PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK 10

2020/21

CHOOSE ARGYLL. LOVE ARGYLL.

#abplace2b

About Argyll and Bute

Population (2019):

85,570

9% Argyll and Bute as a proportion of the total Scottish land area.

Argyll & Bute COUNCIL

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

96% of Argyll and Bute's population live within 10km of the coast.

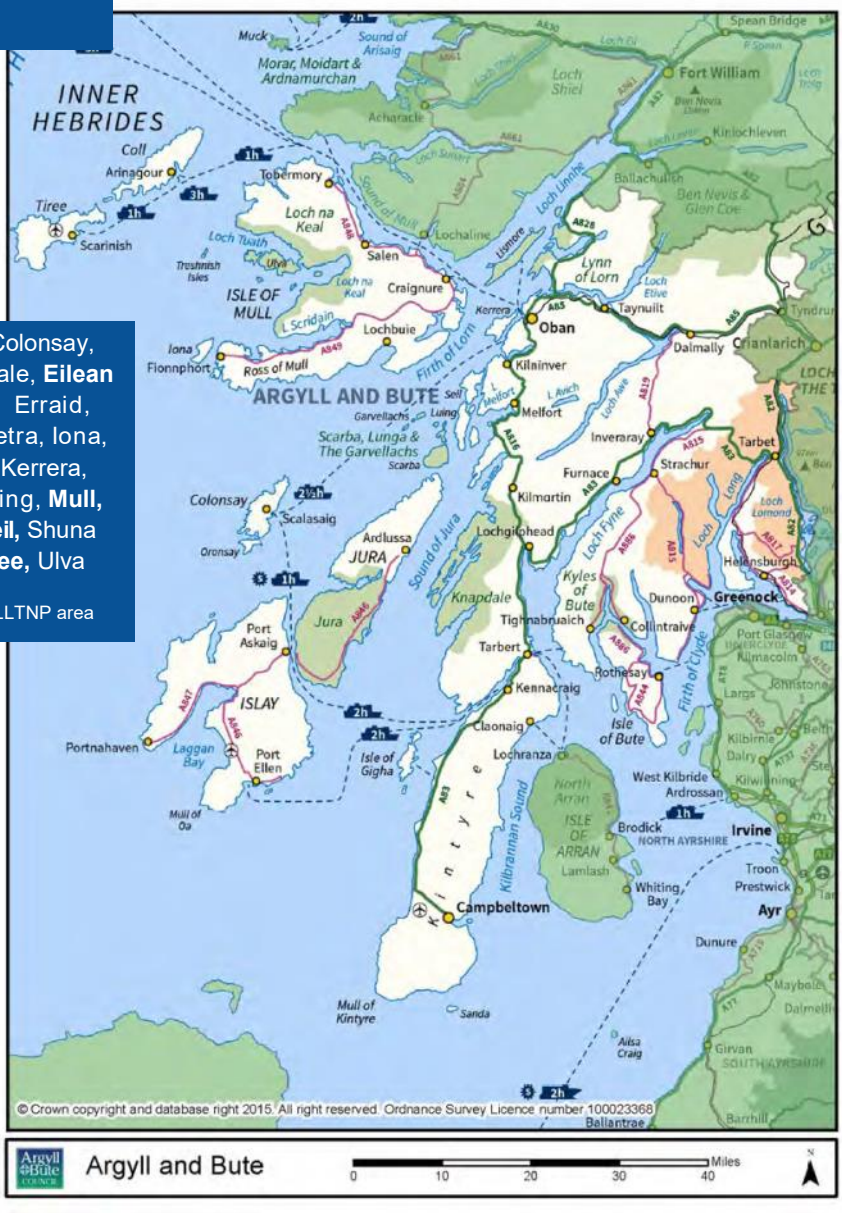
Average Pop. Density (2019):

0.12 persons per ha

21 inhabited islands*

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

* 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)

CHOOSE ARGYLL. LOVE ARGYLL.

Cover Main Picture: Image Credit—MacLeod Construction

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.

Arrinagour, Isle of Coll

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 & Economic Growth, I am pleased to submit the annual performance report for Argyll and Bute Council's Planning Service, which provides relevant statistics for 2020/21 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 10th Planning Performance Framework report underlines the continued commitment of the Council to improving performance, meeting customer needs and helping deliver high quality, sustainable development within Argyll and Bute.

This past year has been a year like no other. Working from home has presented a huge challenge for our customers and staff with little notice to adapt and change to the circumstances we now find ourselves. The service though has risen to this challenge, keeping our staff safe, making best use of digital technology and continuing to process planning applications, respond to Government consultations, assist with the regeneration and recovery of our area and meet new deadlines associated with many policy documents including our LDP.

The service has shown remarkable resilience, ensuring decisions continue to be made including holding all planning committees on line and also hearings with input from the general public. We have worked with our ICT colleagues to find new solutions for home working and wherever possible sought to communicate with our customers and partners to ensure that problems were overcome and progress was made.

Thankfully the Council's previous investment in ICT has enabled the rapid development and roll out of new means of engaging with customers and processes which facilitate work wholly within the virtual environment. Whilst key performance indicators for planning applications have dipped, I am pleased to highlight that the Council continues to make considerable efforts to deliver positive outcomes where possible for all developers and to support sustainable development and growth that is essential to the wider economic recovery from the pandemic. This position is evident in our approval rate of 97.9% of planning applications. Planning has also greatly assisted the delivery of numerous regeneration and housing projects that are helping our economy to bounce back quickly and look to a better and more sustainable future.

In particular, I am pleased to report that 2020/21 also saw confirmation of a transformational £70 million Rural Growth Deal for Argyll and Bute and I look forward to the Planning Service actively engaging with colleagues across the Council, and wider public, private, third sector partnerships in the delivery of this ambitious programme together with significant private sector investment that will enhance the area's fantastic natural resources and business innovation into a thriving local economy.

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Part 1: Defining and Measuring a High Quality Planning Service

1.1 QUALITY OF OUTCOMES

1.1.1 Throughout 2020/21 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 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.

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 March 2021 published non-statutory guidance on the handling of requests for Non-Material Amendments under S64 of the Act was updated.

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 and identification of exemplar designs via the Council's website. The most recent iteration of the Sustainable Design Awards was launched in February 2020 but has subsequently been postponed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Design Awards 2020 were intended to recognise work that was carried out or completed in the period July 2015 to May 2020, however this will be subject to review at an appropriate time. The proposed award categories have been identified as Sustainable Design, Aesthetic Design, Community Led Regeneration Project, Built Heritage, and Design for Under £100k. 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.

1.1.5 There are 33 Conservation Area designations across Argyll and Bute providing protection to the historic built environment, with an ongoing programme to review and update the Conservation Area Appraisal and Character Evaluations that underpin the management of

these designations.

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. The projects which were developed and delivered by the Projects and Regeneration Team during 2020/21 are as follows:

Dunoon CARS - partnership Projects with Historic Environment Scotland. To date this has delivered completion of 2 buildings and 10 shopfronts, with 6 units brought back into use, and 7 Owners Associations formed with a total investment spend of £1.6m. Update report.

Rothesay TH2 - partnership project with National Lottery Heritage Fund, Historic Environment Scotland, Highlands & Islands Enterprise, LEADER and SUSTRANs. To date this has delivered completion of 7 priority buildings,11 shopfronts, 8 small repairs and 2 window projects with total investment spend of £5.4m. Confirmation has also been received that the project will now run until 2023 due to delays arising from the Covid-19 pandemic. Update report.

Lochgilphead CARS - In April 2020/21 the Council launched a new CARS scheme for the Lochgilphead Conservation Area that will run until 2026 with a grant fund of over £1.3m.

Lochgilphead Front Green / Lochgilphead Public Realm Works - £548,000 public realm works project funded by the Scottish Government's Cycling Walking and Safer Routes Fund, HITRANS and Transport Scotland's Spaces for People Fund managed by SUSTRANS for the installation of new footways of local Achnaba stone and renewal of street furniture and crossing points commenced in February 2021 and concluded in March. The £1.6m investment planned for the redevelopment of the Front Green during Summer 2020 has now been rescheduled for Summer 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Tarbert / Ardrishaig Regeneration - Five projects at various stages that will deliver a range of public realm and pathway enhancements. These include the completion of a new office block and chandlery, junction improvements at Tarbert Harbour and a new carpark during 2020/21, together with the Ardrishaig Harbour Regeneration works and Egg Shed development completed in 2019/20. The developments in Ardrishaig are outcomes from the Crinan Canal Corridor Charrette joint working with Scottish Canals which we reported on in PPF 5 and PPF 6. In PPF 9 we reported on the completion of the Ardrishaig Harbour Regeneration project which has subsequently received recognition as an award winner in September 2020 at the Scottish Design Awards in the category of Architecture: Regeneration, and the Egg Shed which was also nominated in the category of Architecture: Public Building. During 2020/21 consultation activity for the Ardrishaig North Public Realm project has also been undertaken and is detailed in section 1.2.9.

Town Centre Fund - Case Study 1 focuses on the delivery of shop front improvements using Town Centre Funding provided by the Scottish Government. The deadline for applications closed at the end of March 2021; a total of 75 applications were received and over £150,000 in funds awarded.

Hermitage Parks for People - £3.7m 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 Winter 2021. The project has included completion of a new passive haus standard pavilion, restoration of historic features including the Category A listed war memorial, renewal of the children's play area, and works are progressing on the Japanese garden and wishing well, and provision of a community garden. In

October 2020 Hermitage Park was awarded 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.

Helensburgh CARS - Funding secured in March 2021 for a £3m heritage-led regeneration project in partnership with Historic Environment Scotland. The scheme proposed to repair at least three priority projects across Colquhoun Street, East Clyde Street, and West Clyde Street within the newly designated Helensburgh Town Centre Conservation Area. The scheme will also improve links between the waterfront and the town centre, and repair of properties on the waterfront.

