



PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK 12

2022/23



About Argyll and Bute

Population (2019):

85,570

9%

Argyll and Bute as a proportion of the total Scottish land area.



43%

of Argyll and Bute's Population live in areas classified as "remote rural".

52

of Argyll and Bute's 125 data zones are amongst the 20% most geographically access deprived data zones in Scotland.

Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2020

80%

of Argyll and Bute's population live within 1km of the coast.

Average Pop. Density (2019):

0.12 persons per ha

21

Bute, Coll, Colonsay, Danna, Easdale, Eilean da Mheinn, Erraid, Gigha, Gometra, Iona, Islay, Jura, Kerrera, Lismore, Luìng, Mull, Oronsay, Seil, Shuna (Luìng), Tiree, Ulva

inhabited islands*

* not including LLTNP area

£536

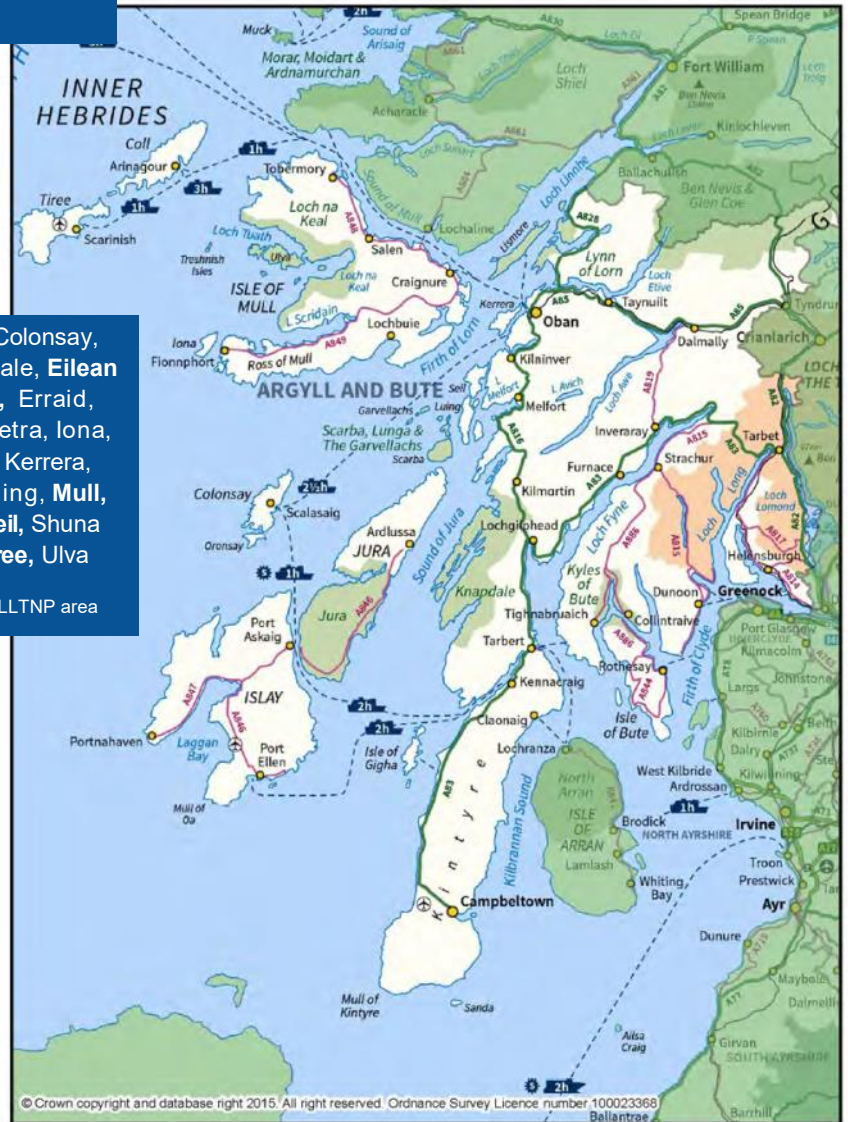
average weekly income

Compared to Scottish Average of £577, and UK Average of £688 (2019)

33%

of employment is in "Public Administration, Education and Health"

Compared to 29.8% in Scotland, 26.4% in UK (2018)



Argyll and Bute

Front cover Image credits:

Main: DB3 Architecture & Design

Top: Bute Community Forest

Bottom: James Fraser

CHOOSE ARGYLL. LOVE ARGYLL.

Argyll and Bute Key Challenges:

Our geography – A highly rural area with many small communities, often separated by water. Access to the area and to key services are perennial challenges.

Reducing population – The projected decline in total population is a real threat to the viability of the area with a potential to adversely impact on the economy/wealth creation, workforce availability and efficient service delivery.

Changing population – With more extremes than most of Scotland we face increasing costs and challenges to deliver services to older people and we need to encourage younger people to move to the area so that our economy can grow.

Economy – Unlocking the opportunities offered by its significant, sustainable economic assets for the benefit of its communities and the competitiveness and security of the Scottish and EU economies.

Employment – Developing education, skills and training to maximise opportunities for all and create a workforce to support economic growth.



The Strand, Isle of Colonsay

Infrastructure – Improving and making better use of infrastructure in order to promote the conditions for economic growth including enhancing the built environment and our town centres.

Sustainability – Ensuring a sustainable future by protecting the natural environment and mitigating climate change.

Health – Improving health and well being and reducing health inequalities.

Deprivation – Inequalities exist in Argyll and Bute so we need to improve how we identify and implement action to address them.

People on the fringe – Many of our communities are very isolated and risk collapsing as population changes take affect alongside urban communities where deprivation can create real hardships.

Foreword:



Fergus Murray

Head of Development & Economic Growth

Argyll and Bute Council

As the Head of Development and Economic Growth, I am pleased to submit the annual performance report for Argyll and Bute Council's Planning Service, which provides relevant statistics for 2022/23 and case studies highlighting the work of the council's planning service that forms part of the wider Development and Economic Growth Service of the council. This 12th Planning Performance Framework report is written at a time of sustained change in the Planning Service with new Government legislation and increased demands on the planning workforce. This has come at the same time of a number of global and national challenges that continues to impact on the wider development industry and our communities.

We continue to make investments in our places with the completion of the Helensburgh Waterfront project and Lochgilphead Front Green that have now received two national awards. This has also been an important year for community led development across Argyll and Bute with key projects delivered in partnership with planners and economic development colleagues. Projects as diverse as new campsites, business parks, affordable homes, spaceports, restoring peatlands and expanding natural forests. This work will gather momentum with new investments planned and successful funding bids looking at key worker housing and improvements to public realm and flood defences.

The council has now declared a housing emergency and this will require significant investment in unlocking sites for new homes and some radical thinking on how we can accelerate housing delivery. The situation has made more difficult by high inflation and increased borrowing costs but a wide range of partners are now involved to assist in this process. Another key aspect of this is the introduction of short term licensing and assessing the need for planning control zones as we consider new data emerging on second home ownership in many of our rural communities that also rely on tourism for a large share of our economic activity.

A key highlight this year has been our design awards that celebrated a number of first class and innovative building projects in places such as Iona, Tiree, Helensburgh and Dunoon to name a few places. Sustainability was at the heart of most of the award winning designs and this was the first time in seven years we were able to present the awards due to the pandemic and other factors getting in our way.

Our heritage investments and shopfront improvement schemes have helped support small businesses in our town centres and we continues to work with our growing network of BIDs.

Next year will again be hugely challenging for the Planning Service. Workloads remain high with major applications coming forward in renewables and energy, industry, housing and leisure. A new Local Development Plan (LDP2) is scheduled to be adopted in 2023/24 as we look to take on board the full implications of NPF4 and the new duties of the Planning Act. Experienced Planners are in short supply and whilst we have had some recent success in recruiting we are also looking still to expand our team at a time of great budget challenge for our authority and competition elsewhere. It is hoped that a new workplace action plan will assist us here including looking at streamlining our internal processes and improving communication with our customers.

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Part 1: Defining and Measuring a High Quality Planning Service

1.1 QUALITY OF OUTCOMES

1.1.1 Throughout 2022/23 the Planning Service has continued to work closely with communities, developers and partner organisations to deliver a range of developments across Argyll and Bute.

1.1.2 The [adopted Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan 2015](#) (the LDP) is firmly embedded into decision making with 12 key policies which seek to promote the delivery of sustainable long term economic growth to support the retention and growth of our population; to support the transition to a low carbon economy; to help retain and improve essential services; to protect and enhance our outstanding natural and built environment, and to maintain and improve our quality of life. Whilst the LDP is now more than five years old it is still considered fit for purpose in terms of decision making alongside NPF4 and will remain so until it is replaced by the [Argyll and Bute Proposed Local Development Plan 2](#) (PLDP2) which is now at an advanced stage in its preparation and has reached Examination stage (*it is noted that the Examination Report has subsequently been published by the DPEA in June 2023*).

1.1.3 Interpretation and implementation of the LDP policy aims is assisted by a suite of Supplementary Guidance and non-statutory Technical Working Notes. These include publications on: [Masterplanning](#), [Advertisement and Signage Policy](#), [Houses in Multiple Occupation](#), and a [Biodiversity Technical Note for Planners and Developers](#). In 2021/22 we published non-statutory guidance on the handling of requests for [Non-Material Amendments](#) under S64 of the Act was updated. Advice for communities interested in [Local Place Plans](#) was published also online during 2021/22 and updated during 2022/23 alongside the provision of [additional guidance](#) for elected members. Planning fee guidance was also updated in 2022/23.

1.1.4 The Council seeks to promote high quality design through the publication of [Sustainable Design Guidance](#) covering a range of topics including Small Scale Housing Development, Larger Housing Development, Working with Argyll and Bute's Built Heritage, Case Studies on Sustainable Materials and Technologies, and place specific guidance for the unique circumstances of the Islands of Coll and Tiree. Delivery of quality in design and place making is celebrated and championed through the Council's Sustainable Design Award scheme. The most recent iteration of the Sustainable Design Awards was launched in February 2020 but was subsequently postponed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The [Argyll and Bute Design Awards 2022](#) were relaunched in October 2022 to recognise work that was carried out or completed in the period July 2015 to December 2022. The award categories included Sustainable Design, Aesthetic Design, Community Led Regeneration Project, Built Heritage, and Design for Under £100k, with two additional categories of a Public Choice and an Elected Member Choice. The range of categories are intended to highlight good practice across varying scales and types of development, and include for the promotion of low cost-innovative design, and community led developments. See **Case Study 3** for details.

1.1.5 There are [33 Conservation Area designations](#) across Argyll and Bute providing protection to the historic built environment. Where resources allow, the Council seeks to review and update the Conservation Area Appraisal and Character Evaluations that underpin the management of these designations and to support regeneration activity.

1.1.6 Through considered and targeted investment, the Council is continuing to develop, deliver and distribute funding to regeneration projects, the foundations of which support more attractive and prosperous places. A bespoke webpage. [Place Based Regeneration - Invest in Argyll \(investinargyllandbute.co.uk\)](#), provides information on the many ongoing and completed regeneration projects which are being delivered by teams across Argyll and Bute Council as well as by community groups. The projects which were developed and delivered by the Projects and Regeneration Team during 2022/23 are as follows:

[Dunoon CARS](#) - a partnership project with Historic Environment Scotland. To date this has delivered the completion of 3 priority buildings with a fourth building currently onsite, 6 full scale shopfront restorations and 7 Owners Associations formed with a total investment spend of £1.9 million. An additional £68,000 was secured to improve shopfronts and increase footfall into the town. So far this has seen an additional 32 grants processed for smaller scale shopfront improvements. During 2021/22 an allocation of £70,000 was made from the Place Based Investment funds towards improvements to Castle House Gate Lodge and its surrounds. Delivery of the CARS is continuing through 2022/23.

[Helensburgh CARS](#) - a £3m heritage-led regeneration project in partnership with Historic Environment Scotland. Three priority buildings have been granted funding and works are planned to commence early in 2024. One shopfront grant has also been awarded and works are commencing in Summer 2023. Small repairs discussions are continuing and it is hoped to progress this aspect during 2023/24. Discussions are currently ongoing to fund an apprenticeship in traditional building skills via the Developing Young Person's Programme, and other training events are being planned for 2023/24.

[Lochgilphead CARS](#) - a partnership project with Historic Environment Scotland with total investment spend of £2m. Two priority buildings are now on site. The remaining two priority buildings are currently in the development phase with an expected start date of Spring 2024. A small number of repair grants are being developed including some prominent shopfront improvement schemes. The [traditional skills training programme](#) is progressing well. Local contractors and building professionals have benefitted from a number of courses including Lead Working and Bossing Skills, and a Level 3 Award in Energy Efficiency. Additionally, over 100 high school students have participated in Construction Skills Demo Days.

[Rothesay Townscape Heritage 2](#) - a partnership project with National Lottery Heritage Fund, Historic Environment Scotland, Highlands & Islands Enterprise, LEADER and SUSTRANS. To date this has delivered completion of 8 priority buildings, 14 shopfronts, 10 small repairs and 2 window projects with total investment spend of £5.4m. The project is ongoing until the end of September 2023 due to delays arising from the Covid-19 pandemic. The project was supported by grant funding from Place Based Investment to help assist with rising construction costs.

