

## Planning Performance

# Annual Report

2015/2016



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## Background

A strong, well-functioning planning service is vital for the long term, sustainable economic growth of Scotland.

Since 2011/12, planning authorities, strategic development plan authorities and Key Agencies have all completed an annual report based on the template devised by Heads of Planning Scotland. This framework provides authorities with a vehicle to set out their achievements over the year and their commitments to improve in the following year. This is the fifth year of submission (fourth year of the key markers). **The information contained in this report reflects the feedback authorities have received from the Scottish Government on their performance against the 15 Performance Markers established by the High Level Group on Planning Performance.**

The reporting period ran from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 and a 'red, amber, green' (RAG) marking against the 15 Performance Markers was provided to authorities in November 2016. For the purpose of the reports the following criteria is applied to each marker:

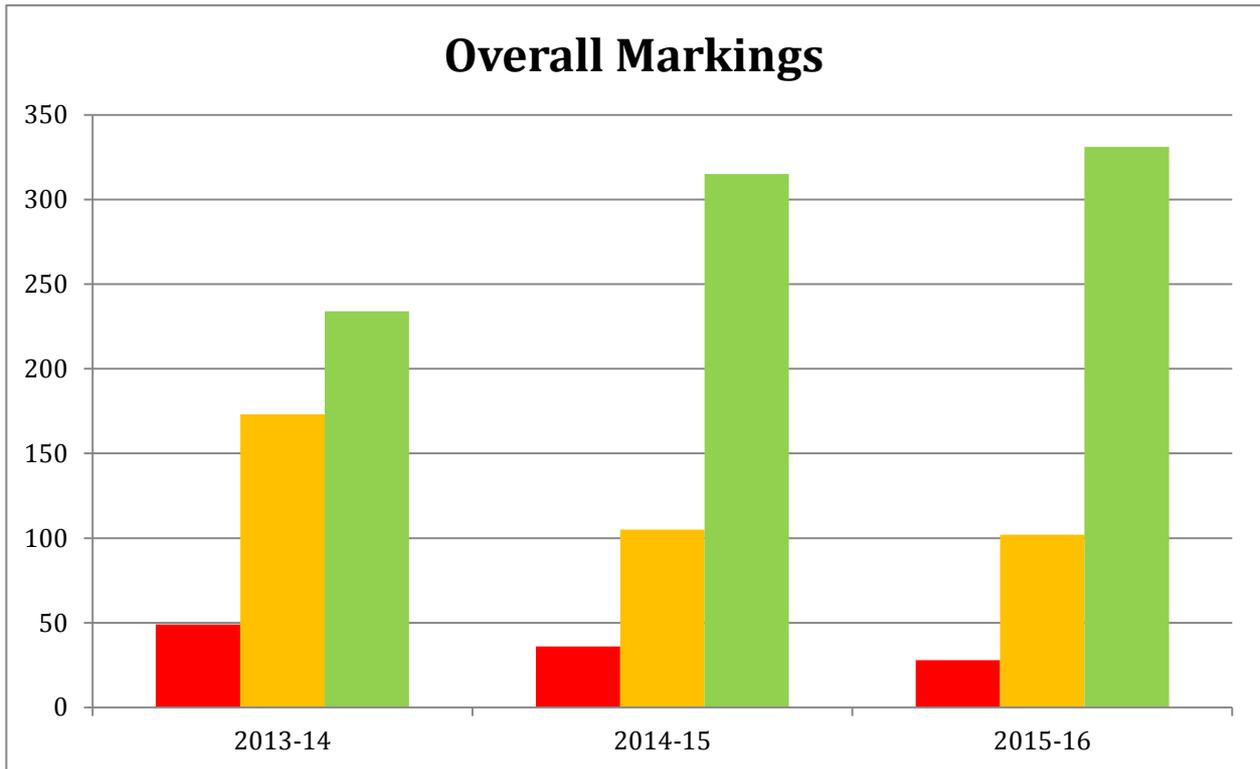
**RED** - Where no information or insufficient evidence to meet the markers has been provided, a 'red' marking is allocated.

**AMBER** - An amber marking shows that some evidence has been provided and that work is on-going in the area, with further improvements needed; or that there is a commitment to move this work forward.

**GREEN** - Green signifies that an authority is meeting the requirements of the marker on all levels.

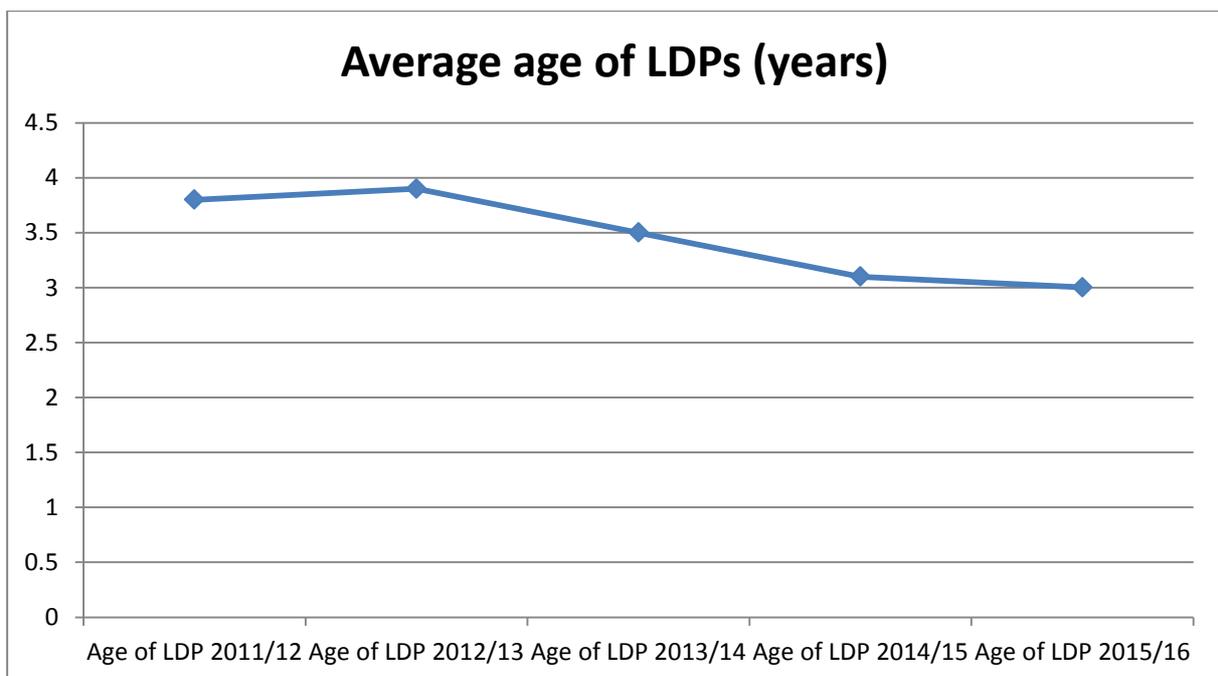
## Introduction

This year the reports submitted by authorities were of a continuing high standard. Again they contained a wealth of information about each authority's planning service and the wide range of work that is carried out by them beyond development management and development planning. This annual report focusses on how authorities performed against the performance markers agreed by the High Level Group on Planning Performance. This is the fourth year that authorities have been assessed against these and as the charts below show there has been continued progress and improvement made by authorities.

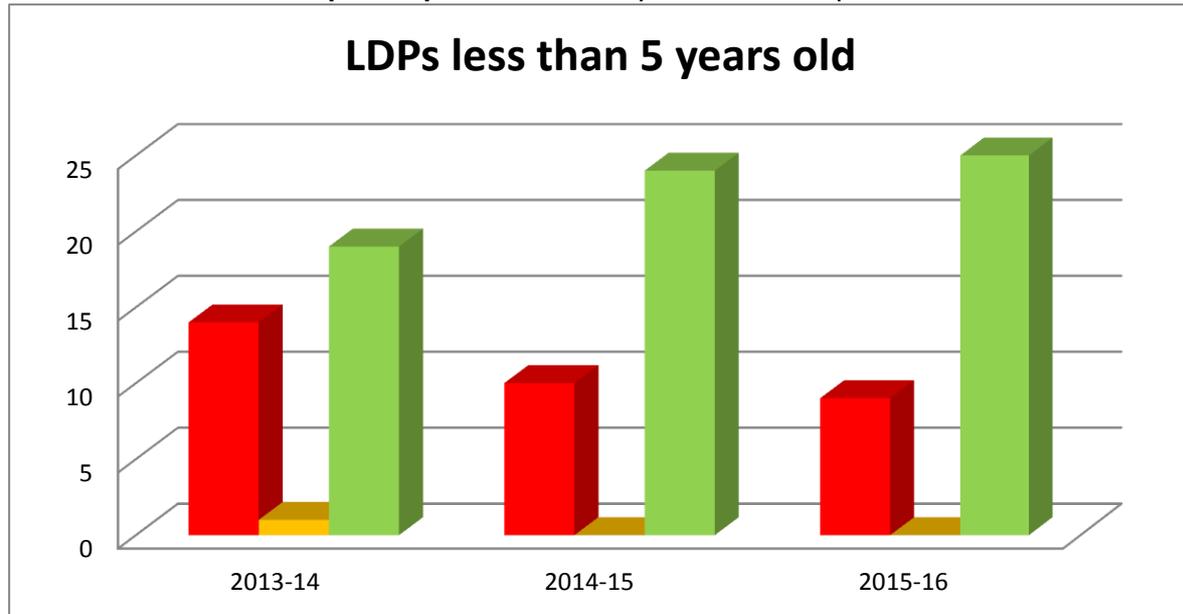


#### Development Planning

In 2015/16, the average age of local development plans (LDPs) was 3 years old, an improvement from last year's 3.1 years with the oldest plan being 8 years old. In this reporting year 25 LDPs were less than 5 years old since adoption, an increase of 1 since the previous year. Nine adopted LDPs are over 5 years old, a decrease of 1 since the previous reporting year of 2014/15.



