
BUILDING STANDARDS BALANCED SCORECARD 2023-25

1.0 HEADLINES

- 1.1 This paper presents to members of the Planning, Protective Services and Licensing Committee the Building Standards Balanced Scorecard provides details of achievements and performance in 2022-23 together with service priorities for 23/24.
- 1.2 Building Standards is a statutory service with its duties and powers detailed in the Building (Scotland) Act 2003 and relevant legislation. The purpose of the building standards is primarily to secure the health, safety, welfare and convenience of persons in or about buildings and of others who may be affected by buildings or matters connected with buildings; further the conservation of fuel and power; and further the achievement of sustainable development. We also ensure that the service operates in a customer focused manner which facilitates development and assists the local economy.
- 1.3 The Balance Scorecard is detailed in **Appendix 1**.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that members of the Planning, Protective Services and Licensing Committee consider and approve the Building Standards Balanced Scorecard.

3.0 BUILDING STANDARDS BALANCED SCORECARD

- 3.1 The Building (Scotland) Act 2003 and associated regulations, sets out the essential standards required to be met for works to existing buildings or to new construction. Building Standards assess detailed applications for proposals to ensure that building work meets these standards; and inspections of works on site, although these are limited to a minimal necessary to ensure that compliance with statutory requirements and the approved building warrant consent. The control of work on site is a matter for contracts and arrangements in place between a builder and client. Verifiers, appointed by Scottish Ministers are responsible for the independent check
- 3.2 This work is primarily achieved through the processing of Building Warrant applications and the acceptance of Completion Certificates to verify compliance with the Building (Scotland) Act 2003 and Building (Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2004. This is further supported through the provision of inclusive access to services and information at local level, delivered within available staff resources.
- 3.3 Building Standards also has other responsibilities, which while not directly part of the verifier's functions. The non-verifier work accounts for approximately 19% of surveyor workload averaged over the authority area and is currently increasing. These include responding to dangerous buildings and structures, unauthorised works, document searches, maintaining the building standards register and working with partners across a range of issues including licensing, events and the built environment. Further details are within the Balanced Scorecard in **Appendix 1**.

3.4 Achievements in 2022-23. Section 3 of the Balanced Scorecard details a number of services achievements of 2022-23 and members' attention are drawn to the following key achievements:

- i. Met and exceeded all targets for key performance measures in 2022-23;
- ii. Exceeding budget income targets for 2022/23 budget, with total income of £1,175,743, securing commercial work from two other local authorities;
- iii. Processed a total of 1139 building warrants;
- iv. Received the national "Outstanding Service and Customer Award" for customer focus from Local Authority Building Standards Scotland in 2022;
- v. The service was reaccredited with the Customer Services Excellence (CSE) Award in 2022, increasing the number of compliance-plus criteria to 23, with the auditor stating "at the forefront of excellence and a remarkable achievement".
- vi. The Scottish Government has categorised the Councils Building Standards as a "strong-performing local authority" and reissued its verifiers licence for a six year period from May 2023.

Challenges and issues.

3.5 The key challenges facing building standards service are:

- i. Recruitment is an ongoing issue with attempts to recruit qualified Building Standards Surveyors being unsuccessful. This position is reflected nationally. Our "Growing our Own" Initiative has been successful in previous years and with the national shortage of qualified building surveyors, we will continue to participate in national workforce discussions, whilst continuing with this strategy. However, the negative aspect of this is that this places additional pressure on existing officers and reduces capacity across the team.
- ii. Our reliance on commercial income from other local authorities is unsustainable as there has been a downturn in building warrant numbers across Scotland. This creates an additional budget pressure and need for action going forward.
- iii. Buildings in disrepair. There is an ever increasing workload associated with action being required by Building Standards in relation to non-maintained buildings in disrepair to assess whether they pose an imminent risk to public safety. Argyll and Bute Council have a statutory obligation as dictated by the Building (Scotland) Act 2003 to require urgent works to remove danger posed by a building, which could include work to the building or preventing access to specific areas. General building maintenance is the responsibility of the property owner(s) and a campaign is required to re-emphasise this with the aim of reducing demands on the building standard service and for property owners to take actions before public safety is compromised.