[Lochgilphead Front Green](#) / [Lochgilphead Public Realm Works](#) - During 2022/23 the £1.6 million investment planned for the Front Green completed its construction phase delivering a revamped play area, new public square and new pathways which have opened up the Front Green to all. The site is identified as an Area for Action within the Local development Plan and the works

complement the previously completed Colchester Square and Argyll Street public realm improvements (see [PPF 9](#)) and the ongoing Lochgilphead CARS. The project has won the [Scotland Loves Local Awards 2022](#) category for [Streets and Spaces](#) in November 2022 and the [Landscaping/Public Realm](#) category of the [Scottish Design Awards 2023](#). See **Case Study 2** for details.

[Tarbert / Ardrishaig Regeneration](#) - Regeneration projects in Ardrishaig were reported on in [PPF 5](#), [PPF 6](#) and [PPF 9](#). During 2022/23 construction work on the [Ardrishaig North Public Realm](#) project commenced with a planned completion date of April 2023. The project will deliver environmental improvements to the waterfront including a waterside viewing area, improved pathways and a new public square adjacent to local community facilities. The site is identified as an Area for Action in the LDP.

[Place Based Investment](#) - The Place Based Investment (PBI) Fund, superseded the Town Centre fund in 2021, which the Scottish Government has committed to allocating on an annual basis over a five year period. Projects committed within the 2022/23 period are as follows:

£100,000 grant to [Oban Communities Trust](#) to create a new outdoor space, which will include a community wellbeing garden, amphitheatre style seating, new and resurfaced pathways and signage at the [Rockfield Centre](#) which will be utilised by the community as a place that enhances community wellbeing.

Working with [Isle of Bute BID](#) to deliver community-led ambitions of re-instating the fountain on Rothesay promenade through a £15,000 investment.

Supporting [South Islay Development](#) with a £44,000 grant for the [Port Ellen Playing Fields project](#). This project is funded primarily from the Regeneration Capital Grant Fund (RGCF) to deliver a Community Hub and Motorhome site which will empower an isolated and disadvantaged community to become sustainable through economic, physical and social regeneration, creating transformational change in a place where people want to live, work and invest.

Supporting [Tobermory Harbour Association](#) with a £140,000 grant to deliver the Pier and Quayside Restoration project element of the wider [Aros Waterfront Development](#). The Aros Waterfront Development is a long-term multiphase project with an overarching objective to create a hub for community well-being, outdoor activities, and educational opportunities, as well as opportunities for new enterprises and sustainable tourism experiences.

£100,000 investment to complete Phase 2 of the [Tobermory Harbour Wall and Railings Project](#) that has provided critical seafront infrastructure to the community of Tobermory by adding resilience against [tidal surges](#) and helping to reduce the impact of climate change.

A further £113,000 investment towards public realm enhancements in the masonry pier section of Helensburgh Pier. The project follows on from the Council's £22 million [Helensburgh Waterfront Development](#) project as it will uplift the pier's visual appearance including views out from the new swimming pool and gym.

£200,000 to assist with the delivery of [Lochgilphead Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme](#) (CARS). The funding was awarded as third party grants to owners of two priority buildings and enhanced project outcomes, helped safeguard two historic buildings and improved the appearance of the town.

Case Study 1

Dunbeg Masterplan - Update 2023

Themes	A: Quality of Outcomes				B: Quality of Services & Engagement				C: Governance				D: Culture of Continuous Improvement			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
Performance Markers																
Key Areas of Work	Design, Masterplanning, Affordable Housing, Collaborative Working, Housing Supply, Community Engagement, Placemaking															
Stakeholders	Argyll and Bute Council, Scottish Government, LINK Housing, Local Community															
Project Lead	Matt Mulderrig															

In [PPF 8](#), [PPF 9](#), [PPF 10](#) and [PPF 11](#) we provided an update on the implementation of the [Dunbeg Masterplan](#), which focussed on the installation of essential infrastructure upgrades, and provided an overview of cross-service internal and external collaborative working arrangements that had been put in place to bring the project to fruition.



The project is being delivered through a strategic partnership between Argyll and Bute Council and [LINK Housing Association](#). The aim of the project was to provide a sympathetic extension to the existing settlement of Dunbeg and has taken a design-led approach in addressing the challenges presented by its rural location and coastal, moorland landscape to deliver a development with placemaking and connectivity firmly established in its foundation.

Completion of [Phase 3](#) properties has progressed well during 2022/23 and remains on track for all properties to be handed over by December 2023 which will bring the total number of properties delivered within the Dunbeg Extension to 375 so far. The project continues to face significant challenges with supply chains and workforce availability reflecting post-Covid impacts at national and global levels. The innovative design and layout of the development is now clearly starting to



emerge on the ground and the demand for housing for workers and students in the locality has been bolstered through further new developments in the immediate locality including [further investment and growth at the adjacent European Marine Science Park](#), and ongoing work to expand the offering of the [University of the Highlands and Islands](#) Dunbeg campus.



The Council will continue to work with key partners in the area to ensure that all sections of the housing market continue to meet demand as this is a key aim of the Council's [Rural Growth Deal](#).

The main focus during 2022/23 has been to develop further detail of future phases including housing, commercial and infrastructure development. LINK and the Council have worked in partnership to develop more detailed site investigation and understanding of the requirements of the development will require to take this into consideration. This partnership working has been extended to the community and key stakeholders, most notably



through holding quarterly Dunbeg Partnership meetings which allows the exchange of views and information in an open forum.

Development of a Transport Assessment and engagement with Transport Scotland has confirmed the Trunk Road junction design,

[Hermitage Parks for People](#) - £3.9m project for the heritage-led regeneration of Hermitage Park. The project has been part funded by National Lottery Heritage Funding and is now reaching its final phase of implementation and is programmed for completion in December 2022 (extended due to the Covid-19 pandemic). In addition to work reported in the previous PPF, the project has continued to deliver assorted areas of new or improved planting and a demonstration garden with bespoke volunteer bothy (with funding from Place Based Investment). In June 2022 Hermitage Park was awarded its third consecutive [Green Flag status](#) recognising not only the park's green credentials but also the involvement of the [community](#) and educational link to the [University of the Highlands and Islands](#).

1.1.7 [In PPF 11](#), Case study 2 reported on partnership working between Argyll and Bute Council, Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN), and the Argyll and the Isles Countryside Trust (ACT) in a project to create 30 hectares of native woodland as part of a compensatory planting arrangement. The merits of this ambitious project have since been recognised through being short-listed in three different awards including the [RSPB Nature Scotland Awards 2022](#), the [Scottish Green Energy Awards](#), and the [National Utility Awards](#).

1.1.8 Involvement of the Planning Service has been instrumental in facilitating a number of developments which have/will deliver new housing, infrastructure, schools, employment, renewable energy, and tourism accommodation/facilities.

1.2 QUALITY OF SERVICE AND ENGAGEMENT

1.2.1 The LDP and priorities of the Planning Service are closely aligned with the [Argyll and Bute Outcome Improvement Plan 2013-23](#) (previously known as the Single Outcome Agreement and Community Plan). The Outcome Improvement Plan remains the sovereign document and the LDP aims to translate its objectives into a deliverable spatial strategy. The Council's [Action Programme](#) is utilised to focus action on priority proposals and allocations, and to identify work which is required to enable development. The Council's internal key performance indicators for the Planning Service all directly tie in and seek to demonstrate a contribution to delivery of the [six long term outcomes](#) identified in the Outcome Improvement Plan. Case Studies 1 & 2 provide an example of these corporate aims being delivered on the ground by LDP policy.

1.2.2 [PLDP2](#) was submitted to the Scottish Government for Examination in early 2022 and subsequently the DPEA issued a statement of conformity. The publication of the Examination Report by the DPEA was however delayed by the progression of NPF4. In addition the Development Policy team has fully engaged with the Scottish Government on NPF4. An updated project plan for the [Development Plan Scheme](#) was last published in March 2022. *See also 1.1.2*

1.2.3 The Planning Service is located in various offices across the main settlements of Argyll and Bute providing relatively easy access to a large proportion of the population. Customers on remoter mainland and island locations are also able to access Council services at Customer Service Points. The Planning Service also provide website, e-mail, and telephone based services to customers, and continues to utilise social media as a means of public engagement. The Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic involved the temporary closure of public offices and delivery of planning services via home working and digital communication channels; these arrangements have continued throughout 2022/23. The Planning Service has continued to engage in a wider corporate discussion within the Council on 'Our Modern Workplace' that is

exploring the potential to review future workplace arrangements through permanent home working / hybrid working arrangements, and rationalisation of the Council's portfolio of office accommodation.

1.2.4 The Planning Service, working in partnership with Regulatory Services, initially attained the [Customer Service Excellence Standard](#) in February 2019. An overview of the work undertaken to reach this attainment was set out in [PPF 8](#). The CSE Standard was retained following reassessment and confirmed in April 2021. A wider corporate review of how the CSE Standard is applied within the Council has precluded undertaking reassessment during 2022/23 however it is currently anticipated that this will be revisited during 2023/24 as part of a joint application by wider grouping of Council Services. A review and update of the Development Management Customer Service Charter will also be undertaken during 2023/24.

1.2.5 The Planning Service continues to build partnerships both internally and externally. The Development Policy and Development Management teams have close links and seek to co-ordinate activity/resources with Economic Growth, Projects and Regeneration, Building Standards, Rural Growth Deal, Environmental Health, Strategic Transport, Housing, Access, GIS and Coastal Development function which all sit under a single Head of Service. Departmentally the Planning Service is also aligned with Roads and Infrastructure under a single Executive Director. The Council Service structure facilitates partnership working and promotes symbiosis in working practice including the merging of Housing with Development Policy to better realise the synergies between these services in the delivery of effective affordable housing development and the [Strategic Housing Investment Plan](#) (SHIP). During 2022/23 the new Council has identified that one of its priorities is to deal with the shortage of housing which has become a critical issue within the area. An internal working group has been set up including senior officers from across all the Council's Services to identify potential solutions and possible interventions. This activity is seeing rapid progress with early quick wins including the refurbishment of a number of redundant Council properties brought back into active residential use by key workers, and being let in co-ordination with a local island Community Housing Trust. The Council has also set up a Data Advisory Group to improve our utilisation of digital information and improve the availability of real time information.

1.2.6 Customer User Forums have previously been held regularly as a joint exercise between the Development Management, Development Policy and Building Standards Services providing a co-ordinated approach to engagement with regular professional customers. The content of recent User Forums include updates on the PLDP2 process, validation standards, updates on changes to legislation, details of any revision to staffing and service delivery arrangements, performance appraisal, and details of recent publications/guidance. Whilst some local level engagement was undertaken during 2022/23 it is intended to reinstate Service level Customer User Forums during 2023/24.

1.2.7 In addition to engaging with individual companies on application specific issues, the Planning Service also seeks to engage directly with the aquaculture industry by arranging an annual liaison meeting with local industry representatives with hosting arrangements alternating between the Council and Industry. The event intended for 2019/20 was due to be organised and hosted by the Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation and has still to be revived following the Covid-19 pandemic. The agenda for the last meeting in 2018/19 meeting included an update on

LDP2, the [Clyde Marine Plan](#), Planning Performance, revised Industry Planning Protocols, discussion about [changes to SEPA's licensing regime](#) and its implications for planning, wild fish interactions, and updated EIA Regulations. In the interim meetings have continued with individual companies however it is hoped that the annual industry liaison meeting can be revived during 2023/24.

1.2.8 The Development Policy Service has developed a remote based assessment of housing land supply in order to verify that it is fit for purpose and does not act as an impediment to the delivery of new house building. This has allowed us to carry out a survey despite 'lockdown' restrictions. The Council continues to explore innovative ways in which it can contribute to or facilitate the further delivery of a variety of housing types as reported in [PPF 7.](#), and is meeting regularly with all local Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to identify working groups as appropriate to find tailored solutions for site specific development impediments. A quarterly Housing Forum is chaired by the Leader of the Council. In addition the Council hosts a forum for Community Housing Trusts with as many as a dozen local communities either already having or planning to provide housing directly themselves. In one case this is being delivered in partnership with a key local employer helping to ensure that they can find accommodation for key workers. In partnership with our local HSCP, we are financing an additional Empty Homes Officer post who will assist in finding accommodation for key NHS workers.

1.2.9 The Council remains supportive of national efforts to roll out improved communications infrastructure. The Council's Digital Liaison Officer continues to provide assistance and single point contact for numerous consultants and monitors progress of telecommunications planning applications as they are developed, submitted and implemented, following internal protocols to engage planning officers with greater expertise in telecoms development when required. Feedback from consultants has been complimentary of the processes which the Council have implemented to assist in the progress of digital connectivity. EE/BT have previously commented positively on the streamlined process that the Planning Service have implemented in assisting in network coverage development. It has also been highlighted internally that cross departmental working will be intrinsic to the successful development of improved fibre penetration into rural communities given the challenges and, in some cases, short timeframes for implementation.

