

Planning Performance

Annual Report

2014/2015

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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 fourth year of submission (third year of the key markers) and once again we have produced additional appendices to this report showing SDPA (appendix 1) and Key Agency (appendix 2) performance – these have been kept separate as some of the performance markers do not cover areas within their remit. **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 2014 to 31 March 2015 and a 'red, amber, green' (RAG) rating against the 15 Performance Markers was provided to authorities in October 2015. For the purpose of the reports the following criteria is applied to each rating:

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

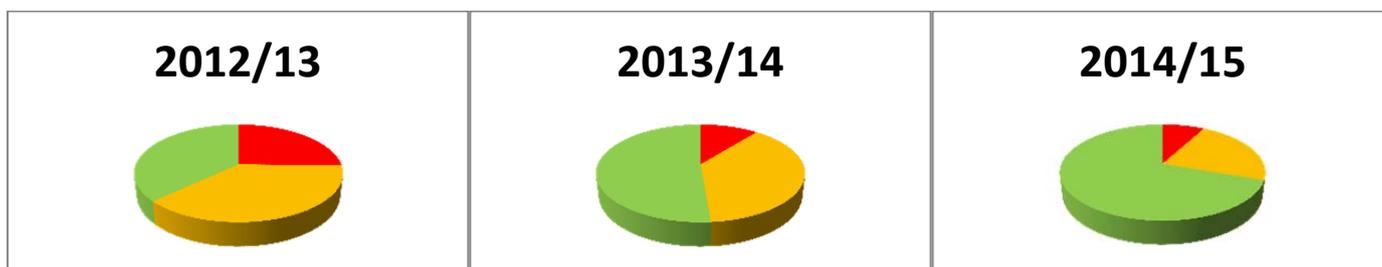
AMBER - An amber marking shows that some evidence has been provided and that work is ongoing in the area, with further improvements needed; or that there is a commitment to move this work forward.

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 year the annual report once again focusses closely on how authorities performed against the performance markers agreed by the High Level Group on Planning Performance. This is the third year that authorities have been assessed against these and as the charts below show there has been significant progress and improvement made by authorities.

All RAG markings per year



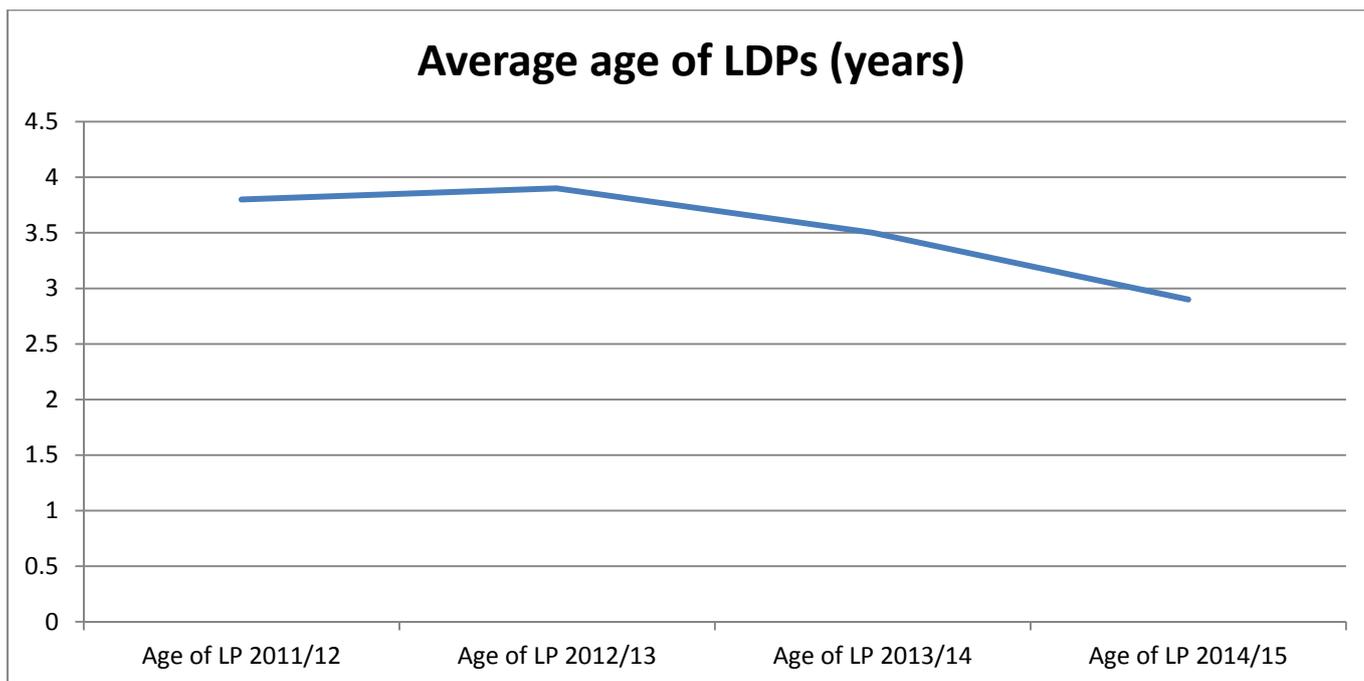
The assessment of authorities by the Scottish Government was altered this year. The feedback they received was based solely on the key markers.

Heads of Planning Scotland (HOPS) agreed to adopt a new process for the review of the 2014/15 Planning Performance Framework (PPFs) reports by using its benchmarking arrangements to undertake peer reviews and encourage planning authorities to share good practice. Meetings of all four benchmarking groups were completed in early October and most authorities have followed up with more detailed paired discussions. Initial results show that this has been a very beneficial process with good discussion of opportunities to share and challenge improvement plans. Additionally, it has provided a review of the effectiveness of the current PPF methodology and the HOPS Executive will reflect on this in preparing guidance for the reporting of 2015/16 performance.

Development Planning

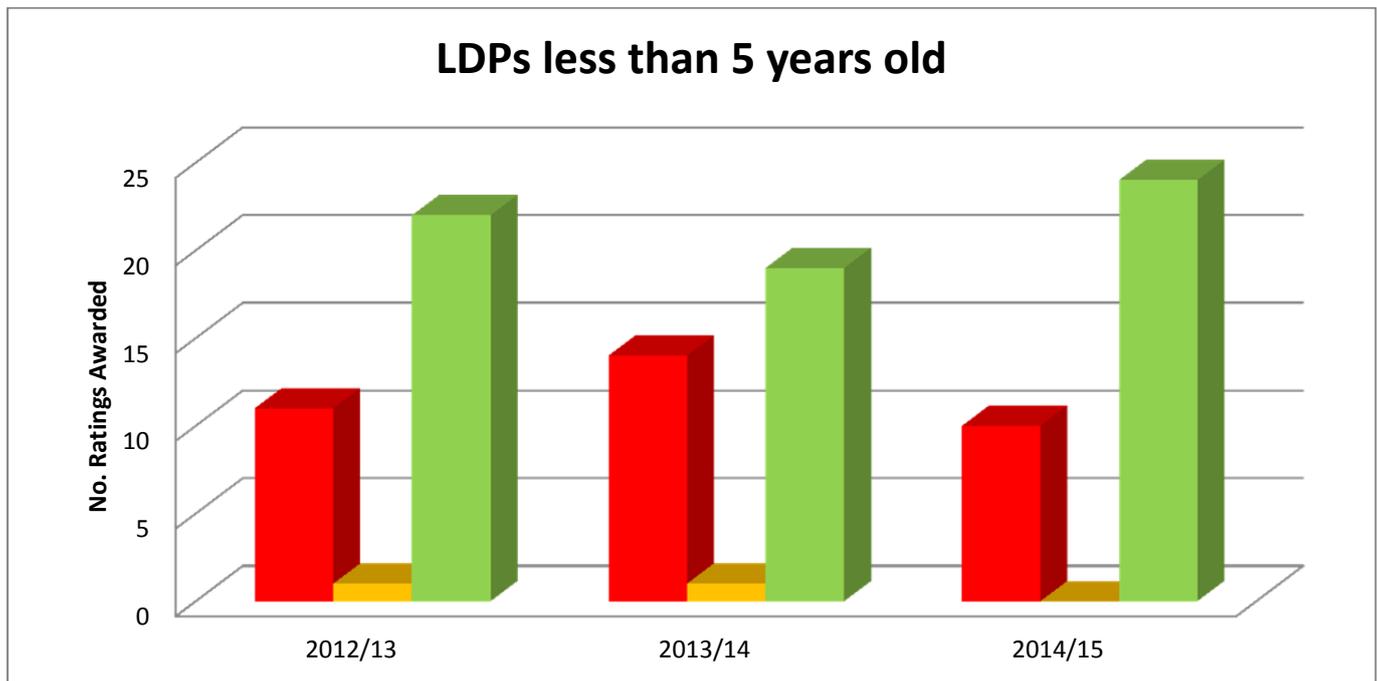
The Scottish planning system aspires to be a plan-led system with importance placed upon having up to date local development plans. They also need to be succinct, map based and focussed on delivery. They must also relate to the people and places they cover and enable the right development in the right place. In 2014/15, the average age of local development plans (LDPs) is 2.9 years old, a reduction from last year's 3.5 years, with the oldest LDP at 7 years. In this reporting year 24 LDPs were less than 5 years old since adoption, an increase of 5 since last year. Ten adopted LDPs are over 5 years old. This is an decrease of four compared to the previous reporting year 2013/14.

Age of Local Development Plans as at 31 March 2015



Performance Marker 7, indicates that there was a slight increase in the number of authorities who have an out-of-date plan within this reporting period and a decrease in authorities who have plans less than 5 years old.

Marker 7 - Local development plan less than 5 years since adoption



Development Plan Schemes

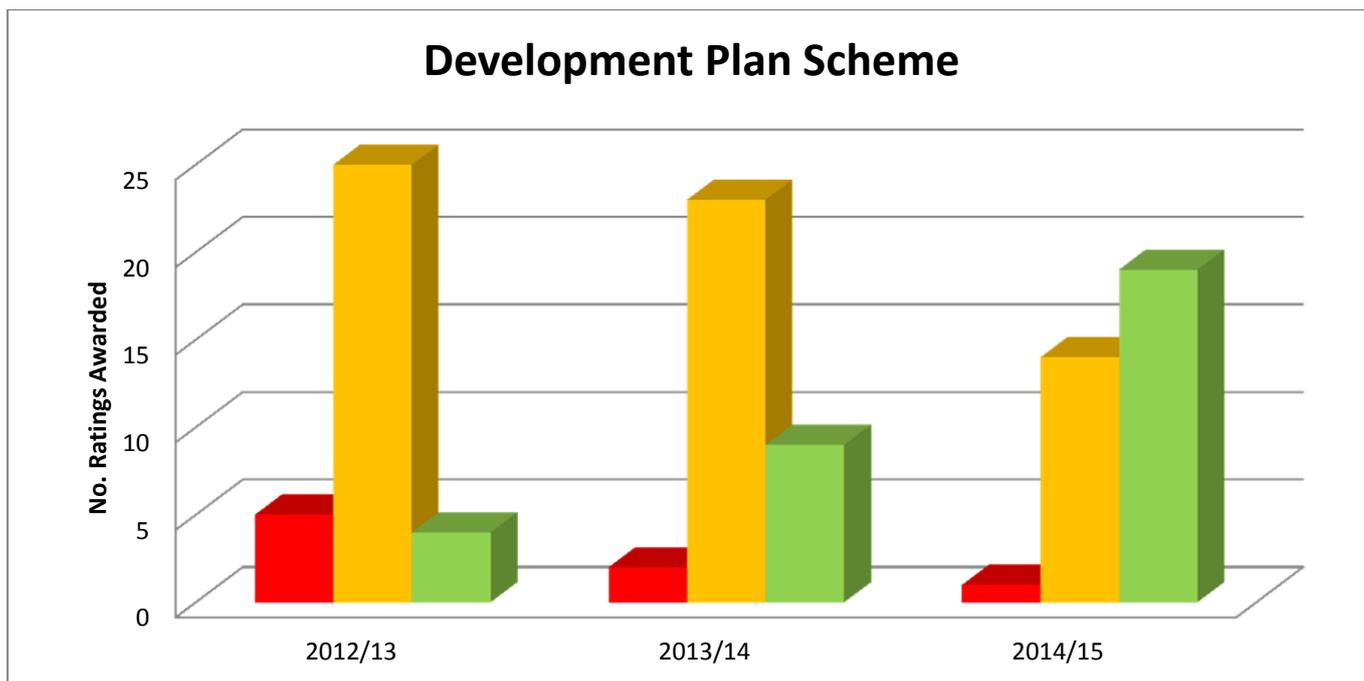
Development Plan Schemes are vital to ensure that the development plan process is project managed, providing stakeholders with a clear understanding of how the Development Plan is expected to progress. Strong and effective project management is crucial to maintaining an up-to-date development plan.

This year saw an encouraging increase in the number of LDPs that were on track for adoption within 5 years of the current plan, increasing from 15 authorities last year to 20 authorities this 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 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



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*

As expected, local authorities are at differing stages with their LDP replacement process, whilst some are almost at adoption, others are calling for sites or at their main issues report stage. It can therefore be quite difficult to draw any meaningful Scotland wide conclusions from the markers on engagement with elected members and stakeholders.

Only seven authorities reported on elected member engagement this year. Last year elected member engagement was quite poorly evidenced and again this year only three of the seven authorities who reported on this marker received a green. Authorities who received a red marking may have had strong stakeholder engagement but this was not evidenced in the report. It would be beneficial that future PPF's detail engagement with elected members to ensure key performance markers can be accurately reflected.

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)*

This year saw seven authorities report on cross sector stakeholder engagement, with four receiving a green marking. Although it is noted that there is a commitment to cross sector stakeholder engagement emphasised in all of the reports, some reports lacked specific detail of the measures being taken to engage at the pre-MIR stage, accordingly those three authorities received amber markings. For future reports the need to evidence and explain this key marker more fully is crucial.

Housing Land

In previous reports we have provided information on the effective housing land available across Scotland and the number of homes this could potentially provide. There were however, concerns about how robust the data provided in the reports was so HOPS Development Planning sub-group was tasked to come up with a clearer definition of effective housing land that was agreed with the industry. Authorities were asked to provide the information in their PPFs. However the information provided is not comparable due to a large number of authorities using the old template. We hope to be able to report on this more robustly next year.

In terms of a 5 year effective housing land supply, 25 authorities state within their reports that they have this. Seven authorities have less than 5 years, whilst two authorities supplied no information.

In 2014/15, planning authorities made decisions on 125 major and 5,836 local housing applications. This equated to consents for 40,000 residential units across Scotland, up by 6,000 on last year's figures.

