



The Building Standards service aims to ensure that buildings in Argyll and Bute comply with the Building Regulations. We do this by providing a customer focussed service for the processing of Building Warrant applications the inspection of construction work relating to Building Warrants in accordance with Construction Compliance and Notification Plans and verification of Completion Certificate submissions. In addition, we are responsible for enforcement relating to unauthorised works and dangerous buildings.

Other services offered include: Pre-Warrant discussions, Fast Track applications for minor works, an outreach service for people with specific service needs who have difficulty reaching our offices, search and/or copy application process for existing documentation and Section 50 Licensing certificates.

Within Argyll and Bute Building Warrant applications and fees received to date in 2014/15 suggest that there is still little confidence in the building industry going forward in the short term, however an increase in planning applications received does suggest that the outlook will be brighter.

### Staff Update

I'm sure most of you are aware that Gary Stead, former Building Standards Team Leader in the Mid Argyll area office passed away in October. I can confirm that the collection taken up for Motor Neurone Disease at his very well attended funeral raised £1476. Many thanks to all of you who attended and contributed.

### eBuilding Standards Update

We have now managed to fix all of the technical issues which halted our previous pilot and have recommenced an in-house trial within our Helensburgh office. We are hoping to roll-out to other areas in the New Year and will again be looking for volunteer agents to assist us in using the online forms and reporting any issues.

Meanwhile the Scottish Government is currently developing a national online eBuilding Standards system to supplement the successful ePlanning Scotland portal. The expansion into Building Standards is planned for summer 2016 and will allow the national on-line submission of Building Warrant applications and Completion Certificates, as well as other related forms via the portal.

### User Forums

To ensure the User Forums can be a joint event with our Development Management colleagues, per your feedback, regrettably this year's forums have had to be rescheduled for late January, early February where a presentation on changes to the technical standards will be provided.

### CPD Events

On 10<sup>th</sup> December 2014 Argyll and Bute Council Building Standards will be hosting our second in a series of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) events.

This event will be on Building Maintenance and Building Pathology with the presentation from Jim Castle from Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU).

I can also confirm that Argyll and Bute Council Building Standards plan to hold a further CPD event in February next year on the following topic:

- Building Technology from First Principles - including fire, structural engineering and building technology. It will concentrate on refurbishments and extensions in respect of support beams, loft conversions and roof trusses.

These events will be held in partnership with various bodies including GCU and will be fully accredited CPD events.

I would be keen to offer these events to our regular users. The likely cost per event will be £45 per head and will include lunch.

If these events would be of interest to you or you have any additional ideas for CPD topics please [contact me](#).



## Liaison with other Building Standards Services

On a national level, we continue to contribute through Local Authority Building Standards Scotland (**LABSS**), the organisation that represents all 32 Scottish local authority building standards services. A key aim of LABSS is to promote a culture of continuous improvement and to achieve best value principles in the delivery of our service.

We also work closely with local authority Building Standards Services in Glasgow, East & West Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire and Inverclyde collectively known as the Clyde Valley Consortium. The integrated work of our group promotes consistency and predictability of service.

## Customer Service Excellence (CSE)

Our annual audit is scheduled for 11<sup>th</sup> December. By hopefully retaining the CSE standard, we can continue to demonstrate how we drive change and improvement relating to customer service.