1.2.10 The Council recognises that it cannot work in isolation and that collaborative working will deliver the most productive outcomes for communities. Area regeneration efforts require substantial involvement from the community as a whole, and relies on private and third party partnerships and subsequent investment. The Council has previously reported on ongoing collaborative work with a number of housing sector partners to identify solutions that continue to deliver new homes where and when they are needed. Amongst others this includes [Mull and Iona Community Trust](#) who we are working with to develop a model where the Council can let them property to provide accommodation for key workers and temporary seasonal workers on the island of Mull; this is a new approach which is being piloted and will evolve as we learn. The Council has also worked with [Mull and Iona Community Trust](#) who are delivering improved shore side facilities at Ulva Ferry with the support of Regeneration Capital Grant Funding secured by the Council. [South Islay Development](#) are delivering a new community hub and motorhome facilities at Port Ellen with the support of the RCGF and Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund, both of which are administered by the Council. We are also working with [Tiree Community Development Trust](#) who are developing new business units at Crossapol with the support of

RCGF; and RCGF funding was also secured during 2022/23 by Mull and Iona Community Trust for phase 2 of the [Nonhebal Business Park](#) and Tobermory Harbour Association for development of a water sports centre in Tobermory. The Council also supports, and works in partnership with the area's [Business Improvement Districts](#). These operate in Oban, Dunoon and Isle of Bute, delivering projects and events. There were two re-ballots in the year 2022-2023, which resulted in a third term for Oban and a second term for Dunoon.

1.2.11 During 2022/23 consultation was undertaken in relation to proposed public realm improvements at Gibraltar Street, Oban with two events held in June and November 2022. consultation took place both online and with face to face engagement and has had a significant impact upon the final scheme which is to be delivered during 2023/24. The [Ardrishaig Public Realm](#) project which was onsite during 2022/23 followed the example of other recent capital projects by providing regular updates to both internal and external stakeholders throughout the construction phase.

1.2.12 The Development Management Service continues to offer a [pre-application and permitted development enquiry service](#). Previously we have reported on the introduction of charging, template responses and online submissions to provide timely, consistent, high quality advice to prospective developers through identification of relevant planning policies, constraints and requirement for supporting information in advance of the formal application process. The [Planning section of the Council website](#) includes useful customer information including advice on 'Permitted Development', relevant publications (including the LDP and non-statutory guidance), information on the planning process and details of how interested parties can engage with it. Customer feedback has however identified demand for a pre-app initiation and follow up advice service however plans to extend the range of services and undertake a full review and refresh of website content has not been possible to date due to limited resource availability and a wider corporate refresh of the website that has restricted the scope at Service level to amend online content whilst this process was underway and it will now be taken forward in 2023/24. Throughout 2022/23 details of disruption to the delivery of services and updated arrangements for contacting the Planning Service have continued to be published and kept up to date on the [Council's website](#).

1.2.13 Elected members remain involved at an early stage of an application for 'major' development and are provided with a briefing on all Proposal of Application Notices (PANs). This [protocol](#) requires all PANs to be reported to the PPSL Committee and allows Members the opportunity to identify matters which they consider would be material to the determination of any subsequent application. Any issues raised by Members are then fed back to the applicant to take into account in the preparation of their formal application. Commencement of s23 of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 has also introduced a new requirement to directly notify local, Scottish, and UK elected representatives when an application for Major development is received. The Council responded to this additional requirement through the introduction in 2019/20 of a new protocol providing notification to the relevant parties by e-mail.

1.2.14 We have reported in previous PPFs on the certainty provided through development of masterplans and LDP allocations. Recent years have seen development, including affordable housing, delivered within masterplan/LDP allocations in Bowmore, Campbeltown, Dunoon, Helensburgh, Lochgilphead, Inveraray, Port Ellen, and Tobermory and we reported in [PPF 7](#),

Case Study 2

Lochgilphead Front Green Regeneration

Themes	A: Quality of Outcomes				B: Quality of Services & Engagement			C: Governance				D: Culture of Continuous Improvement			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Performance Markers															
Key Areas of Work	Regeneration, Greenspace, Town Centres, Community Engagement, Placemaking, Design Workshops/Charrettes, Project Management														
Stakeholders	Argyll and Bute Council, Transport Scotland, Lochgilphead Community Council, Lochgilphead Phoenix Project														
Project Lead	Anna Watkiss														

In [PPF 10](#) and [PPF 11](#) we reported on the development and delivery of a £1.6 million pound investment in the redevelopment of the [Lochgilphead Front Green](#). This development was completed during Summer 2022. The project forms one part of a wider portfolio of work which has the aim of improving the environment and built heritage of Lochgilphead, other projects include the Colcheeter Square/ Argyll Street Public Realm Works, various shop front improvements and Lochgilphead CARS.



The project aim was to improve the Lochgilphead Front Green, a key site located within the Lochgilphead Conservation Area at the heart of the town centre and particularly prominent for those travelling through the town between the central belt to/from Kintyre and the Islands. The site was identified as an Area for Action within the current Local Development Plan and its predecessor. The longstanding ambition and continued desire to see the site enhanced was recorded through the [‘Rethink the Link’](#) Charrette held in 2016 and previously reported upon in [PPF 5](#) and [PPF 6](#).





Further engagement was undertaken with three public consultation events held between March and August 2019. These were well attended with hundreds of participants providing their views on the project and advising of the aspects that they liked and disliked. The information collected helped to shape the final project design which seeks to deliver the key elements which were identified by the local community as most important to them.

The project is funded by Argyll and Bute Council's [Tarbert and Lochgilphead Regeneration Fund](#), the Scottish Government's Cycling, Walking and Safer Routes and Town Centre Funds, Hi Trans, Lochgilphead Phoenix Project, and the Co-operative Local Community Fund.

Pre-app advice and planning permission for the project was sought and granted in 2019. The subsequent procurement process was severely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and resultantly was unable to be concluded until March 2021. Construction works commenced in May 2021 and completed in August 2022.

The project has delivered:

- A new public play park;



- A new public square where community events can take place. This is constructed from the same local stone as the retained War Memorial and which has also recently been used in public realm improvements to the adjacent Colchester Square and reported on in [PPF 10](#).
- Improved surface water drainage and added protection from flooding resulting from coastal storm surges;
- Landscaping which retains the majority of the Front Green as an open grassed area;
- Retention of the existing avenue of Chestnut trees along Poltalloch Street, and replacement of damaged trees with a more salt tolerant species, with additional tree and shrub planting around the play area.
- Provision of new seating areas including a 200m long seating wall which performs the dual function of raising ground levels to reduce the impact of frequent storm surge flood events;
- Provision of enhanced walking and cycling facilities; and,
- Provision of new signage.

The project has contributed to the wider goals and outcomes of the Planning Service through supporting the delivery of town centre regeneration and place-making projects which supports Argyll and Bute to become a more attractive and prosperous place to work, live, visit and do business in. The project is specifically linked to meeting the aspirations set out for Area for Action 12/1 identified in the [Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan 2015](#).



The project has been well received and utilised by the local community and has demonstrated the positive benefits of delivering physical improvements to our built environment. The project has subsequently received national recognition picking up the [Streets and Spaces Award](#) at the

Scotland Loves Local Awards in November 2022, and more recently has won a Gold Award in the [Public Realm and Landscaping](#) category at the Scottish Design Awards 2023.



[PPF 8](#) and [PPF 9](#) that the Dunbeg masterplan area was the subject of a detailed application for 300 affordable dwelling units which is now on site. **Case Study 1** provides an update on activity at Dunbeg over the past 12 months where significant progress has been made toward delivery of 300 affordable houses with completion now anticipated during late 2023. In [PPF 11](#) we reported on a new masterplan for a designated Potential Development Area in [Scalasaig, Colonsay](#) to support community led aspirations spearheaded by the [Colonsay Community Development Company](#) in partnership with [MOWI](#) for social housing and economic development on the island and are pleased to report that during 2022/23 there has been significant progress on the implementation of housing development within this site with completion of phase 1 expected during 2023/24. 2022/23 has also seen planning permission granted for the delivery of [essential infrastructure and enabling](#) works within the [Kilmory Business Park Masterplan Area](#) in Lochgilphead, and a planning application submitted for [phase 4](#) of the [Bowmore Masterplan Area](#) along with the initiation of pre-application discussions on future phases of that development.

1.3 GOVERNANCE

1.3.1 Development Management and Development Policy items are reported to the centralised Planning, Protective Services and Licensing (PPSL) Committee which meets monthly (except for July) and convenes for site visits and discretionary Local Hearings as required. The PPSL Committee met on 11 occasions during 2022/23. Local Review Bodies operate flexibly to demand with 15 LRB meetings convened during 2022/23 in relation to 7 LRB cases. PPSL continued to operate in a virtual format during 2022/23 and continued to facilitate public access to meetings; although discretionary hearings have been held both in person and as virtual meetings. The Council has embraced the use of virtual meetings for committees and discretionary hearings, and whilst some concerns have been raised about the prospect of digital exclusion, experience to date would indicate that conducting Committee business online provides additional opportunities for participation, particularly for populations located in remoter mainland, and island locations. The [Full Council](#) decided in 2021/22 to augment this position with improved functionality, scope for hybrid meeting formats, and functionality for live streaming/broadcasting of Council meetings through recent approval of a roll out of MS Teams to replace Skype from August 2021.

1.3.2 The Council's [Scheme of Delegation](#) to officers was reviewed by Full Council and updated in [September 2022](#). The scheme of delegation continues to operate effectively with 98.2% of decisions being made under delegated powers in 2022/23. During this period 99.5% of applications were approved demonstrating the effectiveness of a plan-led system, flexible/pro-development policies which are aligned to the corporate priority of sustainable economic growth, and a commitment to delivering positive outcomes.

1.3.3 Argyll and Bute Council continues to face significant budget pressures with an estimated budget gap of more than £13 million in 2023/24 and more than £54.5 million for the period 2023-2028. The Council has already made £70 million of recurring savings since 2010-11. In previous PPFs we have outlined the significant contribution towards Council savings which have been delivered by both the Development Management and Development Policy Services over this period which has involved a downsizing of staff resource and the introduction of charging for a number of non-statutory services including the handling of pre-application enquiries and non-material amendments. The Covid pandemic also had a significant impact on resourcing with a substantial downturn in fee income experienced during both 2020/21 and 2021/22 impacting significantly on the ability of Planning Service to respond to these challenging circumstances. The reform of statutory planning fees from 1st April 2022 was therefore

particularly welcome and has partially addressed the concerns previously raised by the Council highlighting that the fees associated with local applications are insufficient to deliver a cost neutral service ([PPF 8 – Costing the Planning Service in Scotland](#)). Planning fee reform has delivered a marked increase in statutory fee income during 2022/23 but it remains evident that there is still a reliance on fee income from a small number of high value major applications to subsidise the wider delivery of the Council's Planning Service. In this respect it is highlighted that a more frequent review of statutory planning fees is necessary particularly in a climate where costs are rising on a regular basis - in this respect it is disappointing that the recent reform of planning fees did not make any provision for an annual increase in line with inflation. An improving financial position during 2022/23 has however better placed the Planning Service to review the availability of resources to address its current challenges which includes the processing of a significant backlog of planning application casework and succession planning with 2.5 additional fte posts being created during 2022/23 within the Development Management Service and a further 3fte to follow during 2023/24 along with 1 additional fte within the Development Policy Service demonstrating a commitment by the Council to reinvesting planning fee income in the longer term resourcing of both Services and improvement of service delivery. Budgets and efficiency measures continue to be considered at management meetings with updates provided regularly to the Executive Director and elected Policy Lead. Participation in the [Costing the Planning Service in Scotland](#) project, as detailed in [PPF 8](#), has confirmed that the cost efficiency of Argyll and Bute's Planning Service compares favourably with that of other Local Authorities and has provided additional insight to assist with budget planning for future years. The outcomes of this project were [reported to the Council's PPSL Committee](#) in June 2019.

1.3.4 During 2022/23 Planning Enforcement continued to be delivered by two dedicated Enforcement Officers based in Lochgilphead and Oban covering the West of Argyll and Bute with the undertaking of enforcement duties being combined with Development Management casework in the East of the Council area. It has however been identified during the development of the DM Service Transformation Action Plan that the provision of an additional dedicated enforcement resource to cover the East of Argyll would improve enforcement performance and release existing planning officer resource for other statutory casework. Funding has been agreed for this additional post in 2022/23 although recruitment and appointment will be undertaken during 2023/24. Enforcement is delivered on a priority basis which is set out in the [Enforcement and Monitoring Charter](#) which was reviewed, updated and approved in March 2022. The Council also published an [addendum to the](#) Charter in November 2020 which remained in force until 30th September 2022 clarifying the manner in which unauthorised development arising from a necessary response / unavoidable impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic was to be addressed in the planning enforcement process. The [temporary relaxation of planning enforcement in relation to town centre recovery from Covid-19](#) was adopted as a Position Statement in July 2020 under emergency powers, these provisions were subsequently extended up until 30th September 2022 following involvement of elected members.