**Marker 7 – Local development plan less than 5 years since adoption**

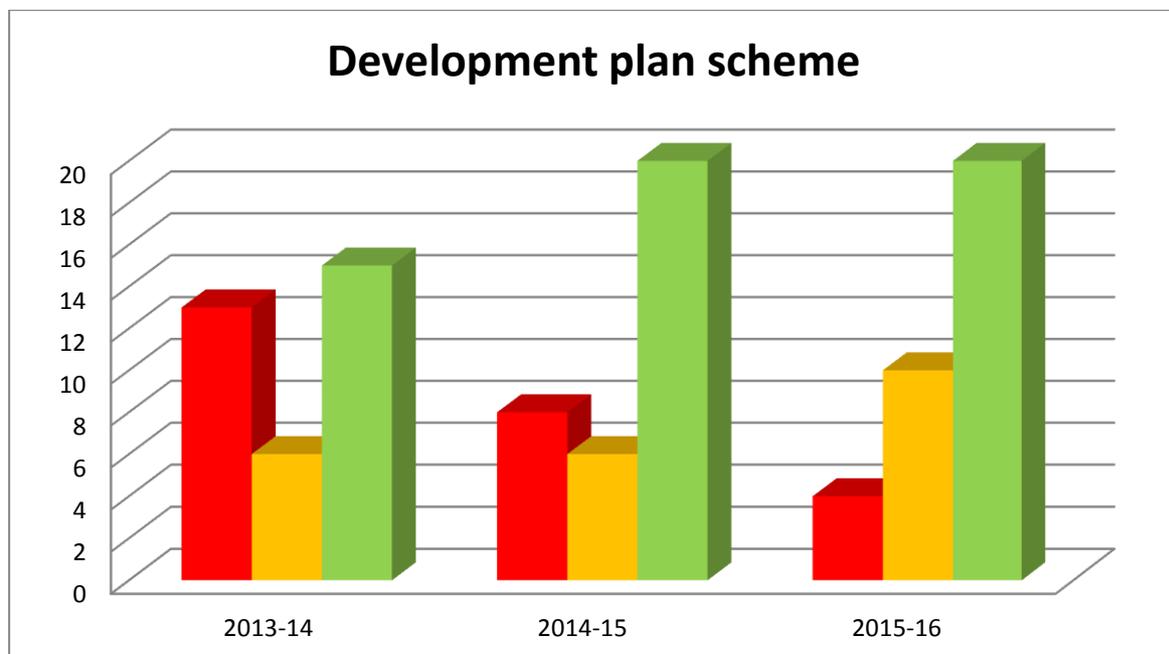


Performance marker 7 indicates that there was an improvement in the number of authorities who have plans less than 5 years old.

**Development Plan Schemes**

**Marker 8 – Development plan scheme – next LDP:**

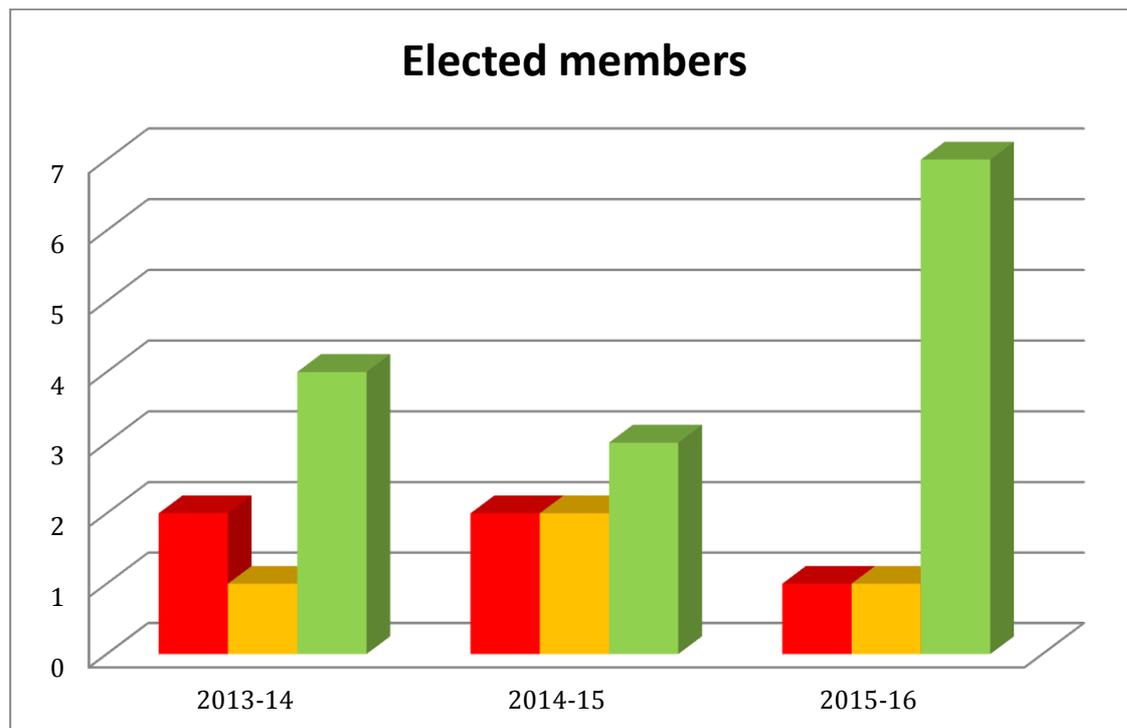
- on course for adoption within 5 years of current plan(s) adoption; and
- project planned and expected to be delivered to planned timescale



Performance marker 8 shows that for 2015/16 there was no increase in the number of LDPs that were on track for adoption within 5 years of the current plan, staying at twenty authorities. There was however, a decrease from 8 to 4 red markers on the previous reporting year.

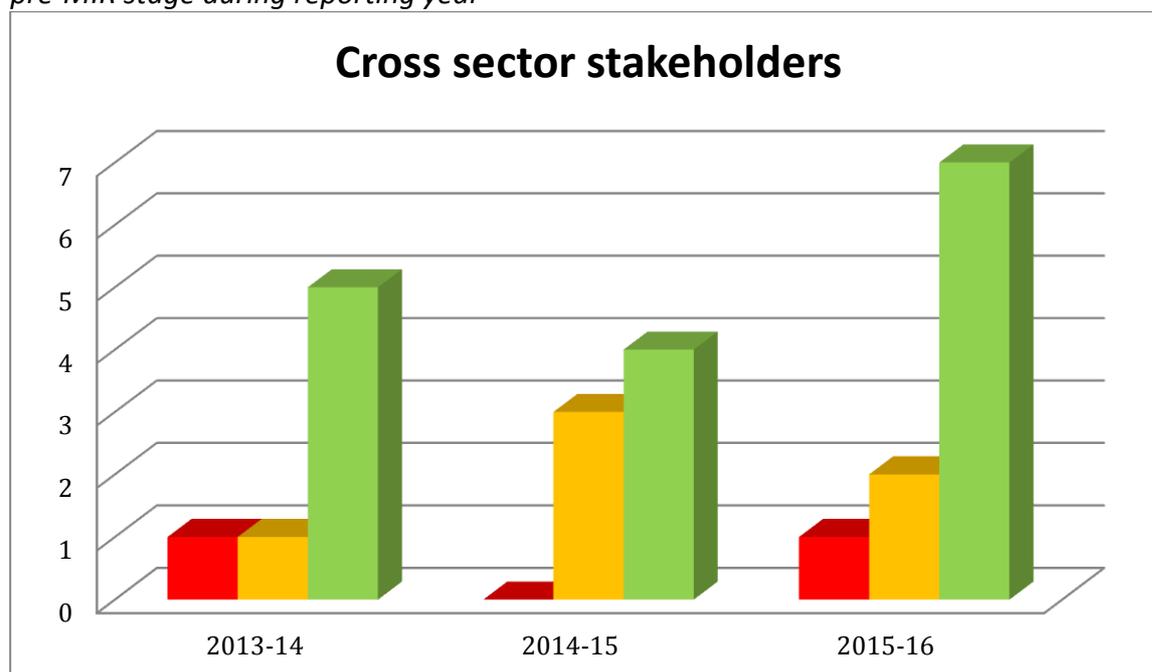
It is crucial that plans are carefully project managed to completion and the focus on delivery is reflected in action programmes and their monitoring. Whilst timescales provide a readily comparable indicator of performance, we will continue to work with planning authorities to improve wider aspects of performance in development planning.

**Marker 9 – Elected members engaged early** (pre-Main Issues Report (MIR)) in development plan preparation – *If plan has been at pre-MIR stage during reporting year:*



Nine authorities reported on elected member engagement in 2015/16. In the previous reporting year elected member engagement was quite poorly evidenced, however this year seven of the nine authorities who reported on this marker received a green. One authority received a red marking and, although they may have had strong stakeholder engagement, this was not evidenced in the report.

**Marker 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**



2015/16 saw 10 authorities report on cross stakeholder engagement. Seven of those authorities received a green marking, two received amber markings and one received a red marking. There is a commitment to cross sector stakeholder engagement emphasised in all the green and amber marked reports, some of the reports lacked specific detail of the measures being taken to engage at the pre-MIR stage, accordingly those two authorities were given an amber marking. In one of the reports there was no detail of the measures being taken to engage at the pre-MIR stage, accordingly that one authority was given a red marking.

### Housing Land

In terms of having a five year effective housing land supply only 3 authorities failed to provide data in this reporting year. The effective housing land supply in Scotland for the reporting year 2015/16 totaled 122,610 units<sup>1</sup>.

In 2015/16, planning authorities made decisions on 105 major and 5,616 local housing applications.

Last year we changed the way housing land was recorded so we are able to make a comparison between the last two reporting years for the number of housing approvals granted during the reporting period and the number of housing completions that have been recorded over the past 5 years.

Housing approvals granted have risen between 2014/15 and 2015/16 but the number of completions over the past 5 years has fallen when looking 5 years back from 2015/16

<sup>1</sup> Figures taken from information compiled by Heads of Planning Scotland

compared to 2014/15.

