, second version has been produced to recognise changes through the new Environmental Authorisation (Scotland) Regulations.

### Consenting Hydrogen Projects in Scotland



This flowchart provides a routemap for consenting hydrogen projects in Scotland and should be read in conjunction with planning policy, legislation and guidance. This routemap does not provide an exhaustive list of consents or authorisations that may be required for a hydrogen development.

This diagram includes interactive elements. Boxes with a red outline indicates that there is additional information.



## 16. Next steps

With the passing of the Scottish Budget the Hub has now had initial approval through the Scottish Government internal budget control processes for 2026/27.

This allows the Hub to continue into the next financial year and for the team to continue operational delivery while planning for the next phase of support.

This will be subject to the decision of Ministers from the next Scottish Government administration and further information on this will be provided from early June.

Further information will be provided on the National Planning Hub website at: [www.planninghub.scot](http://www.planninghub.scot).