1.3.5 The Planning Service continue to engage with key partners to facilitate a number of significant strategic development investments in and around Oban. These include Dunbeg, SAMS and the European Marine Science Park, Saulmore Golf and Marina Development, and Oban Airport Business Park. However there is a need to prioritise co-ordination and planning of long term strategic growth in the Ona area through development and production of the [Oban Strategic Development Framework](#). Preliminary work has begun on the OSDF which will continue throughout 2023 in order to allow wider engagement in 2024.

1.3.6 Changes to the Council's corporate structure in 2019 included the functions provided by Planning and Regulatory Services, and the Economic Development Service being brought under a single Head of Service which is now titled Development & Economic Growth. Whilst the corporate restructure was primarily intended to deliver budget savings the new service structure provides closer alignment and co-ordination of the Council's regulatory functions, including Development Management, with the Council's plan making, business support, and project delivery activities. Increasing reliance on virtual working has had the benefit of providing improved opportunities for collaboration and partnership working across Council services with virtual project teams capable of being readily assembled without the need for extensive travel and time demands. Examples of this approach include Rural Growth Deal Working Groups, the Council's Climate Change Board, and the Care Homes and Housing Programme Board which bring together stakeholders from across a number of Council Services and other key external agencies.

1.3.7 The Planning Service continues to engage with other Council Services through Area Property Action Groups (APAGs). This award winning approach and some of its successful, high quality outcomes have been highlighted within previous PPFs, and examples of this innovative, inter-disciplinary approach to problem solving have been highlighted in [PPF 8](#) and [PPF 11](#).

1.3.8 The Council continues to explore the delivery of shared services with other authorities. During 2022/23 the Planning Service has continued to share service delivery of Conservation and Design advice to Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority, and has also delivered a small amount of charged Biodiversity consultancy. Collaboration with neighbouring authorities also remains ongoing and during 2022/23 this has included case officer discussion with the LLTNP on the administration of cross-boundary applications.

1.3.9 The Development Management Service continues to seek to review and refine existing processes to deliver efficiency savings and improve performance and outcomes for customers. During 2018/19 the Development Management Service invested and delivered an upgrade of Public Access improving stability of this customer engagement tool and allowing greater scope to improve the customer experience. The Service also invested in the purchase of IDOX Enterprise for Uniform during 2018/19 and undertook initial development work during 2019/20 however the development and roll out of Enterprise, which will implement improved workflow processes and performance management, was postponed during 2020/21 due resource implications arising from the Covid-19 pandemic. During 2021/22 a wider project involving Building Standards and Regulatory Services and led by ICT has been implemented to replace the existing Document Management System (DMS) to deliver improved functionality for both officers, stakeholders and the public; Planning and Regulatory Services have engaged with the Council's ICT Service to implement a project managed approach to development, implementation and roll out across three Council Services which was originally programmed for completion in 2022/23 but is now delayed into 2023/24 due to technical issues with the transfer of data into the new systems that requires to be resolved between the software providers. Initial implementation of Enterprise remains scheduled to run alongside completion of the DMS project and will also now take place during 2023/24. As previously reported in [PPF 10](#), the Covid-19 pandemic enforced a requirement to adapt to restrictions on travel and social distancing which expedited the adoption of online working practices, including online validation and e-decision notices, which will be retained in the long term.

1.3.10 All professional staff within Planning Services are provided with laptops to facilitate their ability to travel efficiently and work flexibly across the Council area. The Development Management Service invested in tablets which were deployed during 2020/21 to allow use of e-documents as a replacement for hard copy planning application documentation used for examination of plans outwith the office environment, and recording site visit activity. The Council's longer term investment in ICT that supports flexible working arrangements was crucial to our reaction to the Covid-19 pandemic and allowed the majority of Planning Services staff to seamlessly move to home working. Services providing frontline contact services now continue to provide a primarily virtual service although face to face engagement has resumed where required. In some instances this has involved the delivery of new solutions such as the utilisation of Health Service Near Me portal by the Council's Housing Service to deliver virtual face to face interviews with clients, and the further dissemination of smart phones.

1.3.11 Customer appetite for Processing Agreements remains indifferent. The Development Management Service did not determine any applications with a Processing Agreement during 2022/23 despite engaging with all applicants for Major development. Information on the availability of [Processing Agreements](#) is available on the Council's website, is highlighted in all pre-application reports, and has previously been promoted in User Forums.

1.3.12 Argyll and Bute Council has a [corporate complaints process](#); customer information is provided on the Council website and in customer Charters. All complaints are subject to performance reporting and 'Stage 2' complaints require review by senior management with the option to seek further review by the [Scottish Public Services Ombudsman](#) (SPSO) where customers are not satisfied with the outcome.

1.3.13 Legacy cases (applications which have been valid for more than 12 months) are reviewed regularly as part of caseload management however the resource required to undertake this proactive review has remained diminished during 2022/23 due to reduced staffing capacity. Ordinarily, caseload reviews on longstanding applications is undertaken weekly/biweekly at team level and monthly with involvement of a senior manager. During 2022/23, only 18 legacy applications were concluded representing a downturn on the previous period. The continuing legacy of the Covid-19 pandemic upon workflow, the continuing difficulty in recruiting to vacant posts and interruption of workflow caused by the introduction of NPF4 has all impacted on the capacity of the Development Management Service to determine planning applications during 2022/23 and has resulted in 60 additional legacy cases (125 legacy cases in total) accruing as of 31st March 2023. Ordinarily legacy cases are subject to regular review by the DM Management team and targeted for conclusion; however during both 2021/22 and 2022/23 a long term vacancy at Team Leader level and the impact that this has had on the wider DM Management team has precluded this as a regular activity. Gaps in the management team were eventually resolved in February 2023 closing off a 16 month period where the DM Management Team have operated short-handed. The return to a fully staffed DM management team is expected to result in a marked improvement in the handling of legacy applications during 2023/24.

1.3.14 Applications which are to be subject to planning legal agreements are flagged up on lists of undetermined applications to ensure that the progress can be reviewed on a regular basis, as noted in 1.3.13 above, a requirement to operate with long-term vacancies has reduced resources and availability of staff to undertake this activity. The average time period for processing applications with legal agreements increased from 33.6 weeks to 49.9 weeks during 2022/23.

Case Study 3

Argyll and Bute Design Awards 2022/23

Themes	A: Quality of Outcomes				B: Quality of Services & Engagement			C: Governance				D: Culture of Continuous Improvement			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Performance Markers															
Key Areas of Work	Design, Conservation														
Stakeholders	Elected Members, General Public, Local Developers, Architects/Agents														
Project Lead	Kim de Buiteleir														

The Argyll and Bute Design Awards 2022/23 were [re-launched](#) in September 2022 after being delayed by the Covid pandemic. This is the fourth iteration of an award scheme and covered projects completed between 2015 and 2022. The Awards promote the importance of design and sustainability and provide recognition to those who have managed to deliver high quality development within Argyll and Bute. The launch of the Awards was accompanied by a press release and creation of a [webpage for submission](#) of entries.

Almost 60 nominations were received across the six main categories which were judged by a panel comprised of both planning professionals and elected members who decided on the shortlist for each category and visited each property prior to their final deliberations. The shortlisted entries were also subject to separate votes in the Members Award and [Public Award](#) categories which were new additions this year which were intended to secure more direct public and elected member interest in the Awards.

The panel were impressed with the extremely high standard of entries and noted that a number of the projects have recently won or been shortlisted for other awards including the [RIAS Awards](#); [Heritage Angel Awards](#), and the [National Planning Awards](#).

The [Design Award Ceremony](#) was held in the Helensburgh Civic Centre. This was hosted by the Council's Chief Executive Officer, Pippa Milne and the Head of Development and Economic Growth Fergus Murray, in addition to the elected members and professional officers of the judging panel. Following the success and positive feedback on this year's award ceremony it is intended that the Design Awards will become a biannual fixture.

The Design Award Categories 2022/23:

- Sustainable Design
- Aesthetic Design (Large Scale)
- Aesthetic Design (Small Scale)
- Community Led Regeneration
- Built Heritage
- Design for Under £100,000
- Member's Award
- Public Award



Design Award Winners at the Award Ceremony

Public Choice Award Winner



Iona Abbey

Members' Choice Award Winner



Campbeltown Picture House

Sustainable Design Award Winner



Lochend

Community-Led Regeneration Award Winner



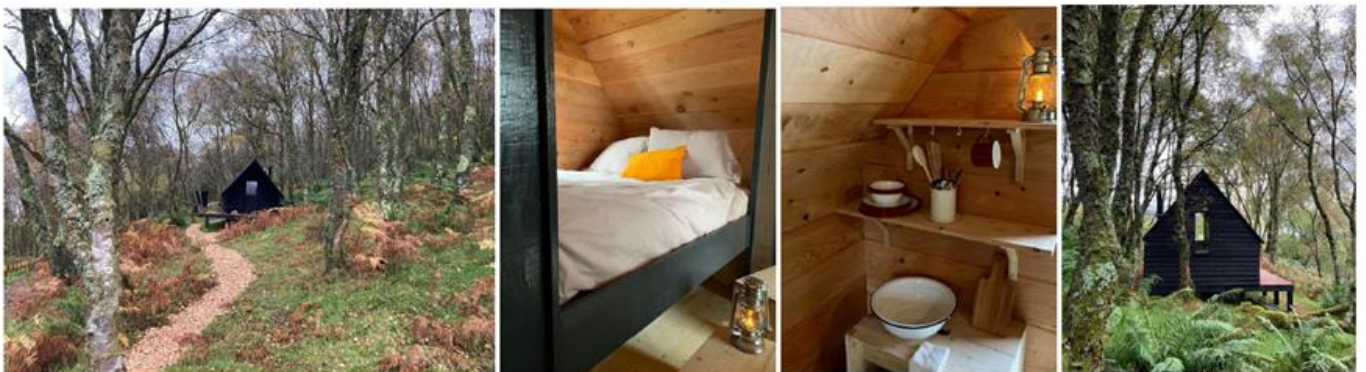
The Rockfield Centre

Community-Led Regeneration Certificate of Commendation



Dunoon Burgh Hall

Under £100,000 Award Winner



Charcoal Huts

Built Heritage Award Winner



Asknish House

Aesthetic Design (Large Scale) Award Winner



Iona Village Hall

Aesthetic Design (Large Scale) Award Certificate of Commendation



Helensburgh Leisure Centre

Aesthetic Design (Small Scale) Award Winner



Taigh an Ailtire

Aesthetic Design (Small Scale) Award Certificate of Commendation



Eilean da Mheinn

Aesthetic Design (Small Scale) Award Certificate of Commendation



St Comghan's Chapel

1.3.15 An audit of the Council's system of internal control and governance in relation to planning applications within Council's internal audit plan for 2021/22. The internal audit was undertaken during 2022/23 and reviewed the planning application handling process to assess compliance with both statutory requirements and Council Policy. This included consideration of risks relating to the Council's ability to deliver core services as a result of the Covid pandemic, failure to meet statutory requirements, and performance monitoring. The internal audit confirmed that the Development Management Service was compliant in respect of these factors but highlight a requirement to update detailed procedure notes to reflect revised ways of working that had been introduced; this documentation will be updated alongside the introduction of new Enterprise workflow and a DMS during 2023/24 - see also 1.4.12.

1.4 CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

1.4.1 During 2022/23 the Planning Service delivered and progressed on a range of Improvement Actions identified in [PPF 11](#). An overview of progress is set out in Part 3 of this document.

1.4.2 The Council continues to benchmark its performance on the determination of planning applications against the National average and the performance of other rural local authorities.

1.4.3 Internally, team meetings are held on a regular basis. The Executive Director attends fortnightly Executive Leadership Team meetings. The Head of Development & Economic Growth attends the fortnightly Departmental Management Team meeting and monthly meetings of the Executive Leadership Team, provides a regular update to Policy Leads, and holds their own Service meetings on a regular basis. Service level management teams also meet regularly/quarterly; within Development Management area teams also meet weekly to assign casework, and review caseload performance.

1.4.4 In January 2022 the Council replaced a corporate requirement for all staff to prepare an annual Performance Review and Development plan (PRD). The new approach seeks to recognise that an annual PRD meeting was not always the best way to approach [performance and career](#) conversations and instead now recognises that conversations about objectives, behaviours, skills and development form part of an ongoing regular dialogue between employees and line managers although this will be supported by corporate activity monitoring outcomes in an annual survey of employers and managers.

1.4.5 Since 2014, the Planning Service has delivered a series of short training events for elected Members which are intended to improve their breadth of knowledge and competence in the undertaking of planning decisions. These are normally undertaken in bite size sessions in the hour prior to a meeting of the PPSL Committee but have also previously included half day workshops and site visits. Training has previously included Competent Motions, Aquaculture Development, Landscape Character Assessment, Low Carbon Technology, Food Growing Strategy, and an update on new legislation. In house planning training covering Development Planning, Development Management and Planning Enforcement was provided for all elected members following the Local Government Elections in May 2022. In addition to this, the member [training programme for 2022/23](#) included a detailed session on processing planning applications, a session provided by SEPA on managing flood risk, new regulations on the production of Local Development Plans, and National Planning Framework 4.