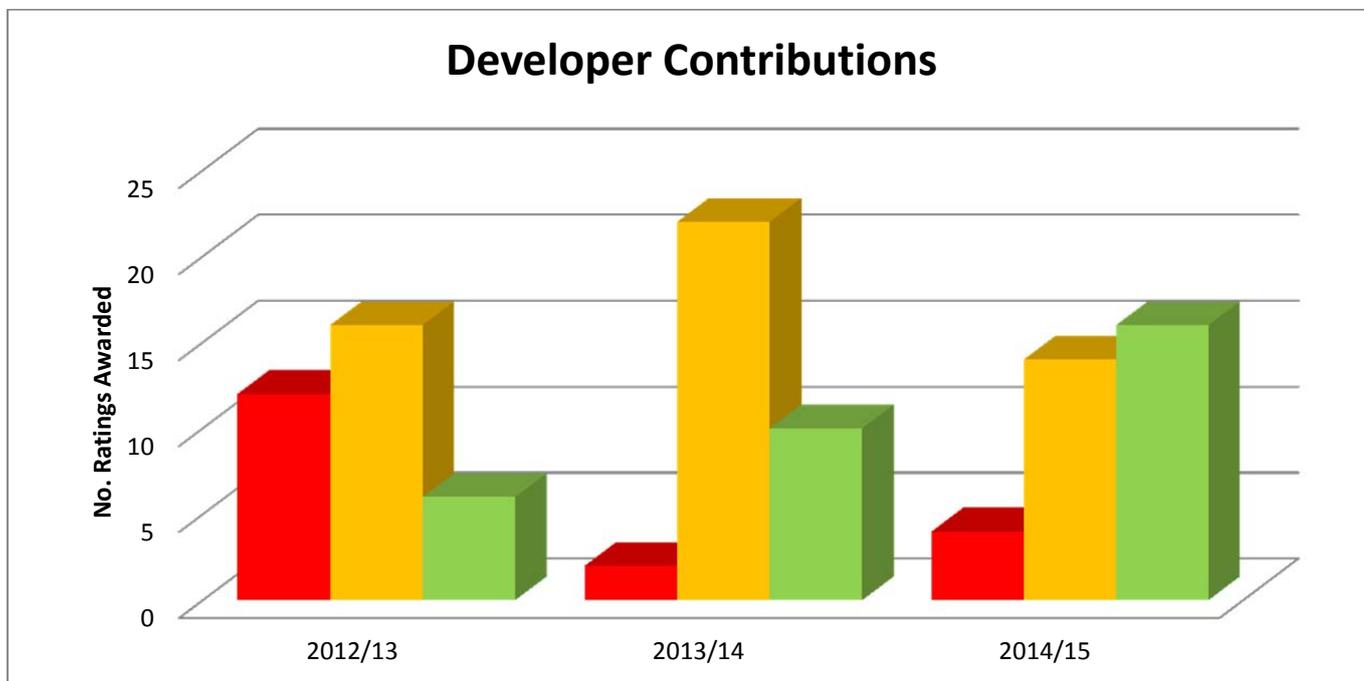
Employment Land

This year the uptake in employment land has increased by over 30%, from 145ha last year to 189ha in 2014/15. 25 authorities provided information on this indicator. Five authorities had no uptake at all and whilst four others were unable to provide information we would expect that there would be some uptake in those authority areas. The uptake ranges from 0.4 ha to 77.5 ha.

Developer Contributions

Marker 15 - Developer contributions: clear and proportionate expectations

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



This marker continues to improve but less so than others. Whilst only two authorities posted reds last year, this year that has increased to four, with two authorities moving from amber to red and two from green to red. The awarding of these red markers was due solely to lack of evidence. The number of ambers has decreased from 22 to 14 and the number of greens increased from 10 to 16.

It is clear from reports that ensuring that expected developer contributions are clear and proportionate is a priority for many authorities. A number of authorities are in the process of reviewing/updating their guidance with some good evidence of close consultation with stakeholders. LDP action programmes also detail the infrastructure requirements for allocated sites, including costings, who is responsible for delivery, possible funding options and specific contribution requirements.

Authorities provided strong examples within their reports of how they set out the requirement for developer contributions in pre-application discussions, often asking other council departments to outline their requirements at this stage. One authority has also set up an inter-departmental group to oversee that requests are proportionate.

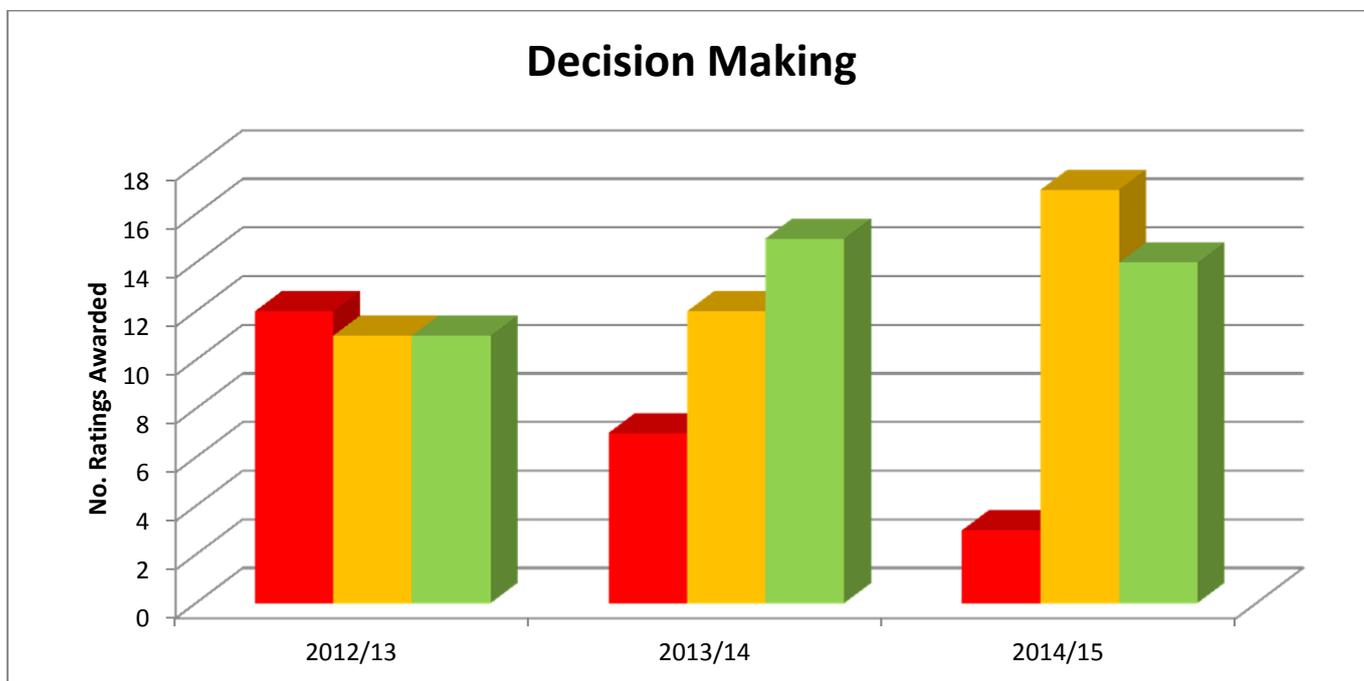
It was also clear that a number of authorities were applying a flexible developer contributions policy where necessary. Specific examples provided included affordable housing policies which could be relaxed where the viability of a project was at risk.

Some authorities have taken the proactive approach to front-fund the infrastructure for certain sites. This allows developer contributions to be identified at the pre-application stage. Similarly some authorities allow deferred or staged payments to be made.

We continue to expect that any processing agreements should identify and include the requirement for developer contributions and set out whether or not a legal agreement is required. These should be clearly identified at the pre-application stage and should be built into processing agreement timescales.

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

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



The marker on decision making saw some improvement this year with only three authorities given a red marking compared to 7 last year. The number of greens awarded fell by one to 14 this year and seven authorities who received greens last year were marked as amber this year. In almost all those seven cases the authorities performance was still very good and well above the national average, but the marker is based on continuous improvement and they were unable to sustain their levels given the very short decision times they reported last year. We will discuss this issue with HOPS.

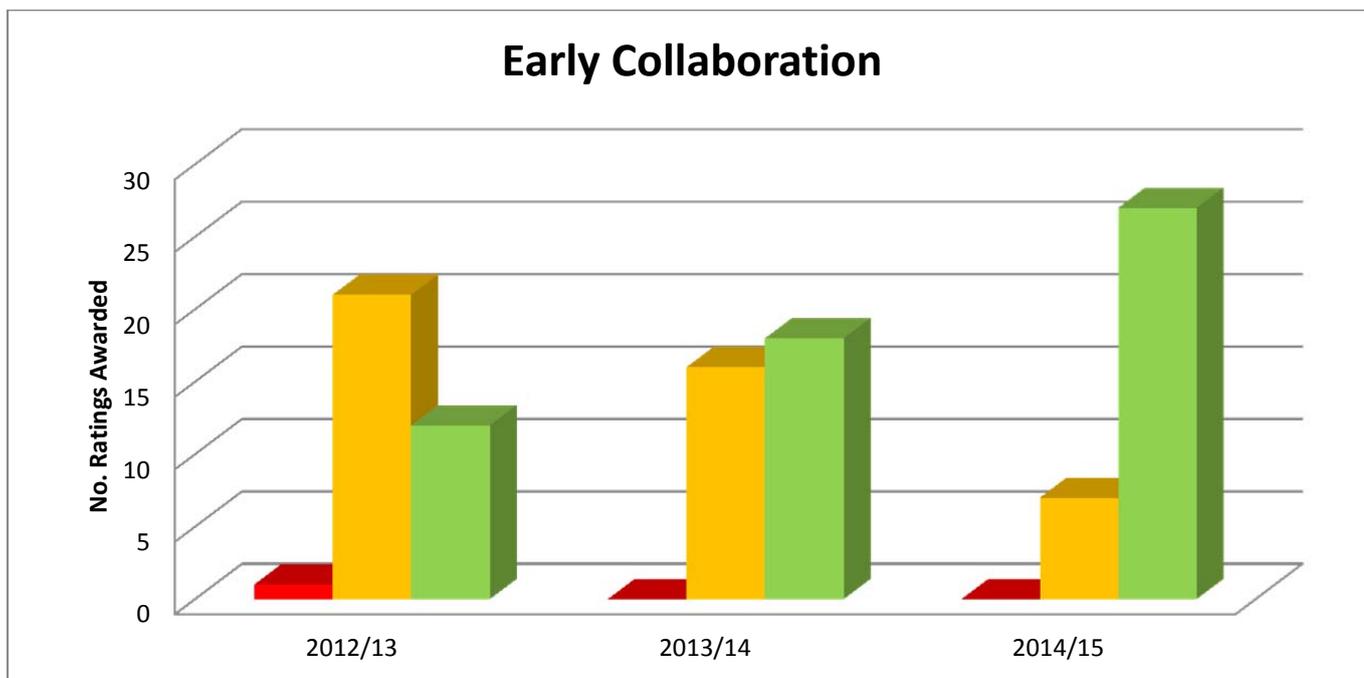
Timescales for decision making continue to vary across the country and the table below illustrates that once again major applications continue to impact timescales the most.

Average decision making timescales 2014/15 (all applications)

| | Shortest Avg. | Longest Avg. | Scotland Avg. |
|----------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|
| Householder | 5.0 | 12.8 | 7.5 |
| Local (non-HH) | 6.2 | 22.7 | 12.9 |
| Major | 7.0 | 135.3 | 46.4 |

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



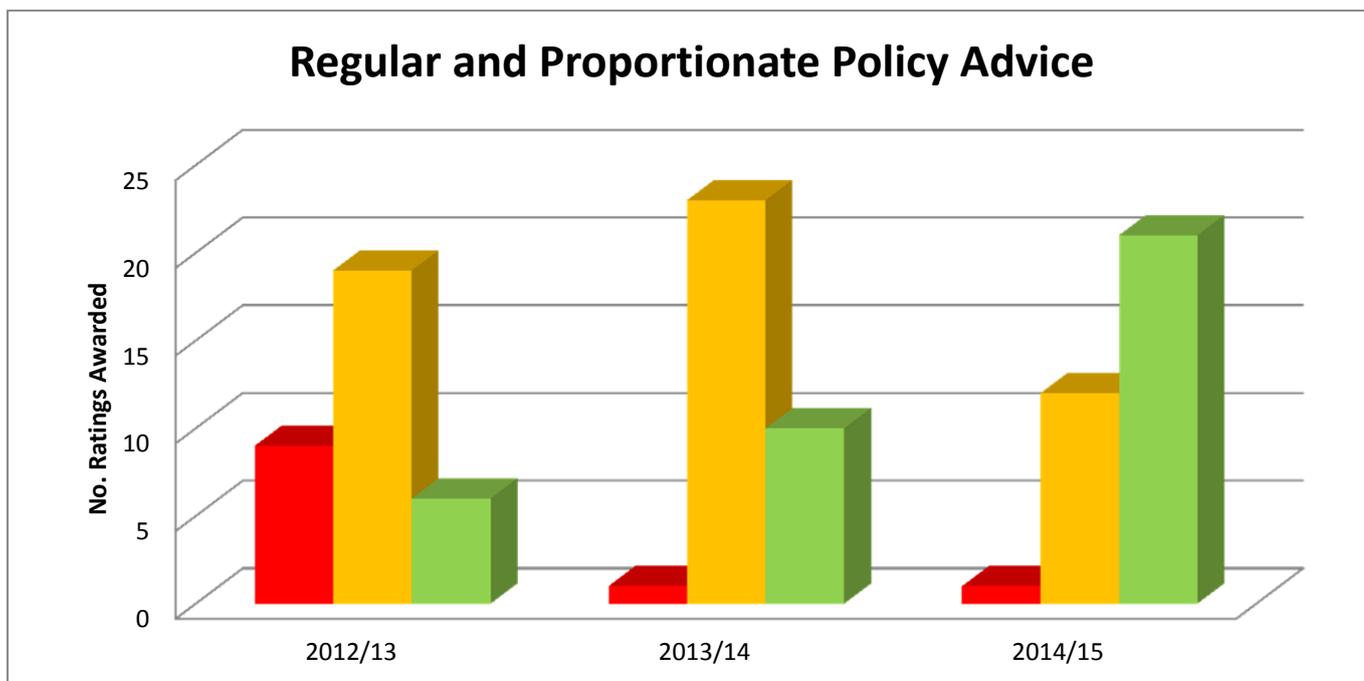
The statistics provided within the National Headline Indicators show that on average 32% of applications are subject to pre-application discussions which is up 1.4% on the previous year. The largest proportion of applications subject to pre-application discussions was recorded by Scottish Borders with 84%. Cairngorms recorded the highest improvement with a 26% increase. Overall there was an even split of authorities who had increased and decreased.

Turning to the key marker, we have seen a continuing improvement in the ratings given, with no red ratings being awarded over the past two years and the number of green ratings increasing with only seven authorities recording an amber rating, however, two of those are accounted for by authorities who had previously had a green marking.