Campbeltown CARS - The conclusion of 13 years of regeneration activity in Campbeltown was detailed in PPF9. Subsequently Campbeltown has been announced as the winner of the Most Improved Place in the 2020 SURF Awards. The award recognises best practice in community regeneration which is the result of the extensive regeneration programme by the Council and its key partners. To support the award nominations a short film and storyboard presentation have been published on the Council's website to promote and celebrate the significant investment and efforts of the various stakeholders.

1.1.7 Involvement of the Planning Service has been instrumental in facilitating a number of developments which have/will deliver new housing, schools, employment, renewable energy, and tourism accommodation/facilities. Additionally, in PPF 7 we reported on the work undertaken to deliver a new secondary school in Oban and are highlight that the completed development was nominated for an award in September 2020 at the Scottish Design Awards in the category of Architecture: Education Building or Project.

Replacement Clubhouse, Machrihanish Golf Club

(Image Credit McKinven & Colville)

Case Study 1

Town Centre Fund Shopfront Improvement Scheme

Themes	A: Quality of Outcomes				B: Quality of Services & Engagement			C: Governance				D: Culture of Continuous Improvement			
Performance Markers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Key Areas of Work	Regeneration, Town Centres														
Stakeholders	Argyll and Bute Council, Local Businesses														
Project Lead	Lorna Pearce														

Harlequin Tearoom

Using Scottish Government Town Centre Funding, Argyll and Bute Council is supporting over 100 local business owners invest in their shopfronts through the provision of grants. Applications were invited from business owners looking to make repairs to their shopfronts in: Campbeltown, Oban, Dunoon, Helensburgh, Cardross, Garelochhead, Rosneath, Kilcreggan, Lochgilphead, Ardrishaig, Tarbert, Tobermory and Bowmore. The grant programme is also supporting work opportunities for local tradespeople, and aims to help the region's towns become more attractive places in which to live, work, visit and invest. Just under £200k has been awarded in shopfront grants, at an intervention rate of 75% of eligible costs, with total grant offers capped at £3,000.

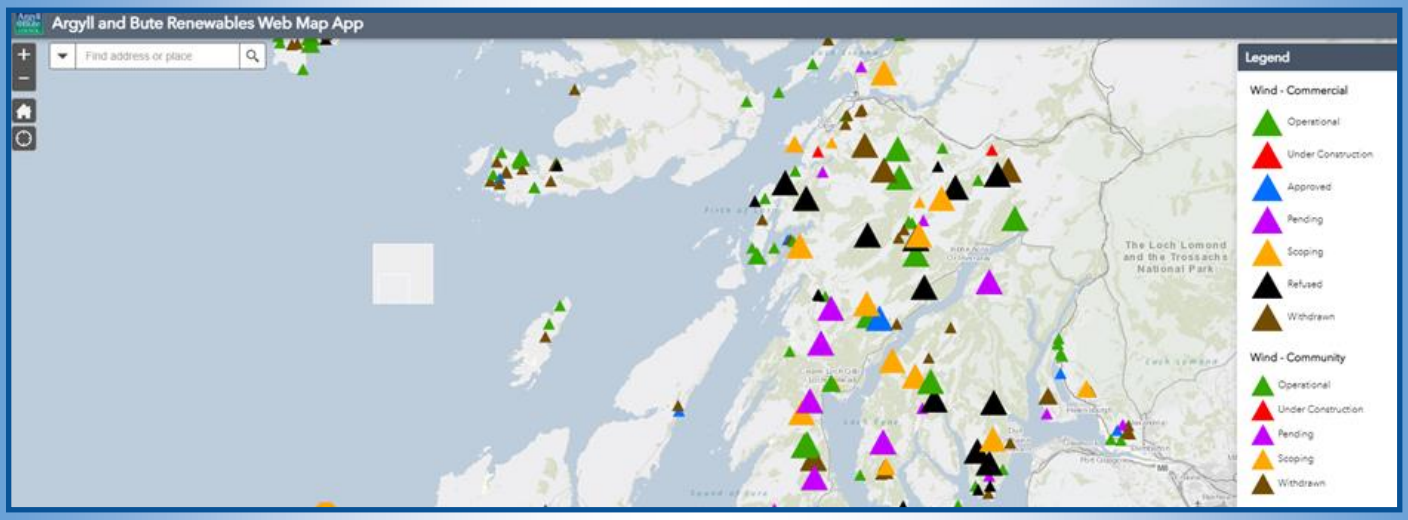
The shopfront improvement scheme is part of a suite of measures designed to support the economic recovery of our high streets, including bespoke 'shop local' messaging, digital training to support business owners enhance the online presence of their businesses, and Google My Business accredited photography to provide current and relevant images of our town centres. Project officers have engaged with Development Management at pre-submission stage to establish content requirement for planning applications, and to identify cases subject to funding deadlines for prioritisation.

Kintyre Reuse Hub

Case Study 2 Planning for Biodiversity & Onshore Wind

Themes	A: Quality of Outcomes				B: Quality of Services & Engagement				C: Governance				D: Culture of Continuous Improvement		
Performance Markers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Key Areas of Work	Environment, LDP & Supplementary Guidance, Planning Applications														
Stakeholders	ABC														
Project Lead	Marina Curran-Colthart														

Argyll and Bute has consistently been a favoured area for developers seeking to harness natural resources for energy. The environmental conditions and size of the Council area mean our Major Applications Team are frequently assessing a variety of renewable energy proposals. The online Renewables Map identifies 52 operational windfarms - 26 commercial and 26 community with others at the initial stages of planning. As a result of the number of applications, we as a planning authority have gained a wealth of knowledge in all aspects of wind energy development. For the purposes of this case study, both commercial and community windfarms will be reviewed in the context of factoring in biodiversity at the scoping, planning permission and operational levels.



The planning process factors in biodiversity interest (habitats and species) at the early planning stages including Screening, Scoping, Environment Impact Assessment and full Planning Permission.

The Biodiversity Technical Note for Planners and Developers which includes the Biodiversity Checklist provides a steer for all kinds of developments and is a useful tool in guiding windfarm developments.

In providing advice on the process, the Local Biodiversity Officers' focus is on those habitats and species including ornithological interests listed in the Draft Local Biodiversity Action Plan, the Scottish Biodiversity Interest, National, International and Local Designations and Hydrology along with any management plans e.g. peat, decommissioning and restoration plans, all in relation to the construction components that can affect them in relation to access (including water course crossings) , buildings, borrow pits and location of the turbines and their platforms.

Some applicants provide a CEMP framework and commit to employing an ECOW to carry out the pre-start ecological checks, toolbox talks and oversee the construction and restoration plans.

Cruach Mhor Windfarm, Cowal

As with all windfarm applications the level of Biodiversity related studies i.e. ecological and ornithological studies and the implementation of mitigation measures, some windfarms have been conditioned to report annually on biodiversity management measures. An example of this is the Cruach Mhor Windfarm on the Cowal Peninsula where the Planning Obligation was entered into pursuant to the Council's decision to grant planning permission to construct a 35-turbine windfarm known as Cruach Mhor Windfarm (ref. 01/01553/DET, granted 7th March 2003 subject to planning conditions which have subsequently been amended in 2015 and, where annual reports and meetings are a feature of the management conditions) with the following aims:

1. Establishment of native woodland
2. Restore conditions for deforested blanket mire habitat
3. Improve quality of deforested blanket mire habitat
4. Restore conditions for deforested heath/grassland/regenerating native woodland habitat.
5. Bird Monitoring.

The 2020 report summarises that all of the following aims have been completed for 1. Native woodland planting, 2 and 3. Restore and Improve conditions blanket mire habitat , 4. restoring conditions is ongoing with hand removal of non-native species along with deer management and 5. Bird monitoring of Hen Harrier, Black Grouse and Short-eared Owl continues with positive survey results for last year.

In summary, this type of agreed management contributes to future proofing biodiversity of these sites by improving their ecological condition better than first surveyed for along with an increase carbon sequestration which will help to meet national and local climate change and biodiversity objectives.

Renewable Energy Action Plan (arcgis.com) , Golden Eagles thriving in Argyll & Bute Windfarms - ScottishPower Renewables

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 in to 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 Study 2 & 3 provide an example of these corporate aims being delivered on the ground by LDP policy.

1.2.2 During 2020/21 preparation of PLDP2 has focussed on analysis and preparation of Schedule 4 responses to approximately 1400 issues raised during the consultation period. These have now been approved at a meeting of the Full Council and final preparations are being made prior to submission to the Scottish Government for an Examination of the PLDP2. Additionally, during the year, the Development Policy team have spent significant time engaging with Scottish Government as part of the NPPF 4 preparation, and particularly through preparation and submission of an Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy. An updated project plan for the Development Plan Scheme was published in September 2020.

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 has seen the temporary closure of public offices and delivery of planning services via home working and digital communication channels for the duration of 2020/21. The Planning Service has engaged within a wider corporate discussion within the Council 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, 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 in March 2021.

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, Environmental Health, Strategic Transport, Housing, Access, GIS and Coastal Development through revised management arrangements for these functions which has seen them brought under a single Head of Service from July 2019. 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 an effective affordable housing development and the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP); over the past year Housing and Development Policy teams have worked closely together to develop an updated Housing Needs and Demand Assessment (HNDA) which will inform the Council's input to NPPF 4, and an updated SHIP.

1.2.6 Customer User Forums are 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. During the pandemic it was intended to hold the Customer User Forum as a virtual event, however, given the additional pressures on staff and local businesses arising from the Covid-19 pandemic it was cancelled for 2020/21. Moving forward consideration will be given on how best to resume this activity, along with exploration of different format, including whether virtual and/or hybrid events are more appropriate to customer requirements.

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 but still remains on hold as a result of 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.

1.2.8 The Development Policy Service have 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.

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 Rockfield Centre is a good example of effective regeneration through partnership working which has occurred with the assistance of Regeneration Capital Grant Funding and Town Centre Funding. The Council also supports, and works in partnership with the area's Business Improvement Districts.