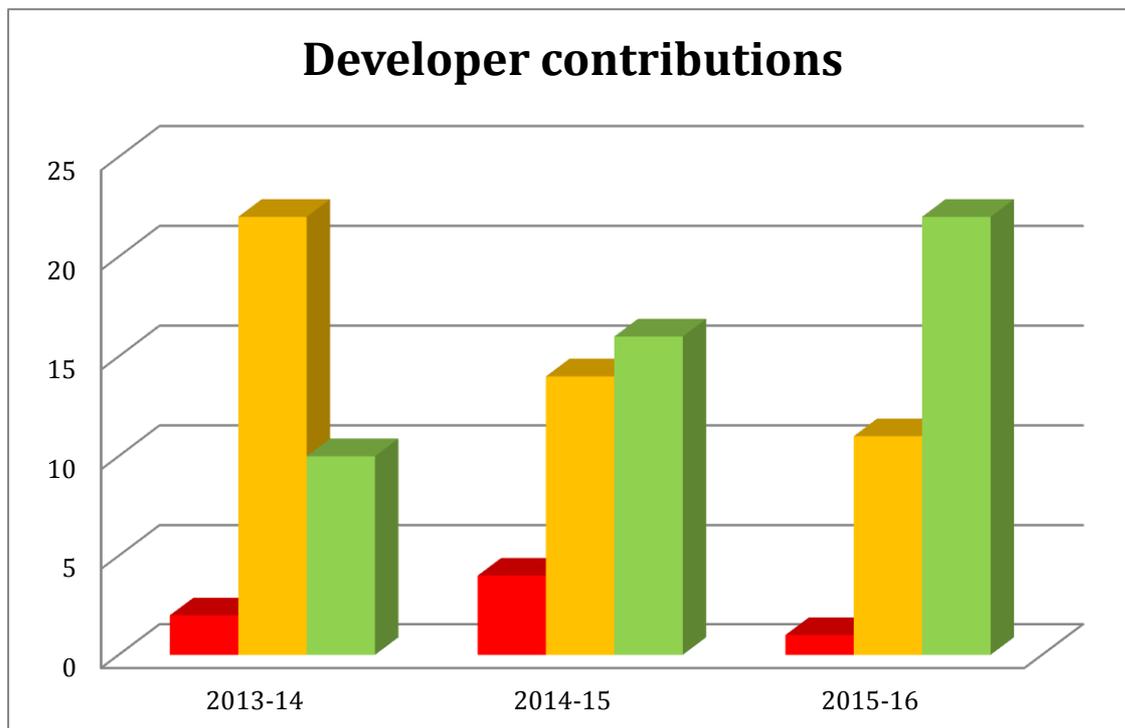
### Employment Land

This year the uptake of employment land has decreased from 207.47ha down to 202.51ha in 2015/16. Five authorities had no uptake at all and five didn't provide any information.

### Developer Contributions

**Marker 15 – Developer contributions:** clear and proportionate expectations

- set out in development plan (and/or emerging plan); and
- in pre-application discussions

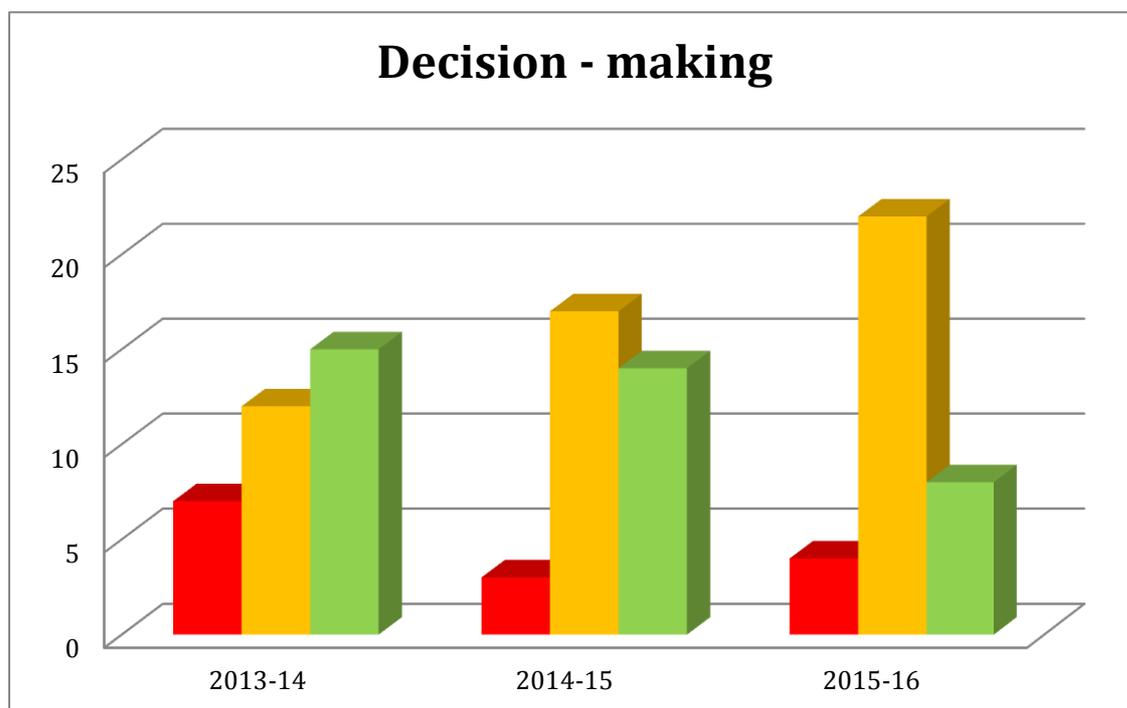


There were improvements with all markers for development contributions in 2015/16. Red markings reduced from 4 to 1, amber markings reduced from 14 to 12 and green markings increased from 16 to 21 from the previous reporting year. The red marking was awarded as although the authority in question had consulted on their developer contributions supplementary guidance, it was not clear what policies the authority had in place or how they were addressed through pre-application discussions.

The key issue in preventing authorities moving from an amber marking to a green marking is authorities not considering developer contributions during the pre-application phase and it not being made clear how requests are proportionate.

Development Management

**Marker 1 – Decision-making:** continuous reduction of average timescales for all development categories



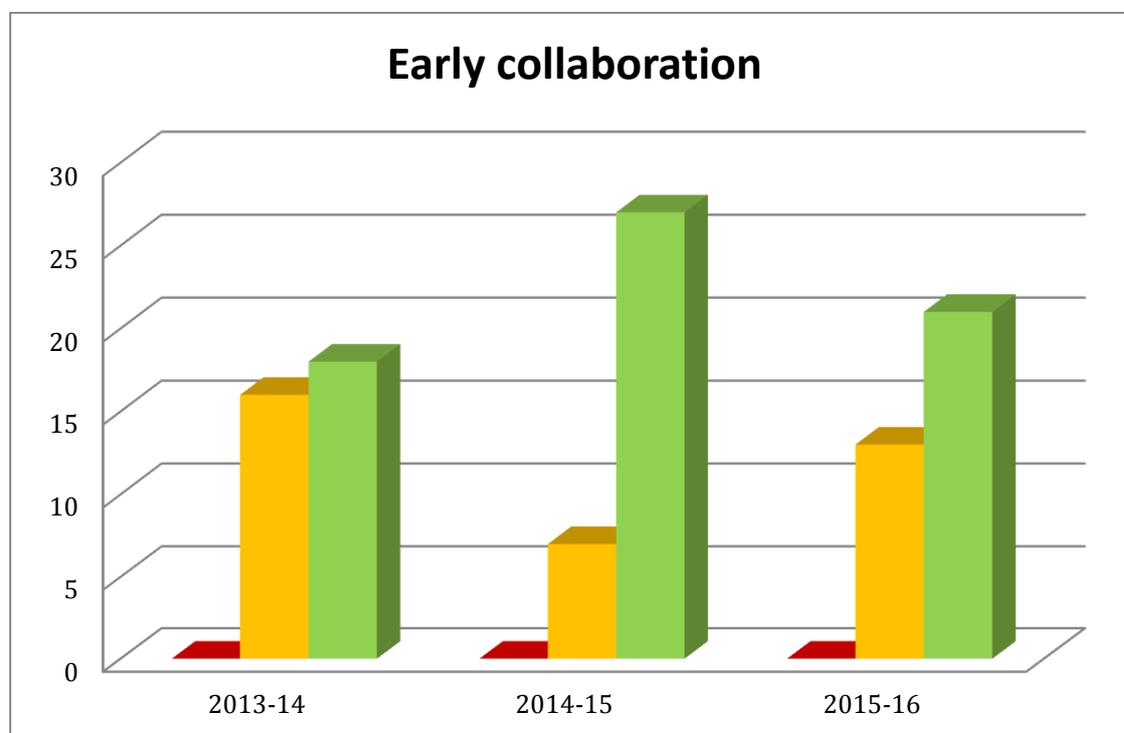
The marker for decision making saw decline in performance for 2015/16. Four authorities received a red marker compared to three the previous year. Authorities with amber markers also increased from seventeen to twenty three and there was a reduction in the number of authorities receiving a green marker. Numbers fell from 14 to 7 between 2014/15 and 2015/16. In almost all of the amber markers performance was still above the national average, but the marker is based on continuous improvement, with many experiencing increased times for decision-making.

Timescales for decision making continue to vary across the country and the table below illustrates that once again major applications continue to impact timescales the most.

	2015/16		
	Shortest Avg.	Longest Avg.	Scotland Avg.
<b>Householder</b>	4.7	10.8	7.5
<b>Local (non-HH)</b>	5.8	25.2	12.3
<b>Major</b>	11.9	128	37.7

**Marker 3 - Early collaboration** with applicants and consultees

- availability and promotion of pre-application discussions for all prospective applications; and
- clear and proportionate requests for supporting information

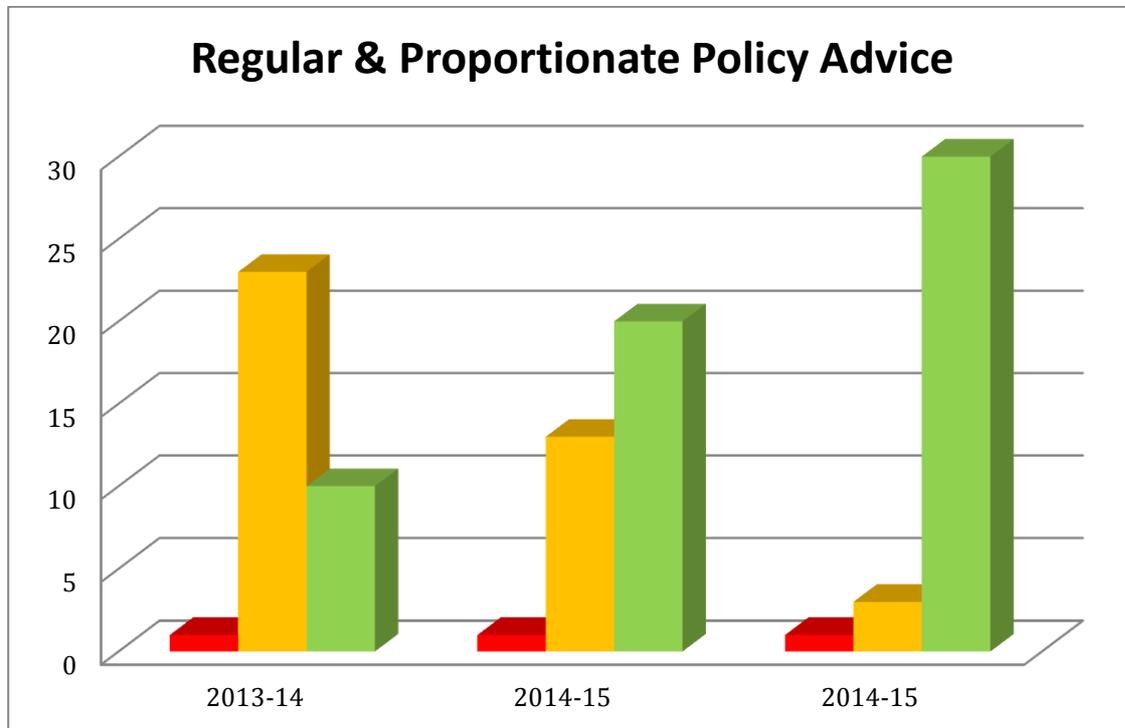


The statistics provided within the National Headline Indicators show that on average 36% of applications are subject to pre-application discussions. This is up 4% on the previous reporting year.