Authorities are providing good evidence of the steps they are taking to offer and enter into pre-application discussions and the extent to which these go to, including holding joint meetings with other council services and statutory consultees. Authorities are also providing a range of guidance and advice to applicants to assist with submitting applications. Having up-to-date LDPs and supplementary guidance can play a key role in the early identification of the information required to support applications and ensure a smooth process through to the final decision.

Marker 11 - Regular and proportionate policy advice produced on:

- information required to support applications; and
- expected developer contributions



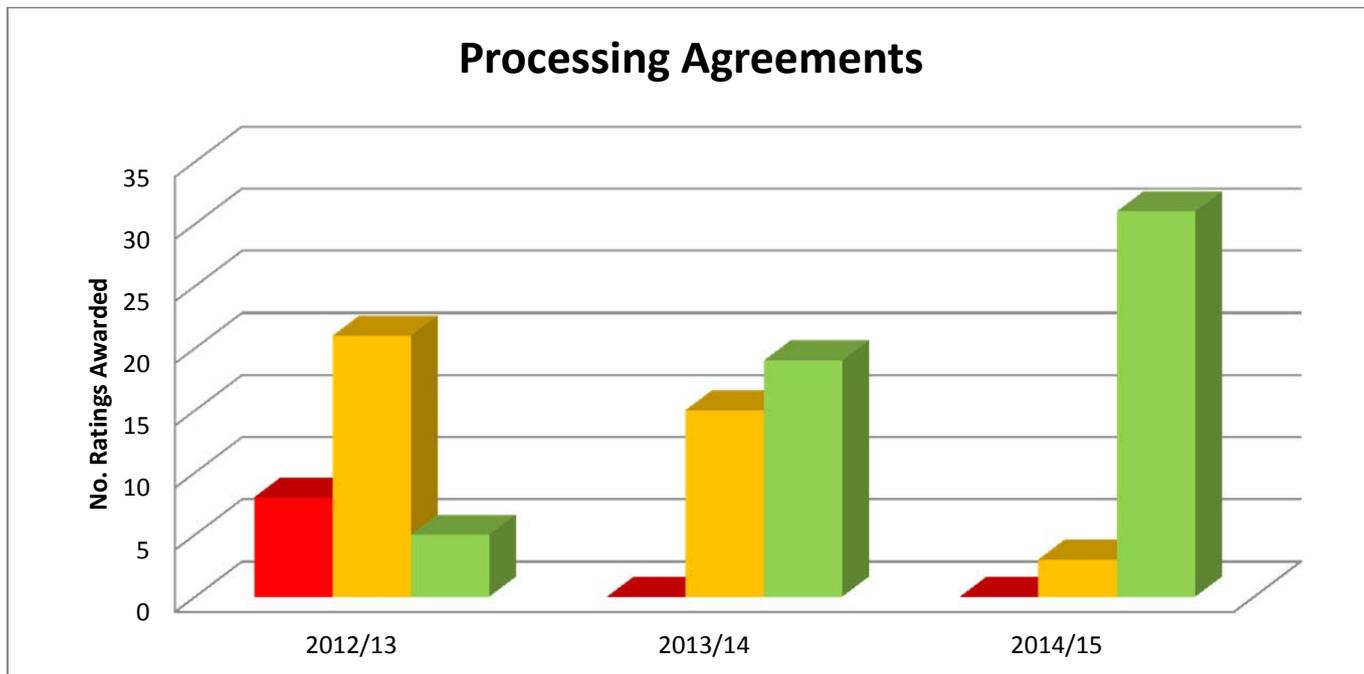
This marker asks authorities to provide evidence on how they ensure their advice on the information required to support applications and expected developer contributions is both regular and proportionate. In the past this is a marker that authorities have struggled to sufficiently evidence, however, this year has seen a marked improvement. Last year 23 authorities were given an amber rating, this year it's only 12. The number of green ratings also rose to 21, and although one authority moved from amber to red through lack of evidence, the authority marked red last year moved to amber this year. Evidence provided within this marker ranged from examples of guidance, to testimonies from developers and case studies explaining the impact and outcome of the proportionate advice. The use of validation checklists and pre-application forums between authorities, developers and consultees are increasing to ensure that the information relevant to the application is identified and requested at an early stage. Other authorities set out in the LDP action programme what supporting information is required for specific sites allocated for development.

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. These take account of the viability of a development with evidence and case studies providing examples of how these were amended or commuted through an alternative scheme.

Processing Agreements

Marker 2 - Processing agreements:

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

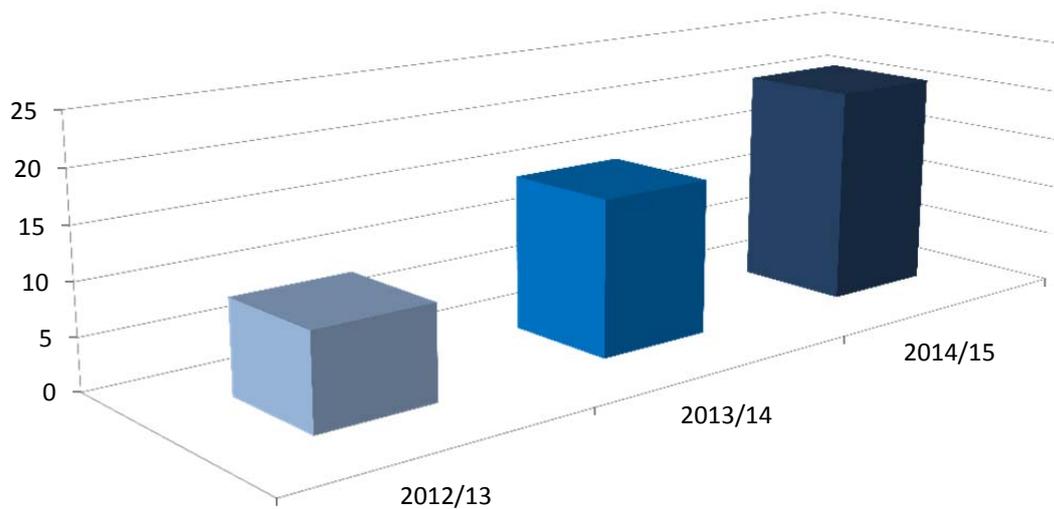


We have seen a significant improvement in the use of processing agreements over the past three reporting periods. No authorities received a red marking and the number of green markings has increased to 31 with the three remaining authorities receiving an amber marking. It is encouraging to see that all authorities are now promoting and encouraging the use of processing agreements, however, work still remains to increase their use.

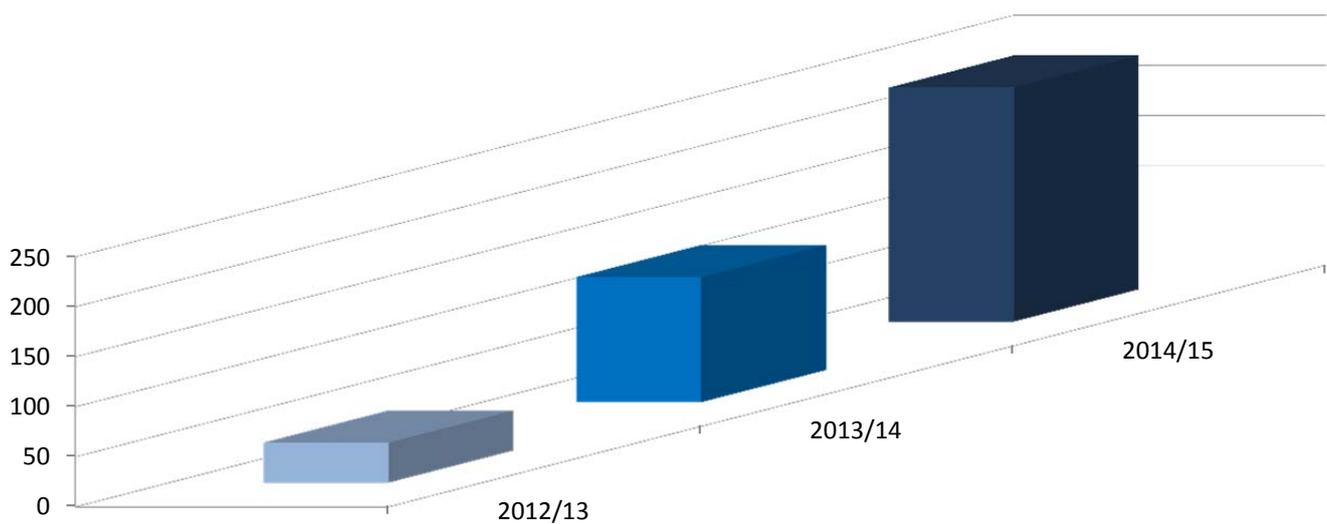
During the reporting period 21 of the 34 authorities have decided an application which was subject to a processing agreement and over the past 3 years, 24 authorities have entered into processing agreements.

Nevertheless, the use of processing agreements still only accounts for 0.01% of all applications, although more encouraging is their use for major applications where 17% of applications are subject to a processing agreement, although this is down 2% from last year.

Number of Authorities Using Processing Agreements



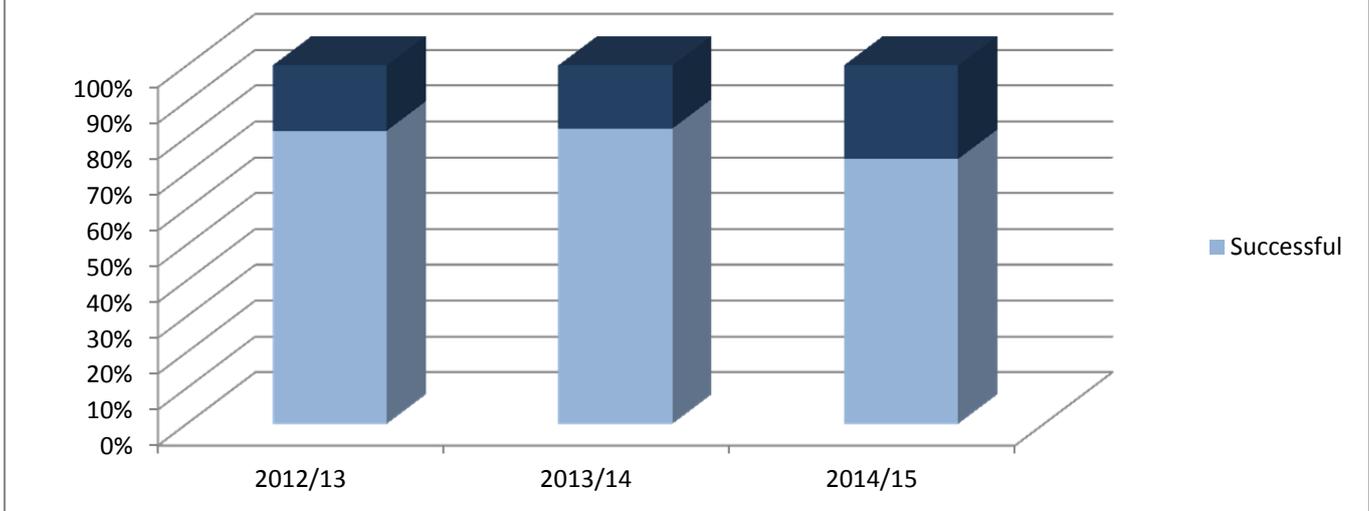
Number of Processing Agreements Used



Edinburgh continued to use the highest number of processing agreements with 20 major applications decided. This equates to 65% of major applications decided by the authority. Highland decided 18 major applications (69%) which were subject to a processing agreement. Loch Lomond continued to use a high proportion of processing agreements with 43 applications in total, 35 of which were for local developments. This equates to 15% of all local applications decided by them.

Key to increasing the use of processing agreements is improving the performance. Currently 73.9% of processing agreements meet the timescales set out, although the percentage of major applications decided within agreed timescales was 84.6%. Twelve of the 21 authorities who had decided applications subject to a processing agreement met the timescales for all the agreements they had entered, whilst three 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.

Processing Agreements: Level of success in meeting agreed timescales



In April 2015 Planning and Architecture Division published a report highlighting the benefits of using processing agreements, in particular the certainty it can bring to the process of obtaining a decision by an agreed time, particularly if timescales are short.

In future we would like to see the use of processing agreements continue to increase. We would also like to hear about the efforts that authorities are making to encourage their use and how all parties have benefitted from their use.

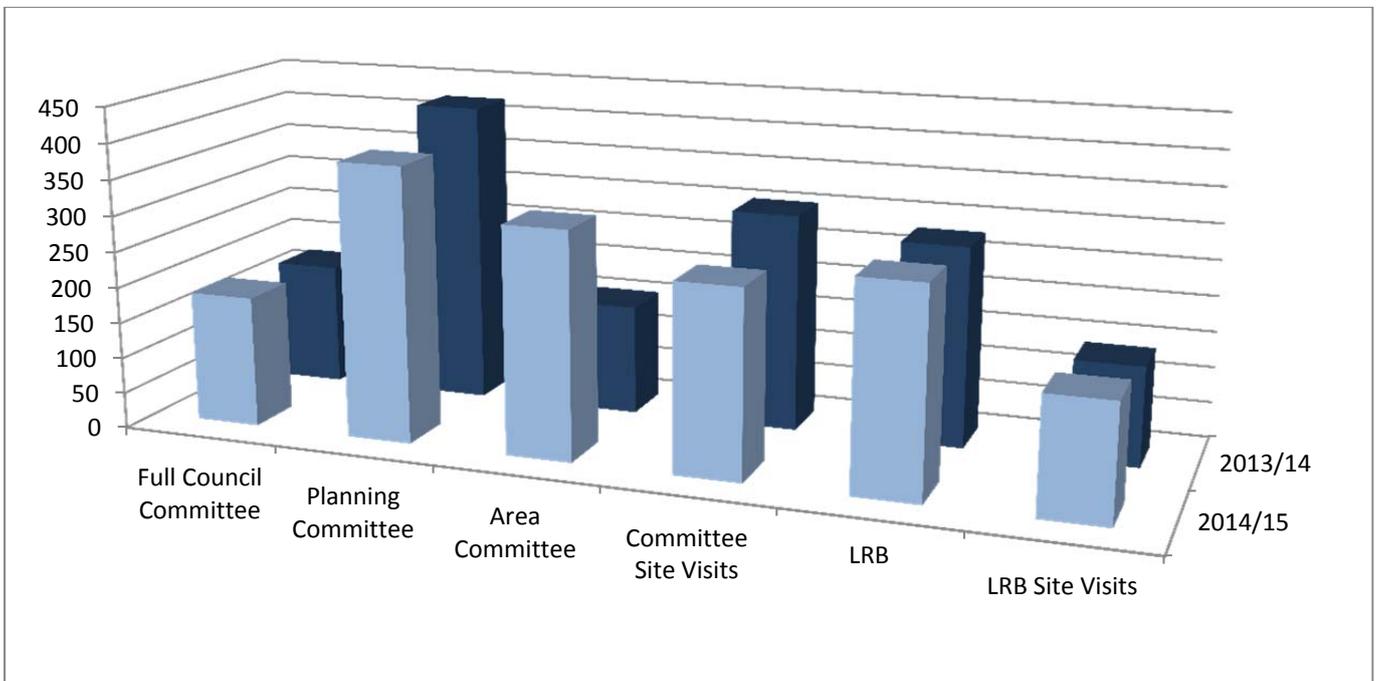
Decision Making Processes

Committees and Local Review Bodies (LRB)

There were 882 planning related committee meetings held during 2014/15, which is an increase of 134. Of these 882 meetings 172 were full council meetings, 422 planning committee meetings and 316 area committee meetings.