1.2.11 The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted on a number of consultation projects planned for 2020/21, including postponement of consultation on the Tarbert and Helensburgh Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisals. The Council has however adopted a virtual consultation approach to progress the public consultation on the Ardrishaig North Public Realm Improvements in June 2020 to seek input on the final design drawings in advance of an application for planning permission being submitted in April 2021. It has been a long term aspiration of local residents and community organisations to see these public spaces integrate better with activity in the town, including provision of crossing points and space for public events, along with an uplift to their overall appearance. The Council has been working closely with members of the Community Council and Community Trust to bring the proposals forward within budget.

Visualisation of Ardrishaig Public Realm Improvements

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 during 2020/21 due to additional work pressures arising from the Covid-19 pandemic. Throughout 2020/21 details of disruption to the delivery of services and alternative arrangements for contacting the Planning Service during the Covid-19 pandemic have been published and kept up to date on the Council's website.

1.2.13 Elected members are 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, PPF 8 and PPF 9 that the Dunbeg masterplan area was the subject of a detailed application for 300 affordable dwelling units that is now on site. Case Study 3 provides an update on activity at Dunbeg over the past 12 months where significant progress has been made toward delivery of 300 affordable houses. 2020/21 has also seen the approval of a new masterplan for the Isle of Ulva to support community led aspirations for social and economic development on the island following a community buy out by the North West Mull Community Woodland Company in 2018.

1.2.15 The Development Policy team undertook public consultation on the pilot project to deliver two Simplified Planning Zones (SPZs) in Lochgilphead and Mull during 2019/20. Subsequently, there has been some programme slippage, which is primarily related to SEPA requirements for additional flood risk information in respect of the Lochgilphead site. Flood Risk Assessment work has been completed during 2020/21 and has identified the area suitable for development. Progression has been further delayed as a result of the cyberattack upon SEPA in December 2020; however it is anticipated that the SPZ will be progressed toward conclusion in the latter part of 2021.

1.2.16 Throughout 2020/21 the Development Management and Projects & Regeneration officers have participated in cross-service/agency working groups as part of the Council's response to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. Some of these activities are highlighted in Case Study 6. Notably this has included participation in the Town Centre Recovery working group including Council representatives from Regulatory Services, Roads, and Licencing, and external stakeholders including Transport Scotland, Police Scotland, and BIDS representatives. Co-ordination of activity with this group has also informed the Council's approach to relaxation of planning controls during the emergency period, a pragmatic approach to planning input in the consideration of temporary licence applications, and proactive identification of public realm sites and management of demand for use of these locations.

Public realm improvements, Dunoon

Case Study 3

Dunbeg Masterplan - Update 2021

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

In PPF 8 and PPF 9 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 collaborative internal and external collaborative working arrangements that had been put in place to bring the project to fruition.

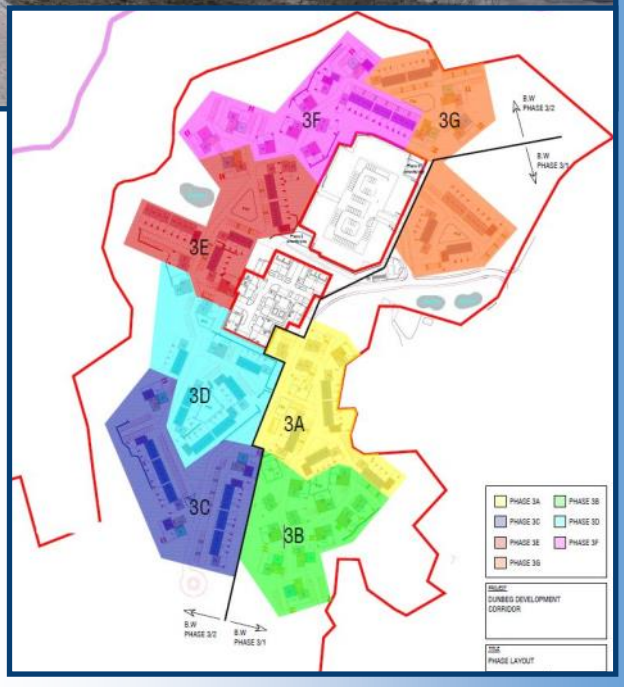
The project is being delivered through a strategic partnership between Argyll and Bute Council and LINK Housing Association. The aim of the project was to provide a sympathetic extension to the existing settlement of Dunbeg and has taken a design-led approach in addressing the challenges presented by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

Image credit MacLeod Construction

Despite being interrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic, construction resumed 2020/21 and the first 38 units within phase 3 of the development were handed over to West Highland Housing Association in April 2021, and all 300 units are programmed for handover by March 2022. 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.

Beyond this phase the Council is now working in partnership with LINK to explore the delivery mechanisms for further phases of the Dunbeg Masterplan Particularly the Halfway House Roundabout on the A85 trunk road, and associated commercial area adjacent it, and following this provision of a further link road to facilitate another possible 300 houses. In the first instance the Council has committed £640k in Lorn Arc TIF funding to progress more detailed Site Investigation and Design Costs for the Half Way house roundabout. Proposal of Application Notices for Pre-Application Consultation have been submitted in advance of major planning applications for the further housing, commercial and infrastructure developments being progressed.



Case Study 4

Marine Economy Infrastructure Needs Assessment (MEINA)

Themes	A: Quality of Outcomes				B: Quality of Services & Engagement				C: Governance			D: Culture of Continuous Improvement			
Performance Markers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Key Areas of Work	Economic Development														
Stakeholders	Argyll & Bute Council, HIE, SAMS, Business Community														
Project Lead	Lorraine Holdstock														

The maritime economy makes a significant contribution to the wider Argyll and Bute economy and provides direct and indirect year-round jobs which are important for coastal communities with downstream jobs supported in transport, processing, support services and equipment manufacturing. This sector has grown in recent years and has significant potential for further growth, particularly in relation to aquaculture, marine renewables, life sciences and biotechnology, and marine tourism, which have strong ambitions for growth both nationally and regionally. While the marine renewable energy industry has not developed significantly in Argyll and Bute, there is significant potential for future tidal, wave and offshore wind development, particularly as Scotland embraces zero-carbon ambitions.

European Marine Science Park (EMSP) - Dunstaffnage, Oban (photo credit HIE)

The current LDP supports growth of the marine economy and since adoption in 2015 a number of development proposals have been granted which directly enable marine industries. These developments include; coastal finfish and shellfish farms, salmon smolt and cleaner fish hatcheries, transit marina, sea transhipment sites, and improvements to fishing piers.

It is essential that the LDP2 continues to promote and support sustainable economic growth and innovation of existing maritime industries, and their supply chains for the development of new maritime industries in Argyll. To do this, the Council and HIE have commissioned SAMS Enterprise to undertake a Marine Economy Infrastructure Needs Assessment (MEINA) for Argyll and Bute. The MEINA aims to gather detail on future onshore development requirements and aspirations from marine industries, focussing on types of development, scale, potential location, and operation requirements. Development requirements could then be considered against:

- Policy in the adopted LDP to identify gaps and consider the need for expansion of existing sites, additional development locations and any change in planning policy (LDP2);
- The investments necessary from public and private sources to secure these developments;
- Prioritisation of the public sector investments in light of available of public funds and the impacts generated for Argyll and Bute by these developments.

Tarbert, Loch Fyne

The MEINA is part of the Rural Growth Deal (RGD); where investment could see Argyll lead the UK and further develop its reputation internationally as a leader in sectors such as marine science and industry including aquaculture and maritime skills. It could develop key routes to market for our world-renowned food and drink produce. It could bring the people and talent we need for our future and to sustain local economies and communities in coastal and rural areas of Scotland. The MEINA will assist in identifying the key priorities for RGD investment and where this should be targeted to support sustainable growth of this sector and set out in the business case for consideration and approval by Scottish Government prior to full deal signing.

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 13 occasions during 2020/21. Local Review Bodies operate flexibly to demand with 21 LRB meetings and 4 site visits convened during 2020/21. Committee arrangements were disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic which caused postponement of the April PPSL meeting with a Business Continuity Committee being constituted as an interim measure for essential decision making functions across the Council as a whole in the aftermath of the initial lockdown in March 2020. PPSL resumed in a virtual format in May 2020 and continued to faciliate public access to meetings; the successful transition to a virtual format for PPSL meetings has also allowed 4 applications requiring discretionary pre-determination hearings to be concluded during 2020/21. 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 idicate that conducting Committee business online provides additional opportunities for participation, particularly for populations located in remoter mainland, and island locations. The Full Council has recently decided 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 2020. The scheme of delegation continues to operate effectively with 98.5% of decisions being made under delegated powers in 2020/21. During this period 97.9% 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's Planning Service continues to face significant budget pressures due to the requirement for delivery of savings across all Council services. The last few years have seen a downsizing of staff resource, redesign of service delivery arrangements, and introduction of a chargeable pre-application enquiry service within the Development Management Service that have cumulatively delivered budget savings of £270,000. Further savings of £125,000 were expected to be made during 2020/21 but could not be delivered in light of the Scottish Government's decision to postpone their review statutory planning fees in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Development Management Service was also under extraordinary financial pressure arising from the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic due to a significant downturn in planning application fee receipts giving rise to a shortfall of 40% (£447,000) of forecast income despite submission rates remaining at 97%. The financial uncertainty arising from reduced income has directly impacted upon performance as recruitments have been delayed to offset the loss of fee income but have in turn reduced the available resource and resilience to undertake the assessment of applications and enforcement and monitoring activities. The ratio of actual receipts (60% forecast income) / volume of submission (97% of 2019/20) further reinforces the concerns raised by the Council in its input to the Costing the Planning Service in Scotland project (as reported in PPF 8) which highlighted that fees associated with householder and local applications are insufficient to deliver a cost neutral position without an unsustainable reliance on a small number of high value major applications to subsidise the delivery of the Council's Development Management function. The Development Management

Service has previously set out and obtained Elected Member support for reform of statutory planning fees in June 2019. The Development Policy team have also downsized their staff resource following retirements of experienced officers during 2019/20 and a requirement to deliver £46,000 savings in 2020/21. Budgets and efficiency measures are considered at management meetings at all levels 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 Planning Enforcement is currently delivered by two dedicated Enforcement Officers based in Lochgilphead and Oban covering the West of Argyll and Bute with the undertaking of enforcement duties now being combined with Development Management casework in the East of the Council area. Enforcement is delivered on a priority basis which is set out in The Enforcement Charter which was reviewed and updated during 2019/20 and subsequently adopted by the Council in March 2020. The Council has published an addendum to the Charter in November 2020 clarifying the manner in which unauthorised development arising from a necessary response / unavoidable impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic will 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 have subsequently been extended up until 30th September 2021 following involvement of elected members.