Service priorities 2023-25

3.6 The service priorities are detailed in Section 4 of the Balanced Scorecard and includes the following key performance targets.

Key National Performance measure	2023-25 Target
The percentage of requests for a building warrant responded to within 20 days	80%
The average time taken to respond to a requests for completion certificate	3 days
The percentage of building warrants issues (or otherwise determined) within six days	90%
The percentage of completion certificates issued/accepted (or otherwise determined) within 3 days	80%
The percentage of applicants providing feedback who were either satisfied or very satisfied with our service	90%

4.0 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The Council's Building Standards service continues to deliver its statutory duties with a focus on providing quality services that are performance and customer focussed. The team have worked hard in 2022/23 with a new management team and their professionalism is recognised through achieving the **Scottish Award for Best Performing Local Authority** in the customer focused category.
- 4.2 The Building Standards Balanced Scorecard 2023-25 details the service priorities and targets and members are asked to endorse this document. Consistent with the new corporate performance framework, the intention is that reports will be brought forward to Committee on a six monthly basis reporting on service performance and progress against service priorities.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Policy – consistent with Council policies for built environment and public safety
- 5.2 Financial – Service is self-financed through income generated from building warrant verification activity.
- 5.3 Legal – statutory service under the Building (Scotland) Act 2003 and associated legislation.
- 5.4 HR – none.
- 5.5 Fairer Scotland Duty - the Fairer Scotland Duty, Part 1 of the Equality Act 2010, came into force in April 2018. The duty places a legal responsibility on particular public bodies in Scotland, such as Argyll and Bute Council, to pay due regard to (actively consider) how they can reduce inequalities of outcome, caused by socio-economic disadvantage, when making strategic decisions and how this has been implemented.
 - 5.5.1 Equalities - all activities comply with all Equal Opportunities/Fairer Scotland Duty policies and obligations.
 - 5.5.2 Socio-economic Duty - all activities have complied with the council's socio-economic duty.
 - 5.5.3 Islands – interventions have been delivered across the Argyll and Bute area, including island communities.
- 5.6 Climate Change – work of service supports climate change and net zero through the implementation and enforcement of building standards.
- 5.7 Risk – sustainability of securing commercial work from other local authorities together with increasing demand from dangerous buildings work and Scottish Governments drive for increased pre-completion inspections, reduces capacity and creates additional resilience issue.
- 5.8 Customer Service – service achieved Customer Standards Excellence

Executive Director with overall responsibility for Development and Economic Growth:

Kirsty Flanagan

Policy Leads for Building Standards: Councillor Green.

12 June 2023

For further information contact: Alan Morrison, Regulatory Services and Building Standards Manager
alan.morrison@argyll-bute.gov.uk.

Appendix 1:

Argyll and Bute Council

Comhairle Earra-Ghàidheal agus Bhòid

Building Standards

Service Plan 2023 - 2025



Argyll and Bute Council
Comhairle Earra-Ghàidheal agus Bhòid
argyll-bute.gov.uk



1.0 - Introduction

The Building Standards Section is part of Planning and Regulatory Services within the Development and Infrastructure Services Directorate of Argyll and Bute Council.

[Argyll and Bute Council](#) area comprises a large mixed urban, rural and island communities. Created in April 1996 it was formed by combining the former Argyll and Bute District Council area and the Helensburgh and Lomond area of the former Dumbarton District Council to form the second largest geographical area of any Scottish Local Authority at 7,000 square kilometres (8.77% of Scotland's total land area) and third sparsest population density of the 32 Scottish local authorities, with an average density of just 0.13 persons per hectare. From Helensburgh, west to the Atlantic islands of Tiree and Coll, and from the Mull of Kintyre, north to the edge of Glencoe. Argyll and Bute is an area of contrast and diversity with 6 main towns, 48 small towns and villages, and 151 minor settlements across the mainland and 25 inhabited islands.

With a coastline of 3,723km, and a declining and ageing population ([currently 86,220](#)) covering a large dispersed geographical area particular service delivery arrangements have been formulated to meet the needs of the diverse communities we serve. Forty- five per cent of Argyll and Bute's population live in settlements smaller than 3,000 people, or outwith settlements altogether, of which seventeen per cent live on Islands.