There have been 0 red markings in the last three reporting years, however, we have seen a decline in performance between 2014/15 and 2015/16. The green markings decreased from 27 to 21 whilst the amber markings increased from 7 to 13. Nine authorities changed from a green to amber marking, three changed from amber to green and 4 stayed amber. The decrease is down to authorities failing to set out clearly how they have engaged early in the process and how requests for supporting information are clear and proportionate.

**Marker 11 – Regular and proportionate policy advice produced on:**

- Information required to support applications, and
- Expected developer contributions



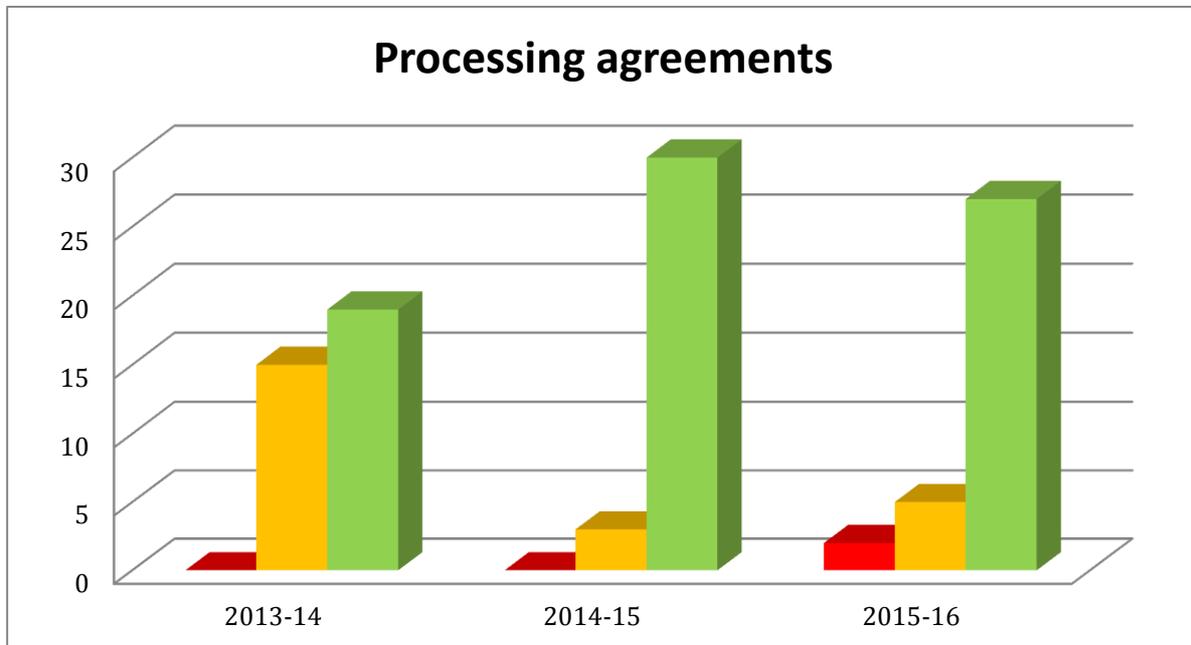
There has been a significant rise in authorities receiving a green marker, increasing from 20 to 30 from the previous reporting year. Amber markers have significantly reduced from 13 to 3 and red markers have stayed the same at 1. Evidence provided within this marker ranged from extensive guidance, policy advice, case studies and in one authorities case, workshops for prolific agents to minimise mistakes. Many authorities are setting out in the LDP action programme what supporting information is required for specific sites allocated for development. Validation checklists and pre-application forums between authorities, developers and consultees are being utilised to ensure that the information relevant to the application is identified and requested at an early stage.

In terms of developer contributions, authorities provided evidence of wide ranging policies and guidance on these. Much of this is set out in Supplementary Guidance, while some is still being developed and consulted on. There are signs that authorities are adopting a more flexible policy on developer contributions.

Processing Agreements

Marker 2 – Processing agreements:

- offer to all prospective applicants for major development planning applications; and
- availability publicised on website

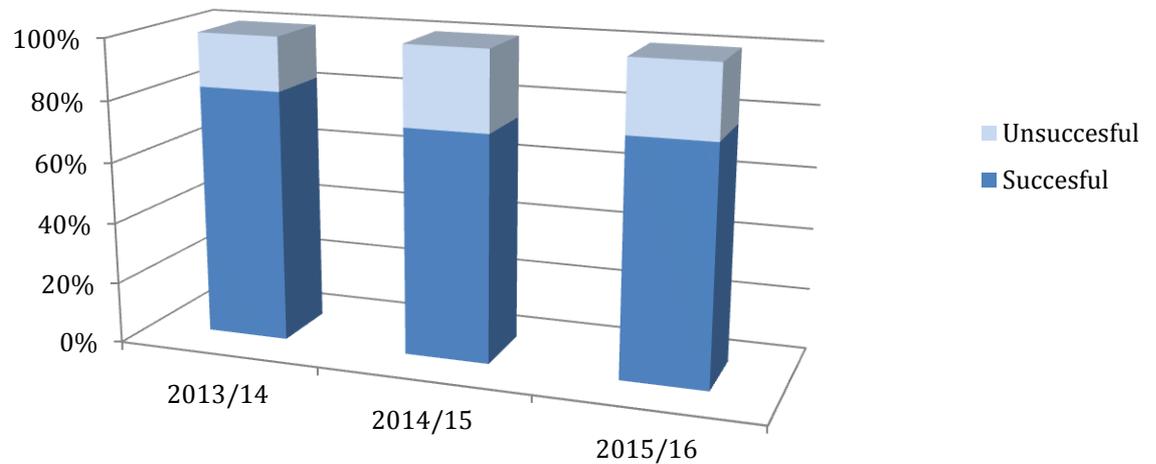


We saw significant improvement in the use of processing agreements between 2013/14 and 2014/15 but there has been a slight downturn between 2014/15 and 2015/16. Red markings increased from 0 to 2, amber markings increased from 3 to 5 and green markings decreased from 31 to 27. It is disappointing that upward trend of authorities using processing agreements was not continued in this reporting period.

During the reporting year twenty six of the thirty four authorities have decided an application that was subject to a processing agreement.

24% of all major applications are subject to a processing agreement. This is up 7% from the previous reporting year.

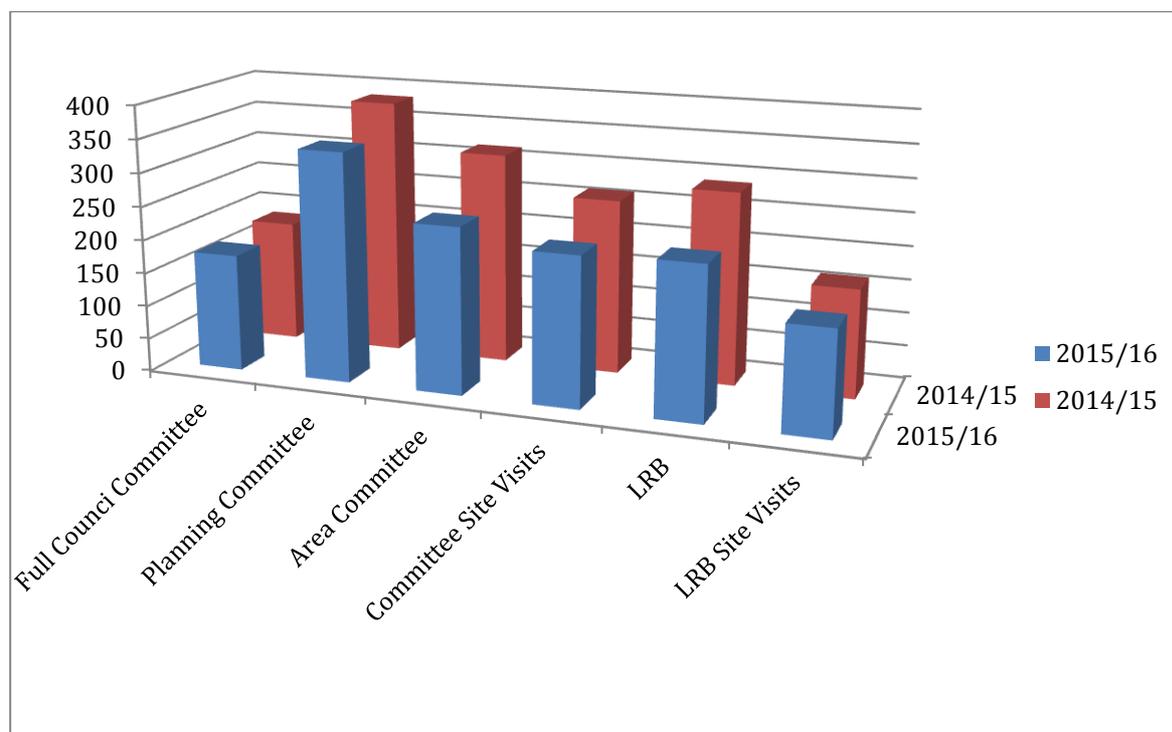
## Processing Agreements: Level of Success in meeting agreed timescales



Currently 76.6% of processing agreements meet the timescales set out. Major applications fell below this with 68.7%, whilst local applications were higher at 78.8%. Six of the 26 authorities who had decided applications subject to a processing agreement met the timescales for all the agreements they had entered, whilst seven authorities recorded that none of the decisions on the applications with processing agreements they had entered into had been delivered within the timescales set out. It is not clear what the reasons are for this, however, it is important to note that processing agreements require all parties to play their part to ensure delivery within the timescales set out.

## Decision Making Processes

### Committees and Local Review Bodies (LRB)



There were 765 planning related committee meetings held during 2015/16, which is a decrease of 117. Of these 765 meetings, 175 were full council meetings, 342 planning committee meetings and 248 area committee meetings.