1.3.5 The Planning Service continue to engage in a multi-agency project in the development of the Oban Strategic Development Framework. It is intended to deliver a long term strategic vision for the town and to act as a vehicle to co-ordinate and maximise synergies between a variety of ongoing project streams. Due to the extraordinary demands arising from the Covid-19 pandemic on the resources of the Planning Service and other key agencies there is no significant progress to report on this key project during 2020/21, it will however be reprioritised as and when resources become available again.

1.3.6 The Council's Housing Service was brought under the umbrella of the Head of Planning and Regulatory Services in November 2017. The revised Service structure has combined management responsibilities for Housing with the Development Policy team. The revised arrangements have already helped to forge better linkage and integration of activity between these complimentary services and has seen Planning and Housing staff being represented at each Service's annual conference. Summer 2019 saw further change to the Council's corporate structure which included the functions provided by Planning and Regulatory Services, and the Economic Development Service 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.

1.3.7 The Planning Service continues to engage with other Council Services through Area Property Action Groups (APAGs). This 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.

1.3.8 The Council continues to explore the delivery of shared services with other authorities. An example of this approach is provision of built heritage advice to the to Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority by the Council's Conservation and Design Officer. This arrangement has been temporarily interrupted during 2020/21 due to maternity leave but is expected to be reinstated during 2021/22.

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 2020/21 funding has been confirmed for implementation a business case for 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. As highlighted in Case Study 6, the Covid-19 pandemic has enforced a requirement to adapt to restrictions on travel and social distancing and has 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 has invested in tablets which have been 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 has been crucial to our reaction to the Covid-19 pandemic as this allowed the majority of Planning Services staff to seamlessly move to home working. Services providing frontline contact services have in many instances been able to continue to provide an almost un-interrupted virtual service following closure of Council offices to the public.

1.3.11 Customer appetite for Processing Agreements remains indifferent. The Development Management Service did not determine any applications with a Processing Agreement during 2020/21 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 has been reduced due to the impact of Covid-19 during 2020/21. Ordinarily, caseload reviews on longstanding applications is undertaken weekly/biweekly at team level and monthly

with involvement of a senior manager. During 2020/21, 17 legacy applications were concluded representing an improvement on the previous period; unfortunately the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic upon workflows and the ability of the Development Management Service in determining planning applications has resulted in 40 new legacy cases (57 in total) remaining undetermined as of 31st March 2021.

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, it is noted that the impact of Covid-19 has reduced resources and availability of staff to undertake this activity. The average time period for processing applications with legal agreements increased from 10.1 weeks to 15.5 weeks during 2020/21.

Case Study 5 Monitoring S37 Consents

Themes	A: Quality of Outcomes				B: Quality of Services & Engagement				C: Governance				D: Culture of Continuous Improvement		
Performance Markers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Key Areas of Work	Enforcement, Collaborative Working														
Stakeholders	ABC, Scottish Ministers, SSEN, SEPA, Scottish Water, Ironside Farrar														
Project Lead	David Moore														

Argyll and Bute Council took the opportunity of the granting of S37 consent by The Scottish Ministers to Scottish and Southern Energy Networks (SSEN) for an 81km transmission line upgrade from Inveraray to Crossaig to request that an independent monitoring officer was appointed, at the developers expense, to assist the Planning Authority to ensure compliance with the terms of the consent due to its scale and complexity. A planning condition to this effect was requested. This is the first time Argyll and Bute Council had sought such a condition to assist resourcing.

The Scottish Ministers and SSEN agreed with this suggested approach, and subsequently, Ironside Farrar Ltd were appointed to monitor compliance with the terms of the S37 Consent on behalf of the Planning Authority, and in particular the EIA and detailed Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP).

As a result of this approach, Ironside Farrar undertake necessary site visits, monitor condition compliance, and produce a monthly report which is submitted to the Planning Authority. This report is placed on public access to ensure full transparency. Monitoring and resolution processes introduced between parties has resulted in collaborative and effective working between the Planning Authority, SSEN and other external agencies such as SEPA and Scottish Water to address any non-compliance identified in a proportionate and pragmatic manner.

This collaborative monitoring and regulatory approach has facilitated the successful delivery of Phase 1 of this this nationally important infrastructure project in accordance with the terms of the S37 consent. This new approach has greatly assisted in project delivery and compliance with the terms of the permission and will be used again by the Planning Authority for the delivery of large and complex infrastructure projects in the future due to reduced resourcing implications for the Planning Authority, whilst still achieving high quality outcomes.

1.4 CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

1.4.1 During 2020/21 the Planning Service delivered and progressed on a range of Improvement Actions identified in PPF 9. 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 Strategic Management Team meetings. The Head of Development & Economic Growth attends the fortnightly Departmental Management Team meeting and monthly meetings of the Strategic Management Team, provides a regular update to Policy Leads, and holds his own Service meetings on a regular basis; a Service level e-Development group is also convened quarterly. Service level management teams also meet regularly/quarterly; within Development Management area teams also meet weekly to assign casework, and review caseload performance. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has been to move internal meetings to an online format but has also seen a range of additional short-term working arrangements introduced particularly involving members of the Senior Management Team. Service and Team level meetings have also increased in frequency, initially many of these became daily or twice weekly to address the extraordinary circumstances arising from the initial lockdown and requirement to maintain contact with staff and recovery of key business. Overtime these requirements have lessened however the frequency of Service/Team level meetings remains higher than 'normal' to address the continuing impact of home working arrangements and loss of day to day contact with staff. Changes to working arrangements and the impact of the pandemic are discussed in Case Study 6.

1.4.4 All Council staff are required to prepare an annual Performance Review and Development plan (PRD). This process allows staff to individually review their performance with their line manager and identify training/development needs. During 2020/21 all PRDs have been conducted as virtual meetings between staff and their line manager.

1.4.5 For the past seven years, 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 decision. These are normally undertaken in bite size sessions in the hour prior to a meeting of the PPSL Committee but have also included half day workshops and site visits. Training during 2019/20 included Competent Motions, Aquaculture Development, Oban Strategic Development Framework, Landscape Character Assessment, Low Carbon Technology, Food Growing Strategy, and an update on the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019. During 2020/21 only one training session on the Roads Design Standards was run; postponed items included the Use of Planning Conditions, SEPA's role as a Statutory Consultee, Placemaking, Archaeology and Planning, Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, and Planning Enforcement have been held over until 2021/22. Training sessions have recommenced in April 2021 with a presentation setting out the experience of the Development Management Service in responding to the Covid-19, and a presentation from the Planning & Environmental Appeals Division (DPEA) in May.

1.4.6 The Annual Planning Conference for 2020 was cancelled as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic but will re-instigated during 2021, most likely on a virtual or hybrid basis. The

conference is 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. Previous conferences have included presentations from the external partners including Nature.Scot, Historic Environment Scotland, and SEPA. Presentations have also been received from the Council's Housing, Economic Growth, and Roads Services, in addition to the Local Biodiversity Officer, Marine and Coastal Development Officer, and GIS Manager covering a range of topics including delivery of affordable housing, homelessness, SuDS, flooding and coastal erosion, Appropriate Assessments, Construction Environmental Management Plans, the Clyde Regional Marine Plan, and availability of new GIS services. The annual conference is a successful platform for exchanging ideas, working practices and knowledge between different Council Services and key stakeholders, and for fostering smarter, more efficient ways of working.

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 and have continued to do so during the Covid-19 pandemic as the majority of these moved to virtual forums. During 2020/21 the Development Management Service has initiated a new quarterly liaison meeting with Highland's and Islands Enterprise to discuss upcoming community projects, 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. During 2019/20 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; in 2020/21 officers have engaged with Highland Council for a peer review of our respective PPF 9 submission, and have engaged more widely with other rural local authorities on reviewing and updating procedures for handling Prior Notification/Prior Approval submissions.

1.4.9 Work remains ongoing in efforts to review and improve the rate of applications which are valid upon receipt. During 2020/21 Officers have continued to participate in a review of the Scottish National Validation Standards that is being undertaken by the Heads of Planning Scotland. 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 but have been unable to arrange a reciprocal visit to the National Park offices in Balloch during 2020/21 as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. During 2020/21, the closure of Council offices has required the rapid development and implementation of new process to facilitate home working in the validation process; limited office presence has however been maintained to manage incoming/outgoing hardcopy mail (including issue of neighbour notifications), and for the conversion of hardcopy submissions into electronic workflow upon receipt. The pandemic has had other less positive effects with an increase in substandard submissions seeing the percentage of applications valid upon receipt reduce to 21.5%. Abnormal workflows, particularly the glut of submissions in FQ4 2020/21 have severely impacted upon the capacity of the centralised validation service to meet performance targets of a 5 day turnaround for reviewing submissions and validation checks are currently taking longer to complete.