Because of the rural nature of the area, the pattern of employment in Argyll and Bute is different to the Scottish average. Argyll and Bute's economy has a high dependency on industries, such as public sector, construction, tourism, agriculture, forestry and fishing, which are facing considerable economic and environmental challenges

2.0 – Building Standards Verification Service

The Building Standards Section is part of Development and Economic Growth within the Development and Infrastructure Services Directorate and has an important role to play in the aims, values and priorities, either directly or indirectly, of the Directorate and the Council as a whole.

The purpose of the building standards is primarily to secure the health, safety, welfare and convenience of persons in or about buildings and of others who may be affected by buildings or matters connected with buildings; further the conservation of fuel and power; and further the achievement of sustainable development. We also ensure that the service operates in a customer focused manner which facilitates development and assists the local economy.

The Building (Scotland) Act 2003 and associated regulations, sets out the essential standards required to be met for works to existing buildings or to new construction. Building Standards assess detailed applications for proposals to ensure that building work meets these standards; and inspections of works on site, although these are limited to a minimal necessary to ensure that compliance with statutory requirements and the approved building warrant consent. The control of work on site is a matter for contracts and arrangements in place between a builder and client. Verifiers, appointed by Scottish Ministers are responsible for the independent checking of applications for Building Warrants to construct or demolish buildings, to provide services, fittings or equipment in buildings, or conversions.

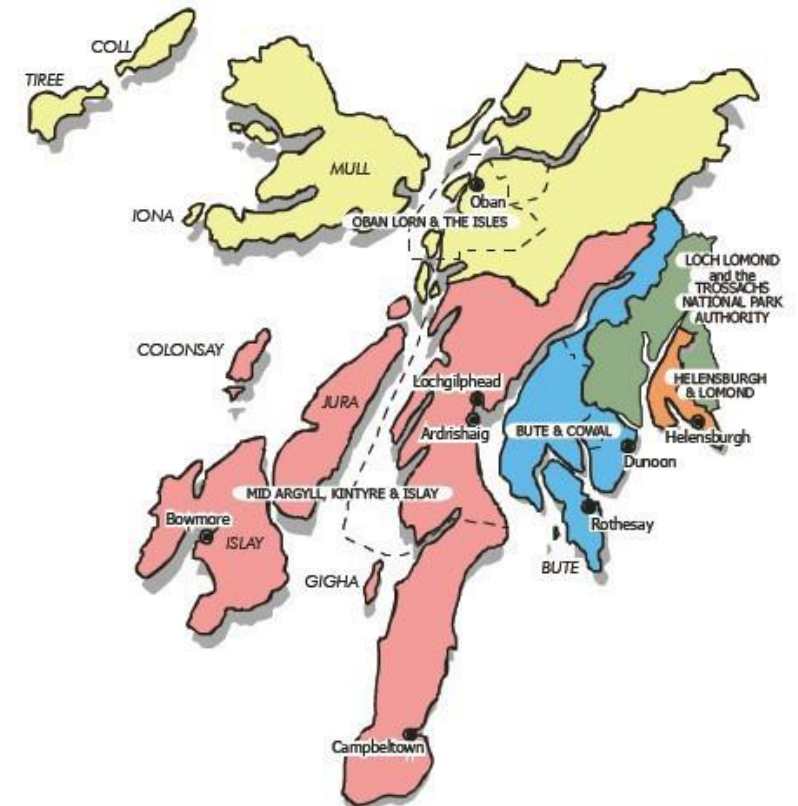
This is primarily achieved through the processing of Building Warrant applications and the acceptance of Completion Certificates to verify compliance with the Building Regulations as required by the Building (Scotland) Act and associated legislation. This is further supported through the provision of inclusive access to services and information at local level, delivered within available resources and the application of “best value principles”.

The Building Standards Service provides a devolved service from four areas offices strategically located throughout Argyll and Bute, with officers working a hybrid model involving home working, from offices and onsite visits, as appropriate.

These being:

- Bute and Cowal area office located in Dunoon town centre with a sub-area office located in Rothesay on the Isle of Bute
- Helensburgh and Lomond area office located in the Helensburgh and Lomond Civic Centre in Helensburgh.
- Mid Argyll, Kintyre and Islay area office located in Lochgilphead
- Oban, Lorn and the Isles area office located in Oban town centre

Area teams generally comprise a team leader, qualified and experienced surveyors, and assistant/trainee surveyors, with shared area administration support staff, from within Development and Infrastructure Services. The Principal Team Lead - Building Standards Manager is the professional service lead.