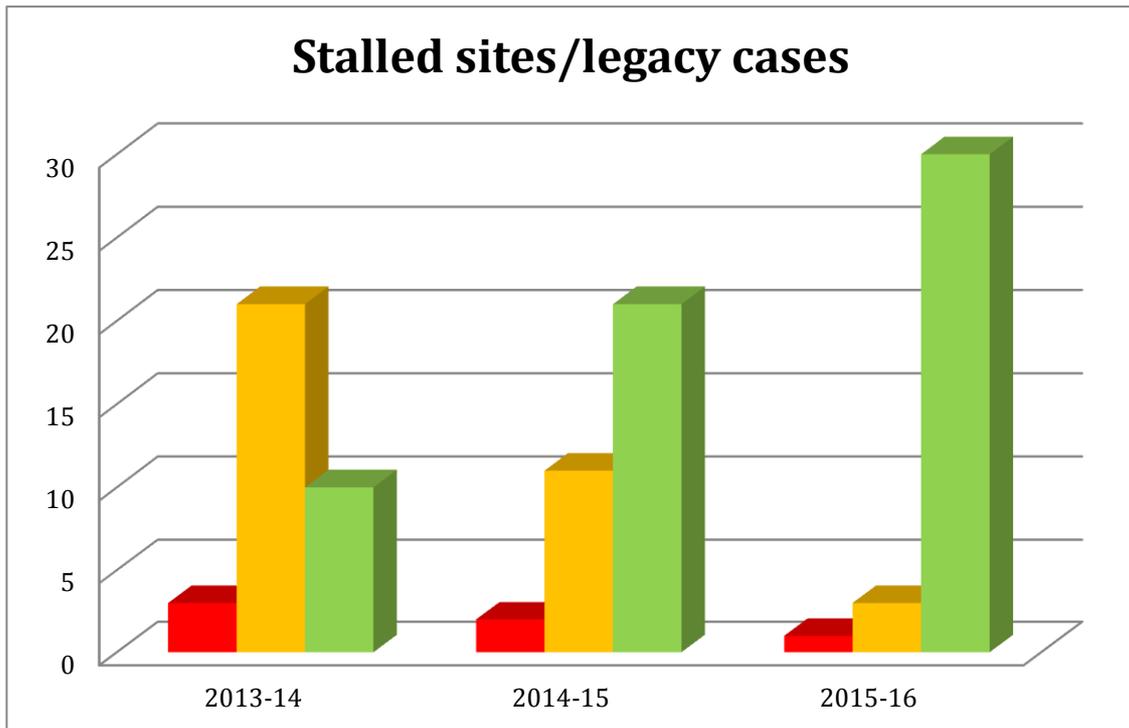
The number of authorities with an area committee has decreased from 9 to 5. As well as the 248 area committee meetings undertaken, 223 site visits were also carried out.

The highest number of committee meetings held, including LRBs, was 176 in one authority, with the lowest being 13 and the average number of committee meetings per authority being 29. This is a slight increase from the 28 reported in 2014/15.

The increase in the delegation rate from 94.5% to 94.9% may account for the reduction in the number of planning committee meetings. In this reporting year 30 authorities provided information on their arrangements for Local Review Bodies and site visits. There was a decrease in the number of authorities reporting site visits. Local Review Bodies convened 227 times in 2015/16, a decrease of 60, and undertook 156 site visits which was a decrease of 6 compared to the previous reporting year.

## Legacy Cases

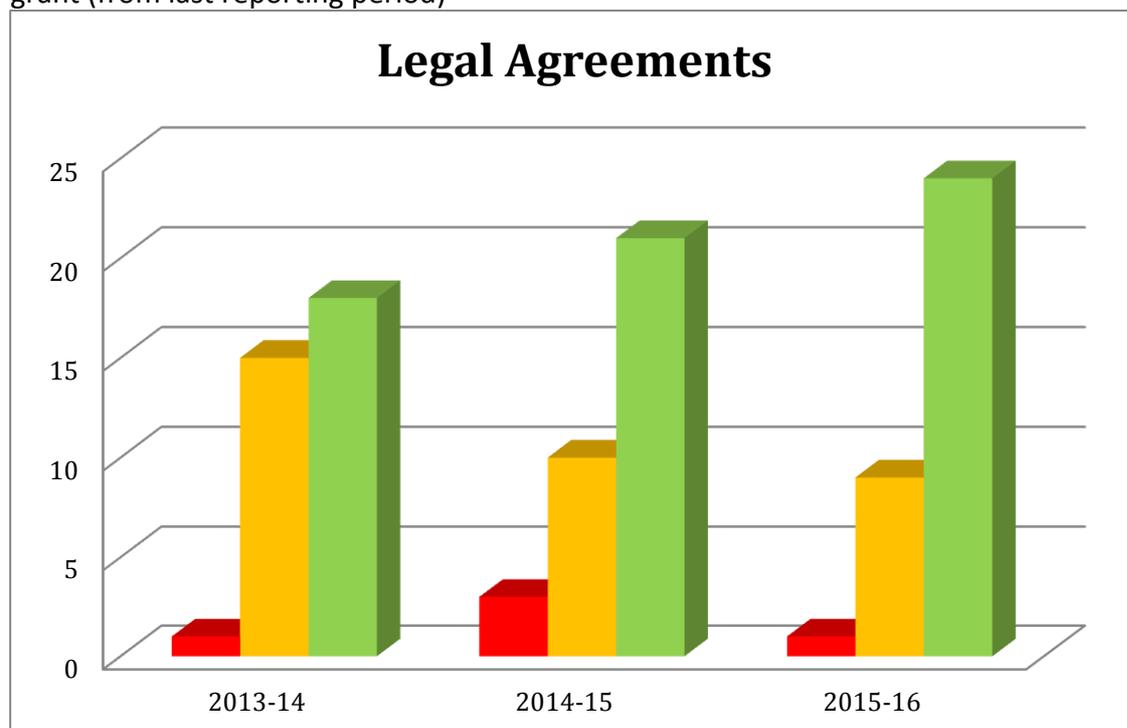
**Marker 14 – Stalled sites / legacy cases:** conclusion or withdrawal of old planning applications and reducing number of live applications more than one year old



We have seen a significant increase in green markings and a significant decrease in amber and red markings from 2014/15. Green markings increased from 21 to 29, amber decreased from 11 to 4 and red decreased from 2 to 1.

#### Legal Agreements

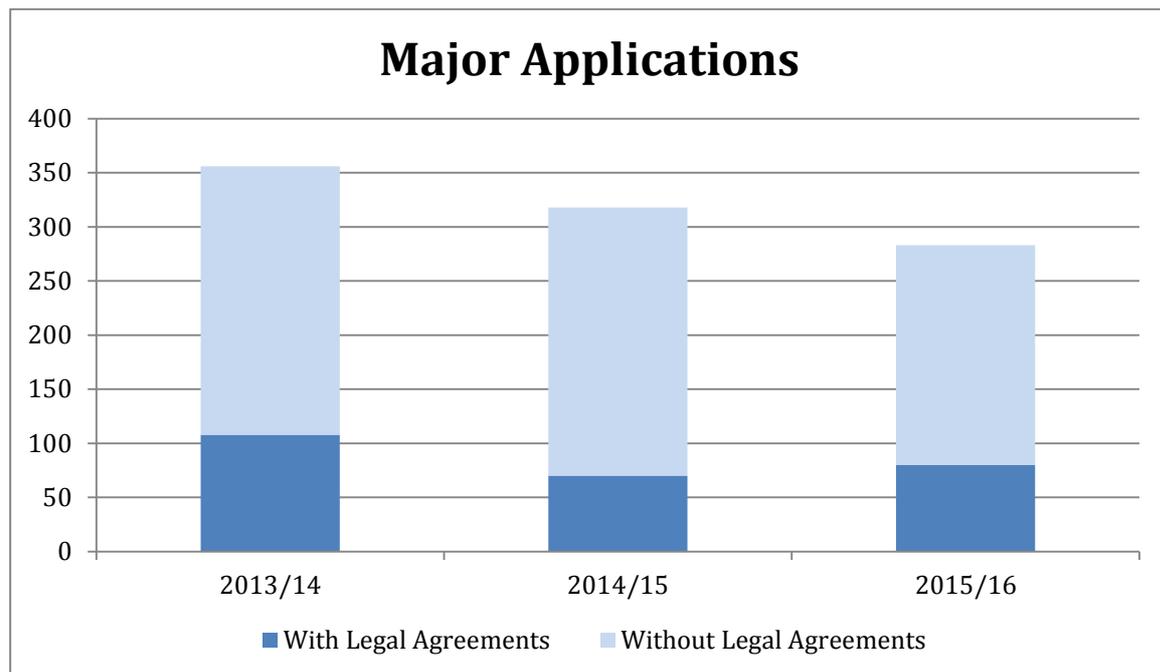
**Marker 4 – Legal agreements:** conclude (or reconsider) applications after resolving to grant permission – reducing number of live applications more than 6 months after resolution to grant (from last reporting period)



This year, major applications with a legal agreement attached took on average 59.9 weeks to see a decision issued, shorter than the 92.8 weeks from last year. The quickest was an average of 9.7 weeks, the longest took an average of 287.1 weeks.

Turning to local applications, the average is 40.7 weeks, shorter than 50.1 weeks from last year. Again the disparity between authorities is clear with the quickest being 3.1 weeks and the slowest taking 134.4 weeks.

This year one authority was given a red marking compared to three in the previous reporting year. Amber markings have reduced from 10 to 9 and green have increased from 21 to 24.

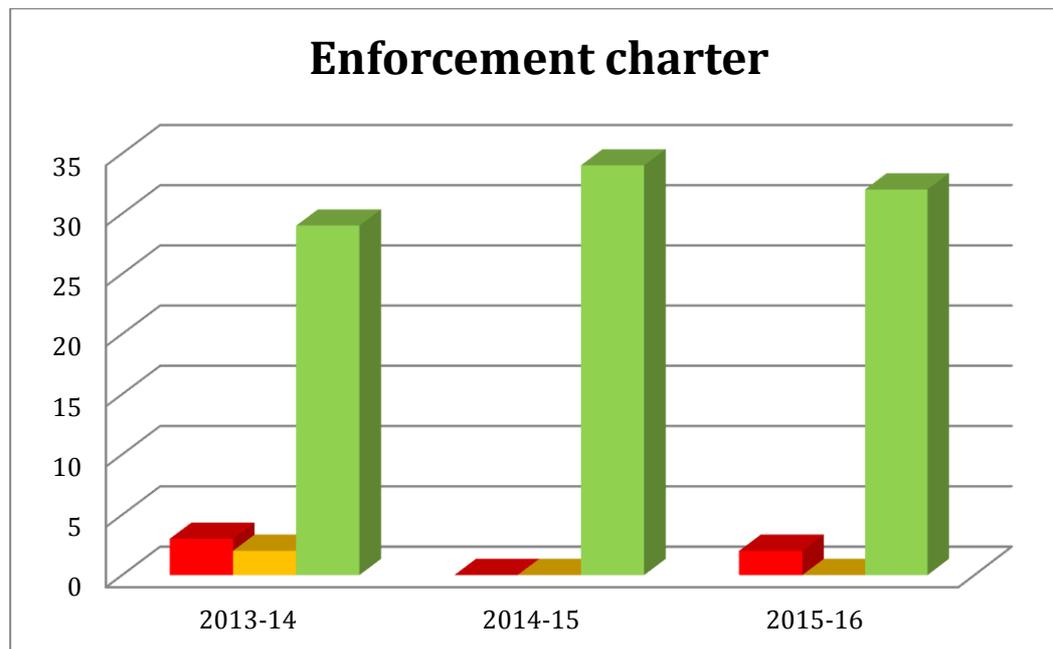


It is clear that a number of authorities are continuing to use conditions where possible so that planning obligations are not required. Looking at the annual statistics we can see that the percentage of major applications decided with a legal agreement attached is continuing to reduce.