1.4.6 The Annual Planning Conference was held in March 2023 both at Helensburgh Civic Centre and online as a hybrid event for a second time. In comparison to the previous years conference, this year prompted a return to a large proportion of staff attending in person and was as a valuable opportunity to meet face to face, particularly for new members of staff. The conference was open to professional staff across the Council who engage in or with the planning process; the conference is promoted as a CPD event to staff in addition to an opportunity to recognise and promote collaborative working not only across the Council but also with other key stakeholders. With NPF4 having come into effect on a few weeks earlier and the Examination Report for PLDP2 anticipated, the changing policy landscape provided the main focus for the conference. The conference included presentations and workshop sessions focussing on Biodiversity, Huts and Soils. Officers were also provided with a presentation on the short listed entries for the Argyll and Bute Design Awards.

1.4.7 Planning Services representatives regularly attend meetings of [Heads of Planning Scotland](#) (inc. DM and DP subgroups), Scottish Planning Enforcement Forum, the Local Authority Aquaculture Forum, [Clyde Marine Planning Partnership](#), [West of Scotland Archaeology Service](#), and the e-Development/Digital Taskforce. During 2022/23 the Development Management Service has continued to have regular meetings with Highland's and Islands Enterprise, SEPA, Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks, and Forestry Scotland to discuss upcoming projects/casework, and to identify and prioritise resource for submission and determination of applications. Whilst it is recognised that there is a downside to the removal of face to face contact there is a significant time and cost saving for authorities like Argyll and Bute through removal/reduction in the significant travel requirements.

1.4.8 In addition to benchmarking performance, the Planning Service also seeks to engage directly with other local authorities to share best practice and develop new ways of working. Previously officers visited Dumfries and Galloway Council, and Glasgow City Council to learn from their experience in the development and roll out of bespoke IDOX Enterprise workflow systems; and more recently have engaged more widely with other rural local authorities on reviewing and updating procedures for handling Prior Notification/Prior Approval submissions, have provided advice to North Ayrshire Council and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park to assist with their handling of aquaculture submissions/cross boundary applications.

1.4.9 Work to review and improve the rate of applications which are valid upon receipt has remained on hold due a lack of staff resource to progress this workstream although it is noted that issues relating to the resourcing and performance of the Central Validation Team (as reported in [PPF 11](#)) have been successfully resolved during 2022/23 with 1 additional fte recruited, and commitment of additional resource to fund overtime to deliver a return to undertaking a first check within 5 working days of receipt. The Development Management Service previously hosted a visit from Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority in 2019/20 to compare arrangements, experience, and resources for the validation of planning applications. During 2020/21, the closure of Council offices required the rapid development and implementation of new process to facilitate home working in the validation process; limited office presence continues to be maintained to manage incoming/outgoing hardcopy mail (including issue of neighbour notifications), and for the conversion of hardcopy submissions into electronic workflow upon receipt. 2022/23 has however seen an improvement in the percentage of applications valid upon receipt which are up from 18% (in 2021/22) to 30.6%.

1.4.10 The Planning Service have engaged with/contributed to Scottish Government consultations, in particular during 2022/23 to the consultation on [Local Development Plan Evidence Report—Defining Gypsies and Travellers](#); in recent times input has also been provided on [Local Place Plan Regulations](#), [Short Term Lets](#), [Onshore Wind Policy Statement](#), [Local Development Planning Regulations and Guidance](#), [Open Space Strategies](#), [Draft Heat Networks Delivery Plan](#), [Marine Litter Strategy](#), [A New Deal for Tenants](#) and [NPF4](#). We have also engaged with the [Independent review of the Current Regulatory Framework for Aquaculture](#) with consultations by other National agencies including SEPA's [Proposals for a Risk-Based Framework for Managing Interaction Between Sea-Lice and Wild Atlantic Salmon](#), and with the Improvement Service on [20 Minute Neighbourhoods in Rural and Island Areas](#).

1.4.11 Aquaculture is an area of planning that relatively few authorities have expertise in. Argyll and Bute is one of five Scottish Local Authorities that deal with the majority of fin fish planning applications. The aquaculture industry is currently seeking to expand into new locations across Scotland to meet national growth targets. In [PPF 8](#) we reported that we had provided assistance to colleagues in North Ayrshire Council and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park following receipt of EIA Screening and Scoping requests for aquaculture development within their respective areas and informal support has continued to be provided during 2021/22 as these projects progressed to formal applications. In 2019/20 Argyll and Bute took up the role of Chair within Local Authority Aquaculture-working group, an online event was held in 2021 however a resumption of the group as a physical meeting with site visit learning opportunities was undertaken in September 2022, see **Case Study 4** for details. Officers also continue to participate in the Fish Welfare Multiagency group which is hosted by the Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and includes Marine Scotland, SEPA, and Local Authority representatives from both a planning and animal welfare perspective.

1.4.12 We reported in [PPF 8](#) and [PPF 9](#) of investment in updated software/systems to deliver a more resilient Public Access service resulting in the availability of the Public Access system rising to 99.9% for the second half of 2018/19. Whilst issues with the day to day resilience of this service have been addressed there is now a focus on delivering improvements to the usability of the Public Access System. It has been identified that delivery of the desired improvements are very much dependent on providing improved compatibility with back office Document Management Systems (DMS) and accordingly work has been progressed with IT, Building Standards and Regulatory Services a project was planned and initiated during 2021/22 to move to the IDOX DMS that will enable improvements to Public Access but also to the functionality of other existing back office workflow systems across a range of Council services. The project has been delayed by matters outwith the Council's control and has been rescheduled for completion in 2023/24.

1.4.13 Internal processes for handling pre-applications and the management of e-mail correspondence and file attachments were subject to review and updating throughout 2019/20 having regard to the implications of [GDPR](#) with updated data retention policies, procedure notes for staff and training sessions delivered, and deletion of data/documents that no longer required be held from systems was undertaken during 2020/21. Enforced homeworking arrangements implemented in response to Covid-19 restrictions have resulted in new workflow processes that remove/minimise the requirement for hardcopy process in mail handling, issuing of decision being expedited in their development in order to allow the planning process to continue operating

during 'lockdown', a lack of staff resource has however to date precluded the further development of a number of temporary processes put in place. The requirement to update detailed procedure notes to reflect new ways of working was highlighted as an improvement action from the internal audit (see para 1.3.14) undertaken during 2022/23 and the production of a new user manual has been identified as a requirement to accompany the implementation of new back office systems (see. 1.4.12).

1.4.14 The online and mobile capabilities of the Council's Geographic Information Systems (GIS) continue to be developed saving officer time and providing customers with quicker access to information. In PPF 9 we reported that the GIS team [developed the 'story map' for the proposed LDP 2 public consultation](#), and enhanced the photographic data layer in the [online map](#) based footpath guide to include key view points from an increasing number of paths. The GIS team also played a valuable role in the Council's response planning to the Covid-19 pandemic and have assisted with a great many of the planning and logistical challenges that have arisen. During 2021/22 the team have continued work to enhance the [Strategic Housing Investment Plan](#) (SHIP) with [enhanced GIS functionality](#) which is now being used to facilitate easier and earlier identification of impediments to development within the SHIP programme. The GIS team has developed a GIS based Storymap which allows spatial analysis of all RSL stock, new builds, ongoing and future development sites. This is an invaluable input to updating and planning the annual SHIP. As this is further developed it will also be launched online. Going forwards the service is seeking to replicate this for all housing tenures in order to further inform our understanding and analysis of the housing market within Argyll and Bute.

1.4.15 Engagement with Forestry Scotland was initiated during 2020/21 on a review of the effectiveness of consultation with the Council on proposals for new plantations, forest accesses, and long term forest plans. This workstream has however been put on hold during 2021/22 due to a lack of resources although liaison meetings with Forestry on other matters has continued. Once completed it is expected to deliver a streamlined consultation process with improved quality of consultation response that is tailored to meet the requirements of Forestry Scotland officers in their assessment of planning proposals. The publication of technical note on Upland Hill Tracks has been progressed and was intended to be completed for publication concurrently with completion of this workstream but has been placed on hold indefinitely following announcement by the Scottish Government in November 2019 that related 'permitted development rights' would be subject to an upcoming review.

1.4.16 The Planning Service has engaged with consultation on both planning controls and licencing for short-term letting, and form part of the Council's working group involving Legal, Regulatory Services, Housing and external stakeholders which will initially seek to implement a licencing scheme from 1st October 2022 and then consider the requirement for planning control areas in the medium to longer-term. In the short term it has been identified that, in the absence of national guidance, local advice requires to be provided by the Council for both officers and the public on planning requirements for short-term lets outwith control areas. During 2022/23, internal guidance has been prepared to assist in the provision of planning responses to STL Licence consultations. Further guidance is also being prepared to respond to the updated policy position set out in NPF4 and will be published in 2023/24.

Case Study 6

Local Authority Officers Aquaculture Working Group

Themes	A: Quality of Outcomes				B: Quality of Services & Engagement			C: Governance				D: Culture of Continuous Improvement			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Performance Markers															
Key Areas of Work	Interdisciplinary Working, Collaborative Working, Staff Training, Skills Sharing														
Stakeholders	Argyll and Bute Council, Scottish Local Authorities, Scottish Government, Marine Scotland, Crown Estate														
Project Lead	Sandra Davies / Peter Bain														

The Council's Planning Service continues to invest significant officer time and effort into supporting the sustainable growth of marine finfish and shellfish aquaculture across Argyll and Bute.

Officers from both the Development Management and Development Policy Services are members of the Local Authority Officers Aquaculture Working Group which also includes officers from Highland, Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles. The working group was originally established in response to legislative change that brought marine aquaculture activity under direct planning control with a view to sharing good practice and ensuring a consistency of approach and delivery of planning services. The group has since established itself as a body of expertise which has not only informed the reform of planning legislation in relation to planning requirements for aquaculture development but has also provided a local authority representation to a number of the various steering groups and parliamentary committees which have and continue to discuss the salmon farming industry.



Scottish Sea Farms Hatchery Visit

Prior to the Covid pandemic, the Local Authority Officer group held an annual meeting which included site visits to operational aquaculture facilities providing opportunities for CPD and sharing of good practice. Argyll and Bute Council took over the chair of the Local Authority Officers group in 2019/20 and an online meeting was held in 2021. The annual meeting was reinstated as a face to face event with a two day conference held in Oban in September 2022 and funded by a grant from the Scottish Government. The event was attended by seventeen delegates with representatives from all five of the Local Authorities with a significant interest in aquaculture along with representatives from the Scottish Government, Marine Scotland, and the Crown Estate.

The agenda included discussion on application of the revised planning fee regime to shellfish and prospect for future amendment, procedural issues raised by recent casework, a discussion on the issue of potential health implications from the release of fish farm medications upon wild swimmers, the handling of planning enforcement for aquaculture, interim measures and emerging new provisions in relation to the management of sea lice including a presentation from SEPA on the emerging Sea Lice Framework, and ongoing matters relating to regulatory review. The conference concluded with an opportunity for delegates to tour Scottish Sea Farms onshore hatchery at Barcaldine.

Part 2: Supporting Evidence & Performance Markers

Wherever possible weblinks have been provided within the body text of the report.

