

Welcome to another edition of our Newsletter- Keeping you informed of any changes in Building Standards

March 2020

Building Standards Newsletter

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Financial Position

The financial outlook for Local Authorities in Scotland is still difficult with year on year savings required. Argyll and Bute Council requires to make further savings in the next financial year.

Building Standards through commercialisation continue to generate a balanced budget thus maintaining staffing levels. We are continuing to ensure that any commercialisation will not impact on the service we provide as 'Verifier' for the Argyll and Bute Council area.

Coronavirus.

As you will all be aware the UK and Scottish Governments have increased expectation of action required to deal with Coronavirus in Britain and I would like to update you on what this means for Argyll and Bute Council.

We are working with our NHS colleagues, and taking guidance from the UK and Scottish Governments, to plan and prepare as required.

A tactical group has been formed and is tasked at looking at all operational activities and the impact the virus could have on vital services.

Although this is an uncertain and worrying time, we have plans in place and will continue to monitor the situation and communicate any updates.

Service Delivery

Building Standards will continue to work as normal, either remotely or office based, however it should be noted that there is the possibility that all council offices will close in the near future and no access will be possible. In this regard we would request anyone wishing to submit documents/applications as hard copies, that this is done either via the Scottish Government Portal or electronically to the appropriate area office detailed below:-

Bute and Cowal Area Office – planning.bandc@argyll-bute.gov.uk

Helensburgh and Lorn Area Office – planning.handl@argyll-bute.gov.uk

Mid Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands Area Office – planning.maki@argyll-bute.gov.uk

Oban Lorn and the Isles Area Office – planning.olandi@argyll-bute.gov.uk

Building Standards will also have restricted ability to undertake site inspections. This decision will be taken on a case by case basis.

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For more information, please see our website, www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/building-standards or call our Customer Service Centre on 01546 605518. If you have any comments on how to improve our service to you, please complete our Service Improvement Suggestion form available on our Performance and Customer Care webpage or in the leaflet stands in your local area office.

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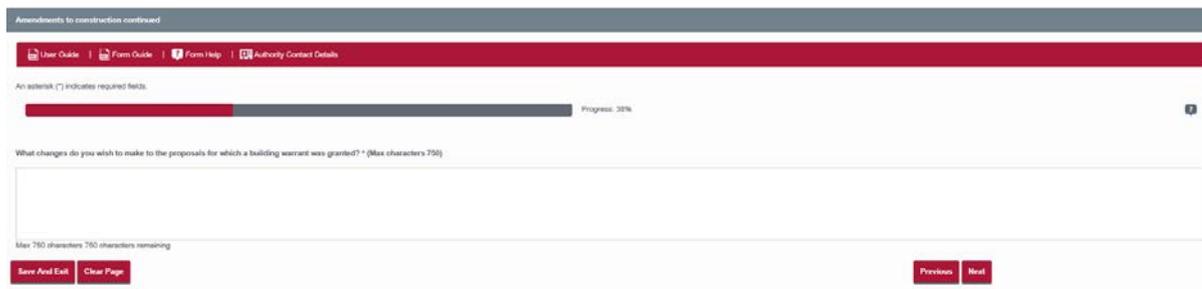
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When you are submitting an Amendment to Warrant Application via the Scottish Government Portal, it is very important that you complete the question 'Does the amendment make changes to the construction proposals for which a building warrant was granted?' (shown in the screenshot below) correctly, as if you do not, then you are not prompted to advise us on what the amendments are. This question should be answered 'Yes'.



The screenshot shows a web form titled 'Amendments to construction'. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'User Guide', 'Form Guide', 'Form Help', and 'Authority Contact Details'. Below this is a progress bar indicating 'Progress: 33%'. The main question is 'Does this amendment make changes to the construction proposals for which a building warrant was granted?'. There are two radio buttons: 'Yes' (selected) and 'No'. At the bottom, there are buttons for 'Save And Exit', 'Clear Page', 'Previous', and 'Next'.

This then allows you to enter the details of the proposed amendments (see screenshot below) which will ultimately assist the Surveyors greatly.



The screenshot shows the continuation of the 'Amendments to construction' form. It features a large text area for entering details of proposed amendments. The question is 'What changes do you wish to make to the proposals for which a building warrant was granted?' (Max characters 750). Below the text area, it says 'Max 750 characters 750 characters remaining'. At the bottom, there are buttons for 'Save And Exit', 'Clear Page', 'Previous', and 'Next'.

Staff Update

Our Building Standards Manager, Martin Matheson, is retiring on the 31st March 2020 with Building Standards responsibility now moving to Environmental Health, which is managed by Alan Morrison. A Principal Building Standards Team Leader post has been established to carry out the day to day management of Building Standards with Alex Linden assuming this post on the 25th March 2020. Katherine Mckerral has returned from Maternity Leave on a part time basis, working Tuesday and Wednesday all day, and Thursday mornings.

Emma Wilson is currently on maternity leave due to return July 2020.

We will continue to operate as a virtual team, redirecting applications to other area offices who have the capacity, ensuring that no applicant is disadvantaged.

National Customer Survey

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In last year's National Customer Satisfaction Survey, carried out by the Building Standards Division of the Scottish Government, our rating out of 10 was 8.5 one of the best in the country with the average rate being 7.

As our service users, we would be grateful to receive any suggestions on how we can further improve on our customer focused service delivery and national figure result.

Customer Service Excellence (CSE)

Our sixth year of rolling audit took place on the 26th November 2019 and due in no small part to our regular users comments made to the assessor, either in person or by telephone, we have once again successfully retained full compliance on the 57 criterion. In addition we received a further 3 compliance pluses, now making a total of 18 compliance pluses, the most held in any section or service within the Council. As a result the team and I would like to thank all our service users for their continued support.

Customer Satisfaction

Argyll and Bute Council Building Standards will continue to seek your views on our local service. The views of our regular users are very important to us and assist in focusing our service delivery.

We would be grateful therefore if you could spend a few minutes completing our on-line customer satisfaction survey.

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