Only a very small number of local applications have a legal agreement attached to them, this remains steady at around 1.5% of these applications

Enforcement

Marker 6 – Enforcement charter updated/re-published within last 2 years

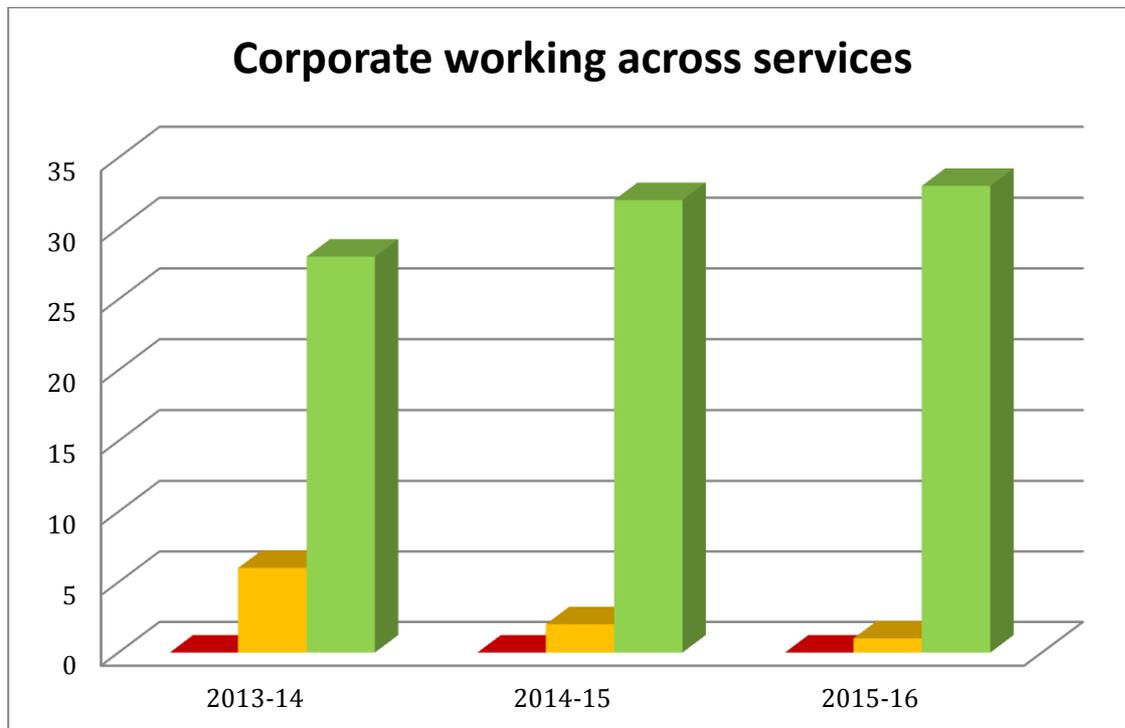


All thirty four authorities could not maintain an up-to-date enforcement charter which was achieved in the previous reporting year. Thirty two authorities received a green marking with two authorities that previously received a green marking, receiving a red marking for 2015/16.

5655 breaches were identified which is a decrease of 426 from the previous year. Authorities resolved 4867 of the breaches identified in reporting year, which was an increase of 406 cases overall from 2014/15. This demonstrates the increasing effort made by authorities to resolve any enforcement issues before formal enforcement action is taken.

Corporate Working

**Marker 12 – Corporate working across services** to improve outputs and services for customer benefit (for example: protocols; joined-up services; single contact arrangements; joint pre-application advice)

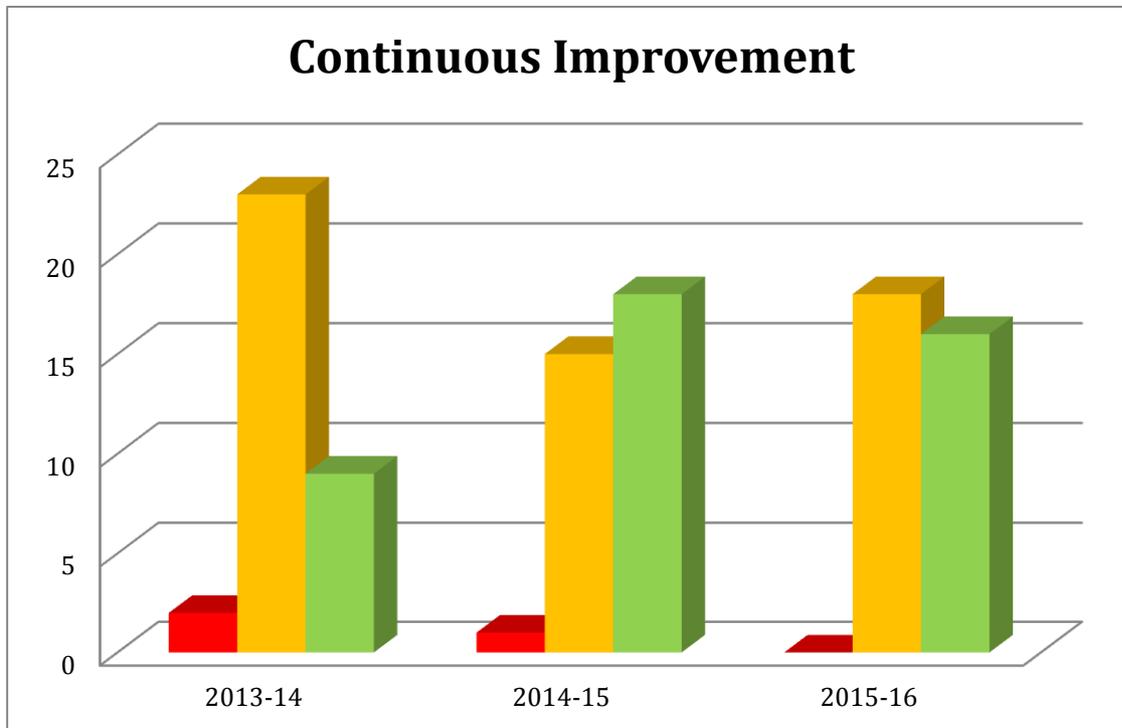


Performance against marker 12 started with a very high number of green markings in 2013/14. Only one authority is without a green marking for which that authority received an amber marking. The authority given the amber marking, had a green marking in the previous reporting year.

Continuous Improvement and Sharing Good Practice

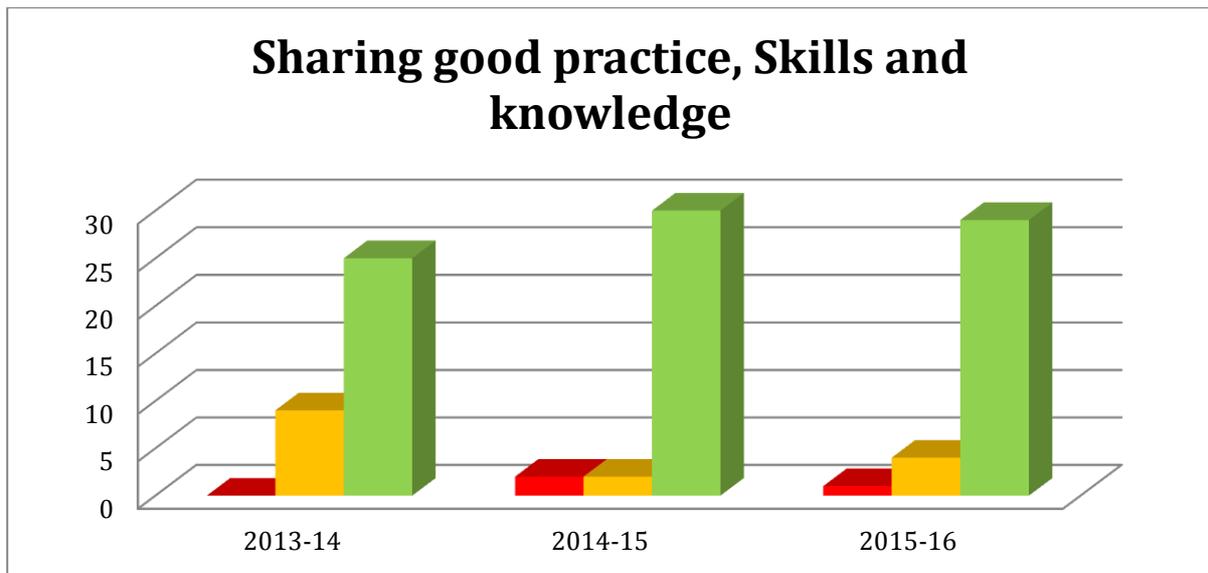
Marker 6 – Continuous Improvement

- progress/improvement in relation to PPF National Headline Indicators (NHIs); and
- progress ambitious and relevant service improvement commitments identified through PPF report