The number of authorities with area committees has increased by three to nine. As well as the 316 area committee meetings undertaken 261 site visit were also carried out.

The highest number of committee meetings (including LRBS held was 161 in one authority, with the lowest being seven and the average number of committee meetings per authority being 28 which is an increase from 23 in 2013/14. Whilst it is not clear what the reasons behind the increase are, it could be that some committees are convening more regularly to consider applications than they previously were and this is reflected in quicker decision making.

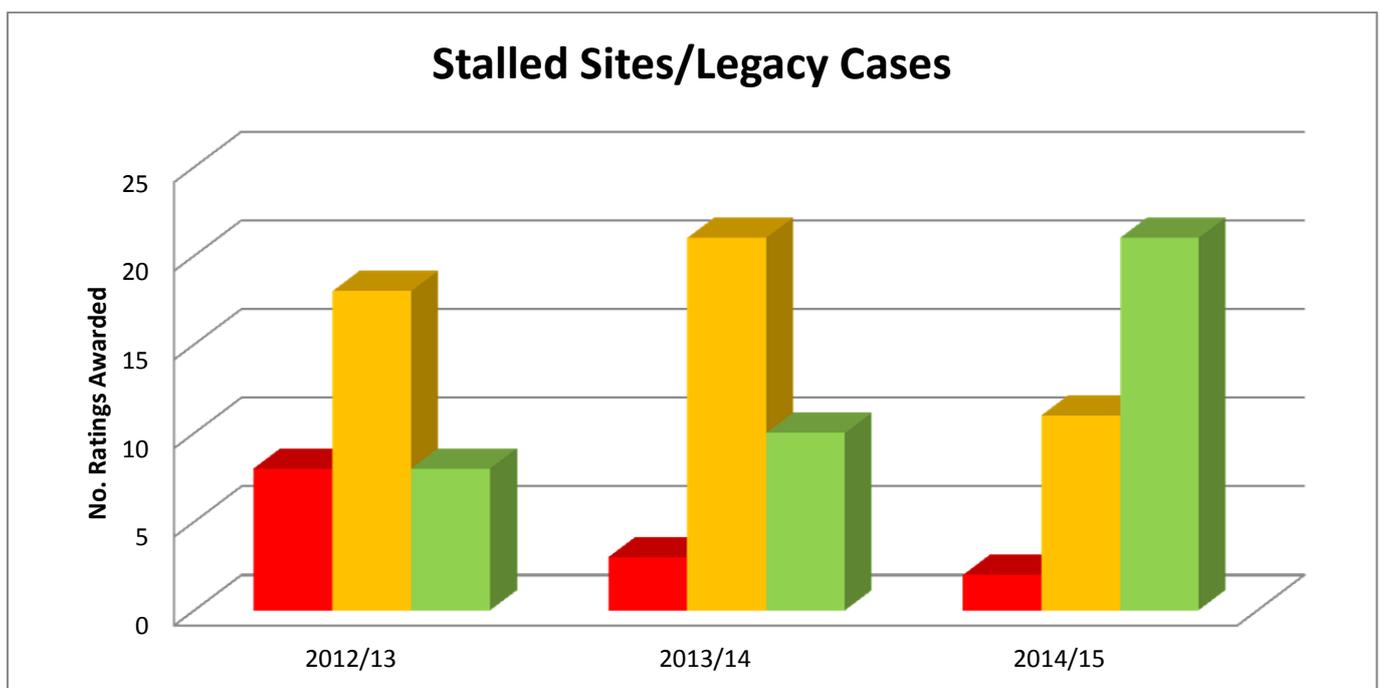


The increase in the delegation rate from 92.6% to 94.5% may account for the increase in the number of LRB meetings and site visits and the reduction in the number of planning committee meetings.

In this reporting year 31 authorities provided information on their arrangements for Local Review Bodies and site visits. There was a 33% increase in the number of authorities reporting site visits. Local Review Bodies convened 287 times this year, an increase of 8 from last year, and undertook 162 site visits, which was an increase of 23 site visits on last year's report.

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



After the introduction of average timescales for decision making in 2012/13 it became obvious that a small number of very old cases were skewing the timescales substantially. This year for the first time authorities were asked to report on the number of legacy cases (applications over 1 year old) that were in the system. Whilst most authorities provided this information, a number did not and we would encourage them to use the correct template next year. Authorities are also assessed against Key Marker 14 which requires them to “conclude or withdraw old planning applications and reduce the number of live applications more than one year old”.

Over the past 3 years of PPF reporting we have heard about the action that authorities have been taking to reduce the number of legacy cases which can be seen by the significant increase in the number of green ratings. This year we have seen an almost reversal in the number of green and amber ratings from 21 amber and 10 green in 2013/14 to 11 amber and 21 green in 2014/15. We have however, seen two authorities revert from a green marking down to an amber.

Until recently the full extent of the number of legacy cases within the system was unknown. A separate exercise was undertaken prior to the submission of the PPF reports following a request from the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Communities and Pensioners’ Rights to investigate how many applications over one year old were in the planning system as of 30 June 2015. Responses were received from 31 authorities. For two of the remaining three authorities we were able to use the information provided within their PPF report (from March 2015, rather than June). One authority did not respond or report on legacy cases in their PPF so we have no information for them. Outlined below is a summary of the findings

| | |
|--|------------|
| Total Number of Cases | 1888 |
| Highest number of Cases submitted by an Authority | 618 |
| Oldest Case* | 21/12/1983 |
| Oldest minded to grant* | 05/03/1998 |
| Total minded to grant* | 485 |
| Pre 2009* | 898 |
| Post 2009* | 988 |

*excludes those cases identified through PPFs

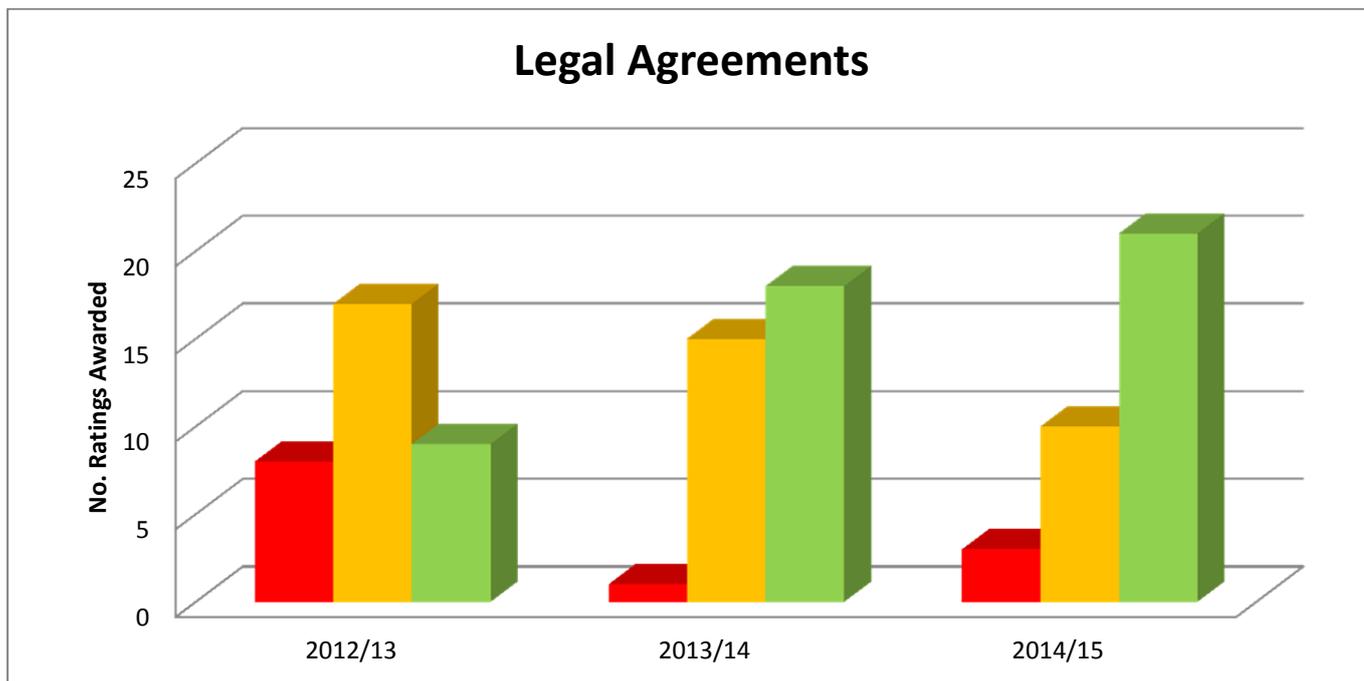
We recognise that there are issues around withdrawal and reaching a decision on legacy cases and we will work with HOPS and the development sector to try and resolve the issues.

We note from the PPFs that many authorities have now put in place protocols to ensure that they manage and limit legacy cases. Where legal agreements are required many authorities take these back to committee for refusal where no progress has been made over a certain period of time.

Next year we hope to see a further improvement in the number of green markings and a reduction in the number of cases remaining within the system.

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)



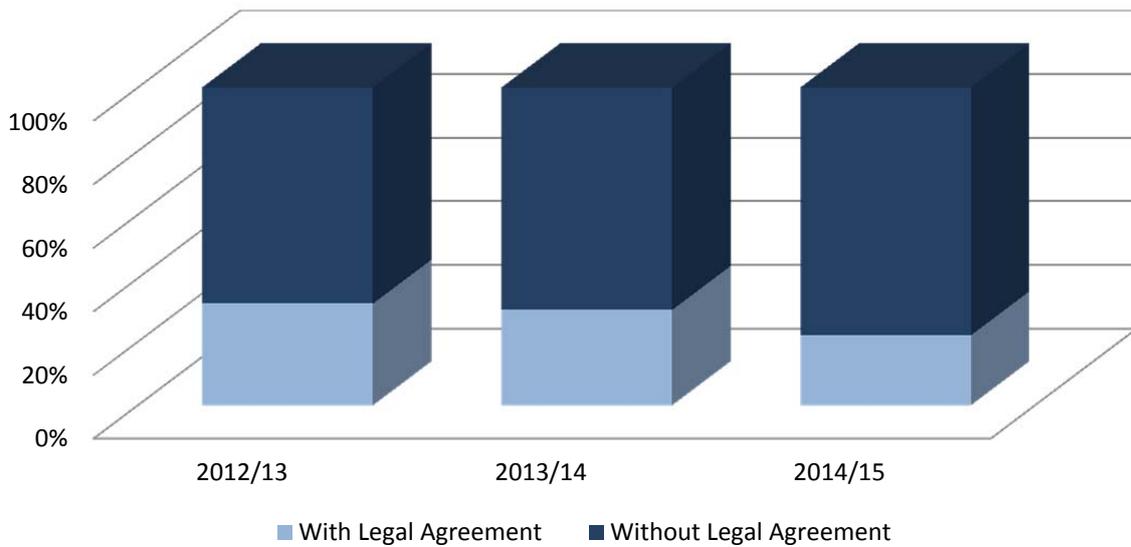
This marker asks authorities to consider implementing a system by which they refuse or take back to committee applications where the negotiations over a section 75 or other legal agreement have stalled. However there are a few authorities who reported that they consider such a timescale is not conducive to good business and investment and are therefore happy to work with developers for as long as it takes to secure the agreement.

Timescales for legal agreements do vary by authority but generally timescales are improving gradually. This year, major applications with a legal agreement attached took on average 92.8 weeks to see a decision issued, longer than the 87.5 weeks from last year. The quickest authority took 13.1 weeks, the longest took an average of 259 weeks.

Turning to local applications the average timescale for issuing a decision still remains around five times longer than an application which has no legal agreement. The average is 50.1 weeks, compared with 10.3 weeks. Again the disparity between authorities is clear with the quickest being 7.6 weeks and the slowest taking 115 weeks.

This year three authorities were given a red compared to only one last year. Two of those three authorities received an amber last year, one was awarded a green. It is clear from previous reports that work to time limit these discussions is being undertaken by these authorities, however, little or no evidence was provided in this year's reports.

Major Applications



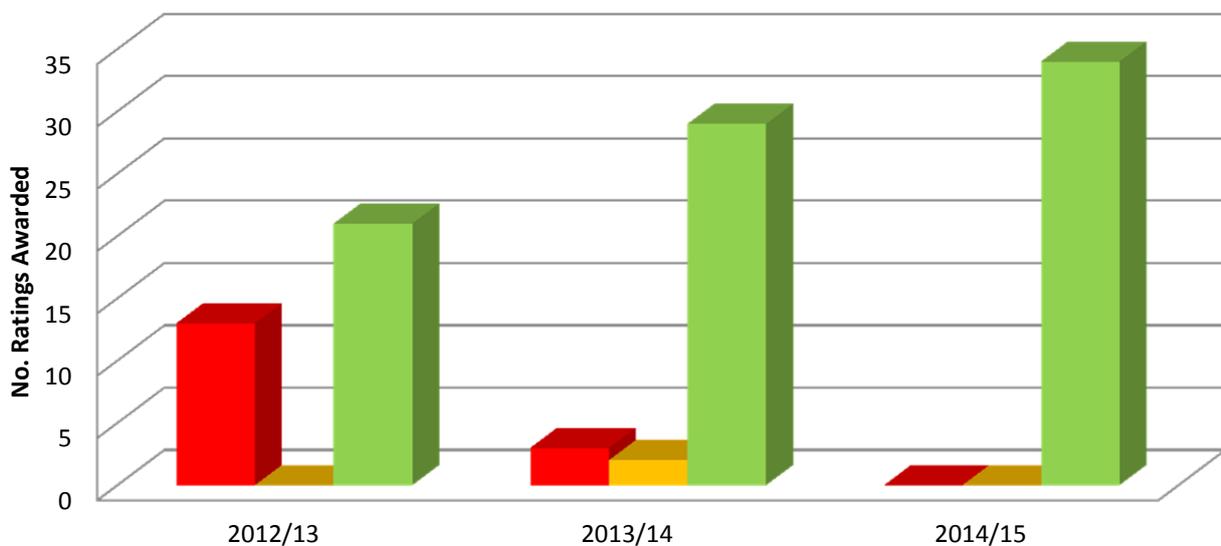
It is also clear from the reports that a number of authorities are continuing to use conditions where possible, so that planning obligations are not required. Looking at the annual statistics we can see that the percentage of major applications decided with a legal agreement attached is continuing to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

