



National Planning Improvement

NATIONAL PLANNING IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK

Improvement Action Progress Update 2025

Perth and Kinross Council



Perth and Kinross NPIF Annual Report (Year Two - 2025)

Foreword

The first National Planning Improvement Framework (NPIF) for Perth & Kinross Council (PKC) was submitted late 2025, following peer review with key stakeholders and Dundee City Council as our Cohort 2 partner council. Endorsement from the National Planning Improvement Champion was received in November 2025.

This foreword presents PKC's Year 2 update on our Improvement Action Plan and reflects the ongoing commitment to Planning Service improvement, in combined response to evolving requirements and expectations. It summarises current progress across the Improvement Framework's key themes:

- **People.** PKC continues to strengthen its workforce through improved staff development and career progression, at strategic levels, working closely with HR. Student placements remain active within the Planning Service with expanded capacity to support future planners. Communication between officers, communities and service users is under review to improve information sharing and exploring clearer points of contact whilst aligned with best practice and team strategy.
- **Culture.** Work is ongoing to strengthen governance, communication and engagement across the Planning Service. A dedicated Planning Improvement Officer role now supports the review of a Service Improvement Plan and revisiting earlier improvement projects. Training for Elected Members continues through regular sessions and briefing notes, with preparation underway to review training needs for 2026. Alongside this, options are being explored to rationalise Planning webpages and social media use, and to progress digital planning improvements through collaboration with IT and GIS services.
- **Tools.** There is a continued focus on improving digital capability and refining internal processes within the Planning Service, to aid workforce capacities. Within Development Management, regular performance statistic review, alongside senior management support to officers, has already helped reduce stalled and legacy cases thus improving workloads and determination timescales. Work is also underway to strengthen monitoring of Local Review Body and DPEA decisions and to explore improved sharing of information more effectively across teams.
- **Engage.** The Planning Service continues to promote early planning engagement, with general enquiries directed through the Duty Planning Officer service. Webpages have since been updated to improve signposting. Well-received Planning User and Housebuilder Forums, for example, continue to be organised in addition to community engagement forums forming part of LDP3 process. Current levels and methods of customer feedback return and results of the Annual and National



Customer Stakeholder Surveys are to be reviewed ahead of introducing new customer service surveys.

- **Place.** Work continues to strengthen monitoring and implementation processes across the Planning Service, informed by established annual audits such as the Employment Land Audit, Housing Land Audit and Scottish Vacant and Derelict Land Survey. The creation of a Delivery Programme is to be investigated. Ahead of LDP3 adoption, further review of processes and closer alignment between Development Management and Place Strategy teams also seeks to improve on consistent Place outcomes.

As separate update, the Planning Service has experienced internal staff progression and turnover, with consequent capacity implications, however it is anticipated that all current vacant posts should be filled early 2026, with potential backfilling hopefully concluded mid-year. The appointment of a dedicated Planning Improvement Officer in late 2025 now aims to provide sustained long-term support and action for identifying, prioritising and implementing improvement action delivery.

Concluding, we are pleased to report strong progress across a range of actions whilst maintaining a steady throughput of application decisions, enforcement case management and continued preparation of Local Development Plan 3 (LDP3) with our reviewed Evidence Report submission planned for DPEA Gate Check early 2026. The Year 2 Questionnaire has been beneficial in identifying the need to tighten up each action headline in the interests of clarity and deliverability.

Introduction

The National Planning Improvement Framework (NPIF) was piloted incrementally in three separate cohorts throughout the 2024/25 financial year. This was to test a new approach to measuring the performance of planning authorities. The pilot aimed to test the new framework, to explore what works and what doesn't. This resulted in each planning authority producing an improvement action plan and performance assessment.