Building Standards also has other responsibilities, which while not directly part of the verifier's functions. This work accounts for approximately 19% of all officer time, averaged over the authority. However due to the continuing lack of property maintenance within the urban landscape, there is an increasing trend towards additional officer time, in these areas, being occupied by responding to and dealing with dangerous/defective buildings or structures.

- **Dangerous Structures**

There are occasions when risks to public safety may arise due to the condition of buildings. If action is required to safeguard the occupants or general public, Building Standards will take whatever action is necessary to remove the danger by enforcing the requirements of the Building (Scotland) Act 2003. Building Standards responds to numerous reports of Dangerous Buildings every year.



- **Unauthorised Works**

Building Standards is responsible for enforcing the requirements of the Building (Scotland) Act 2003 on buildings constructed without warrant or in contravention of conditions of warrant, and buildings whose limited life has expired.



- **Licensing**

Building Standards advises the independent Licensing Board and other Council services on suitability of premises such as public houses, restaurants, cinemas, theatres, entertainment venues, Houses in Multiple Occupation and other licenses. Building Standards gives consideration to various areas including means of escape, emergency lighting, disabled access, occupant capacity and structural suitability.

- **Built Environment Regeneration**

Building Standards plays a key role in the Council's physical regeneration projects and are a member of the project team providing advice, legislative interventions and monitoring work as necessary.



- **Public Events**

Building Standards has a considerable input into major events outdoor venues, particularly in relation to crowd capacity, means of escape, raised structures, crowd control barriers and general safety matters. Such events include the annual Cowal Highland Gathering, Dunoon and numerous Music Festivals throughout the area.

Document Searches

Building Standards can provide information about properties where Building Warrants, Completion Certificates or 'Letters of Comfort' have been issued. Building Standards records (25 years for domestic and 50 years for large non-domestic applications) date from 1964 and information can be viewed or copied on request.



3.0– Achievements and Highlights of 2022

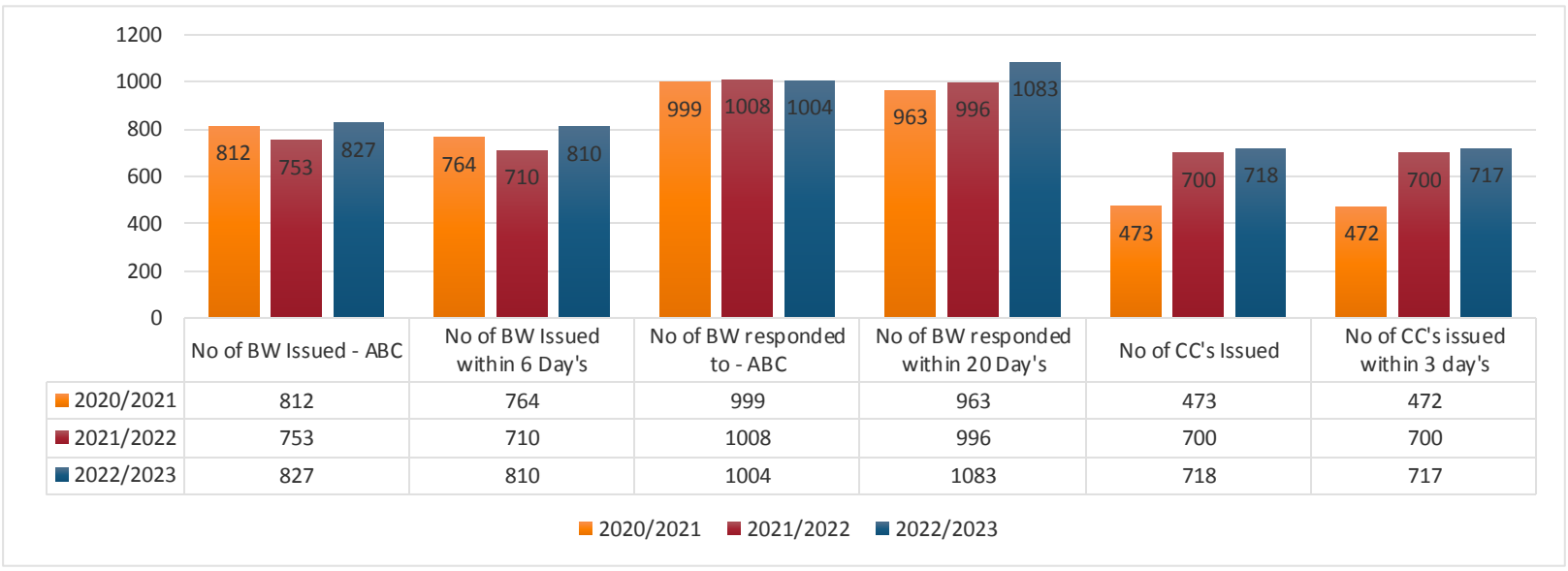
- Argyll and Bute Building Standards service has a strong commitment to managing performance which forms the basis of our Service and team plans with regular internal and external audits and reviews.
- The Building Standards Service has consistently performed well, meeting or exceeding targets for performance over which it has control. This has been achieved despite new ways of working post-Covid, a reduction in available budgets and continued need for significant change instigated through the Scottish Government’s Building Standards Performance Improvement agenda and Council priorities.
- Post pandemic, the on-going economic downturn, high costs of living and availability of building materials and consequential reduction in both private and public finance are continued challenges the service continues to face. There is also a shortage of qualified building standards surveyors across Scotland which poses recruitments and workforce planning issues, emphasising the importance of developing and retaining a skilled and competent workforce with sufficient capability to embrace new working practices and increased workloads is also recognised.
- The service was awarded the Local Authority Building Standards Scotland Award for best local authority in Scotland for the “customer focus” category
- The Scottish Government has categorised the Councils Building Standards as a “strong-performing local authority” and reissued its verifiers licence for a six year period from May 2023