1.4.10 The Planning Service have engaged with Scottish Government consultations, in particular during 2020/21 to the consultations on the

Review and Extension of Permitted Development Rights - Phase 1, and Short Term Lets: Licensing and Planning Control Areas both of which involved follow up participation with Scottish Government / HOPS working groups. During 2020/21 the Council's Planning Service has also responded to consultations on Planning System - Promotion and Mediation: draft guidance, National Planning Framework: Position Statement, Proposed Changes to Pre-Application Consultation Requirements in Planning, Scottish Planning Policy and Housing: Technical Consultation on Proposed Policy Amendments, and Draft Sectoral Marine Plan for Offshore Wind Energy.

1.4.11 In March 2020 the Planning, Protective Services and Licencing Committee approved the Lochgilphead Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan as non-statutory technical planning guidance. We also reported in PPF 9 that draft Appraisals and Management Plans for the Tarbert, and Helensburgh Town Centre Conservation Areas had been prepared for progression in 2020/21. Public engagement on these items has been postponed in light of travel and social distancing restrictions arising from Covid-19 but will be reinitiated in due course.

1.4.12 Aquaculture is an area of planning that relatively few authorities have expertise in. Argyll and Bute is one of four 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. During 2020/21 Argyll and Bute have taken up the role of Chair within Local Authority Aquaculture-working group and have provided input to a co-ordinated working group response to issues raised by the Aquaculture Industry during the early stages of the Covid-19 lockdown period during which operational restrictions meant that sites could not always be operated in full compliance with the terms of their planning permissions. Officers have also participated 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.

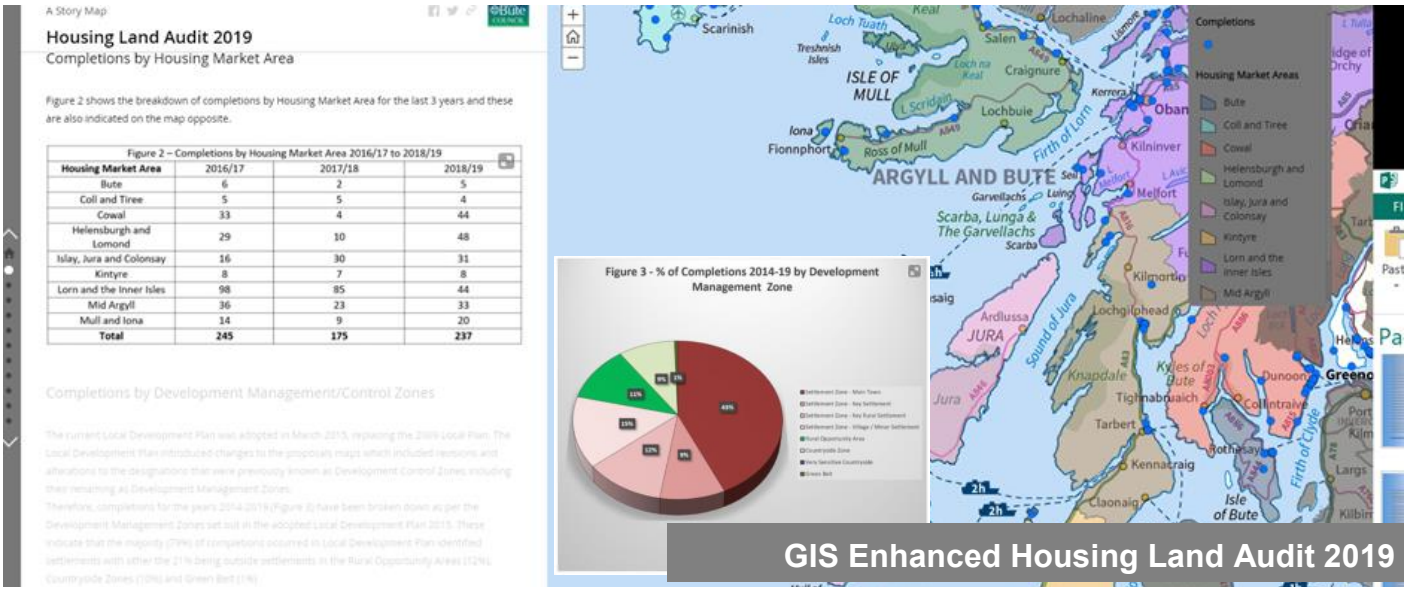
1.4.13 We reported in PPF 8 and PPF 9 of investment in updated software/systems to deliver a more resilient Public Access service resulting in the availability of the Public Access system rising to 99.9% for the second half of 2018/19. Whilst issues with the day to day resilience of this service have 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 funding has been secured during 2020/21 for implementation of a business case for procurement of an alternative DMS that would not only provide improvements to Public Access but also to the functionality of other existing back office workflow systems across a range of Council services.

1.4.14 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' - some of these are detailed in Case Study 6.

1.4.15 We reported in PPF 8 that the Planning Service has successfully attained Customer Service Excellence Standard during 2018/19. Retention of CSE accreditation requires continued engagement with customers to develop and inform the ways in which we deliver our services in the future and the standards to which we deliver them. The reaccreditation assessment was held in March 2021 as a virtual event and re-accreditation was confirmed in early April this year. The assessment included a specific focus on how Planning and Regulatory Services had reacted to the Covid-19 pandemic and maintained customer service levels despite the limitations imposed by home working, contact and travel restrictions during this period.

1.4.16 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. It is hoped that this service will help to stimulate active lifestyles. The GIS team have 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. The team have also been working on integrating 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.



GIS Enhanced Housing Land Audit 2019

1.4.17 Engagement with Forestry Scotland has continued 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 will continue into 2021/22 and 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 Autumn 2019 that related 'permitted development rights' would be subject to an upcoming review.

Case Study 6 Development Management Response to Covid-19

Themes	A: Quality of Outcomes				B: Quality of Services & Engagement				C: Governance			D: Culture of Continuous Improvement			
Performance Markers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Key Areas of Work	Development Management Processes, Performance Management, Process Improvement, Staff Training, Online Systems, Interdisciplinary Working														
Stakeholders	ABC Development Management, IT, Legal and Governance														
Project Lead	Peter Bain														

The emergence of Covid-19 pandemic and the continuing impact of restrictions put in place to control transmission of the virus and protect public health have defined life for all of us during 2020/21, and have had a significant impact on the Council's ability to provide a Development Management Service and its service delivery arrangements.

Service Failure:

Despite taking preparatory actions during February and March 2020, the overnight closure of all Council offices on 22nd March 2020 gave rise to significant challenges to undertake a decision making process that relies on engagement with the public and stakeholders.

Whilst a programme had been implemented to issue all staff with laptops and VPN access to Council networks only two-thirds of the DM Staff were initially able to report for duty in the immediate aftermath of the first lockdown, and even those who could log in in many cases had limited availability due to childcare responsibilities, home schooling and IT issues.

The closure of all Council premises also meant that the service was unable to receive and process incoming hardcopy mail, or to issue outbound documentation including neighbour notification and decision notices preventing new applications from being registered or older applications from being determined.

The UK Government's "Stay at Home" instruction was interpreted by the Council as only permitting travel for essential services or activities under taken in response to Covid-19 which precluded any physical site visits being undertaken to progress applications that were already in process, and prevented Council's Planning, Protective Services and Licencing (PPSL) committee meetings being convened.

Recovering Critical Business:

Proactive steps taken in advance of lockdown ensured that lines of communications with staff remained open, even where they could not access Council systems. Instructions had also been posted online and issued directly to regular customers promoting electronic means of communication. Pre-emptive steps also included instigation of workstreams for the implementation of virtual working arrangements which significantly reduced the time period during which the DM Service was unable to function.

Initial efforts following the "Stay at Home" involved communication with staff to ensure health and

wellbeing, to confirm working arrangements during this extraordinary period, and make arrangements to get all staff back online. Telephone, video, and e-mail were critical tools for effective communications with staff and customers at this time. Initial activity included procurement and distribution of additional IT equipment to facilitate home working, and to put in place flexible working arrangements with staff.

The management team and systems staff undertook a triage process once the circumstances of lockdown were known to identify each area of service failure and to prioritise solutions for resolution. The resilience and potential of existing backoffice systems and processes were challenged to develop workaround solutions for hardcopy processes. Officers also sought to engage with other organisations, particularly via HoPS and the K-Hub to discuss challenges and identify/share solutions.

Following a mammoth effort, by 6th April 2020 alternative workings arrangements had been put in place along with staff training resources to allow resumption of all essential hardcopy processes, including control over the handling of incoming and outgoing postal mail, revised processes for handling representations, moving validation to a fully electronic process, new workflow processes to allow tasks to be allocated and tracked across a virtual team, and the roll out of electronic decision notices and approved plans.

Once processes were in place to allow receipt and determination of applications, efforts turned to focus on the progression of casework that was already in the system, and the assessment of new applications. A new risk assessment procedure to review and identify proposals that were capable of being determined without a site visit were implemented and updates issues to applicants where it was identified that travel restrictions would prevent an essential site visit from being undertaken. Planning enforcement site visits were also affected but could be sanctioned where it was identified that the issue gave rise to a significant and immediate adverse effect to public safety or amenity.

Whilst the April meeting of the PPSL was cancelled the committee was able to be reconvened on 20th May as a virtual meeting using Skype and restored the decision route for non-delegated items that were otherwise ready to be determined.

The removal of initial restrictions on non-essential travel allowed the limited resumption of planning application and enforcement site visit activity to outdoor public locations at the end of June 2020, and was expanded to include business and industry premises and exterior areas of residential property during July which allowed essential site visits to resume subsequently for all but a handful of applications.

Summer 2020 also saw the initial relaxation of lockdown and significant demand for new development to support outdoor eating/drinking facilities and other town centres activities. The Development Management Service engaged with a multi-disciplinary stakeholder group including other regulatory functions of the Council, local and Trunk Roads authorities, Police Scotland and local business representatives that was convened to manage these activities. It was recognised that even the minimum procedural time periods for determination built into the planning process rendered it unfit for purpose in being able to respond to the rapidly changing requirements of businesses during this incredibly fluid period where criteria of operation could change at very short notice. In response, the Council adopted a Position Statement setting out the temporary

relaxation of planning control and the circumstances in which these would apply in order to provide certainty for businesses, officers, and any third parties who may be concerned about the activity. The Position Statement has subsequently been extended to remain in place until 30th September 2021 and augmented by an addendum to the Enforcement and Monitoring Charter that provides guidance on the relevance of Covid-19 to planning enforcement elsewhere, and the manner in which the Council might be expected to factor this into actions in responding to a breach of control.