This report was compiled drawing on evidence from a variety of sources including:

- [Argyll and Bute Outcome Improvement Plan 2013-2023](#)
- [Argyll and Bute - Economic Development Action Plan 2016 - 2021](#)
- [Argyll and Bute—Renewable Energy Action Plan](#)
- [Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan 2015](#)
- [Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan 2 Development Plan Scheme March 2022](#)
- [Argyll and Bute - Main Issues Report 2017](#)
- [Argyll and Bute Council Website](#)
- [Argyll and Bute Council Monitoring and Enforcement Charter March 2022 & Covid-19 Addendum](#)
- [Argyll and Bute Council Planning Performance Framework Online Publication/Archive](#)
- [Argyll and Bute Council, PPSL Committee Minutes](#)
- [Argyll and Bute Council Scheme of Administration and Delegation](#)
- [Argyll and Bute Council, Development & Economic Growth Service Plan 2020-23](#)
- [Argyll and Bute Housing Land Audit 2021](#)
- A range of committee reports
- Customer feedback
- Reports from IDOX Uniform
- [Scottish Government Statistical Returns](#)

Case Study Topics	Issue covered by Case Study No.	Case Study Topics	Issue covered by Case Study No.	Case Study Topics	Issue covered by Case Study No.
Design	1, 3	Affordable Housing		Performance Monitoring	
Climate Change		Economic Development		Process Improvement	
Conservation		Enforcement		Project Management	2
Biodiversity		Development Management Processes		Skills Sharing	4
Regeneration	2	Planning Applications		Staff Training	4
Environment		Interdisciplinary Working	4	Online Systems	
Greenspace	2	Collaborative Working	1, 4	Data & Information	
Town Centres	2	Community Engagement	1, 2	Digital Practice	
Masterplanning	1	Placemaking	1	Transport	
LDP & Supplementary Guidance		Design Workshops/ Charrettes	2	Other	
Housing Supply		Place Standard			

PERFORMANCE MARKERS REPORT 2022/23

	PERFORMANCE MARKER	EVIDENCE / COMMENTS
1.	Decision-making: Authorities demonstrating continuous evidence of reducing average timescales for all development types.	Part 4—Table B & Part 5—Table A. Contextual commentary setting out factors affecting performance on decision-making are set out under Part 5 C and also within Case Study 5.
2.	Project management: Offer of processing agreements (or other agreed project plan) made to prospective applicants in all major applications <u>and</u> availability publicised on planning authority website.	Part 1—1.3.11 Processing Agreements for major and ‘locally significant’ developments are promoted through pre-application discussion, user forums and online. Argyll and Bute Council - Processing Agreements
3.	Early Collaboration with applicants and consultees on planning applications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability and promotion of pre-application discussion for all prospective applications. • Clear and proportionate requests for supporting information. 	Part 1—1.2.12 Case Studies 1 & 2 & Part 4 - Table B The Development Management Service provides a pre-application advice service . This is promoted on the Council website, through user forums, and by officers when engaged by prospective applicants. Pre-application assessment of proposals seeks to identify all relevant issues which will be material to the determination of a subsequent application, and will involve engagement with consultees where appropriate. The report template issued to applicants was revised during 17/18 to include a dedicated section identifying the requirement for supporting information - this list is populated following a review of relevant planning constraints and the advice of consultees (including other Council Services) to ensure that any request for further information is specific and proportionate to the development proposed. Where applicants do not engage at pre-application stage a similar approach is undertaken to identify issues and any requirement for further information at an early stage in the handling of the application. Applications are validated against the National Validation Standard published by HoPS to ensure that submissions and requirements for supporting information are quality checked on a consistent basis. This document is also promoted and published on the Council website to assist applicants in the preparation of their application. During 2021/22 updated guidance on the submission and processing of applications under S64 of the Act was prepared and published.
4.	Legal agreements: Conclude (or reconsider) applications within 6 months of ‘resolving to grant’.	Part 1—1.3.13 & Part 5—Table A Applications subject to legal agreements were determined with an average time period of 49.9 weeks during 2022/23. Applications requiring a legal agreement are reviewed regularly and are highlighted on officers outstanding items case lists.

	PERFORMANCE MARKER	EVIDENCE / COMMENTS
5.	Enforcement charter: updated / republished.	Part 1—1.3.4 Part 4—Table C, Case Study 5 The <u>Planning Enforcement and Monitoring Charter</u> was reviewed and updated in March 2022. In 2020/21 the Charter was augmented by a <u>Position Statement</u> on the temporary relaxation of planning control within town centres, and an <u>addendum to the Charter</u> covering more general Covid-19 related issues both of which remained in place until 30th September 2022.
6.	Continuous improvement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Show progress/improvement in relation to PPF National Headline Indicators; Progress ambitious and relevant service improvement commitments identified through PPF report. 	Part 4—Tables A, B, C & Context D, Case Study 5. The legacy impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on workflow and a lack of availability of planning professionals has continued to have a significant adverse effect upon performance of decision-making timescales during 2021/22. Part 3 details previous and committed Service Improvements. Contextual commentary on delivery/identification of improvements is included within: Part 1—1.1.4, 1.1.6 1.2.2, 1.2.4, 1.2.6, 1.2.12, 1.3.3, 1.3.4, 1.3.9, 1.3.10, 1.3.13, 1.3.14, 1.4.2, 1.4.3, 1.4.8, 1.4.9, 1.4.12, 1.4.13, 1.4.15, 1.4.16, Case Studies 2 & 3, and Part 5 Table A
7.	Local Development Plan: Less than 5 years from adoption.	The Local Development Plan was adopted in 2015. <u>Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan 2015</u>
8.	Development plan scheme: Demonstrates next LDP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On course for adoption within 5 year cycle. Project planned and expected to be delivered to planned timescale. 	LDP2 is project planned with careful management and reporting of any adjustments, at 31.03.2023 LDP 2 was at Examination stage and is currently scheduled for adoption in 2023 - see Part 1 - 1.2.2 <u>Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan Scheme March 2022</u> <i>It is further noted that the DPEA published the <u>Examination Report for LDP2 on 9th June 2023.</u></i>
9.	Elected members engaged early (pre- MIR) in development plan preparation: <i>if plan has been at pre-MIR stage during reporting year.</i>	N/a
10.	Measure no longer required - numbering maintained for data continuity	N/a

	PERFORMANCE MARKER	EVIDENCE / COMMENTS
11.	Production of regular and proportionate policy, advice, for example through supplementary guidance, on information required to support applications.	<p>The Make a Planning Application section of the Council website provides applicants with information that they need to consider before making an application, this includes updated planning fee guidance.</p> <p>Argyll and Bute - Planning Application Info</p> <p>The Central Validation Team contributed to the development of and have subsequently adopted the National Validation Standard published by HoPS in 2017. Officers have participated in HoPS ongoing review of this document during 2020/21. Part 1 - 1.4.9</p> <p>HoPS National Validation Standard</p> <p>Supplementary non-statutory planning guidance is reviewed and updated regularly. Current publications include Houses in Multiple Occupation, and Advertisements, Masterplanning, and Biodiversity. During 2021/22 the Council has published updated guidance on S64 submissions and Local Place Plans.</p>
12.	Corporate working across services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit (for example: protocols; joined up services; single contact; joint pre-application advice.)	Part 1 - 1.1.6, 1.2.1, 1.2.3, 1.2.4, 1.2.5, 1.2.6, 1.2.8, 1.2.9, 1.2.10, 1.2.11, 1.2.12, 1.2.13, 1.2.14, 1.2.15, 1.3.1, 1.3.4, 1.3.5, 1.3.6, 1.3.7, 1.3.12, 1.4.3, 1.4.5, 1.4.6, 1.4.12, 1.4.13, 1.4.15, 1.4.16, 1.4.18 & Case Studies 1, 2, 4
13.	Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge between authorities.	Part 1 - 1.1.3, 1.1.4, 1.1.6, 1.2.7, 1.2.15, 1.3.8, 1.4.2, 1.4.6, 1.4.7, 1.4.8, 1.4.9, 1.4.10, 1.4.12, 1.4.17, 1.4.18 & Case Study 4
14.	Stalled sites / legacy cases: Conclusion / withdrawal of planning applications more than one year old.	<p>Part 1 - 1.3.13, 1.3.14, Part 3, Part 4 - Table B, & Part 5 C</p> <p>During 2022/23 18 legacy cases were cleared. At 31st March 2022 there were 125 'live' legacy applications undetermined. The declining performance on this measure has been identified as a specific area for improvement in 2023/24</p>
15.	Developer contributions: Clear expectations set out in development plan and in pre-application discussions.	<p>The adopted Local Development Plan sets out expectations in respect of Developer Contributions for affordable housing and green / play space and is supported by Supplementary Guidance which sets out that the Council will seek appropriate elements of planning gain proportionate to the scale, nature, impact and planning purposes associated with the development.</p> <p>Where Developer Contributions are required these will be flagged up at pre-application stage where applicable, or where no pre-application engagement is sought then officers will seek to make the developer aware of the requirement and justification for any developer contribution as soon as such a requirement is identified in the assessment process.</p> <p>The Council has reviewed its approach to Developer Contributions and has set out a specific policy approach to this issue within PLDP 2 (proposed Policy 48) Where appropriate the Council shall seek appropriate developer contributions in liaison with participating partners and developers which are proportionate to the nature, impact and planning purposes associated with the development, and shall be in accord with the Policy Tests set out in Circular 3/2012.</p>

Part 3: Service Improvements

UPDATE ON DELIVERY ON SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS ACTIONS FOR 2022/23

SERVICE IMPROVEMENT	STATUS / EVIDENCE
1. Retain Customer Service Excellence Award	On Hold - Revised action for 2023/24 see Part 1 - 1.2.4
2. Deliver LDP 2	Progressing - Adoption planned late 2023 - see Part 1 - 1.2.2, Part 2 - KPI Table (8), Part 4 - Table A & C
3. Run Sustainable Design Awards	Completed - see Part 1 - 1.1.4 and Case Study 3
4. Production of Short Term Letting Planning Guidance	Progressing - see Part 1 - 1.4.16
5. Production of Hill Tracks Guidance (<i>subject to Scottish Government review of 'PDR'</i>)	On Hold - Awaiting outcome of Scottish Government review of 'Permitted Development Rights' - see Part 1 - 1.4.15
6. Implement improved workflow and performance management systems within the Development Management Service (<i>project initiated 2021/22 to replace existing systems with IDOX Enterprise and DMS</i>)	Progressing - Part 1 - 1.3.9, 1.3.10, 1.3.13, 1.3.14, 1.4.2, 1.4.3, 1.4.8, 1.4.9, 1.4.12, 1.4.13
7. Review of Validation Processes (<i>on-going engagement with regular customers and review/promotion of HoPS National Validation Standards to improve proportion of applications valid upon receipt</i>)	On Hold - see Part 1 - 1.4.9
8. Deliver Dunoon CARS (Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme) project (<i>ongoing - 90% delivery complete</i>)	Progressing - see Part 1 - 1.1.6
9. Deliver Rothesay TH (Townscape Heritage) project (<i>ongoing - completion due 2022/23</i>)	Progressing - see Part 1 - 1.1.6
10. Deliver Ardrishaig Public Realm Works (<i>programmed to commence 2022/23</i>)	Progressing - see Part 1 - 1.1.6
11. Deliver Lochilphead CARS (Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme) (<i>project ongoing - 15% complete</i>)	Progressing - see Part 1 - 1.1.6
12. Deliver Lochilphead Front Green Public Realm Works (<i>project ongoing—due completion in 2022/23</i>)	Completed - see Part 1 - 1.1.6 and Case Study 2

COMMITTED SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS TO BE DELIVERED IN 2023/24

SERVICE IMPROVEMENT	STATUS / BACKGROUND
1. Delivery of LDP 2 to Adoption	<i>Ongoing</i> - see Part 1 - 1.2.2, Part 5 C, and <i>Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan Scheme March 2022</i>
2. Production and Publication of Short Term Letting Planning Guidance	<i>Ongoing</i> re-scheduled for completion in 2023/24 - see Part 1 - 1.4.16
3. Production of Hill Tracks Guidance	<i>On Hold during 2022/23</i> to be progressed subject to Scottish Government delivery of review of 'PDR' - see Part 1 - 1.4.15
4. Implement Improved Workflow and Performance Management Systems within the Development Management Service (<i>replace existing systems with IDOX Enterprise and DMS</i>)	<i>Ongoing project initiated 2021/22</i> see Part 1 - 1.3.9, 1.3.10, 1.3.13, 1.3.14, 1.4.2, 1.4.3, 1.4.8, 1.4.9, 1.4.12, 1.4.13)
5. Review of Validation Processes (<i>engagement with regular customers and review/promotion of HoPS National Validation Standards to improve proportion of applications valid upon receipt</i>)	<i>On Hold during 2022/23</i> see Part 1 - 1.4.9
6. Performance Improvement for Development Management (<i>demonstrate improving trends in determination time periods, reducing volume of case work backlog and legacy cases during 2023/24</i>)	<i>New Action</i> forming part of wider Transformational Action Plan for Development Management see Part 1 - 1.3.3, 1.3.13, 1.3.14, and Part 5 A and C
7. Undertake a Review and Implement a Refresh of the Pre-application Enquiry Service	<i>New Action</i> forming part of wider Transformational Action Plan for Development Management see Part 1 - 1.1.12
8. Review and Implement an Updated Customer Charter for the Development Management Service / Renew Customer Service Charter	<i>Revised Action</i> - see 1.2.4
9. Review and Update Planning Enforcement Charter	<i>New Action</i> programmed to be completed by March 2024 see Part 1 - 1.3.4, and Part 4 C
10. Re-establish Customer User Forums during 2023/24	<i>New Action</i> - see Part 1 - 1.2.6
11. Create and Recruit 5 fte New Posts in Development Management and 1fte in Development Policy	<i>New Action</i> forming part of wider Transformational Action Plan for Development Management see Part 1 - 1.3.3, 1.3.4, Part 5 C and Part 6
12. Deliver Rothesay TH (Townscape Heritage) project	<i>Ongoing Project</i> see Part 1 - 1.1.6
13. Deliver Ardrishaig Public Realm Works	<i>Ongoing Project</i> programmed to complete in 2023/24 see Part 1 - 1.1.6
14. Deliver Lochilphead CARS (<i>Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme</i>)	<i>Ongoing Project</i> see Part 1 - 1.1.6
15. Deliver Helensburgh CARS (<i>Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme</i>)	<i>Ongoing Project</i> see Part 1 - 1.1.6
16. Deliver Dunoon CARS (<i>Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme</i>)	<i>Ongoing Project</i> see Part 1 - 1.1.6