Key highlights and achievements are highlighted in the table below

Management

- a. Fully re-instated building standards service post pandemic
- b. Met all targets for the key service performance measures for 2022-23
- c. During financial year 2022/23, Building Warrant applications (including amendment of Building Warrants) have increased but are not yet a pre-pandemic levels. Commercial work from other local authorities is necessary to provide a balanced budget but this is becoming increasingly challenging, as warrant numbers fall across Scotland. The value of works lodged with Argyll and Bute Council in 22/23 was £ 154,228,288.00 across the 1139 warrants received across Argyll and Bute.
- d. Exceeding budget income targets for 2022/23 budget, with total income of £1,175,743
- e. Secured commercial income from two other Scottish local authorities, where the team 557 warrants from these authorities, which accounted for £135,543 of our income.

Received the national “Outstanding Service and Customer Award” for customer focus from Local Authority Building Standards Scotland in 2022



Key: BW = Building Warrant applications; CC= completion certificates

Better use of digital technology

- a. Continued to embrace the opportunities created by digital technology with the aim of delivering greater efficiency, transparency, consistency in decision making together with better outcomes to our customers and stakeholders
- b. Initiatives such as e-building standards, remote verification inspections, migration of our electronic document management system and the development of an on-line User Forum.

Customer focus	<p>a. Maintained high customer satisfaction levels</p> <p>b. The service was reaccredited with the Customer Services Excellence (CSE) Award in 2022, increasing the number of compliance-plus criteria to 23, with the auditor stating “at the forefront of excellence and a remarkable achievement.”</p> <p>c. The Scottish Government has categorised the Councils Building Standards as a “strong-performing local authority” and reissued its verifiers licence for a six year period from May 2023</p>																		
Workforce development	<p>a. Implemented the national Building Standards/LSABSS Competency Framework across all building standards professional staff</p> <p>b. Continued support to Assistant Building Surveyors and other staff in working towards a professional qualification</p>																		
Performance	<p>Building Standards continued to meet and exceed targets for all of the Scottish Key Performance Indicators and are regarded by the Scottish Government as a “strong performing local authority”.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Key National Performance measure</th> <th>Target</th> <th>Actual</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>The percentage of requests for a building warrant responded to within 20 days</td> <td>80%</td> <td>98.2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>The average time taken to respond to a requests for completion certificate</td> <td>3 days</td> <td>2 days</td> </tr> <tr> <td>The percentage of building warrants issues (or otherwise determined) within six days</td> <td>90%</td> <td>97.4%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>The percentage of completion certificates issued/accepted (or otherwise determined) within 3 days</td> <td>80%</td> <td>99.8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>The percentage of applicants providing feedback who were either satisfied or very satisfied with our service</td> <td>90%</td> <td>100%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Key National Performance measure	Target	Actual	The percentage of requests for a building warrant responded to within 20 days	80%	98.2%	The average time taken to respond to a requests for completion certificate	3 days	2 days	The percentage of building warrants issues (or otherwise determined) within six days	90%	97.4%	The percentage of completion certificates issued/accepted (or otherwise determined) within 3 days	80%	99.8%	The percentage of applicants providing feedback who were either satisfied or very satisfied with our service	90%	100%
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4.0- Challenges