Each improvement action plan sets out:

- What the planning authority has agreed as its priority activities
- Whether these have short-, medium- or long-term timescales
- The owner of the actions
- The resources needed

[Link to action plan for 2023/24.](#)

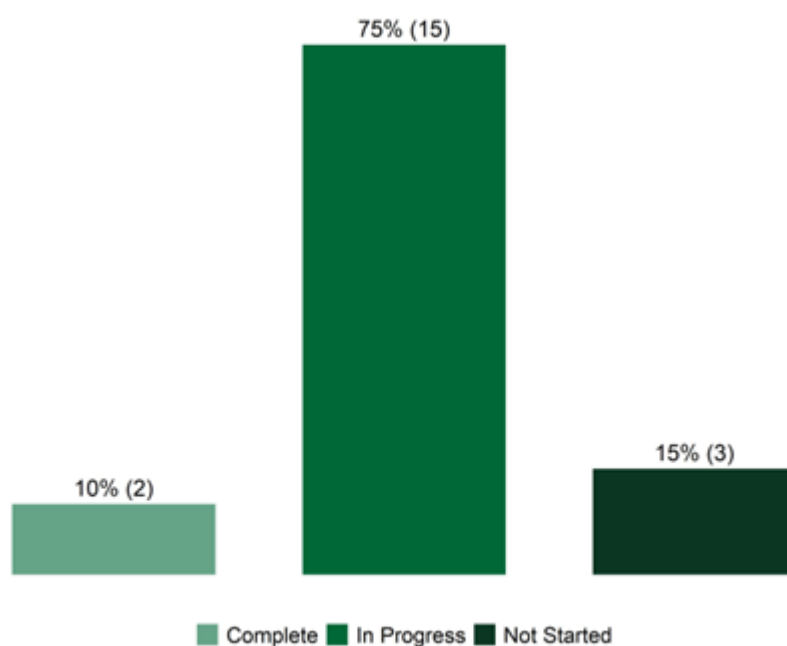
In year two of the NPIF the planning authorities are to update on their progress with the improvement actions. This report sets out the progress Perth and Kinross has made, detailing any updates to actions, any further actions and plans for further collaboration with peer partners.



Planning Improvement Actions Progress Update

This section details each of the improvement actions and the progress the planning authority has made.

Perth and Kinross have 20 improvement actions. The status of the actions is shown below:



Action 1: Implement a Workforce Strategy including assessment of any skills gap(s) and a continuous learning programme.

In Progress

Progress against this action: The Workforce Strategy is still being prepared but single dependency working has already been identified and any training needs or requests are currently being captured through individual Officer annual Personal Development Discussions (PDDs), as well as opportunities being identified through the NPIF process.

The following next steps are proposed: A Workforce Strategy template shall be created. The template will identify team plans, highlight single dependency situations, Officer skillsets including any specialisms to assist. An effective and consistent signposting to training events, as advertised via RTPi and the Planning Hub for example, shall also be reviewed.



In response, the following changes to the action are proposed: title change was proposed by the LPA and accepted by IS. The action title was originally: Implement a Workforce Strategy including skills gap (continued learning). Will allow single dependency situations to be highlighted and identify Officers with skills to help

Action 2: Review career grade structure across the Planning Service.

In Progress

Progress against this action: Initial discussions have been held with our HR Team, and the career grade structure is currently being progressed at a Strategic service level to ensure consistency across the Planning function.

The following next steps are proposed: Follow up on actions from discussions with HR and review the existing career grade structure across different Planning Service teams.

Action 3: Increase Student Placements.

Complete

What was the outcome of completing this action?

On an annual basis, two student placements continue to be advertised and filled thus supporting the development of student experience with public sector planning practice whilst also supporting the future of the planning profession. We are delighted to note that two students have been offered full-time positions.

Additionally, it is welcomed to note that scope and budget are in place to enable an additional student placement to be offered. To date, placements have predominantly assisted the Local Development Plan team and this will now be expanded to also offer Development Management experience in recognising the importance for students to gain rounded planning experience.

Action 4: Introduce a protocol for communications between communities and Planning Officers and to consider a single point of contact

In Progress

Progress against this action: Across the Planning function it has been identified that working style and method is different across the Development Management and Local Development Teams. The former is grouped by development scale (Householder Development, Local



Development and Major Development) while the latter operates a more locality and ward-based approach. We are currently investigating options on appropriate sharing of Officer contact details. Meanwhile, it is standard practice for Management to delegate enquiries to the appropriate Officer(s) for follow-up action.

The following next steps are proposed: No single point of contact is actively advertised currently however through continued case management, networking, engagement and collaboration, certain Officers may become points of contact, naturally. There is also opportunity to take stock of historic and current PKC working practices, to review effectiveness, trial and consider alternative workstyle options. Single points of contact through continued, or rota, ward-working could then be investigated.