Part 4: National Headline Indicators (NHI's) 2022/23

A: KEY OUTCOMES—DEVELOPMENT PLANNING	2022/23	2021/22
Local and Strategic Development Planning		
Age of local development plan(s) at end of reporting period. <i>Requirement: less than 5 years.</i>	8 years	7 years
Will the local development plan(s) be replaced by their 5th anniversary according to the current development plan scheme?	No	No
Has the expected date of submission of the plan to Scottish Ministers in the development plan scheme changed over the past year?	No	Yes
Were development plan scheme engagement / consultation commitments met during the year?	Yes	Yes
Effective Land Supply and Delivery of Outputs		
Housing approvals	302 units	507 units
Housing completions over the last 5 years	1367 units	1201 units
Marketable employment land supply	83.98 ha	85.0 ha
Employment land take-up during the reporting period ¹	0.8 ha	0.7 ha
B: KEY OUTCOMES—DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT	2022/23	2021/22
Project Planning		
Percentage and number of applications subject to pre-application advice	Data incomplete ²	7%(84)
Percentage and number of major applications subject to processing agreement	-	-
Decision Making		
Application approval rate	99.5%	98.0%
Delegation rate	98.2%	97.7%
Validation	30.6%	19.2%
Decision-making Timescales		
Major Developments ³	43.1 weeks	40.8 weeks
Local Developments (non-householder)	16.3 weeks	13.6 weeks
Householder Developments	12.7 weeks	10.3 weeks
Legacy Cases		
Number cleared during reporting period	18	27
Number remaining	125	65
C: KEY OUTCOMES—ENFORCEMENT	2022/23	2021/22
Time since <u>enforcement charter</u> published / reviewed	16 months	1 months
Complaints lodged and investigated	184	228
Breaches identified - No further action taken	135 - 49	177 - 51
Cases Closed	85	109
Notices served	18	18
Direct Action	0	0
Reports to Procurator Fiscal	0	0
Prosecutions	0	0

D: NHI KEY OUTCOMES COMMENTARY:

1. It is noted that this NHI is not wholly reflective of the uptake of employment land within Argyll and Bute where the rural nature of the Council area and local economy stimulates demand for development in locations that are not readily addressed through take up of allocated land. The Council's settlement strategy seeks to promote sustainable economic development and focuses allocation of employment land in and around existing key settlements where there is demand of employment, existing housing provision and infrastructure to support new development. The LDP does however recognise that the requirements of traditional rural industries, particularly those which are island based including the whisky industry and aquaculture, will give rise to occasional demand for development in countryside locations - our settlement strategy is sufficiently flexible to accommodate this demand but it also means that take up of land for employment purposes is not wholly captured in the NHIs.
2. It has been established that this data set is incomplete and does not currently provide an accurate reflection of the number of planning applications that have been subject to pre-application advice. 570 pre-application enquiries were received during the reporting period, this figure is representative of 54.7% of the volume of statutory determinations within the same period.
3. It is noted that the data subset for 'major' applications is small and easily skewed. Contextual commentary on other factors affecting decision-making timescales are set out within Part 5 C of the report.

Part 5: Official Statistics

A: DECISION-MAKING TIMESCALES (based on 'all applications' timescales)						
Timescales	2022/23		2022/23		2021/22	
	No of Cases (%)		Weeks		Weeks	
Overall						
Major developments	8		43.1		40.8	
Local developments (non-householder)	533		16.3		13.6	
• Local: less than 2 months	205 (38.5%)		6.6		7.1	
• Local: more than 2 months	328 (61.5%)		22.4		13.6	
Householder developments	300		12.7		10.3	
• Local: less than 2 months	112 (37.3%)		6.8		7.0	
• Local: more than 2 months	188 (62.7%)		16.2		18.8	
Housing Developments						
Major	1		46.6		76.3	
Local housing developments	235		16.6		13.1	
• Local: less than 2 months	96 (40.9%)		6.7		7.2	
• Local: more than 2 months	139 (59.1%)		23.5		18.8	
Business and Industry						
Major	-		-		9.7	
Local business and industry developments	17		19.5		11.9	
• Local: less than 2 months	4 (23.5%)		6.9		7.3	
• Local: more than 2 months	13 (76.5%)		23.4		14.2	
EIA Developments						
EIA Developments	1		15.0		25.2	
Other Consents						
Other Consents	109		14.4		13.0	
Planning / Legal Agreements						
Planning / Legal Agreements	5		49.9		33.6	
• Major: average time	1		85.4		76.3	
• Local: average time	4		41.0		30.3	
B: DECISION-MAKING: LOCAL REVIEWS AND APPEALS						
Type	Total Number of Decisions	Original Decision Upheld				
		2022/23		2021/22		
		No.	%	No.	%	
Local reviews	2	2	100	6	33.3	
Appeals to Scottish Ministers	3	1	33.3	1	20.0	

C: Context

Development Management Service:

Argyll and Bute Council's Development Management Service continues to process planning applications with the aspiration to deliver positive outcomes in all cases. This approach is reflected in our high approval rates but is often achieved by providing applicants with additional time beyond prescribed statutory determination periods where this is required to negotiate and address resolvable deficiencies in their submissions. Whilst it is recognised that this approach can have a negative impact upon performance in decision-making time periods it is contended that this is outweighed by the economic benefits of delivering on improved development proposals which might not otherwise have obtained permission had the Council sought to determine within prescribed statutory time periods; additionally resources required to handle amended applications, appeal and LRB work is minimised.

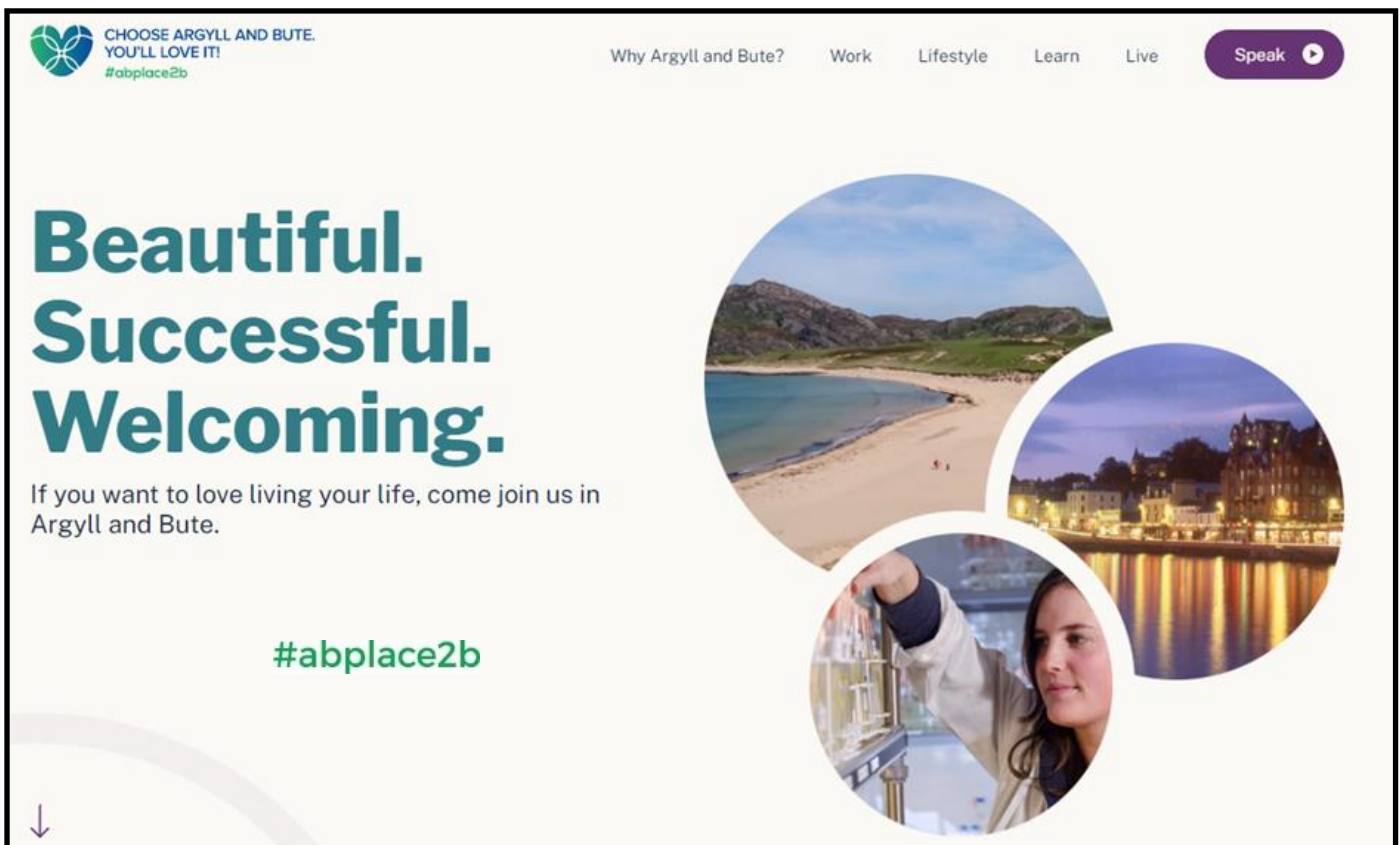
Service delivery arrangements continue to be impacted by the legacy impact of the Covid-19 pandemic; in particular the Service is experiencing a high volume of demand as a wide range of major developments delayed by the pandemic have sought planning permission during 2022/23. This period of high demand has coincided with a period of high staff turnover, continued difficulties in recruiting in a market where there is a lack of available planning professionals (an issue known to be a national rather than local issue and are discussed by Heads of Planning Scotland and the RTPI in their [Future Planners Project Report July 2022](#)) and higher absence rates attributable to stress related illness. During this period the Service has required to operate with vacancies in key positions for extended periods of time in some cases for 16 months. The resilience of the Service to operate efficiently with reduced resource and high volume of casework had already been eroded through previous requirements to make budget cuts and reduce staffing numbers in previous years. Whilst temporary measures have been taken to maintain a critical level of service delivery through use of overtime and use of external resources to process planning applications it is expected that overall performance will remain impacted until staffing issues are addressed through filling of vacancies. The Scottish Government's reform of statutory planning fees from 1st April 2022 is welcomed but came too late to factor into budget plans for 2022/23. A resultant significant increase in planning fee income has however been monitored during the course of the last financial year and has provided confidence to support a business case which will see an increase staff resource within DM with two new posts created within the Major Applications team during 2022/23 and additional posts planned in 2023/24 to bolster enforcement and validation functions.

The ongoing issues in relation to the management of a significant backlog of casework and reduced staffing arising from recruitment difficulties has continued to have an adverse impact upon performance of the DM Service and in particular the time taken for determination of planning applications. The continued deterioration in performance has been highlighted at a high level with regular reports provided to both Executive Management and Elected Members and has informed the initiation of a programme of transformational actions which will include review and addressing of resourcing issues, internal processes and procedures, attraction of new staff and staff retention, development, morale and mental health, and communication and engagement with customers and stakeholders that will be further developed and implemented during 2023/24 with the primary purpose of improving performance and efficiency of service delivery.

Development Policy Service:

Progression of LDP2 during 2022/23 has been on hold whilst awaiting the publication of DPEA Examination Report. During this hiatus the DP team have progressed the development of draft guidance in anticipation of the Reporters comments; this work will support LDP2 upon its adoption. The publication of NPF4 in November 2022 delayed the issue of the Examination Report and the DP Team were required to respond to a variety of information requests issued by the DPEA in response to new matters raised by NPF4. It is noted that the Examination Report was subsequently published in May 2023 and will allow progression of LDP2 toward adoption later in the year.

It should be noted that until the new Local Development Plan (LDP2) is adopted, the current Local Development Plan's (the Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan 2015) statutory status remains, including that of the associated Supplementary Guidance. The current LDPs made plans for ten years from adoption, so until 2025, and are still considered to be robust. The LDP contains an effective land supply with the latest [Housing Land Audit](#) showing an effective supply of 3738 units or 5.02 years supply as at 1 April 2022, thus taking us to 2026 well beyond the proposed adoption date of LDP2. The proposed growth areas of Tobermory – Dalmally and Helensburgh and Lomond have sufficient supply to take us beyond the adoption of LDP2. Planning applications will continue to be processed as normal during the delay period, being assessed against the Adopted plan. An updated [Development Plan Scheme](#) was approved by elected members in March 2022 that re-programmed the planned adoption date to early 2023, this period has however been impacted by delays in the publication of the Examination Report by the DPEA.



Part 6: Workforce Information (at 31.03.23)

	Tier 1 <i>Chief Executive</i>	Tier 2 <i>Director</i>	Tier 3 <i>Head of Service</i>	Tier 4 <i>Manager</i>
Head of Planning Service			☑	

RTPI Qualified Staff	Number
Head of Service	1
Development Management	12
Development Policy	4
Enforcement	2
Projects and Regeneration	3

Staff Age Profile	%
Under 30	3.5
30 - 39	17.2
40 - 49	27.6
50 and over	51.7

Staff Structure Diagrams as at 31.03.2023

Service Overview

Planning Services includes:

Development Management;

Development Policy & Housing; and

Projects and Regeneration.