- Recruitment is an ongoing issue with attempts to recruit qualified Building Standards Surveyor being unsuccessful. This position is reflected nationally. Our “Growing our Own” Initiative has been successful in previous years and with the national shortage of qualified building surveyors, we will continue to participate in national workforce discussions, whilst continuing with this strategy. However the negative is that this places additional pressure on existing officers and reduces capacity across the team.

- Our reliance on commercial income from other local authorities is unsustainable as there has been a downturn in building warrant numbers across Scotland. This creates an additional budget pressure and action.
- Due to budget savings measures, Building Standards have also lost a 0.5 FTE Building Standards Surveyor post.
- Buildings in disrepair. There is an increasing workload associated with the assessment of buildings in disrepair and whether they pose a risk to public safety. Building Standards have powers under the Building (Scotland) Act to require urgent works to remove the danger which could include work to the building or preventing access to specific areas. General building maintenance is the responsibility of the property owner(s), and this message requires to be re-emphasised through a communications strategy, with the aim of reducing demands on the building standard service and for property owners to take actions before public safety is compromised.

5.0 – Service Planning Priorities 2023 - 2025

The key priorities in the 2023-25 service plan are :

1. Managing performance and workload against available resources and in the Councils finance outlook 2024-27.
2. Continue to provide a verification service to our customers and deliver our statutory duties under the Building (Scotland) Act 2003
3. Monitor the external environment and the impact of the Scottish Building Standards Hub and Scottish Governments Construction Compliance and Notification Plan (CCNP)
4. Ensuring compliance with the new updates to the Technical Handbooks post February 2023 and further changes in June 2023.
5. Tackle the pressures on Building Warrant fee income due to the economic downturn.
6. Workforce planning and the replacement of experienced officers due to retire over the next 3-5 years
7. Continuing to grow and develop our team in meeting the national building standards competency framework
8. Maximising our use of digital technology and new ways of working including remote verification and improvements to software information management systems
9. Migration of Document Management System in line with e-Building Standards.
10. Make preparations for assessment in respect of Customer Service Excellence.
11. Working and supporting our customers and stakeholders
12. Working with service partners as part of Argyll Property Action Group (APAG) in tackling non-maintained properties prior to any potential enforcement action

13. Maintain performance focus and meet key performance targets
14. Retention and improvement on CSE award criteria
15. Effective budget management and exploring opportunities for improving efficiencies and to maximising income.
16. Work corporately to address the Councils financial challenges
17. Achieving performance targets (see appendix I) and reporting performance corporately and nationally.
18. Continue to engage with customer and stakeholders to develop the Building Standards User Forum , provide regular newsletters and complete our customer service improvement plans
19. Deliver the Action Plan relating to the Councils internal audit of building standards 2023 report

6.0– Conclusions/Summary

Conclusions/Summary

Building Standards continues to play a critical role in protecting the built environment and public safety. The Building Standards Service Plan 2023-25 plan ensures that this work continues

Appendix A: Key performance measures and targets for 2023-25

Key National Performance measure	2023-25 Target
The percentage of requests for a building warrant responded to within 20 days	80%
The average time taken to respond to a requests for completion certificate	3 days
The percentage of building warrants issues (or otherwise determined) within six days	90%
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