Action 5: Consideration of a clear progression route from Graduate to Officer and support through the RTPi APC process

In Progress

Progress against this action: This is linked to Action 2 (career grade structure) and will result in a joined-up approach. This is currently being investigated at a Strategic service level.

The following next steps are proposed: Further review and creation of an informal guidance note to highlight and raise awareness of in-house mentoring opportunities, supported by recently accredited Officers. Additionally, a clear career progression route from Planning Technician to Graduate/Assistant/Planning Officer shall build on previous experience(s) and become formalised to support future iterations of the Future Planners Programme, as promoted by Scottish Government. All resulting actions shall be incorporated into team plans and strategies thus linking to Action 1.

Action 6: Review of Scheme of Delegation

In Progress

Progress against this action: The current Scheme of Delegation was approved by Scottish Ministers in May 2024. A review is in progress to review and understand how up to date and proportionate it is.

The following next steps are proposed: A workshop shall be organised to review the criteria requirements for Full Council, Planning and Placemaking Committee, Strategic Lead and Appointed Officers. The workshop will then consider the timeframe for a further review.



Action 7: Produce new Service Improvement Plan

In Progress

Progress against this action: Progress has already been made in identifying planning service improvements pre-NPIF (Planning Improvement Programme) and as part of the NPIF process. Actions were implemented when time and limited resources allowed.

The following next steps are proposed: To highlight continuous commitment to improve and enhance our Planning function, scope and budget allowed for the introduction of a Planning Improvement Officer role (in post as of December 2025). The post now offers more dedicated resource to revisit previous projects such as Streamlining and Process Mapping and those identified through the NPIF process. With guidance from the Improvement Service, PKC shall aim to support the formation of a connected network of Improvement leads across all Local Planning Authorities.

In response, the following changes to the action are proposed: Title change was proposed by the LPA and accepted by IS. The action title was originally: Update Service Improvement Plan once NPIF process completed.

Action 8: Continue to deliver training for Elected Members

In Progress

Progress against this action: The next scheduled election, with potential member change, is May 2027. Training and refresher sessions continue to be run, and Elected Member briefing notes are published online when required. Local arrangements continue to be reviewed in line with any national training programme requirements.

The following next steps are proposed: At request and at identified times (elections, etc.), training continues to be provided to Elected Members, led at the national level. We are aware that a national requirement programme is due to be implemented. Meantime, at the local level, proactive consultation shall be carried out with Members to review any specific requests for 2026.

Action 9: Gather, review and collate data in relation to Local Review Body decisions.

In Progress

Progress against this action: Decision data and meeting summaries are already captured.

The following next steps are proposed: Recent Local Review Body meetings shall be reviewed and upcoming meetings monitored to ensure capture of information remains efficient and effective. It has been identified that the resulting learning outcomes may not fully relayed to all teams and therefore an investigation into communication process(es) shall be carried out.



In response, the following changes to the action are proposed: title change was proposed by the LPA and accepted by IS. The Action title was originally: Consider whether further information can be gathered on Local Review Body process.

Action 10: Review the Planning function's use of communication channels, to ensure alignment with best practice

In Progress

Progress against this action: Discussions with IT/Communications Teams are underway to seek best ways forward with the rationalisation of Planning Service webpages, for an improved customer experience. In response to Rapid Review: Embedding Customer Care in Planning Services, we are committed to ensuring clear and accessible content for service users.

The following next steps are proposed: Follow-up with IT/Communications to seek a draft website/webpage and consult with a focus group consisting of internal and external users. A review of existing analytics for PKC planning webpages, X/Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube and any others shall be carried out to assess reach and engagement value.

In response, the following changes to the action are proposed: title change was proposed by the LPA and accepted by IS. The Action title was originally: Review the Officers and the use of communication channels

Action 11: Investigate opportunities to enhance the use of digital technologies (e.g. tools) to support effective planning functions

In Progress

Progress against this action: Introduction of the Planning Improvement Officer post now provides additional resource to seek digital enhancements and improvements where possible. Meetings are ongoing with IT to develop corporately driven and supported use of AI and Power BI services. Enhancements are currently ongoing with IT in relation to use of underutilised modules in Uniform and the effective use of spatial data in ArcGIS systems, following termination of our previous GIS system (Location Centre).