Local Review Boards resumed business as virtual meetings during late Summer 2020, and the final element of the determination process was resumed in November 2020 with the resumption of discretionary pre-determination hearings, again using Skype.

Longer Term Impacts:

Workflow: Covid-19 has had a significant impact on workflow during 2020. The initial period of service failure in the aftermath of the March 2020 lockdown, and subsequent period during which travel restrictions prevented all site visit activity resulted in a 3 month period where new submissions significantly outstripped the number of applications determined creating a caseload backlog and was further exacerbated by a spike in submissions during February and March 2021. The recent glut of new submissions has primarily impacted upon the Central Validation Team as the volume of new applications has exceeded the staffing capacity available to process the incoming submissions; issues at validation stage have been further exacerbated by an increase in the number of substandard submissions, and technical issues with backoffice systems both of which have increased the time required to undertake validation. Workflow pressures in the management of statutory activities have been addressed by downgrading the priority of non-statutory activities. This has included reducing resource allocated to service improvement activities, longer time periods for responding to pre-application enquiries and has also impacted upon our ability to deliver on planning enforcement. This latter element, coupled with enforcement relaxations in town centres, has resulted in an 'enforcement deficit' that will not only require additional resource in the future to address but is also likely to give rise to more immediate impact in customer dissatisfaction where the Council's enforcement response does not meet 'normal' expectations.

Customer Communication: The Development Management Service has made considerable effort during 2020/21 to keep customers updated and to advise of revised expectations in respect of service delivery standards. This has included 'live' service updates online, newsletter/e-mail updates to regular customers, and e-mail updates to individual applicants. The Senior Management Team have been kept updated on issues affecting service delivery arrangements and have in turn been supportive where customers have been unhappy to be advised that 'normal' expectations on service delivery cannot be met. Whilst this approach has not been successful in every case, the volume of complaints about the Development Management Service have not notably increased during 2020/21; where complaints have arisen these usually involve circumstances where effective communication has not been provided. In the absence of face to face meetings, officers continue to utilise telephone/video conference meetings to engage directly with customers and stakeholders.

Finances: Despite low submission rates during the early part of 2020/21, by the end of FQ4 new

submissions still amounted to 97% volume of the previous year. Whilst the overall volume of submissions is cause for encouragement it is however noted that there was a general absence of any high value local or major developments and as a consequence fee income received was only recovered at 60% of the budget forecast for 2020/21 leaving a shortfall of £447,000. Whilst the Council has subsequently received some additional funding to address costs arising from Covid-19, the financial uncertainty has directly impact upon performance and resourcing during 2020/21 with decisions made to delay recruitment of vacant posts further reducing the capacity and resilience of the Development Management Service.

Home working: The Council's previous investment in technology that supported flexible working arrangements, and the resilience of its ICT infrastructure has been fundamental to the success of the Development Management Service in being able to resume activity in an almost seamless manner. The enforced requirement for home working has demonstrated that this is a viable option for staff and managers to consider as part of future service delivery arrangements with benefits of increased flexibility for staff, and greater potential to attract suitably qualified professional staff, particularly for work in more remote areas. There are also potential financial benefits for the Council if it is able to rationalise its office estate. The Development Management Service has engaged in corporate workstreams that are not simply looking to manage the return to office working but will seek to modernise the Council's working arrangements on a more permanent basis with options for office / hybrid / home working arrangements. Enforced home working has however also had a number of adverse consequences during 2020/21 particularly with the management of communications and staff morale. Many staff have struggled to balance home/work life balance, especially during periods where schools and other childcare facilities were closed; a significant number of staff have also found themselves isolated socially and/or unable to motivate themselves without the stimulus of the office environment. These issues have impacted on both staff effectiveness and availability with consequent adverse effect upon performance, particularly during formal 'lockdown' periods. Managing these issues has also required additional management time at all levels to be expended on proactively engaging with teams and individuals to replace passive engagement/supervision that would ordinarily have occurred within the office environment where managers can observe issues with performance, behaviour, or motivation first hand, again resulting in a reduction in resource available for determination of applications and progression of service improvement activities.

Performance: The reduced availability of staff resource, interruption of workflow, and consequences of enforced home working arrangements on efficiency of some processes has had an inevitable impact upon the ability of the Development Management Service to determine applications quickly. The average time taken for determination of local (non-householder) submissions had increased by almost 4 weeks by FQ2 2020/21 and whilst there has been significant improvement during FQ3 and FQ 4 the volume of undetermined applications is continuing to place the Development Management Service under considerable strain going into 2021/22 and will only be resolved once the Service is able to return to full staffing levels following recruitment to current vacancies. Steps have also been taken to temporarily increase the staff resource within the Central Validation Team alongside provision of improved information for applicants in the expectation that this will assist to improve validation time periods and the overall time taken to process applications through reduction of front-end delay.

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 Sept. 2020
- Argyll and Bute - Main Issues Report 2017
- Argyll and Bute Council Website
- Argyll and Bute Council Enforcement & Monitoring Charter March 2020 & Covid-19 Addendum
- Argyll and Bute Council PPFs 6,7, 8 and 9
- 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 2019
- 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	3	Economic Development	4	Performance Monitoring	6
Conservation		Enforcement	5, 6	Process Improvement	6
Regeneration	1	Development Management Processes	6	Project Management	
Environment	2	Planning Applications	2	Skills Sharing	
Greenspace		Interdisciplinary Working	6	Staff Training	6
Town Centres	1	Collaborative Working	3, 5	Online Systems	6
Masterplanning	3	Community Engagement		Transport	
LDP & Supplementary Guidance	2	Placemaking	3	Active Travel	
Housing Supply		Charrettes		Other:	
Affordable Housing	3	Place Standard			

PERFORMANCE MARKERS REPORT 202/21

	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 6.
2.	**Project management:** Offer of processing agreements (or other agreed project plan) made to prospective applicants in all major applications and 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:** • 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 2, 3 & 5, & 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.
4.	**Legal agreements:** Conclude (or reconsider) applications within 6 months of 'resolving to grant'.	Part 1—1.3.14 & Part 5—Table A Applications subject to legal agreements were determined with an average time period of less than 6 months during 2020/21. 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 & 6 The Planning Enforcement and Monitoring Charter was been reviewed and updated in March 2020. Argyll and Bute Council Enforcement & Monitoring Charter March 2020. During 2020/21 this has been augmented by a Position Statement on the temporary relaxation of planning control within town centres, and an addendum to the Charter covering more general Covid-19 related issues.
6.	**Continuous improvement:** • 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 6. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant adverse effect upon performance of decision-making timescales. Part 3 details previous and committed Service Improvements. Contextual commentary on delivery/identification of improvements is included within: Part 1—1.1.4, 1.1.5, 1.2.2, 1.2.4, 1.2.15, 1.3.9, 1.3.11, 1.3.13, 1.3.14, 1.4.9, 1.4.11, 1.4.13, 1.4.15, 1.4.17 and Part 5 Table A
7.	**Local Development Plan:** Less than 5 years from adoption.	The Local Development Plan was adopted in 2015. Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan 2015
8.	**Development plan scheme:** Demonstrates next LDP • 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, and is currently scheduled for adoption in 2022. Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan Scheme Sept. 2020
9.	**Elected members engaged early (pre– MIR) in development plan preparation: *if plan has been at pre -MIR stage during reporting year.***	N/a
10.	**Cross sector stakeholders, including industry, Agencies and Scottish Government, engaged early (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation - *if plan has been at pre -MIR stage during reporting year.***	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.**	The Make a Planning Application section of the Council website provides applicants with information that they need to consider before making an application. Argyll and Bute - Planning Application Info 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 HoPS National Validation Standard Supplementary non-statutory planning guidance is reviewed and updated regularly. Current publications include Houses in Multiple Occupation, and Advertisements, Masterplanning, and Biodiversity.
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, 1.2.16, 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 & Case Studies 1, 3, 4, & 6
13.	**Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge between authorities.**	Part 1—,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 & Case Studies 3, 5 & 6
14.	**Stalled sites / legacy cases:** Conclusion / withdrawal of planning applications more than one year old.	Part 1—1.3.13, & Part 4—Table B. During 2020/21 17 legacy cases were cleared. At 31st March 2021 there were 57 'live' legacy applications undetermined.
15.	**Developer contributions:** Clear expectations set out in development plan and in pre-application discussions.	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. 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. The Council is continuing to review its approach to Developer Contributions in the production of LDP 2 and 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.