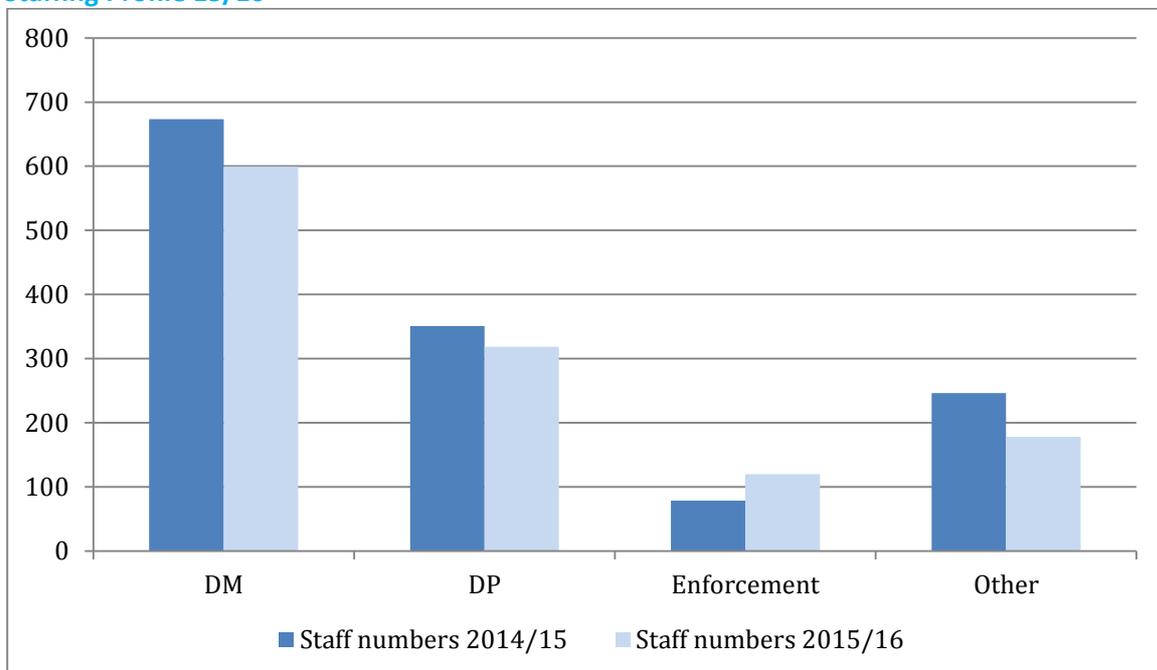
As previously mentioned we have seen an overall improvement in the number of green and amber markings and a reduction in the number of red markings given. There still remains work to be done, but the evidence provided shows that authorities are moving in the right direction and hopefully this will result in an improvement in timescales for deciding applications. This reporting year there were 0 red markings but green markings have dropped from 18 to 16 and amber markings have risen from 15 to 18.

Marker 13 - Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge between authorities



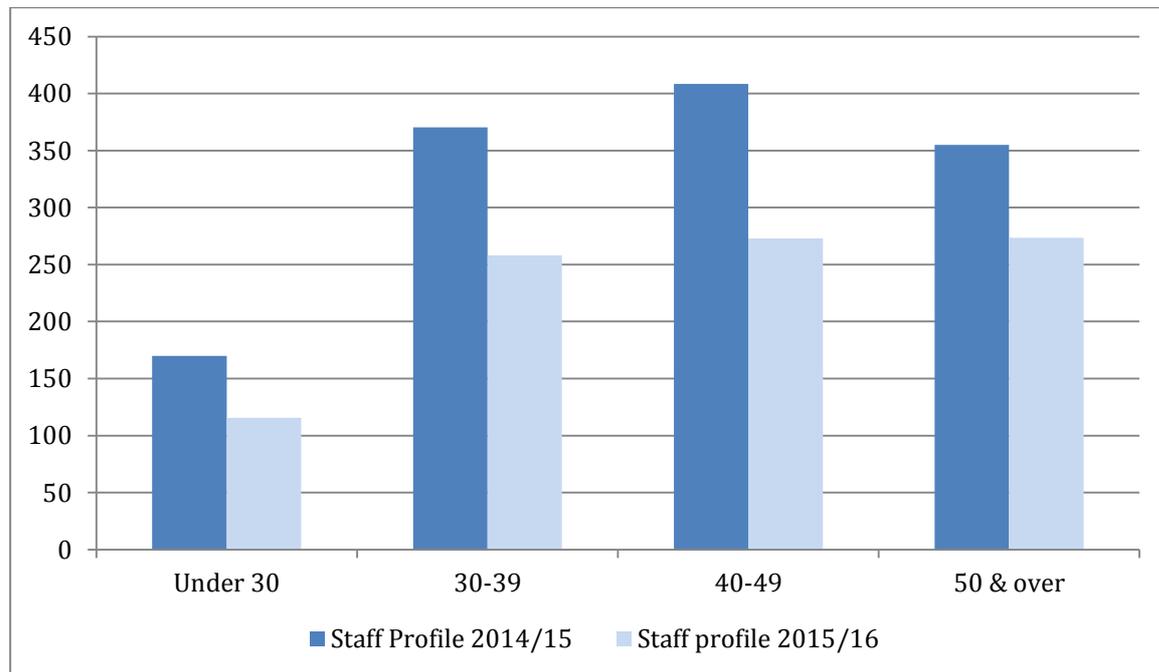
Progress with this marker has declined in terms of the number of green markings from the previous reporting year, but red markings have improved. 2015/16 saw 1 red, 4 amber and 29 green markings awarded. One authority moved from a red marking to green, and two authorities moved from green to amber. The red marking was awarded due to a lack of evidence.

Staffing Profile 15/16



Four authorities did not report on their staff numbers therefore we are unable to draw any comparisons with previous years.

On average, planning authorities allocate almost twice as many people to development management as development planning, 46% and 28% respectively. 10% of staff members are allocated to enforcement and 16% in the “other” category.



With regards to age profile of staff in planning authorities we have seen a decrease in the numbers of staff in all age categories compared to the previous reporting year.

**Conclusion**

We are encouraged to see the improvement in performance reporting over the past 3 years. We have seen the number of red markings decrease by 45%, the number of amber markings also decrease by 40% and the number of green markings awarded increase by 41%. In real terms, reds have decreased from 49 to 27, amber from 173 to 104 and greens increased from 234 to 330.

## Strategic Development Plan Authorities – Annual Report

This is the third Annual Report of the Strategic Development Plan Authorities (SDPAs) Planning Performance Framework (PPF) reports which covered the period April 2015 to March 2016

All 4 SDPAs provided reports. The SDPAs are:

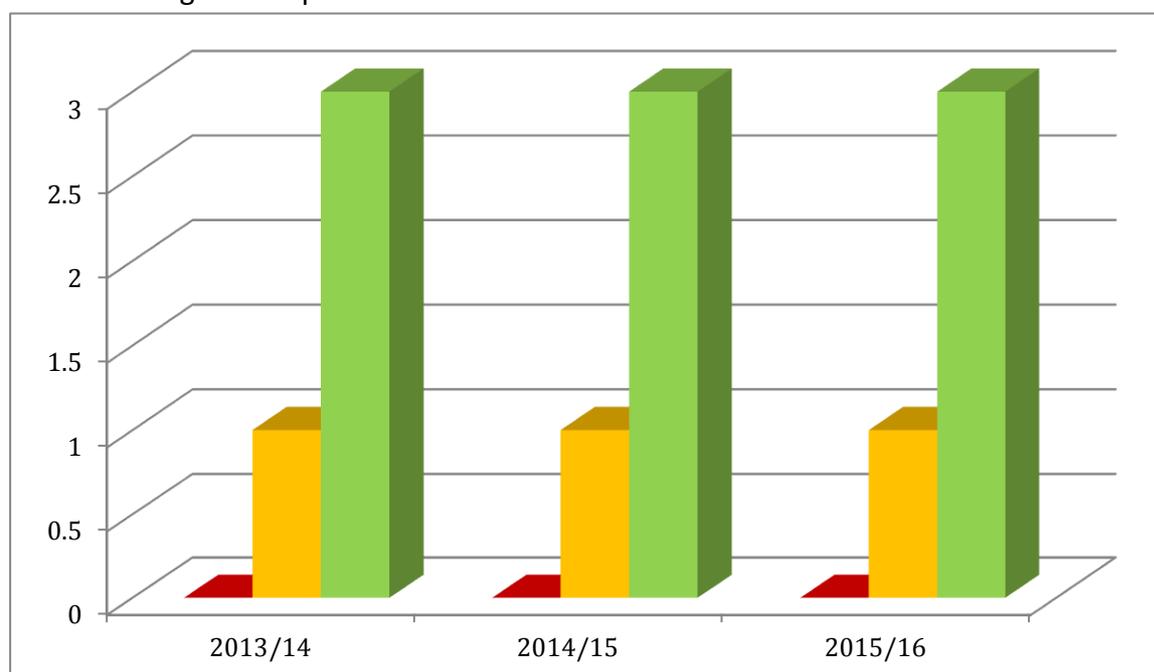
- Aberdeen City & Shire
- Glasgow and Clyde Valley SDPA (now ClydePlan)
- SESplan
- Tayplan

This report provides a summary of the 6 performance markers which are applicable to the SDPAs. Commentary is provided on the themes emerging and the aspects that should be addressed in future reports. As with the Local Authorities the SDPAs are to review each other's plans to share learning and provide feedback on the aspects of the reports not covered by the key markers.

### Continuous Improvement

#### Marker 6 - Continuous improvement:

- progress/improvement in relation to PPF National Headline Indicators; and
- progress ambitious and relevant service improvement commitments identified through PPF report

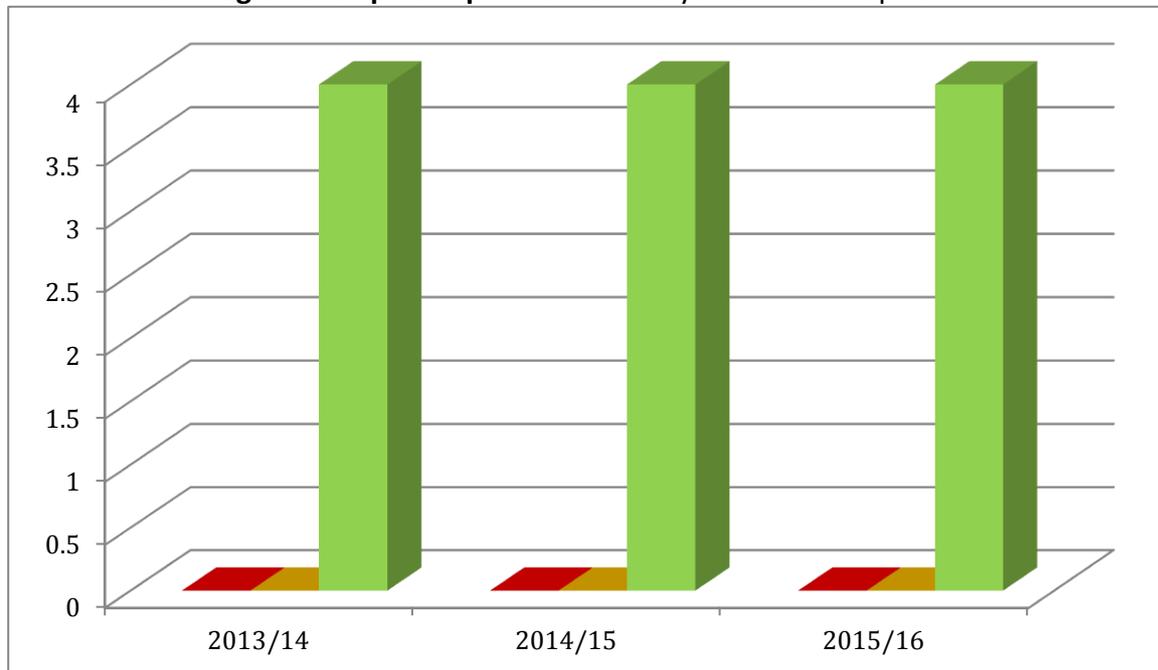


This year the strategic development planning authorities have retained the markings they were given for continuous improvement in 2013/14 and 2014/15. For this marker the SDPAs are assessed on whether they have an up-to-date SDP, whether their development plan

scheme is on course to deliver a replacement plan within 5 years and the progress they have made with their service improvement plan and forthcoming commitments.