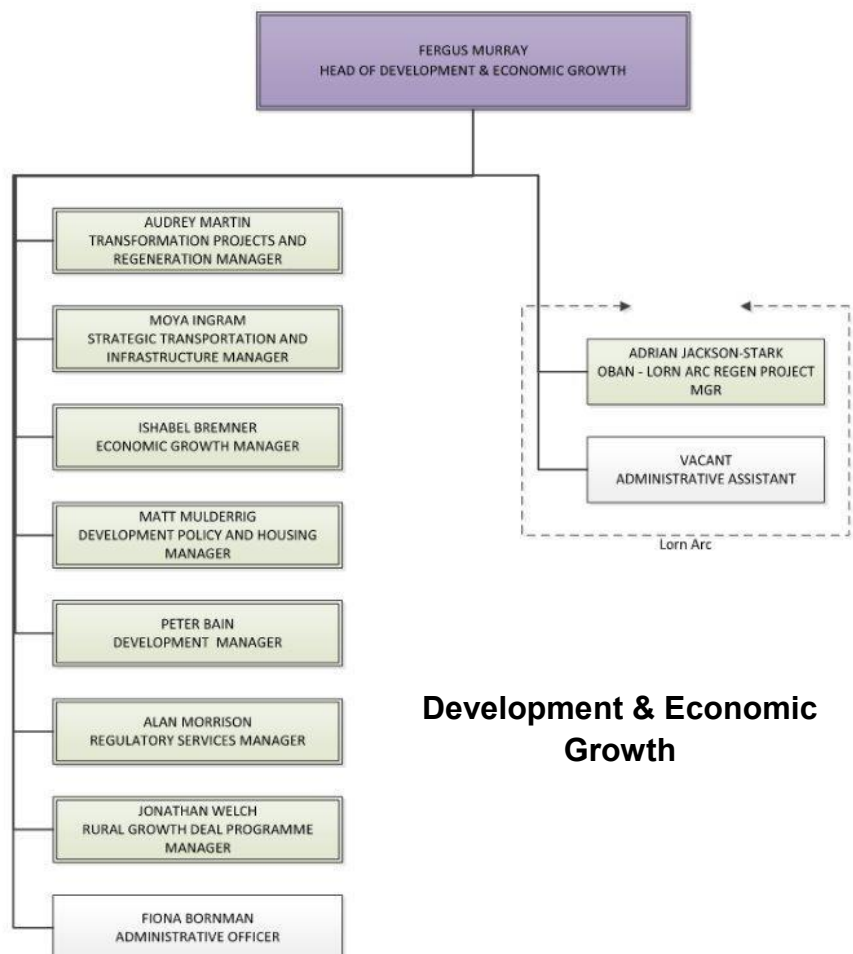
Planning Services sit within the Development & Infrastructure Services Department, and within the portfolio of the Head of Development & Economic Growth which also includes responsibility for the complimentary activities of:

Regulatory Services;

Economic Growth;

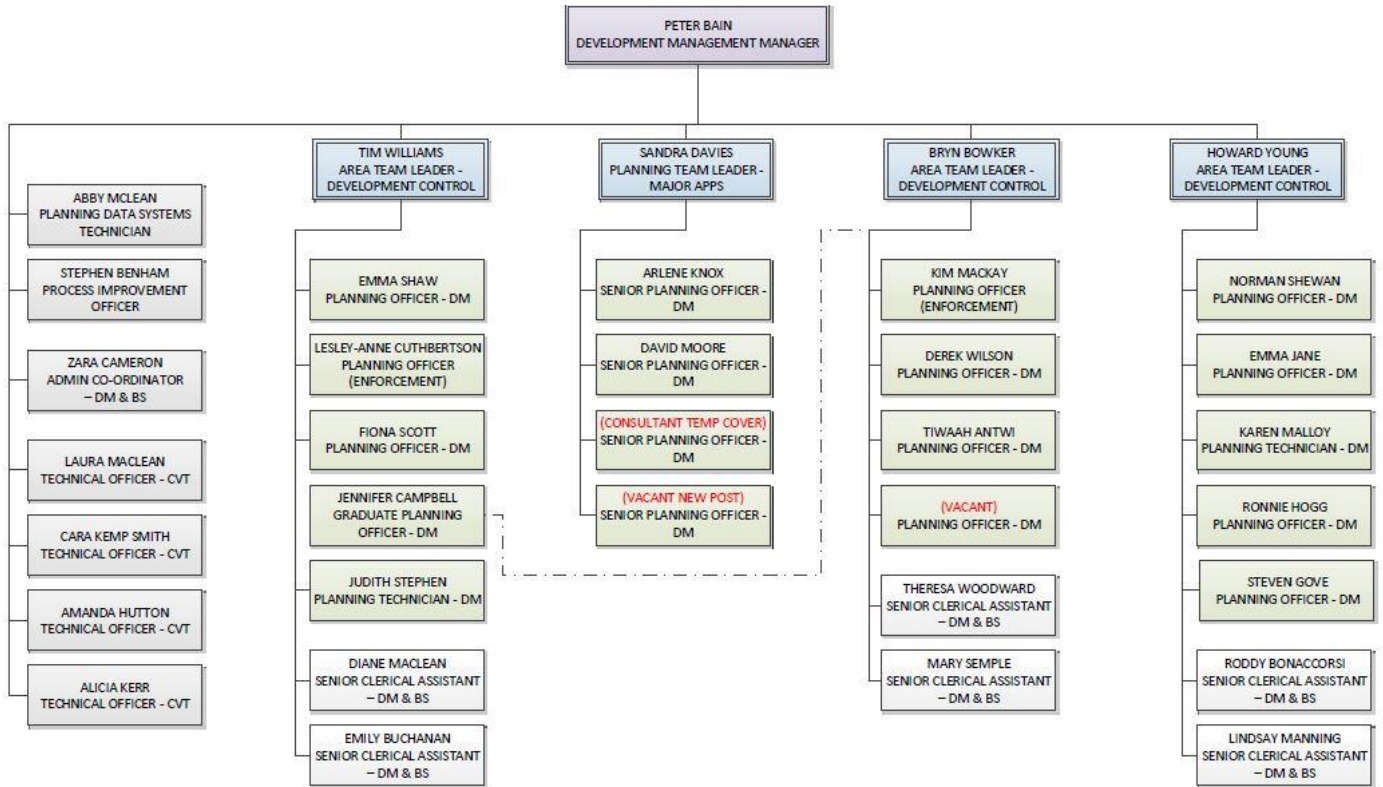
Rural Growth Deal Programme;

Strategic Transportation & Infrastructure; and, project specific activity relating to Oban Strategic Development Framework including Lorn Arc regeneration activities.

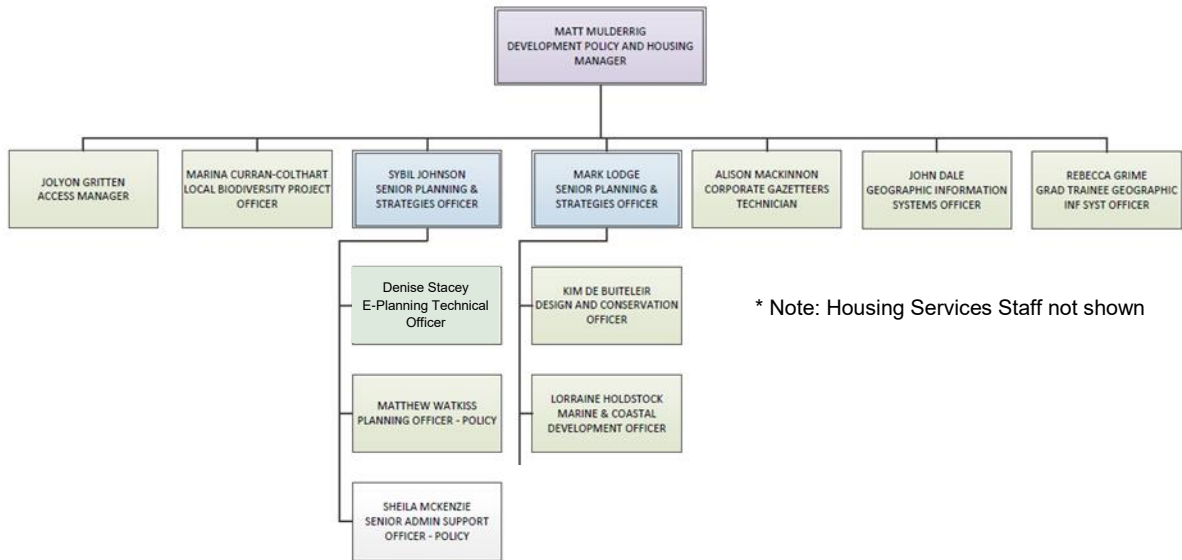


Development & Economic Growth

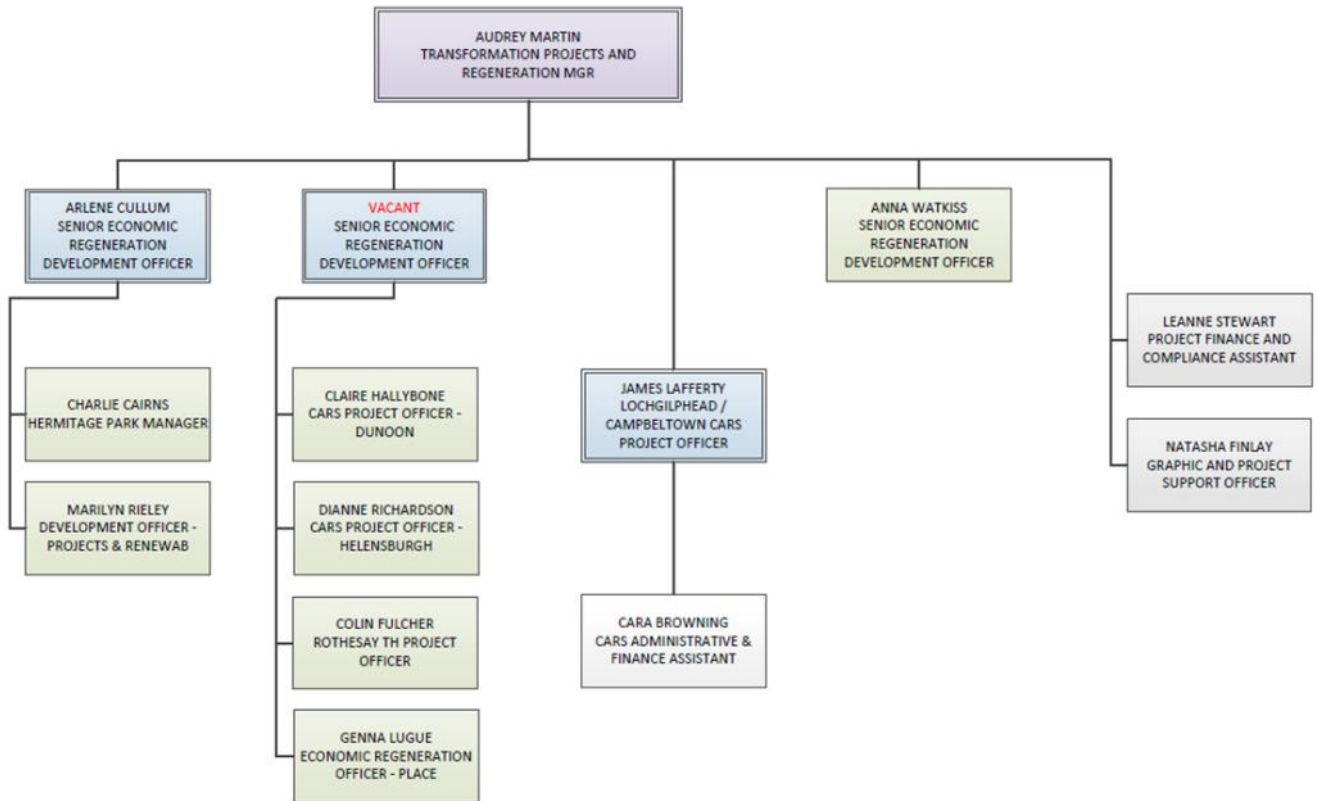
Development Management (at 31.03.2023)



Development Policy & Housing (at 31.03.2023)



Projects and Regeneration (at 31.03.2023)



Part 7: Planning Committee Information

Committees & Site Visits	Number
Full Council Meetings	8
Planning Committees	11
Planning Committee Site Visits	3
Area Committees	16
Local Review Body	15
LRB Site Visits	1



Argyll and Bute Council
Development and Infrastructure Services
Executive Director: Kirsty Flanagan
www.argyll-bute.com
Chomhairle Earra-Ghàidheal is Bhòid