Only a very small percentage 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

Enforcement Charter



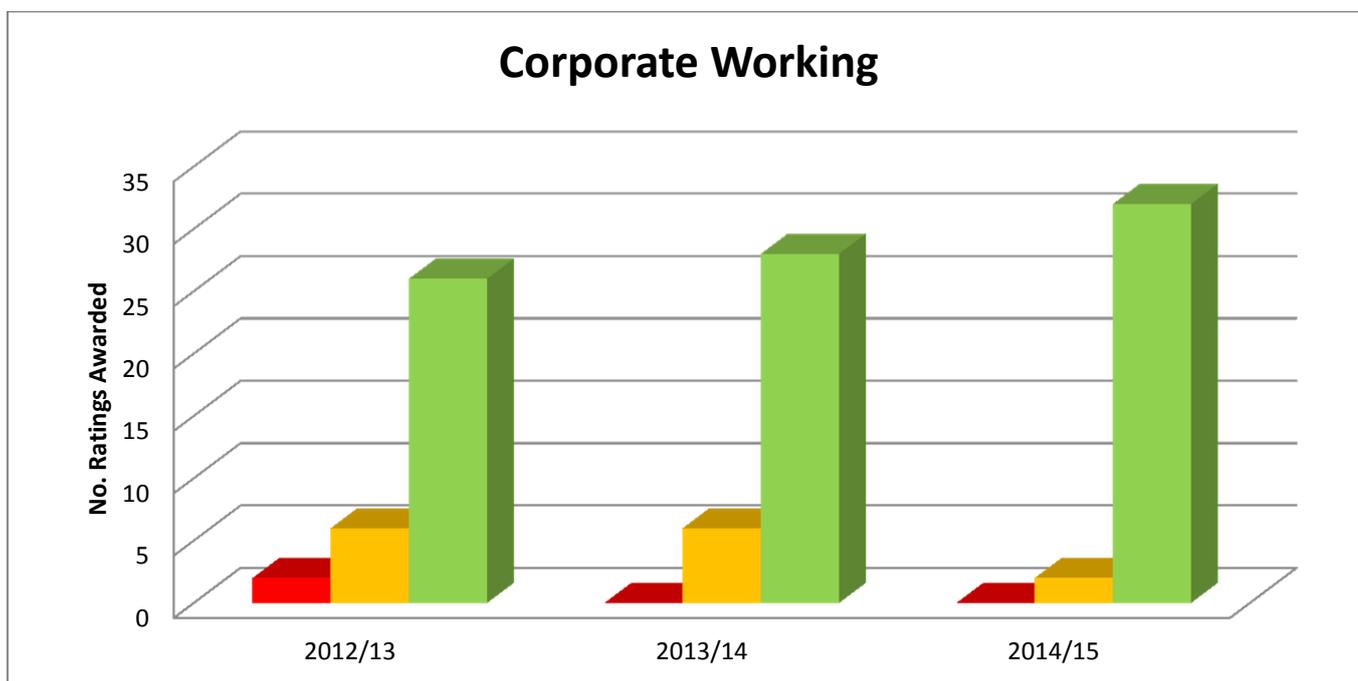
Planning authorities have a legal requirement to maintain and make available to stakeholders an Enforcement Charter, which must be updated and re-published at least every two years. There is a requirement to update the Enforcement Charter more frequently if circumstances change within this period.

For the first time since the introduction of this marker, all 34 authorities have an up-to-date enforcement charter and received a green rating. This is an improvement on the previous reporting year, where three authorities had a charter which was over 2 years old.

Within this reporting period there was an increase in identified breaches. 6081 breaches were identified which is an increase of 249 from the previous year. Authorities resolved 4461 of the breaches identified in reporting year, which was an increase of 250 cases overall from 2013/14. This increase gives a resolution rate of 73.3% compared to 72% during the two previous reporting periods. 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)



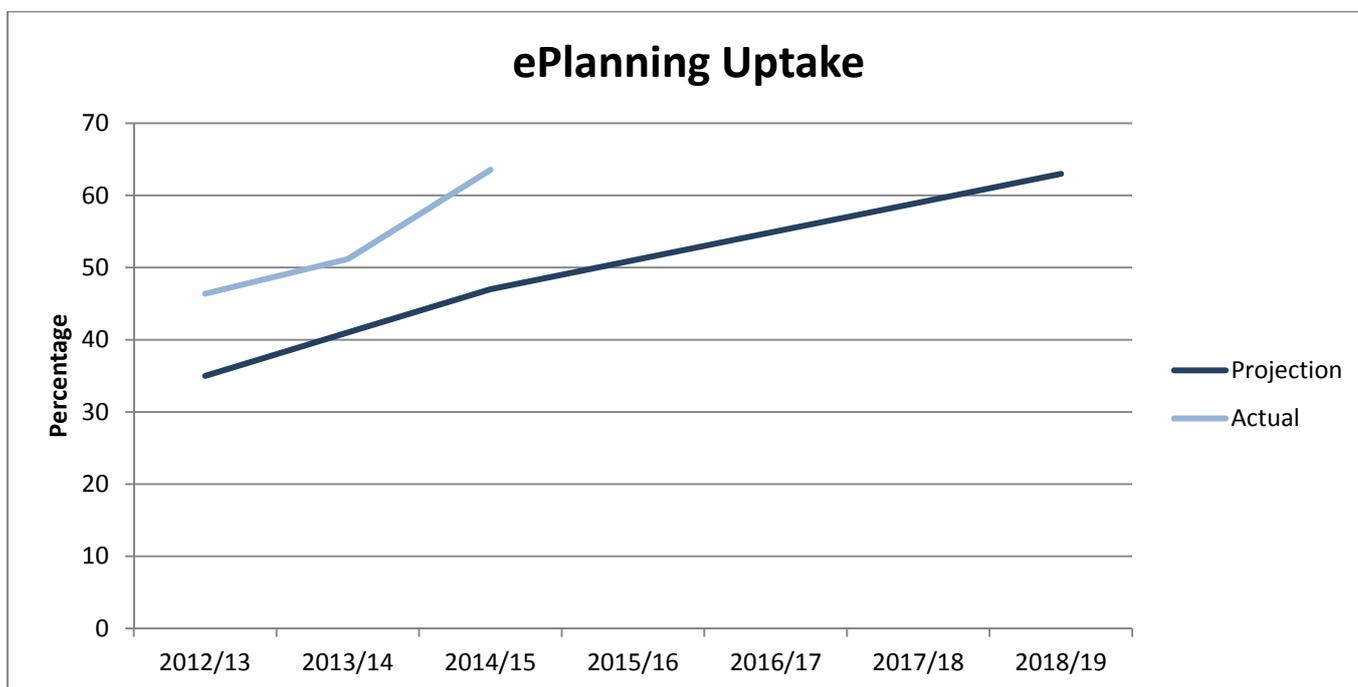
Performance against marker 12 started with a very high number of green markings in 2012/13. This has left little room for improvement, however, we have seen that those authorities without a green marking have strived to obtain one. Only 2 authorities are without a green marking with one of those authorities dropping to an amber from a green. Both amber markings were given due to a lack of evidence provided within their reports.

It is encouraging to see the commitment authorities are putting in to provide a joined up service. We have heard how council services such as transport and environmental health are being brought under the same director or located in the same office to ensure closer working arrangements. We have even heard how the more rural authorities are trying to foster closer working relationships between their area offices. Authorities are drawing up protocols with other council services and agencies to agree when to consult with them and to agree timescales within which to respond. As outlined earlier in the report the provision of pre-application discussions, which includes other council services, is increasing and is outlined in case studies within some authorities reports.

As with other high scoring markers there may be a need to revise the criteria to ensure that continuous improvement is maintained. Authorities may wish to report on the benefits which have been realised from the improvements which they have made. Case studies could highlight how holding joint pre-application discussions has led to issues being identified and resolved early in the process, resulting in a faster more efficient process from application submission to decision.

ePlanning

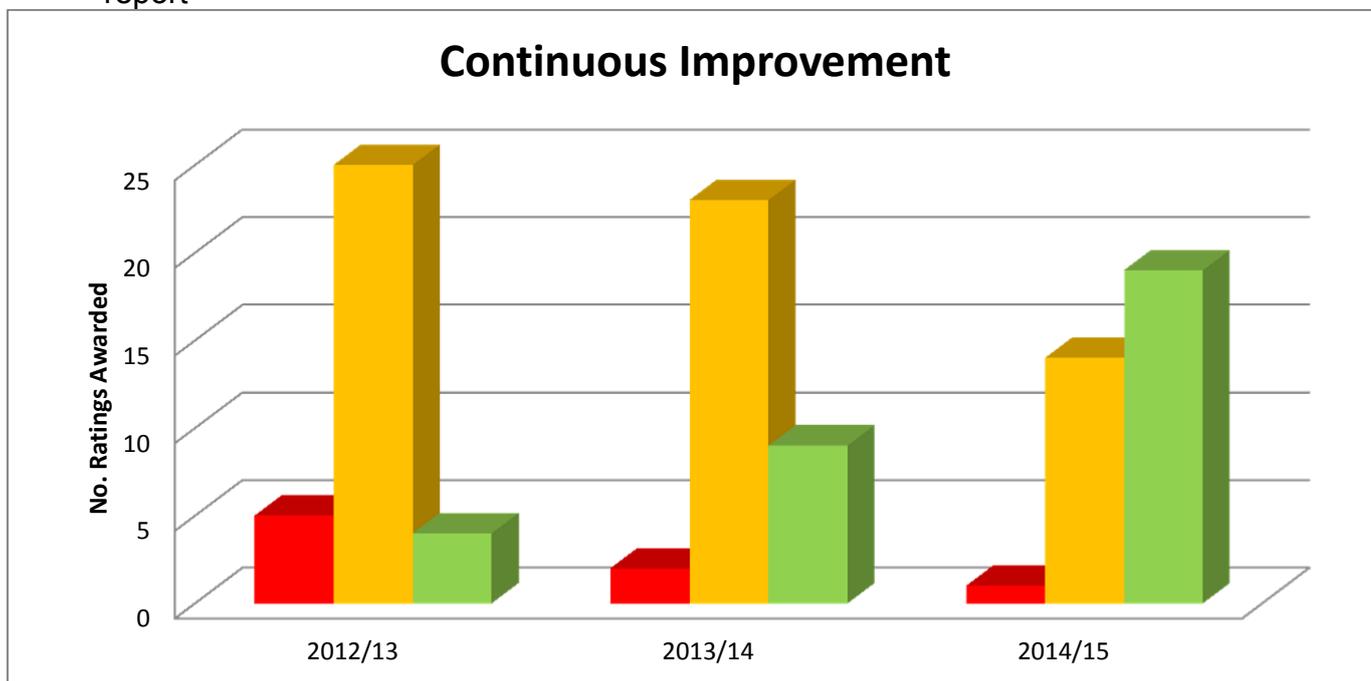
ePlanning is widely recognised as being a strong example of delivering an online service in partnership across the public sector. This has resulted from encouragement by all Heads of Planning and authorities in general to promote ePlanning as the primary means for submitting applications. In February 2015, the 100,000th application was submitted through ePlanning Scotland. In 2006 the prediction was to have 33% of planning applications submitted through the portal by 2014/15. Take up continues to increase steadily – almost 64% of all planning applications are now submitted through the current ePlanning Scotland site. Expectations remain that authorities’ use of ePlanning will ensure maximum benefit to customer services and financial savings for applicants and the authorities themselves.



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



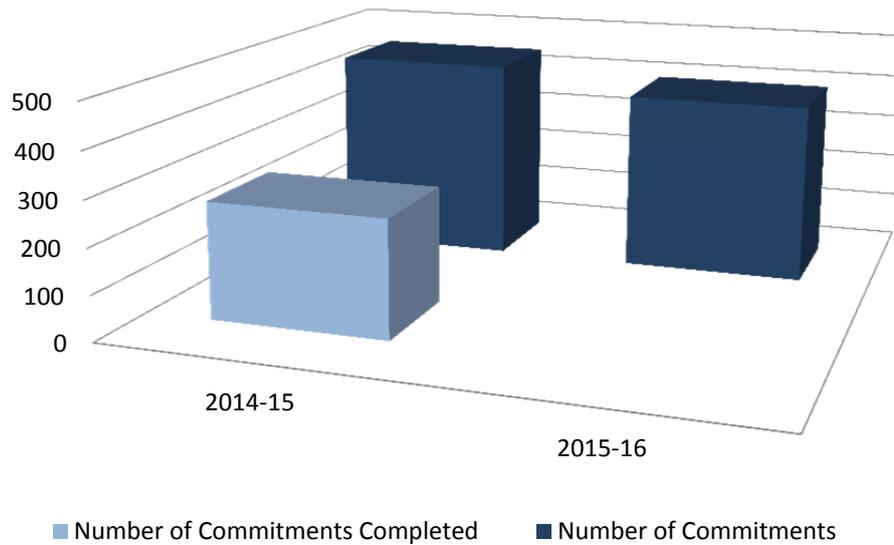
Over the past 3 years we have been impressed with the commitment authorities have shown to having a programme of continuous improvement. As previously mentioned we have seen an overall improvement in the number of green and amber ratings and a reduction in the number of red ratings given. There still 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.

We have noted a slight drop in the number of green markings relating to decision making timescales with an increase in amber and a reduction in red markings. We have seen improvements in the number of up-to-date LDPs, a reduction in their average age and an increase in the number of replacement LDPs which should be adopted within the required 5 year timescale. For the first time, all enforcement charters are up-to-date which is also the first time all authorities have received a green marking.

This year we have changed the way housing land is recorded therefore no comparison is possible. We have also started to record the number of housing approvals granted during the reporting period, the number of housing completions that have been recorded over the past 5 years and the number of applications over one year old within the system. We will provide an analysis of these figures in next year's report.

Turning to the second indicator within the marker which relates to the service improvement commitments made for 2015/16, we have seen a reduction in the number of commitments made for 2015/16 from 451 to 400, making the average number of commitments made for each authority 12, which is down 1 from 2014/15. The highest number of commitments made by a single authority is 51, however, a large number of these could be considered core business or part of their commitment to continuous improvement. The previous year the same authority made 48 commitments with a 50% success rate. Of the 51 commitments made for 2015/16, 38 are carried forward as either an on-going commitment or incomplete.