### Strategic Development Plan

#### Marker 7 - Strategic development plan less than 5 years since adoption

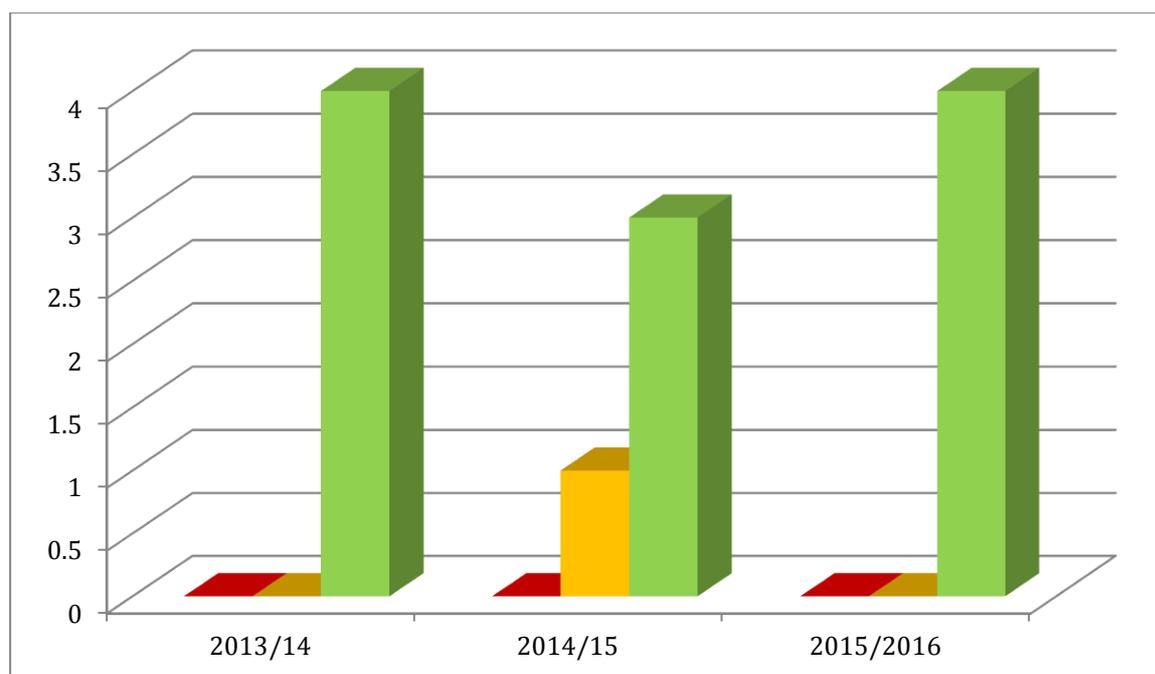


The table above shows that all SDPs have been up-to-date over the last 3 years. 2012/13 when reporting began provided similar results as the last 3 reporting years.

### Development Plan Scheme

#### Marker 8 - Development plan scheme – next LDP:

- on course for adoption within 5 years of current plan(s) adoption; and
- project planned and expected to be delivered to planned timescale



Performance on development plan schemes has also remained positive over the past 3 years of PPF reporting. We have seen one SDPA slip from a green to an amber marking due to a lack of description of how the plan will be project planned to adoption in the previous reporting year. 2015/16 saw all 4 SDP's achieve a green marker.

### Pre-MIR Engagement

**Marker 9 - Elected members engaged early** (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation – *if plan has been at pre-MIR stage during reporting year*

One SDP reported for this marker achieving a green marking.

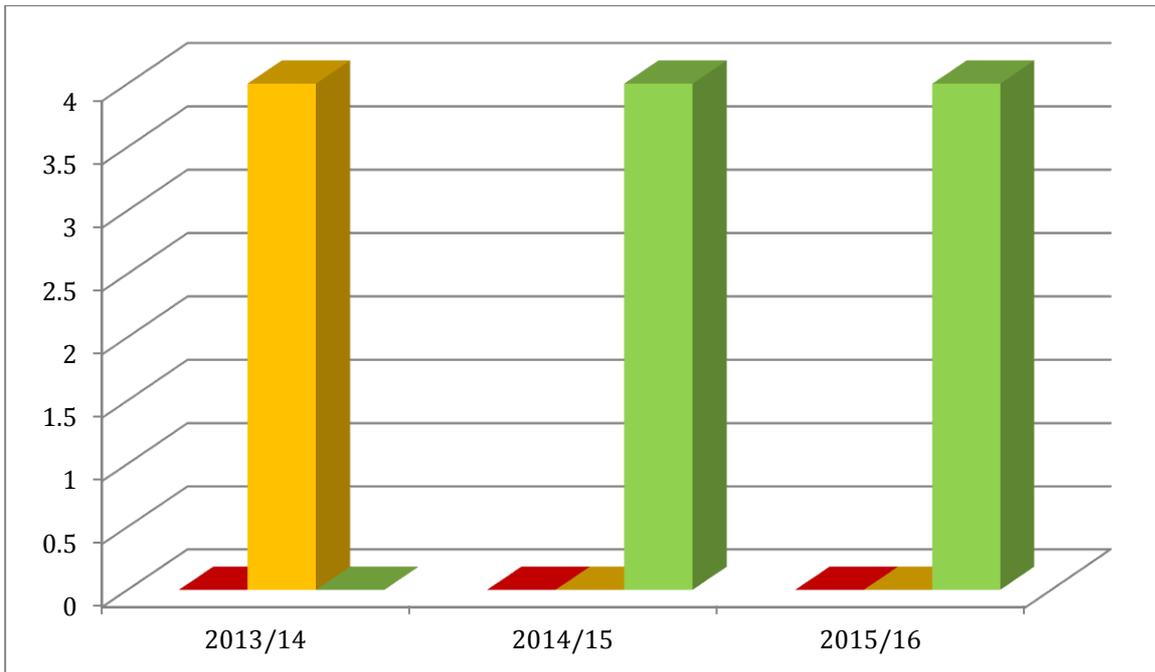
**Marker 10 - Cross sector stakeholders\*** engaged early (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation – *if plan has been at pre-MIR stage during reporting year*

*\*including industry, agencies and Scottish Government*

Again only one SDP reported for this marker, again achieving a green marking. In the two previous reporting years only two SDPAs were at a stage in their plan preparation which meant they were assessed against these markers. In the previous reporting year one achieved an amber marking and the other one received a green marking.

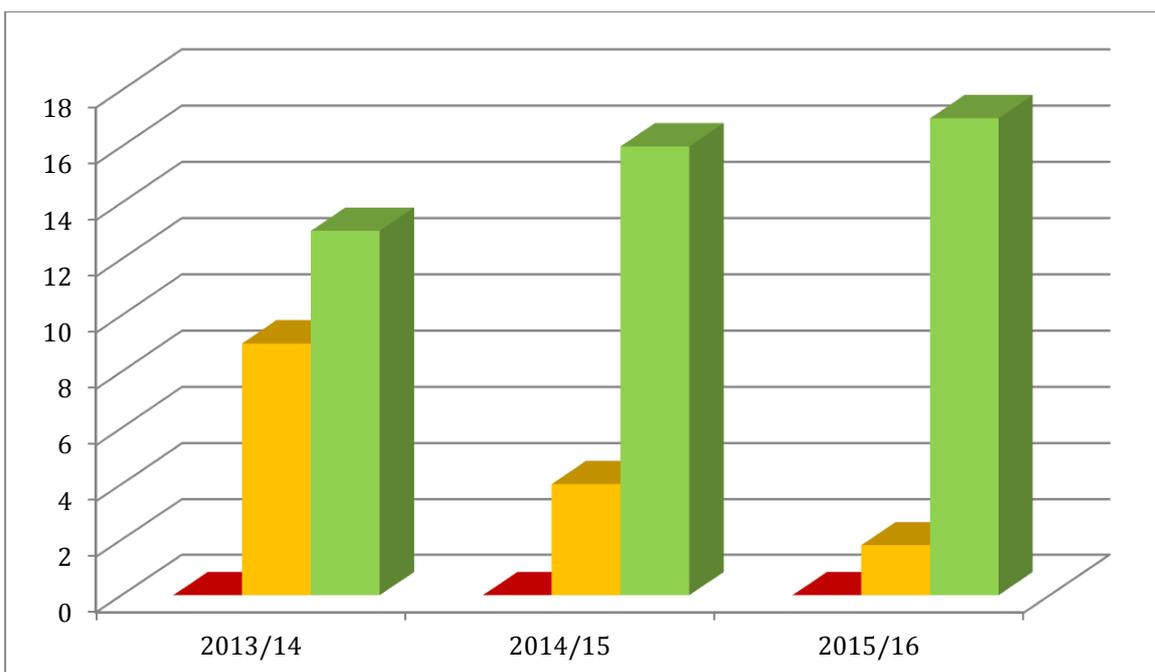
Sharing Good Practice, Skills and Knowledge

**Marker 13 - Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge between authorities**



There has been improved performance over the last 3 years of PPF reporting and for the second year in a row all authorities have received a green marking for sharing good practice. SDPAs have really embraced a culture of sharing best practice through benchmarking and working with their constituent authorities. Working with Chambers of Commerce, Community Planning Partnerships and other SDP's were also evidenced.

**Overall RAG Markings for SDPAs - 2013/14 -2015/16**



We are really pleased to see SDPAs embracing a culture of continuous improvement over the previous 3 PPF reporting periods. There have been no red markings given throughout the period with the number of amber markings decreasing and green markings increasing.

 [@ScotGovPlanning](https://twitter.com/ScotGovPlanning)

 [youtube.com/channel/UCFXVlacEAuv\\_YMbbaekmoTQ](https://youtube.com/channel/UCFXVlacEAuv_YMbbaekmoTQ)

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