



Comhairle nan Eilean Siar



NATIONAL PLANNING IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK

Improvement Action Plan 2024

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Western Isles Council)





A high performing planning authority needs to have the right number of people to do the work expected of it with the rights 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	Score (1=Making excellent progress, 5= No progress)
1. The planning authority has sufficient resources and skills to maximise productivity	4
2. The planning authority has a valued and supported workforce	3

Based on the grading above, outline any areas of improvement that are required and by whom and their level of importance (High/ Medium/ Low) and by when (short/ medium/ long term).

Improvement Action What action will you take? What will the outcome be?	Owner	Importance High Medium Low	Timescale Short term – 1 year Medium term – 3 years Long term – 3+ years	Resources
ATTRIBUTE 1: In view of the approaching Renewable Energy Major Projects challenge, work with the Planning Hub and a peer Local Authority to ensure that sufficient Planning resource is in place through secondment, outsourcing etc	Chief Planning Officer	High	Short Term	Internal, Scottish Government and Developer Contribution



ATTRIBUTE 2: Through Skills Audit and building on the existing Workforce Strategy, develop the skills required for NPF4 delivery	Planning Managers	Medium	Medium Term	Leadership Team Time
---	-------------------	--------	-------------	-------------------------



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	Score (1=Making excellent progress, 5= No progress)
3. This Planning Authority has embedded continuous improvement	3
4. This Planning Authority has sound governance	2
5. This Planning Authority has effective leadership	2

Based on the grading above, outline any areas of improvement that are required and by whom and their level of importance (High/ Medium/ Low) and by when (short/ medium/ long term).

Improvement Action	Owner	Importance	Timescale	Resources
What action will you take? What will the outcome be?		High Medium Low	Short term – 1 year Medium term – 3 years Long term – 3+ years	



ATTRIBUTE 3: Raise awareness of NPIF outcomes and actions across the Comhairle and embed NPIF-led improvement culture within the Planning Service	Chief Planning Officer	Medium	Medium Term	Chief Planning Officer Time
ATTRIBUTE 4: Offer Planning training to all Elected Members given their decision making role at Full Council	Planning Managers	Medium	Medium Term	Leadership Team Time
ATTRIBUTE 5: Introduce monthly Chief Planning Officer briefings for Sustainable Development Committee Chair and Vice Chair	Chief Planning Officer	High	Short Term	Chief Officer Time





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 as efficient as possible in doing this. The planning authority makes best use of digital technology and how it manages and uses data.

Attribute	Score (1=Making excellent progress, 5= No progress)
6. The planning authority has a robust policy and evidence base	3
7. The planning authority makes best use of data and digital technology	3
8. The planning authority has effective and efficient decision-making processes	3

Based on the grading above, outline any areas of improvement that are required and by whom and their level of importance (High/ Medium/ Low) and by when (short/ medium/ long term).

Improvement Action <small>What action will you take? What will the outcome be?</small>	Owner	Importance <small>High Medium Low</small>	Timescale <small>Short term – 1 year Medium term – 3 years Long term – 3+ years</small>	Resources
ATTRIBUTE 6: Monitor impact of NPF4 on island communities and identify areas for 'island proofing' and refinement for action by Scottish Government	Leadership Team	Medium	Medium Term	Leadership Team Time



ATTRIBUTE 7: Develop the use of GIS in spatial analysis	Planning Manager: Development Planning	Medium	Medium Term	Planning Manager / GIS Technician Time
ATTRIBUTE 8: Review the Committee reporting process to reduce report length and rationalise the number of conditions attached	Planning Managers	High	Short Term	Planning Manager Time
ATTRIBUTE 8: Explore the potential for Major Project developers to jointly fund a post-consent Conditions Discharge / Enforcement post	Chief Planning Officer	High	Short Term	Developer Resources



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	Score (1=Making excellent progress, 5= No progress)
9. This planning authority has good customer care	2
10. The planning authority has effective engagement and collaboration with stakeholders and communities.	2

Based on the grading above, outline any areas of improvement that are required and by whom and their level of importance (High/ Medium/ Low) and by when (short/ medium/ long term).



Improvement Action	Owner	Importance	Timescale	Resources
What action will you take? What will the outcome be?		High Medium Low	Short term – 1 year Medium term – 3 years Long term – 3+ years	
ATTRIBUTE 9: Work with IT colleagues to develop the Comhairle website’s Planning area, including guidance on submitting a valid Planning application	Planning Managers	Medium	Medium Term	Planning Manager / IT Service Time
ATTRIBUTE 10: Introduce a Consultees Forum for statutory Planning consultees, internal and external, to share information on pipeline projects, provide support at particular pressure points and maintain good response times	Leadership Team	High	Short Term	Leadership Team Time





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	Score (1=Making excellent progress, 5= No progress)
11. The planning authority supports the delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places	2
12. This planning authority supports the delivery of appropriate development	3

Based on the grading above, outline any areas of improvement that are required and by whom and their level of importance (High/ Medium/ Low) and by when (short/ medium/ long term).

Improvement Action <small>What action will you take? What will the outcome be?</small>	Owner	Importance <small>High Medium Low</small>	Timescale <small>Short term – 1 year Medium term – 3 years Long term – 3+ years</small>	Resources
ATTRIBUTE 11: Chief Planning Officer to chair Strategic Local Partnership for Housing Group, aligning Government Housing allocation with local delivery on a place-based basis	Chief Planning Officer	High	Short Term	Chief Planning Officer Time



ATTRIBUTE 12: Introduce regular meetings between the Chief Planning Officer and construction sector representatives

Chief Planning
Officer

High

Short Term

Chief Planning
Officer