Service Improvement Commitments

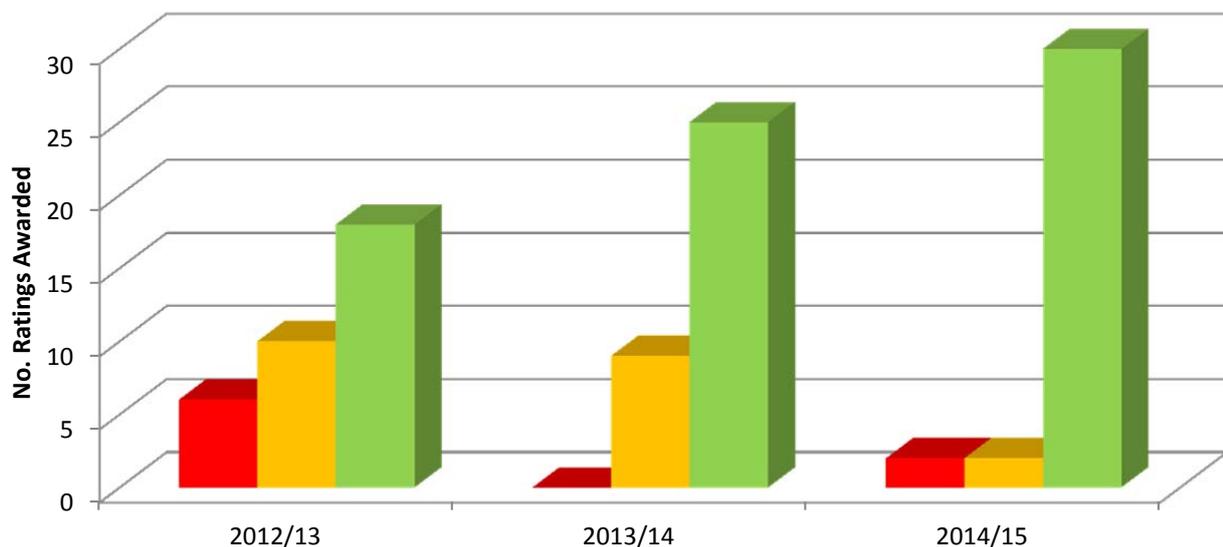


Two authorities have recorded a 100% completion rate with their Service Improvement (SIP) commitments for 2014-15 with an average completion rate across all authorities of 56%.

We would encourage authorities to focus on a small number of specific, measurable commitments that are linked to areas for improvement identified within their performance report and which strongly relate to improving the service they provide to customers.

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

Sharing Good Practice



Progress with this marker continues to improve. Only four authorities did not receive a green rating for this marker this year. This compares favourably with last year where 25 authorities were awarded a green and nine an amber. Whilst there were no red ratings awarded last year, this year 2 authorities received a red and 2 an amber. Whilst one of the authorities remained at an amber, one authority moved from a green to an amber, one from an amber to red and one from a green to a red. These markers were awarded because little or no evidence had been provided on how they met the marker.

Within the performance reports there was strong evidence provided of the work authorities were doing to share their knowledge, good practice and skills, not only with other authorities but with consultees and other stakeholders. These ranged from fora for agents to explain new ways of working, to attendance at various Heads of Planning sub-groups on development management; performance and practice; and development planning. Other examples included discussions held with benchmarking families on a wide range of subjects and participation at performance workshops which gave officers the opportunity to discuss solutions and innovative new ways of working. The success of these could clearly be seen to be reflected throughout the reports and not just under this marker. These new ways of working are making a positive impact on work around decision making timescales, pre-application discussions, validation and stakeholder engagement.

As noted in the introduction, this year HOPS have agreed to use their bench-marking groups to provide a peer review of the performance reports. Part of this review is to identify examples within the report of new or innovative ways of working or ideas that have been successfully implemented so these can be shared across authorities. We would expect the outcome of these performance benchmarking sessions to feature in next year's report.

Staffing/Workforce

Due to corporate restructuring in a number of authorities a comparison of 2013/14 and 2014/15 figures is not possible.

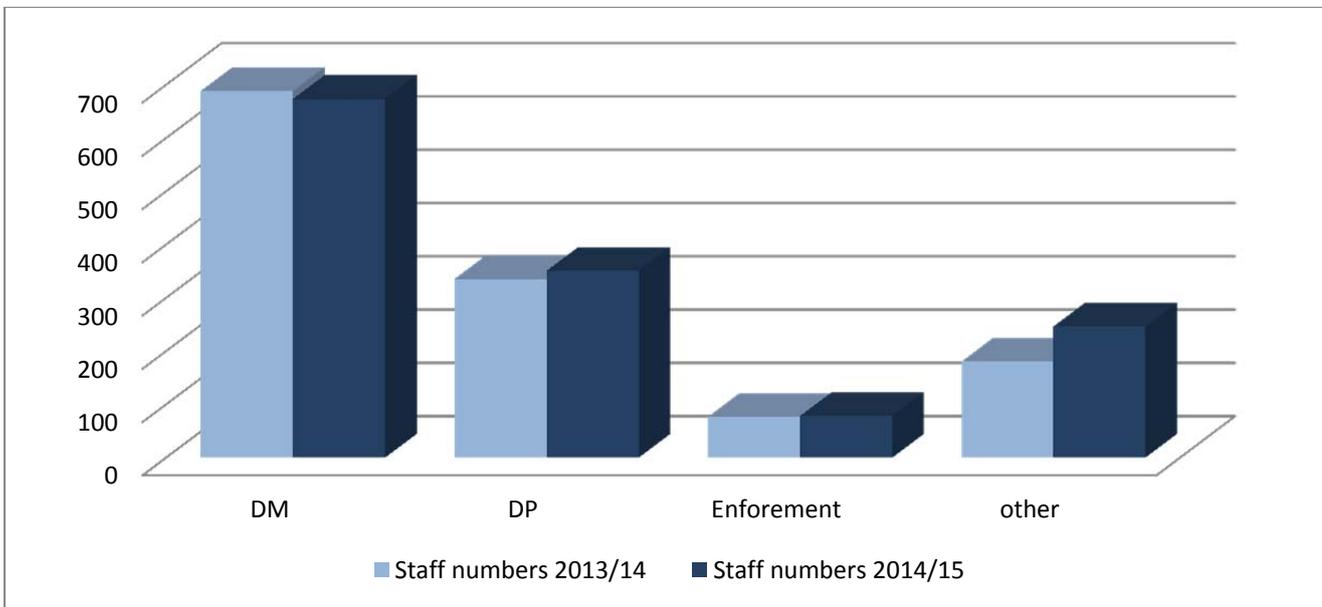
Staffing profile 14/15

The number of staff across all planning authorities has increased by over 54 in the past year from 1446 to 1500 members of staff. The largest increase in staffing has been in the development planning and other categories (Figures for one authority are only included in the totals as they have not provided a breakdown of their staffing for 2014/15).

On average Planning Authorities allocate almost twice as many staff to development management as development planning, 50% and 25% respectively, with 6.25% members of staff allocated to enforcement and 18.75% in the "other" category.

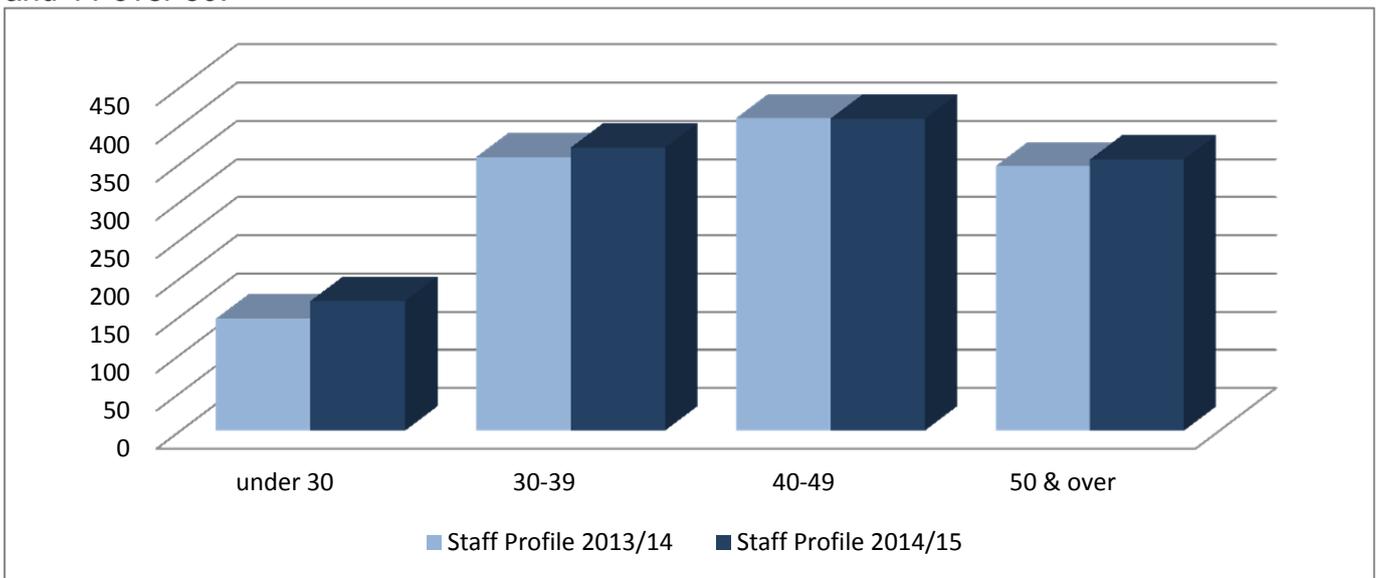
Staffing levels in development management roles reduced from 688 in the previous reporting year to 673. There was an increase to development planning roles, from 335 in the previous reporting year to 351 this year. Enforcement staffing levels remain very similar, and only saw a minor increase from 77 in the previous year to 79 this reporting year. The "other" classified staffing category has increased the most this reporting year, with 246 compared to last reporting year's figures of 180.

The fluctuation of numbers in staffing within authorities may be due to the fluid nature of staff movement to cover pressures in specific areas. This could be as a result of reaching a crucial stage in the development plan process that requires increased staff numbers, or to target a particular planning issue requiring additional resources.



With regards to the age profile of staff in planning authorities we have seen an increase in the number of staff in both the under 30 and 30-39 category, there has been a slight drop in those 40-49 but an increase in the 50+ category.

On average authorities have 5.4 members of staff under 30, 12 between 30-39, 13 between 40-49 and 11 over 50.



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 69%, the number of amber markings decrease by 41% and the number of green ratings awarded increase by 185%. In real terms reds have decreased from 117 to 35, amber from 174 to 103 and greens increased from 171 to 317.

We have been impressed with authorities' commitment to continuous improvement, however, we note that in some circumstances we are reaching a plateau, for example in decision making timescales and we will work with Heads of Planning Scotland to resolve this issue so that high performing authorities are not penalised for small increases in timescales.

There has also been a large amount of work going into sharing good practice and benchmarking and we look forward to hearing more about this in next year's reports. In particular we will be interested in hearing about the peer to peer review of PPF reports which has been undertaken.

A good range of service improvement commitments have been identified for the year ahead and we look forward to hearing about the progress being made against these, the impact the actions have had and the benefits realised. Some authorities are still including elements of core business within their commitments. We would encourage them to focus on actions which have been identified within their reports which will bring benefits to their customers and stakeholders.

Finally, the reduction in the number of red and amber ratings awarded is welcome, however we would like to encourage authorities to ensure that they focus on providing appropriate evidence to support the key markers. Authorities should also bear in mind that although they may have previously mentioned something within an earlier report this will still need to be included in their current report as the markers are based solely on the information provided in the report for that year.

STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN AUTHORITIES – ANNUAL REPORT

This is the second Annual Report of the Strategic Development Plan Authorities (SDPAs) Planning Performance Framework (PPF) reports which covered the period April 2014 to March 2015.

All 4 SDPAs provided reports. The SDPAs are:

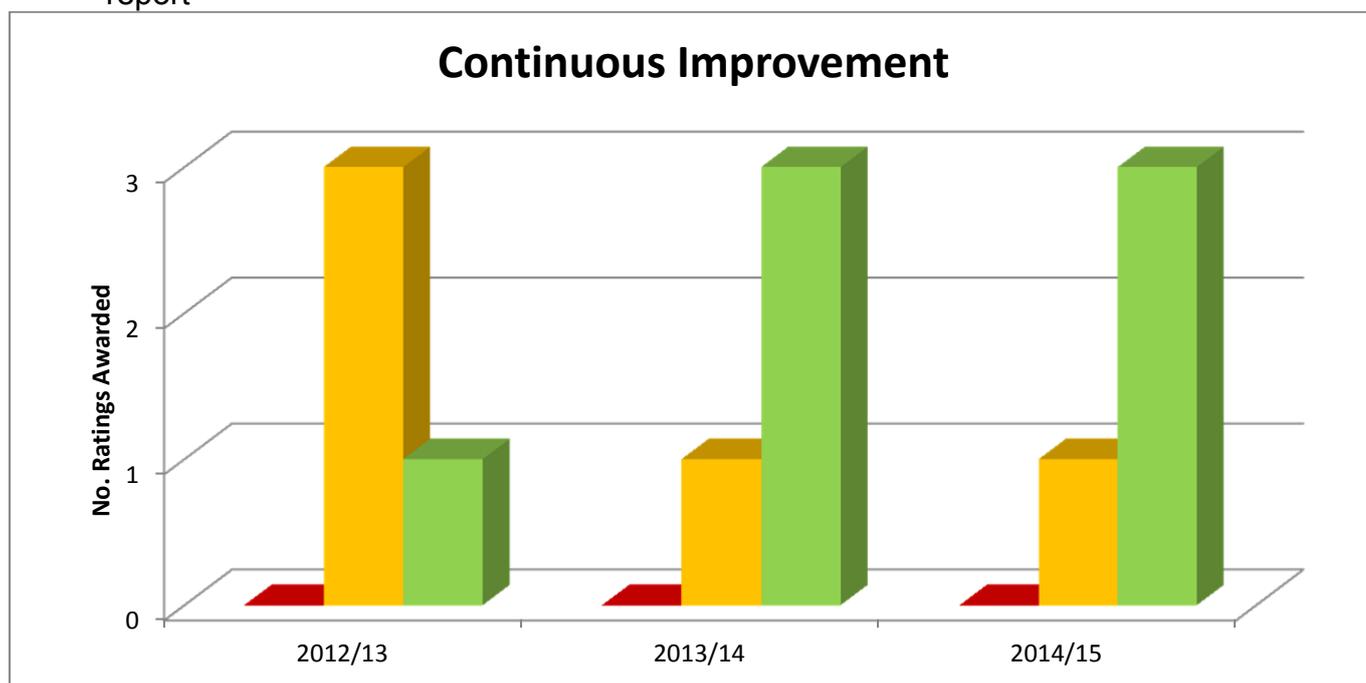
- Aberdeen City and Shire
- Glasgow and Clyde Valley SDPA (now ClydePlan)
- SESplan
- Tayplan

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 undertake peer-to-peer review of 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:

