

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

June 2016

Building Standards Newsletter

eBuilding Standards.scot



Scottish Governments National eBuilding Standards Portal.

Argyll and Bute Building Standards will continue to encourage our stakeholders to make more use of the Scottish Government Portal, assisting when required either on-site or via telephone consultation. If you would like to take advantage of this service please email beth.connelly@argyll-bute.gov.uk who will contact you direct to arrange a suitable time to discuss your requirements.

We are aware that there are issues with the portal that require to be addressed, one particular issue on the portal relates to the attaching and naming of drawings. We emailed our system users earlier in May to ask them if they would follow a specific procedure, the full details of both the problem and procedure that we have put in place are detailed in the link [eBS System – Drawing Identification Problems](#). Until this issue can be resolved, providing the information in this way will be beneficial to all parties allowing applications to be processed more quickly and make communication between either party simpler and clearer. We have contacted our back office system provider asking for changes to be made and we will continue to work with the Scottish Government to have these issues addressed.

In our December Newsletter we advised of a number of proposed changes we wished to make in relation to eBuilding Standards. These changes, which have been reviewed, are listed below and will be implemented on the 1st July 2017.

- If plans or documents are submitted incorrectly through the portal i.e. orientation, bulked together as one pdf document, our first response report will request that any future plans or documents must be uploaded in the correct format as detailed in the guidance on the Portal.
- Where the application is submitted via the portal, if information is returned in any other format, other than via the portal, then the applicant/agent will be emailed to inform them that the information/details must be re-submitted via the portal.
- If an application is submitted other than via the portal and you provide your email address your application will be processed fully electronically including at approval stage.

To date 73% of all new applications have been received via the Scottish Government eBuilding Standards Portal, since its launch on 24th August 2016.

Realising our potential together

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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Verifier License - Kevin Stewart, Minister for Local Government and Housing, re-appointing all 32 local authorities as building standards verifiers for the next appointment period from 1 May 2017.

In a departure from previous appointments, local authorities have been re-appointed for differing periods based on their performance under the current performance framework. Local authorities with strong performance have been re-appointed for a period of six years, authorities with good performance but have aspects of their service that would benefit from improvement have been re-appointed for three years and those authorities with poor performance have been re-appointed for one year. Argyll & Bute Building Standards who continue to perform well, have shown strong turnaround times and excellent customer satisfaction has as a result been re-appointed for a further six years.

Fee Increases

As building warrant fees have not increased since 2003, the Scottish Government issued a consultation between November 2016 and January of this year on a proposal to increase building warrant fees with the lower end fees rising £100 to £150 per application. The intention is to raise an additional £3.5m per annum, interestingly the Scottish Government proposed that this fee increase should be split between Local and Scottish Government, with Local Government retaining £2 million and the Scottish Government £1.5 million to fund the running costs of the Building Standards Division - the Scottish Government department with responsibility for building standards.

The intention behind this fee increase was to shift the building standard 'verifier' service towards full cost recovery, this increase in income is not to support the 'non verifier' or 'enforcement work' only verifier works.

The consultation responses broadly supported the idea of fees being increased but **not** to fund the Building Standards Division, as a result the Scottish Government has now issued a revised proposal to Local Authorities which, if accepted, would see the Building Warrant fees increased from this summer.

Commercialisation and Budget Position

Once again Council finances continue to be challenging, as a result additional savings are required from all services. Building Standards have been tasked with returning a balanced budget which unless the economic outlook changes will be extremely difficult even if the Building warrants fees are increased. To assist us balance our budget Building Standards are continuing to seek additional revenue schemes; during the last quarter of 2016/17 Argyll and Bute Building Standards processed a significant number of Building Warrant applications for the City of Edinburgh Council.

Going forward this type of commercialisation will continue but we must emphasise that any additional work undertaken for other Local Authorities will not be done to the detriment of our regular service users

BSD Fire Engineering

As part of the Building Standards Division's (BSD) commitment to keep the building standards system under review, in 2015 a survey was issued to evaluate how local authorities were verifying Building Warrant applications which involved a fire engineered solution. The research set out the findings from consultation with stakeholders and made suggested improvement actions on the design verification of fire engineered solutions as part of a Scottish building regulatory system. The report "Research to Support the Improvement of the Design Verification of Fire Engineered Solutions as Part of the Scottish Building Regulatory System" was published in November 2016.

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Following this, the Scottish Government commissioned further research, the report “Competency Criteria for Local Authority Verifiers When Checking Fire Engineered Solutions for Compliance with Building Standards” was published in May of this year. The report identifies 3 levels for assessing the fire strategy of a building, it also identifies against each of the levels, the minimum qualifications and competence criteria (training, knowledge, skills and experience) for verifying fire engineered proposals for compliance with building regulations.

As fire engineering becomes more of the norm, Local Authority verifiers are likely to have to rely on third party consultation in relation to fire engineered solutions and any deviations from the Technical Handbooks. This could have significant time and cost implications for all service users. Unfortunately this is outwith our control.

User Forums

We propose to hold our annual joint User Forums with Development Management and Development Policy in early September, after the summer holidays. Further details will be given nearer the time.

National Customer Survey

The third annual national customer survey results were published earlier in the year and the report can be accessed [online](#).

Please see below Argyll and Bute’s performance against the Scotland average (one of the best results in the country) and confirms our customer satisfaction rating is well above the national average..

Measures	Scotland 2016	Argyll & Bute 2016	Argyll & Bute 2015	Argyll & Bute 2014
OVERALL SATISFACTION				
Overall satisfaction with the service received (out of 10)	7.1	8.4	8.1	7.4
MEETING EXPECTATIONS				
Extent to which the service met expectations (out of 10)	7.2	8.5	8.1	7.6
Very/fairly satisfied with the timeliness of various aspects of the service	57%	79%	74%	58%
Kept very/fairly well informed about the progress of an application or submission	57%	83%	73%	62%

I would like to thank all those of you who participated in the survey and for giving us such a positive response. I would welcome any suggestions you may have which would assist us to further improve our service.

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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