Part 3: Service Improvements

SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS TO BE DELIVERED IN 2021/22

COMMITTED SERVICE IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS
1. Retain Customer Service Excellence Award *(Re-assessment due March 2022)*
2. Deliver 2 pilot Simplified Planning Zones *(ongoing - Lochgilphead and Mull)*
3. Prepare 2 Conservation Area Appraisals *(Tarbert and Helensburgh Town Centre Conservation Areas)*
4. Delivery of LDP 2 *(ongoing - see Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan Scheme 2020)*
5. Run Sustainable Design Awards *(ongoing - launched Feb 2020)*
6. Production of Hill Tracks Guidance *(subject to Scottish Government review of 'PDR')*
7. Implement improved workflow and performance management systems within the Development Management Service *(replace existing systems with IDOX Enterprise and DMS)*
8. Review of Validation Processes *(ongoing - engagement with regular customers and review/promotion of HoPS*
9. Deliver Dunoon CARS (Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme) project *(ongoing - 85% delivery complete)*
10. Deliver Rothesay TH (Townscape Heritage) project *(ongoing - 65% delivery complete)*
11. Deliver Tarbert and Lochgilphead Regeneration Fund project *(ongoing - 80% delivery complete)*
12. Deliver Lochilphead CARS (Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme) project *(ongoing - 15% complete)*

DELIVERY ON SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS ACTIONS FOR 2020/21

SERVICE IMPROVEMENT	STATUS
1. Retain Customer Service Excellence Award	**Delivered** - see Part 1 - 1.2.4, 1.4.15
2. Deliver 2 pilot Simplified Planning Zones	**Progressing** - see Part 1 - 1.2.15
3. Prepare 2 Conservation Area Appraisals	**Postponed due to Covid-19** - see Part 1-1.4.11
4. Deliver LDP 2	**Progressing** - Adoption planned 2022 - see Part 1 - 1.2.2, Part 2 - KPI Table (8),Part 4 - Table A & C
5. Run Sustainable Design Awards	**Postponed due to Covid-19** - Launched Feb. 2020 but currently on hold due to Covid-19 - Part 1 - 1.1.4
6. Production of Hill Tracks Non-Statutory Technical Guidance	**On Hold** - Awaiting outcome of Scottish Government review of 'Permitted Development Rights' - see Part 1 - 1.4.17
7. Implement improved workflow and performance management systems within the Development Management Service.	**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, 1.4.13, 1.4.14
8. Review of Validation Processes	**Progressing** - see Part 1 - 1.4.9
9. Deliver Dunoon CARS	**Progressing** - see Part 1 - 1.1.6
10. Deliver Rothesay TH (Townscape Heritage) project	**Progressing** - see Part 1 - 1.1.6
11. Deliver Tarbert and Lochgilphead Regeneration Fund project	**Progressing** - see Part 1 - 1.1.6
12. Deliver Lochilphead CARS (Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme) project	**Progressing** - see Part 1 - 1.1.6

Part 4: National Headline Indicators (NHI's) 2020/21

A: KEY OUTCOMES—DEVELOPMENT PLANNING	2020/21	2019/20
Local and Strategic Development Planning		
Age of local / strategic development plan(s) at end of reporting period. *Requirement: less than 5 years*.	6 years	5 years
Will the local / strategic 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?	Yes	Yes
Were development plan scheme engagement / consultation commitments met during the year?	Yes	Yes
Effective Housing Land Supply		
Established housing land supply	5310 units	5319 units
5-year effective housing land supply	2889 units	3738 units
5-year effective land supply total capacity	4998 units	5051 units
5-year housing supply target	1500 units	3725 units
5-year effective housing land supply *(to one decimal place)*	9.63 years	5.0 years
Housing approvals	509 units	500 units
Housing completions over the last 5 years	1084 units	1052 units
Marketable employment land supply	85.7 ha	86.4 ha
Employment land take-up during the reporting period [1]	0.7 ha	2.07 ha

B: KEY OUTCOMES—DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT	2020/21	2019/20
Project Planning		
Percentage and number of applications subject to pre-application advice [2]	11.9%(126)	4.6% (65)
Percentage and number of major applications subject to processing agreement	-	-
Decision Making		
Application approval rate	97.9%	97.8%
Delegation rate	98.5%	99.0%
Validation	21.5%	24.7%
Decision-making Timescales		
Major Developments [3]	40.4 weeks	33.9 weeks
Local Developments (non-householder)	12.5 weeks	10.2 weeks
Householder Developments	9.1 weeks	7.2 weeks
Legacy Cases		
Number cleared during reporting period	17	13
Number remaining	57	34

C: KEY OUTCOMES—ENFORCEMENT	2020/21	2019/20
Time since enforcement charter published / reviewed	12 months	1 month
Complaints lodged and investigated	224	351
Breaches identified - No further action taken	170 - 54	194 - 157
Cases Closed (breaches resolved)	119 (84)	177 (73)
Notices served	22	19
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 5 but it also means that take up of land for employment purposes is not wholly captured in the NHIs.

2. It is 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. 537 pre-application enquiries were received during the reporting period, this figure is representative of 51.6% 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.

Affordable Housing Development, Ulva Ferry, Isle of Mull

Part 5: Official Statistics

A: DECISION-MAKING TIMESCALES (based on 'all applications' timescales)			
Timescales	**2020/21 No of Cases (%)**	**2020/21 Weeks**	**2019/20 Weeks**
Overall			
Major developments	**4**	40.4	19
Local developments (non-householder)	**546**	**12.5**	**10.2**
• Local: less than 2 months	**214(39.2%)**	**6.8**	**6.8**
• Local: more than 2 months	**332 (60.8%)**	**15.0**	**14.7**
Householder developments	**287**	**9.1**	**7.2**
• Local: less than 2 months	**183 (63.8%)**	**6.6**	**6.0**
• Local: more than 2 months	**104 (36.2%)**	**13.5**	**12.0**
Housing Developments			
Major	**2**	**19.5**	**45.7**
Local housing developments	**264**	**12.1**	**10.7**
• Local: less than 2 months	**93 (35.2%)**	**6.9**	**6.9**
• Local: more than 2 months	**171 (64.8%)**	**16.1**	**14.8**
Business and Industry			
Major	**-**	**-**	**13.9**
Local business and industry developments	**16**	**12.7**	**13.9**
• Local: less than 2 months	**7 (43.8%)**	**7.0**	**6.3**
• Local: more than 2 months	**9 (56.3%)**	**17.1**	**18.3**
EIA Developments	**-**	**-**	**-**
Other Consents	**204**	**9.0**	**7.3**
Planning / Legal Agreements	**6**	**15.5**	**10.1**
• Major: average time	**-**	**-**	**-**
• Local: average time	**6**	**15.5**	**10.1**

B: DECISION-MAKING: LOCAL REVIEWS AND APPEALS					
	Total Number of Decisions	**Original Decision Upheld**			
		2020/21		**2019/20**	
Type		**No.**	**%**	**No.**	**%**
Local reviews	**8**	**6**	**75**	**4**	**66.7**
Appeals to Scottish Ministers	**3**	**1**	**33.3**	**2**	**66.7**

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.

The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly impacted upon the service delivery arrangements and performance of the Development Management Service during 2020/21, these factors are addressed in detail within Case Study 6.

Development Policy Service:

There has been slippage in the LDP2 programme as a result of a number of factors including: the reallocation of resources to prepare an Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and engagement in National Planning Framework 4; diminished staff resource due to retirement, maternity leave, budget savings, and redeployment of policy support staff in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. In particular, the postponement of site visit activity during Covid-19 pandemic together with closure of Council Offices made delivery challenging for the team. That said, the Schedule 4s have now been approved by the Council in June 2021 and will shortly be sent to the DPEA for consideration.

It should be noted that until the new Local Development Plan is adopted, the current Local Development Plan's 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 2019, thus taking us to 2024 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 September 2020 that reprogrammes the planned adoption date to February 2022.

Part 6: Workforce Information (at 31.03.21)

	Tier 1 *Chief Executive*	Tier 2 *Director*	Tier 3 *Head of Service*	Tier 4 *Manager*
Head of Planning Service			☑	

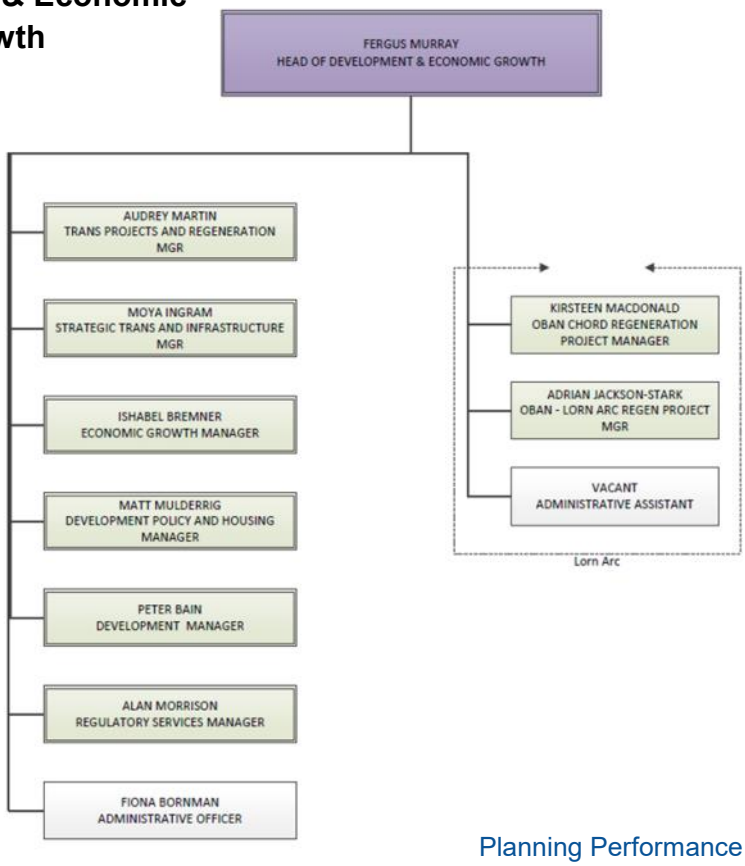
RTPI Qualified Staff	Number
Head of Service	1
Development Management	14
Development Policy	3
Enforcement	1
Projects and Regeneration	3