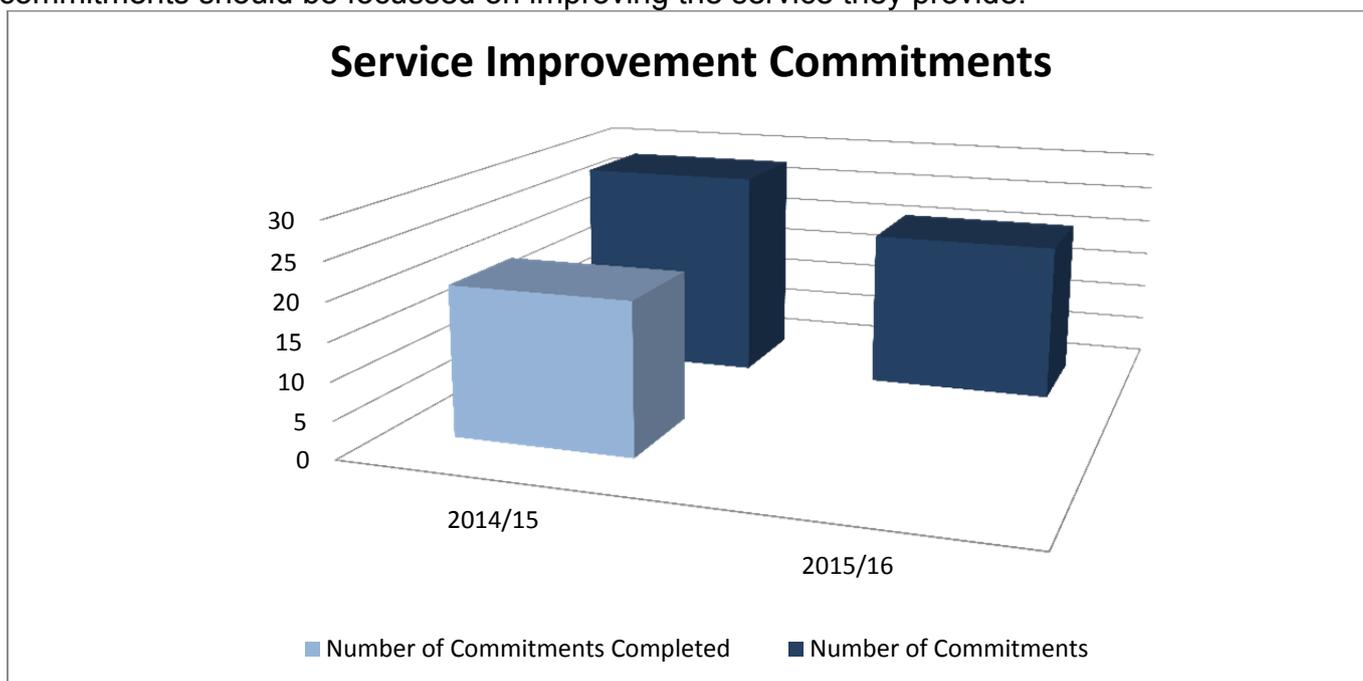
- progress/improvement in relation to PPF National Headline Indicators; and
- progress ambitious and relevant service improvement commitments identified through PPF report



This year the strategic development planning authorities have retained the markings they were given for continuous improvement in 2013/14. 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.

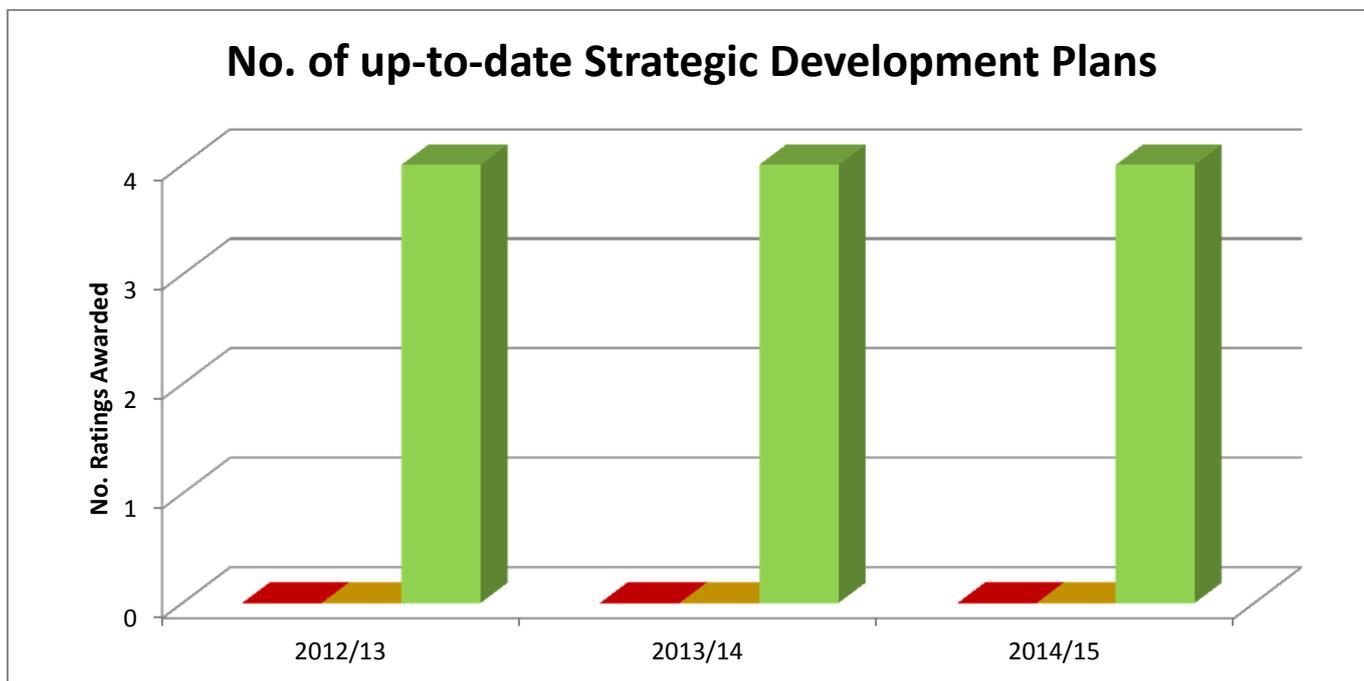
SDPAs have managed to complete 71% of the service improvement commitments made for 2014/15. The average number of commitments made for 2015/16 has reduced to three from

seven the previous year. We would expect to see an increase in the number of commitments completed during the reporting year due to their reduced number. There remain some elements of core business activities appearing in Service Improvement Plans and we will remind everyone that commitments should be focussed on improving the service they provide.



Strategic Development Plan

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

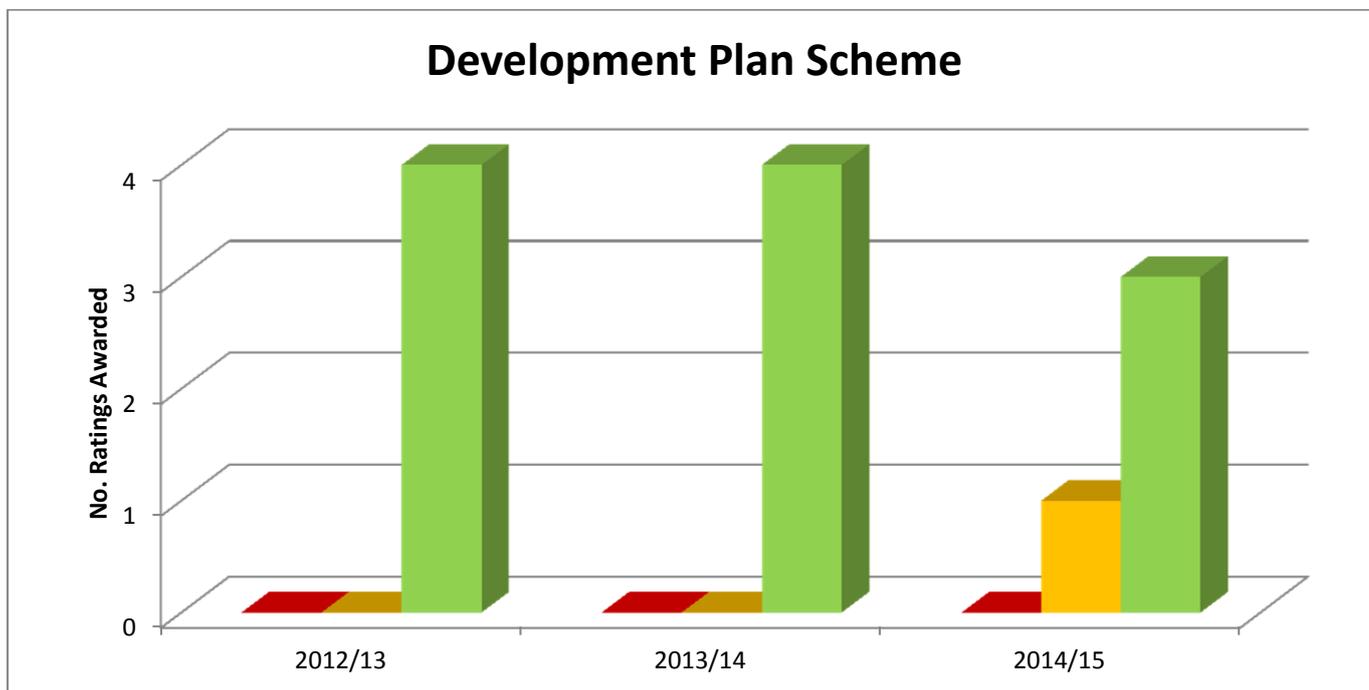


The table above shows that all SDPs have been up-to-date since PPF reporting began in 2012/13. The average age of SDPs is 2.2 years with the youngest plan being 1 year old and the oldest being 3.3 years.

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 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. However, all plans are on course to be adopted within the required 5 year timescale.

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*

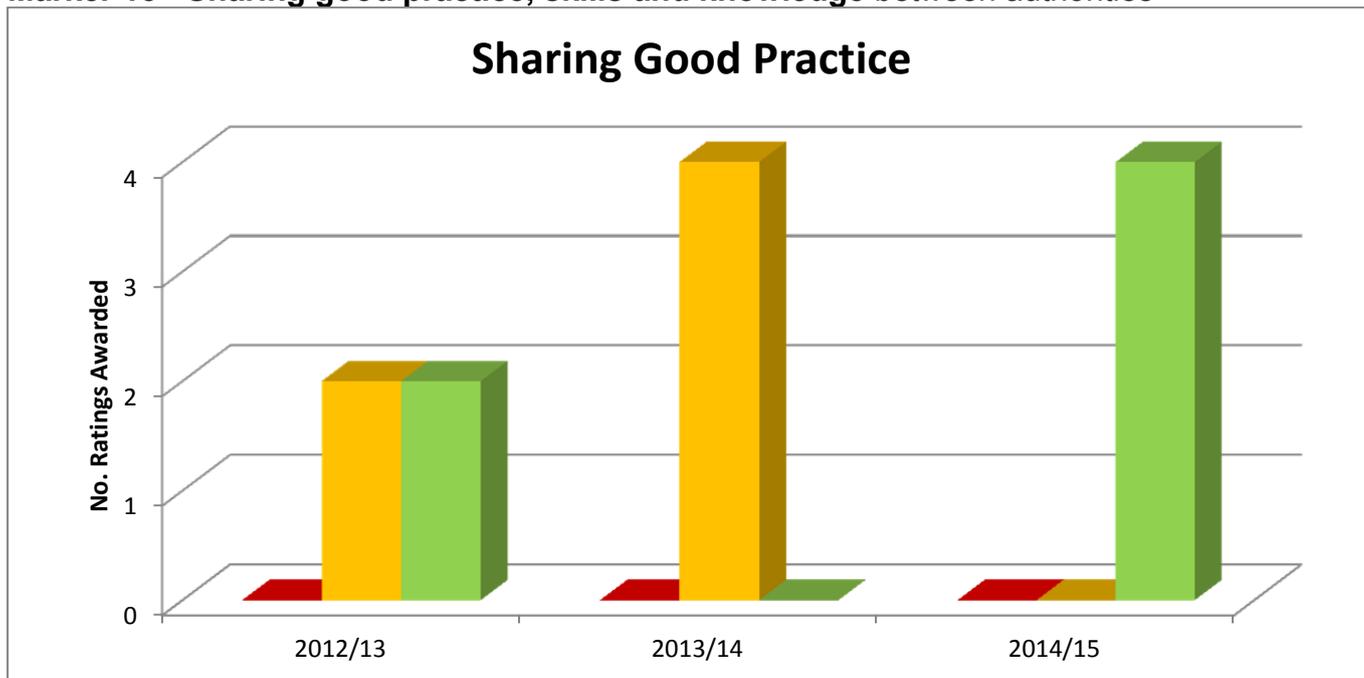
Marker 10 - Cross sector stakeholders* engaged early (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation – *if plan has been at pre-MIR stage during reporting year*

**including industry, agencies and Scottish Government*

Only two SDPAs were at a stage in their plan preparation which meant they were assessed against these markers. Both SDPAs were assessed against this marker last year with one improving from amber to green and the other maintaining their amber marking. The amber rating given was due to the report not making clear if the engagement activity was undertaken before publication of the Main Issues Report.

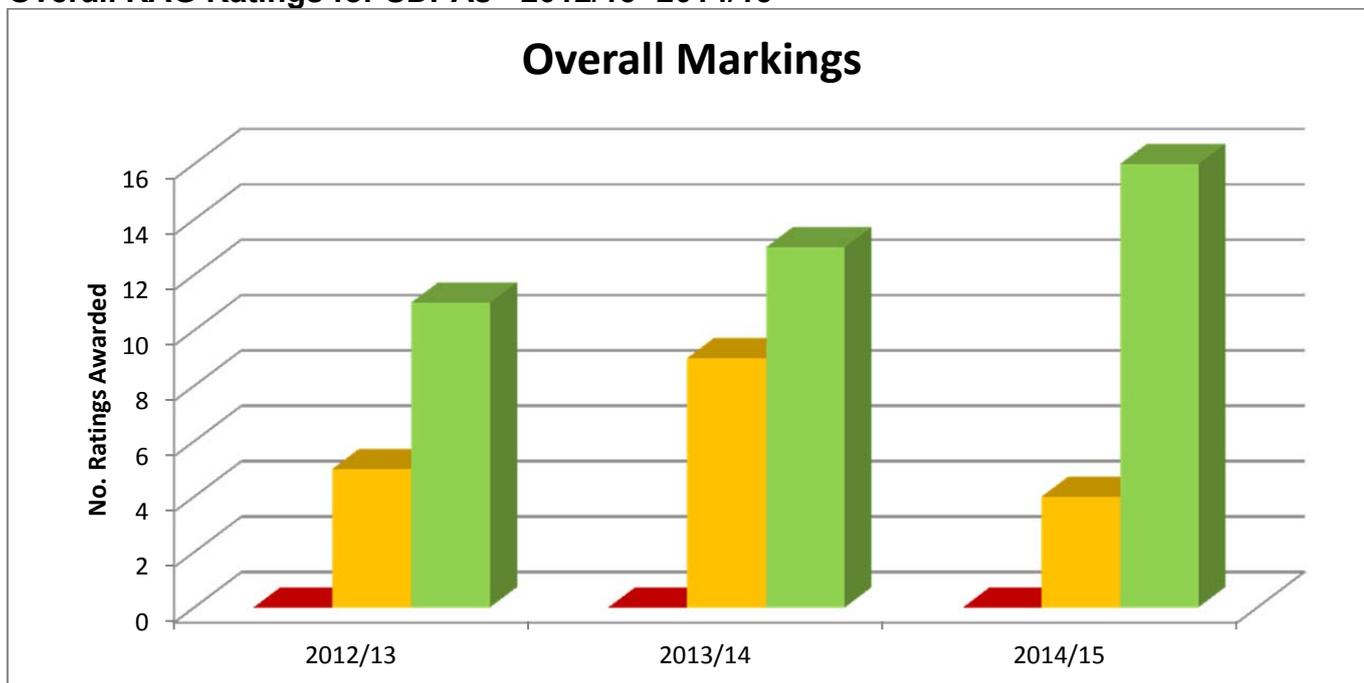
Sharing Good Practice, Skills and Knowledge

Marker 15 - Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge between authorities



There has been varied performance over the 3 years of PPF reporting, however, for the first time 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. Examples of working with NHS boards and other areas of the UK were also evidenced. SDPAs are investigating the potential of creating more virtual fora to allow the sharing of good practice to become more regular and informal.