The following next steps are proposed: Continue to work with IT+GIS Teams to develop and promote the use of digital tools, in line with corporate standards and practices. Review, knowledge-share and trial new digital tools when they become available for use, ensuring a continued awareness on best fit for purpose. An opportunity has been identified to test and trial advanced ArcGIS packages, to support Development Management decision-making, however this remains to be investigated. Overall, there is ongoing commitment to support our workforce with emerging technologies in addition to utilise existing tools to best effect whilst also ensuring public information remains accurate and available.



In response, the following changes to the action are proposed: title change was proposed by the LPA and accepted by IS. The action title was originally: Investigate opportunities to improve digital engagement on general planning issues to ensure that the service is utilising emerging digital technologies effectively to aid the decision-making process

Action 12: Improved monitoring and gathering/communication of [DPEA] Appeals decisions

In Progress

Progress against this action: Appeals decision data are already being captured. Officers to communicate appeal outcomes at individual team meetings and bring forward cases of interest to wider team meetings, for discussion and in raising awareness.

The following next steps are proposed: To review recent [DPEA] Appeals and their outcomes, feeding back for wider team awareness and learning, and to investigate more effective outcome relay processes. As part of internal process, a revise of summary formatting is to be standardised including key points for discussion.

In response, the following changes to the action are proposed: title change was proposed by the LPA and accepted by IS. The Action title was originally: Improved monitoring of Appeals data

Action 13: Review the Enforcement Charter

In Progress

Progress against this action: The current Enforcement Charter was adopted May 2024. A review and redraft have been commenced, and the changes are to be reviewed at the Economy & Infrastructure Convenors meeting (March 2026) to seek any additional input.

The following next steps are proposed: Additional revisions shall be considered, finalised and final document raised at the Economy & Infrastructure Committee in April 2026 for approval, with adoption thereafter.

Update: Service standards were reviewed in advance resulting in a reduction in number to concentrate on quality of service. The changes also include a commitment for case turnaround to be in a consistent manner (e.g. explicitly specifying 'working days') and clarifies expectations for service users. As a result, customer service aims to be improved whilst seeking service standards reflective of how cases are processed.



Action 14: Review internal consultation process(es)

In Progress

Progress against this action: Information has been gathered from Officers which has initially informed internal consultation process and challenges faced, including but not exclusive to expected turnarounds, lack of sufficient information and multiple methods of communication and relay.

The following next steps are proposed: Continue to review and collect feedback and arrange a formal event to gain detailed views and processes from officers and internal consultees. There is opportunity to check in with our Peer Local Authority to understand and review if any points of learning can be gained from their internal consultation process(es).

In response, the following changes to the action are proposed: title change was proposed by the LPA and accepted by IS. The action title was originally: Review process for internal consultation responses.

Action 15: Introduce a customer service survey measuring satisfaction with the level of collaboration in the preparation of the local development plan/local place plans

Not Started

Reason(s) action has not been progressed:

- Other

The following next steps are proposed: We await results of the Annual and National Customer Stakeholder Survey which shall be reviewed and we will then determine if any separate activity is required. Feedback of qualitative results shall also be beneficial to inform all other improvement Actions moving forward.

Action 16: Ensure Duty Officer contact details are clear on PKC website

Complete

What was the outcome of completing this action?

Duty Planning Officer contact has always been advertised on our webpage, but with limited clarity on who to ask to speak to if calling Customer Services. The specific Planning webpage ([Planning application information](#) and [What needs planning permission?](#)) has since been updated and now features improved signposted information.



Action 17: Assess methods on how to assist community engagement for major/national planning applications

Not Started

Reason(s) action has not been progressed:

- Other

The following next steps are proposed: On review of this Action and with guidance from the Improvement Service, community engagement and training are now separated. The Action's intention primarily relates to community engagement at the national and major development level. We actively welcome the submission of [Local Place Plans](#), provide clear guidance on the specific webpage and include the opportunity for follow-up contact.

We currently offer some community engagement guidance for major/national developments ([Major planning applications and Environmental Impact Assessments](#)). Opportunities to expand the guidance, provide follow-up contact information and any proactive engagement methods, to support communities shall be investigated in line with best working practice. Initial assessment will be carried out and further update provided.