Staff Age Profile	Number
Under 30	2
30 - 39	8
40 - 49	15
50 and over	21

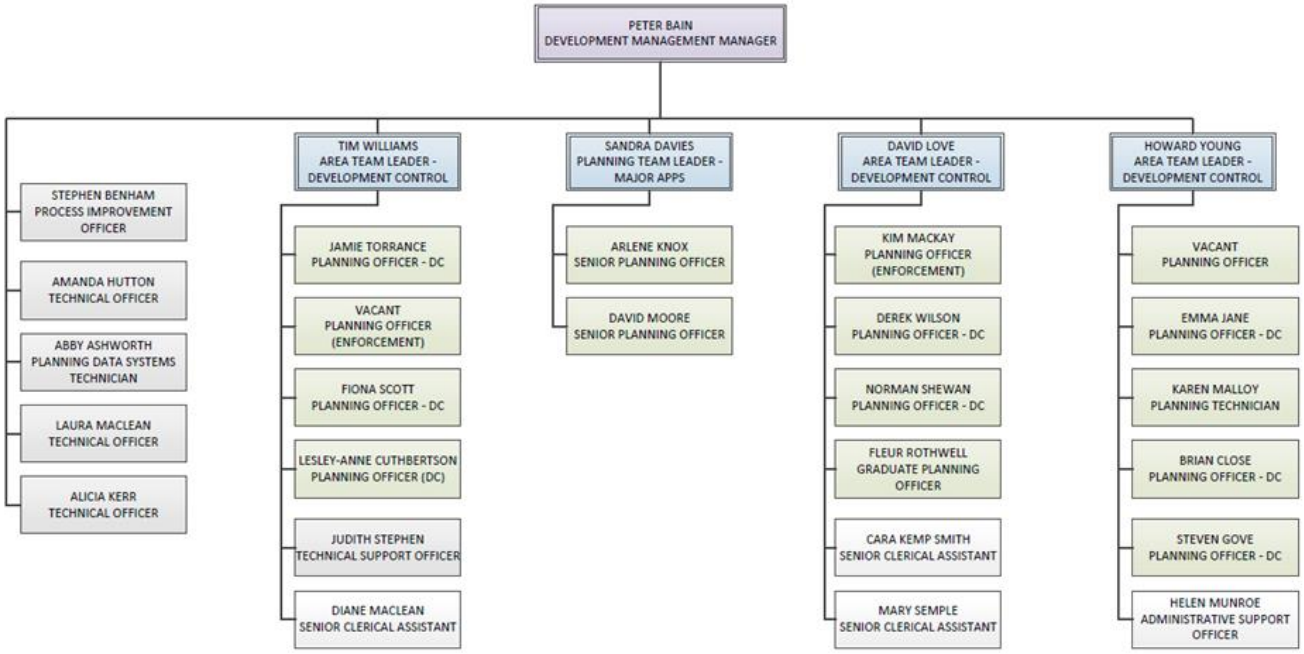
Planning Services includes Development Management, Development Policy & Housing, Projects and Regeneration. Planning Services sit within the Development and Infrastructure Services Department, and within the portfolio of the Head of Development & Economic Growth which also includes responsibility for the complimentary activities of Regulatory Services, Economic Growth, Strategic Transportation & Infrastructure, together with a number of project specific activity relating to Oban Strategic Development Framework including Lorn Arc regeneration activities.

Staff Structure Diagrams as at 31.03.2021

Development & Economic Growth

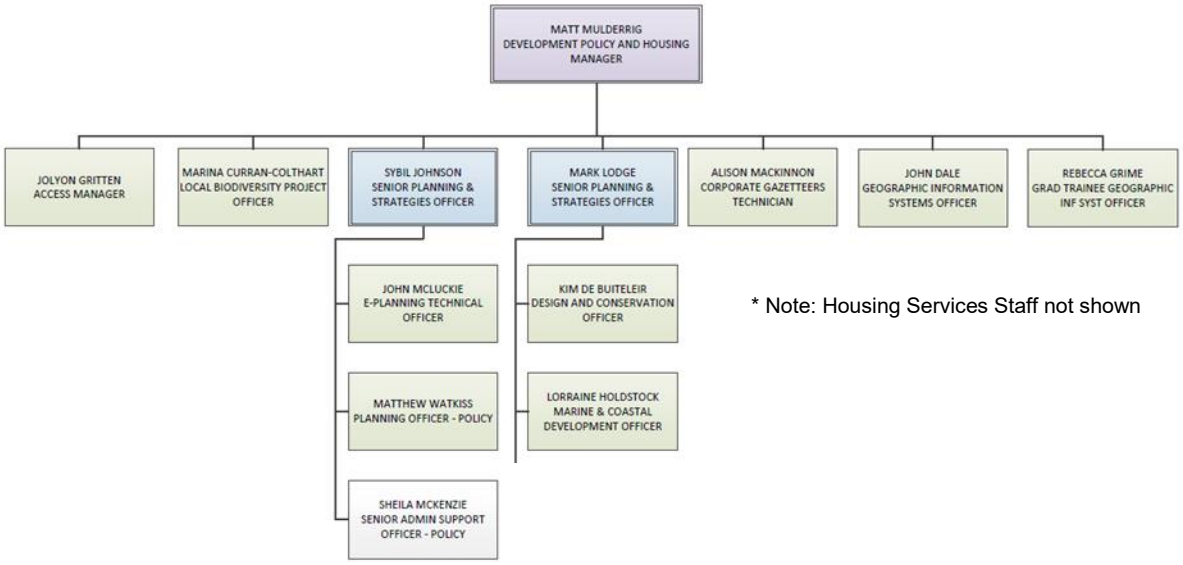


Development Management



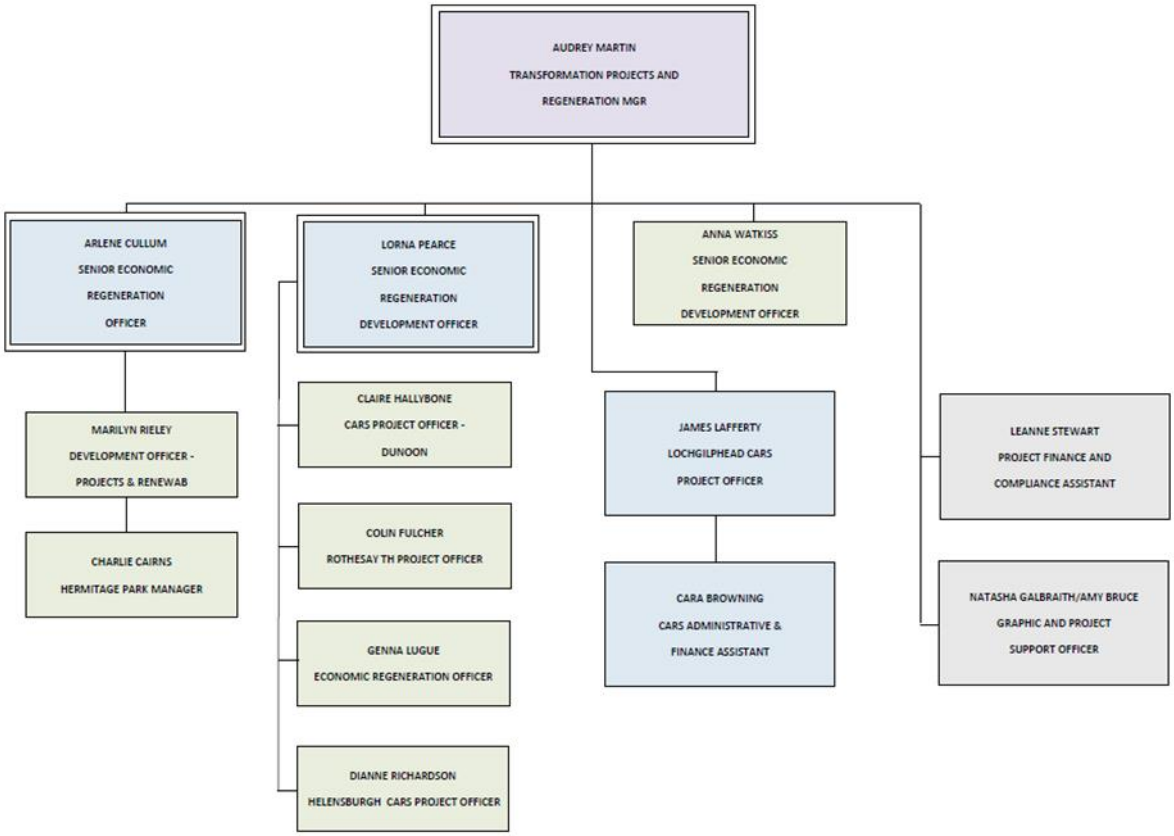
* Note: BS/DM Admin Co-ordinator and 2 FTE Senior Clerical Assistants not shown (shared resource but on Building Standards payroll)

Development Policy & Housing



* Note: Housing Services Staff not shown

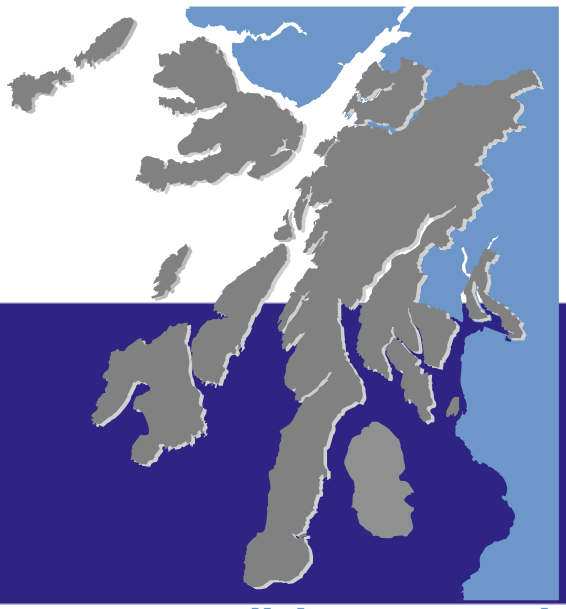
Projects and Regeneration



Part 7: Planning Committee Information

Committees & Site Visits	Number
Full Council Meetings	5
Planning Committees	13
Area Committees	14
Local Review Body	21
LRB Site Visits	4

Planning Services
Seirbheisean Planaidh
Policy • Projects • Management • Standards



Argyll and Bute Council
Development and Infrastructure Services
Executive Director: Kirsty Flanagan

www.argyll-bute.com
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