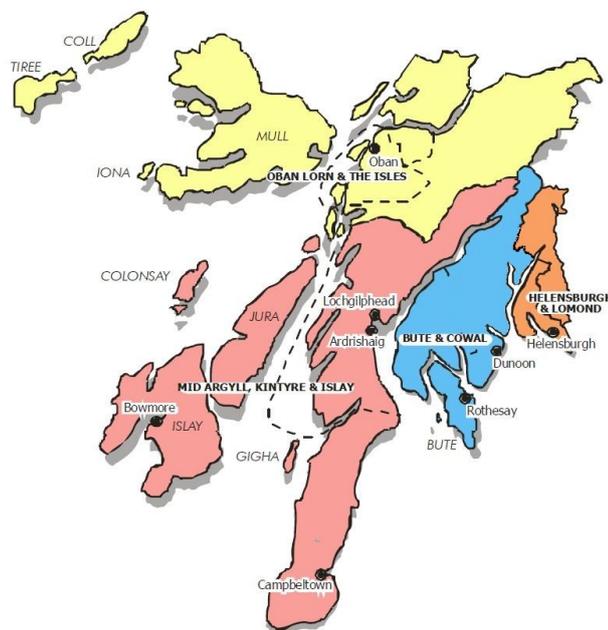
## Looking Forward

Our key objective for the coming year will be to continue to align our service delivery with the performance framework developed by the Scottish Government and supported by local authorities to improve the quality, compliance, consistency and predictability of verification activities. In addition, the Building Standards service will continue to engage with, support and work with our Clyde Valley Consortium partners to promote consistency and predictability of the verification service across the consortium area.

## Quarterly Statistics

I can confirm that by proactively moving Building Warrant applications to area offices which have more capacity performance has held up well and I'd like to take this opportunity to publicly thank all staff for their hard work.

Argyll & Bute Council Building Standards Performance Statistics	July - Sept14	
	target	Actual
The percentage of requests for a building warrant responded to within 20 days.	80%	97.2%
The average time taken to respond to a request for a completion certificate.	3 days	2.7 days
The percentage of building warrants issued (or otherwise determined) within six days.	80%	96.4%
The percentage of completion certificates issued/ accepted (or otherwise determined) within three days.	80%	99.1%
The percentage of applicants providing feedback that were either satisfied or very satisfied with our service.	84%	100%



## Compliance

- Construction Compliance and Notification Plans (CCNP's) are now issued with all Building Warrants. The plans specify stages of construction when Building Standards are to be notified to undertake an inspection.
- It is the applicant's responsibility to contact Building Standards to arrange an inspection.
- We record where an applicant fails to adhere to the CCNP
- We record the most common aspects of non-compliance found on site.
- We report quarterly to the BSD on the number of CCNPs completed
- To date, in a lot of cases, Building Standards are still not being notified that works have commenced on site. As a result CCNPs are not being completed.
- **Please ensure that if you are handing over the project to the applicant at approval stage they are made aware of the roles of the applicant or "relevant person".**

## Customer Satisfaction

Argyll and Bute Council Building Standards will continue to seek your views on our local service as the views of our regular users are very important and assist us in focusing our service delivery. I would be grateful therefore if you could spend a few minutes completing our [on-line customer satisfaction survey](#).



Realising our potential together

## Argyll and Bute Council officially launches the Buy With Confidence scheme

### Protecting consumers - supporting business

At last week's Planning, Protective Services and Licensing (PPSL) Committee meeting the council officially launched our Buy With Confidence (BWC) scheme, a national initiative with a local focus.

This scheme, used by a number of local authorities across the UK, provides consumers with a list of approved traders in their area - local businesses that have given their commitment to fair trading.

Buy With Confidence gives people the reassurance that the members have been vetted by our Trading Standards, are committed to trading fairly and deliver a high level of customer service.

For members, the Buy With Confidence initiative gives them the independent support and advice of Trading Standards, helps to promote their business and reduces the threats posed to legitimate businesses by rogue traders.

In order to become a BWC member, a business must apply or be recommended to join the scheme and must then pass a set of tailored background checks. Membership of the scheme is not given lightly – amongst other checks, each applicant will have their complaints history reviewed and will receive a visit from Trading Standards.

Good references are required from previous customers and applicants must agree to abide by the scheme's code of conduct, which requires them to follow the letter and spirit of the law.

Only if all the scheme requirements are met will a business be granted membership and their conduct will be continually monitored.

Members in other local authorities have been very positive about the costs and benefits of being a BWC member. The council intends to set fees for membership of the scheme at £95 per year, with a further £25 for a disclosure check on employees, and will be specifically targeting the construction/home improvement industry in the first year. The target sector for the scheme is those working in the home improvement sector and the first members are a painter and decorator, and an electrician.

Further information is available on the council website at:

<http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/approved-trader-scheme>

If businesses are interested in joining the scheme they should call Argyll and Bute Council's Trading Standards team on 01546 605519.