In response, the following changes to the action are proposed: title change was proposed by the LPA and accepted by IS. The action title was originally: Access the level of community engagement from PKC for major applications and Local Place Plans and training around national planning applications.

Action 18: Training around Place and Wellbeing Outcomes

Not Started

Reason(s) action has not been progressed:

- Other

The following next steps are proposed: The Place Standard Tool had been extensively used through previous engagement and consultation events organised by the Local Development Plan Team. The intention is to investigate and review Place and Wellbeing Outcomes, to build awareness and understanding as part of wider training for Officers and with the aim to ensure consistency in practice. Through discussions with the Improvement Service, we are aware that Place and Wellbeing guidance is available on their website and training can be made available.



Action 19: Review and establish clear monitoring processes to ensure accurate frameworks for the delivery of development

In Progress

Progress against this action: Discussions are underway as part of the Local Development Plan 3 (LDP3) process. Annual audits are undertaken such as the Employment Land Audit, Scottish Vacant and Derelict Land Survey and Housing Land Audit, which support the wider Planning function/strategy, and forms part of LDP evidence bases. Multiple methods of data collection, communication and analysis are undertaken.

The following next steps are proposed: Investigate and review current monitoring processes, with separate aim to improve workforce capacity. Review opportunities to improve connections between Development Management, Building Standards and Place Strategies (including Local Development Plan) teams, to ensure improved monitoring of delivery. Review and test utilisation of digital tools to improve monitoring methods, such as Power BI dashboards. This latter point aligns with Action 11.

In response, the following changes to the action are proposed: title change was proposed by the LPA and accepted by IS. The action title was originally: establish clearer routes for monitoring delivery

Action 20: Review and establish clear monitoring processes to ensure and support development implementation

In progress

Progress against this action: Planning User, Housebuilder, and Validation Forums continue to be held and offered, to encourage and promote development and good quality submissions to be valid on receipt. Pre-validation and pre-application services continue to be offered to highlight and guide efforts to address concerns, prior to submission.

Post-decision, we continue to support non-material variation requests and signpost to submission of a new planning application. We carry out Development Monitoring duties, through our Enforcement function, to ensure post-decision implementation aligns with the approved design and conditional requirements are satisfied. Planning Obligations are also reviewed to ensure legal fulfilment to ensure delivery.

In response, the following changes to the action are proposed: Investigate and review current monitoring processes for overall development implementation. Annual statistics, including Housing Delivery, are to be investigated to provide headline figures highlighting the degree of completed development achieved each year. From development completions, select case studies can then form the basis of discussion, and continued learning practice, on what worked well and not so well, also informing Local Development Plan processes.



Separately, we await results from HOPS on standardised conditions whilst continuing to apply reasonable and proportionate conditions and in minimising pre-commencement conditions where possible. Discussions are also underway to review the continued and scheduled timing of forums and to assess their effectiveness and/or desire for revised subject forums.

Finally, in early discussions with Economic Development and Development Management, opportunities have also been identified to encourage and support commercial and business development through informed Planning guidance, processes and enhanced collaborative working.

In response, the following changes to the action are proposed: title change was proposed by the LPA and accepted by IS. The action title was originally: consider the role of ensuring Development Implementation and that fits particularly following LDP3 being adopted.



New Proposed Planning Improvement Actions

The table below details further improvement actions added.

Improvement action What action will you take? What will the outcome be?	Owner	Importance High Medium Low	Timescale Short term- 1 year Medium term – 3 year Long term 3+ year	Resources
Action 21: Review customer journey, as part of a Service Charter (including clear process mapping, and service standards). In Progress; as evident in Action 13 and aligned with other Actions.	Planning Improvement Officer	Medium	Short to medium term – 1+ years	We have the resources to carry out this improvement action. Useful recent resource: Rapid Review on Embedding Customer Care in Planning Services Customer Care/Engagement training events and webinars.



Peer Collaborative Review Follow Up

As part of the pilot, each planning authority held a peer collaborative review workshop. This brought together key stakeholders and customers to discuss and provide constructive feedback on the improvement action plan.

Status of the peer review follow-up meeting: Rather than a 6-month timeline it is considered that a 12-month follow-up email is more appropriate, to be programmed c.July-August 2026.