### Did You Know?

- If you provide your e-mail address, we will e-mail any correspondence to speed up the process. Please ensure the e-mail address you provide is current, legible and spelled correctly.
- If you provide a certificate of design **along** with your application form, the fee is reduced by 10%. Please ensure you submit the correct fee!
- If you state on your application form that you will submit a certificate of construction, you will also get a fee reduction, in this instance it is 1%. You must submit the correct certificate on completion. If you don't, we won't accept your submission until we receive the fee that was deducted at the time of application.
- If you do not provide all the information needed to approve your warrant after 3 months, we may refuse it.  
Only the Applicant or the Agent can fill in the Completion Certificate, not the building contractor, unless they are noted as agent on the application form!
- A Completion Certificate will only be considered for a valid Building Warrant.

For more information, please see our [website](#).

### Performance and Progress

Our Balanced Scorecard, which is submitted annually to Scottish Government focuses on three core perspectives with two cross cutting themes as another key element of our service improvement activities:

1. Professional Expertise & Technical Processes
2. Quality Customer Experience
3. Operational and Financial Efficiency

A recent national review of our reporting arrangements has resulted in a revised Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) template, a summary of which forms part of the Balanced Scorecard. The CIP is updated quarterly and submitted to the Scottish Government to show how we are progressing to improve and develop our service provision. Copies of these documents can be viewed [online](#).

Realising our potential together

[www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/building-standards](http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/building-standards)



## News from the Building Standards Division of the Scottish Government

### Revised Section 6: Energy standards and guidance

At the beginning of October 2014, the text for the next set of standards and guidance was published on the BSD website. Coming into effect on 1st October 2015, the publication of this section of the Technical Handbooks one year in advance is unprecedented. This should allow the construction industry time to adjust to any new construction practice needed to achieve the new carbon dioxide abatement levels set by Section 6. The core documents, which at present stand-alone from the current Technical Handbooks are available [online](#).

### Revised Section 0: Exempt buildings, services and fittings (Schedule 1)

At the beginning of October 2014, an amendment to the Building (Scotland) Regulations 2004 came into force by virtue of the Explosives Regulations 2014 (ER 2014). The amendment replaces paragraph 1 of Schedule 1 (Exempted buildings and services, fittings and equipment). The amendment was needed to align the type 1 exempt class in building regulations with the requirements of ER 2014 and clarify the exempt status of buildings where only part of them are used for the manufacture or storage of explosives.

### Consultation on a review of building standards guidance

At the end of October 2014 a consultation was launched for a range of possible changes to the guidance in the following Sections: 2 – Fire, 3 – Environment, 4 – Safety, 5 – Noise and 7 – Sustainability. This follows discussion with industry last year under the theme of ‘better regulation’. The measures selected for review were considered by a working group, with the intention of delivering these in a smarter way, without loss of amenity and where feasible reducing cost for industry. The consultation closes on 21 January 2015 and can be accessed [online](#).

### Action Plan process – for the changes to Section 6: Energy

The Sullivan Report (Update 2013) recommends that an action plan is developed to ease the introduction of the 2015 changes to Section 6: Energy. The approach to be taken is through a ‘collaboration website’ where industry can demonstrate what is already being done and

also identify issues that could need further consideration. Trade and Professional bodies will be the point of contact and able to contribute on behalf of their members. You can read more about the Action Plan process [online](#).

### Improvements to local authority cost recovery powers for enforcement

The Buildings (Recovery of Expenses) (Scotland) Act 2014 comes into force on 24 January 2015 and introduces changes to the cost recovery powers for local authorities taking enforcement action under the Building (Scotland) Act 2003 (2003 Act). The new sections in the 2003 Act will allow a LA to make a Charging Order in respect of their expenses and the building, determine the number of instalments for payment and register the Order in the appropriate land register. These improved powers are particularly relevant for the important role LAs have in dealing with defective and dangerous buildings and will improve the certainty of them recovering their expenses.

### Guidance

In response to an agent’s request we have now produced a guidance note on Soakaway Design and Specification. Our Customer Service Charter and our existing Guidance Notes were updated again this year. The Customer Service Charter and several of our Guidance Notes are also available in Gaelic. All these documents are available in hard copy from Local Area Offices or alternatively [online](#).

Feedback on these documents is always very welcome.



Martin Matheson and all his team at Building Standards wish our regular users a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