Overall RAG Ratings for SDPAs - 2012/13 -2014/15



We are really pleased to see SDPAs embracing a culture of continuous improvement over the 3 PPF reporting periods. There have been no red markings given throughout the period with the number of amber ratings decreasing and green ratings increasing. SDPAs are encouraged to ensure that they provide the necessary evidence to ensure that ratings are either maintained or improved on in the coming years. Delivering on their service improvement commitments should help ensure that this is the case.

KEY AGENCIES – ANNUAL REPORT

Seven key agencies (agencies) provide PPF reports.

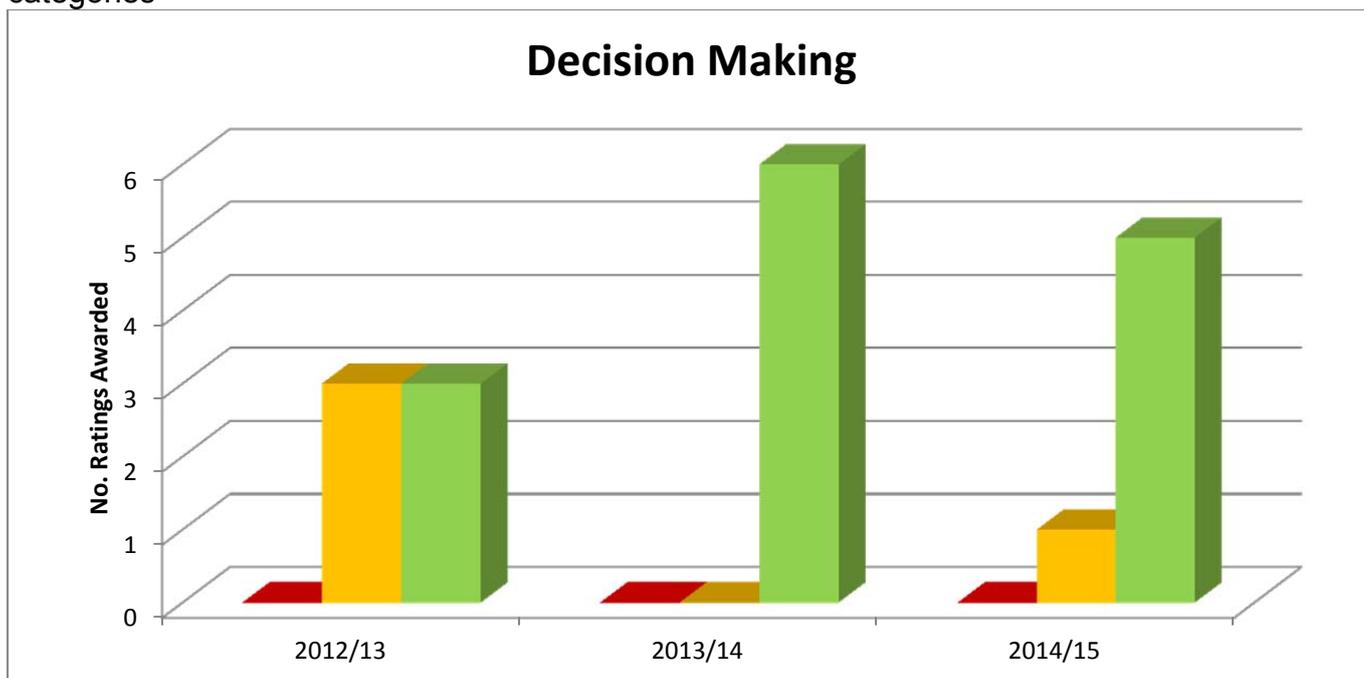
- Architecture and Design Scotland
- Historic Scotland
- Scottish Water
- SEPA
- SNH
- Sportscotland
- Transport Scotland

This report provides a summary of the 6 performance markers which were applicable to the agencies. We are conscious that the key markers identified below do not fit exactly or reflect the work that the Key Agencies undertake within the planning process and we will look to work with them to tailor these markers more specifically for future reporting.

Analysis of Performance Markers

Decision Making Timescales

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

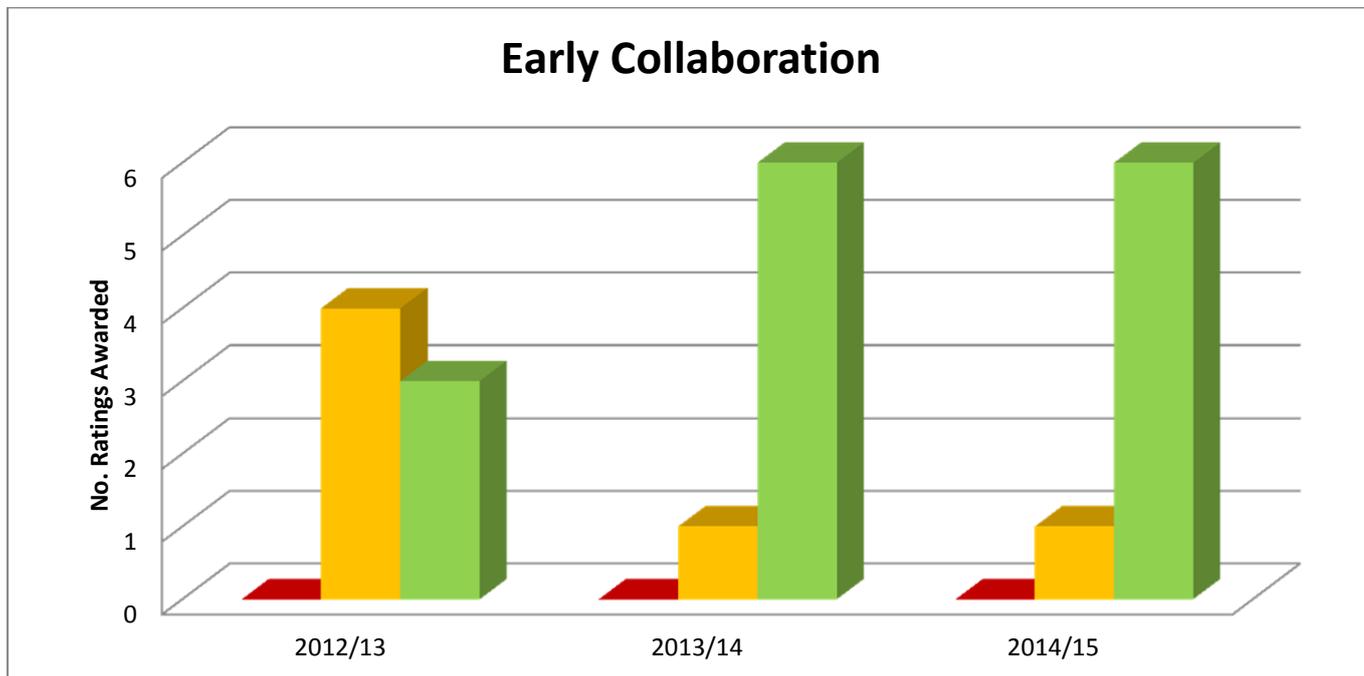


Whilst this marker is entitled 'decision making' in the context of Key Agencies it relates to their responses to consultations on planning applications, development plans and Strategic Environmental Assessment. There has been a slight dip in performance this year by one Agency but the other agencies continue to improve.

Early Collaboration with Applicants and Consultees

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

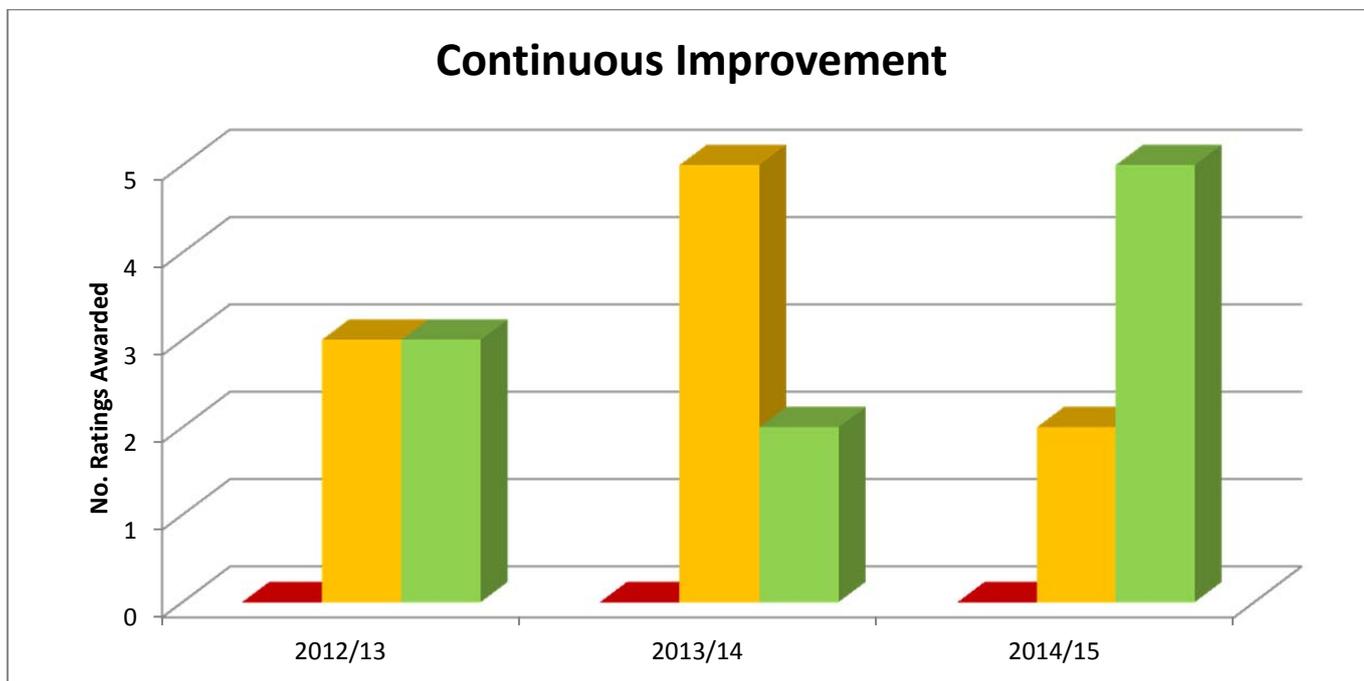


This marker and the work it represents remains pivotal to the role that Agencies play in the planning process, ensuring that they contribute to the earliest stages of the planning process at both development planning and planning application stage. Overall, progress remains stable with only one Agency struggling to evidence the marker. The use of standing guidance is also being used to reduce the consultation levels across the agencies. Proportionate advice is something else that comes out from the reports with a drive to ensure further information is only requested where necessary.

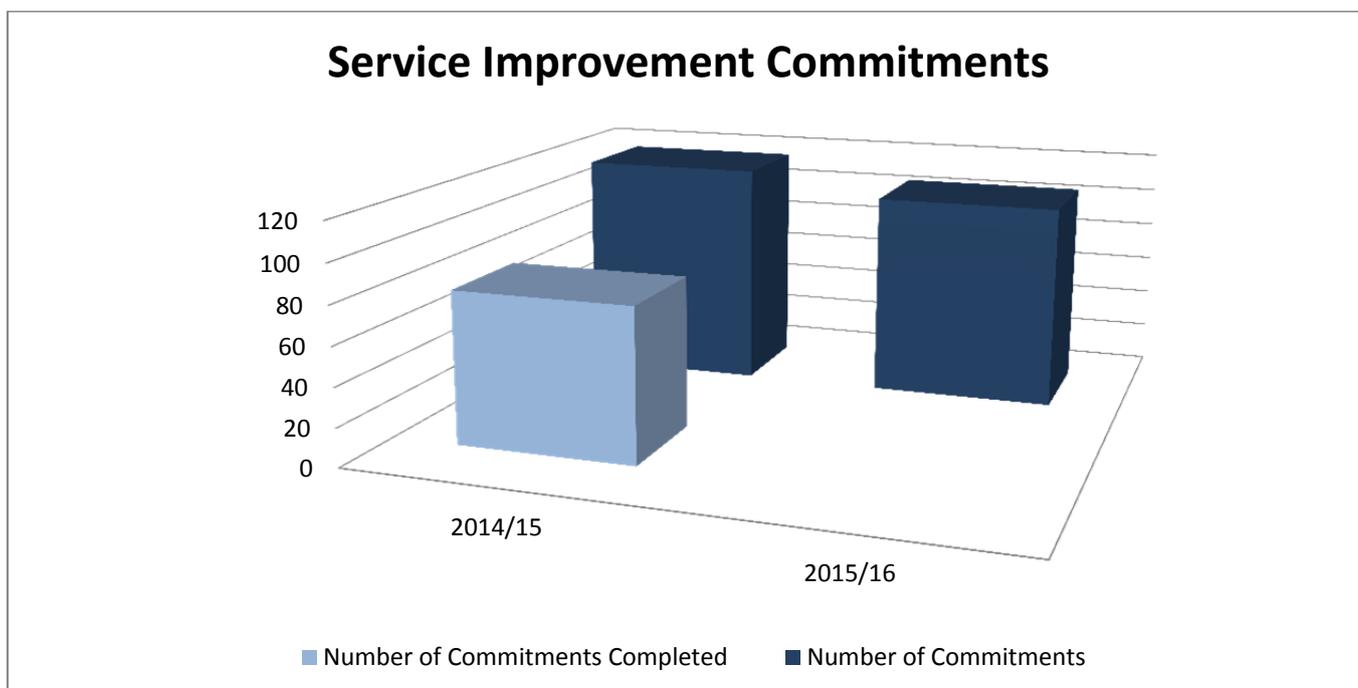
Continuous Improvement

Marker 5 - Continuous improvement:

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



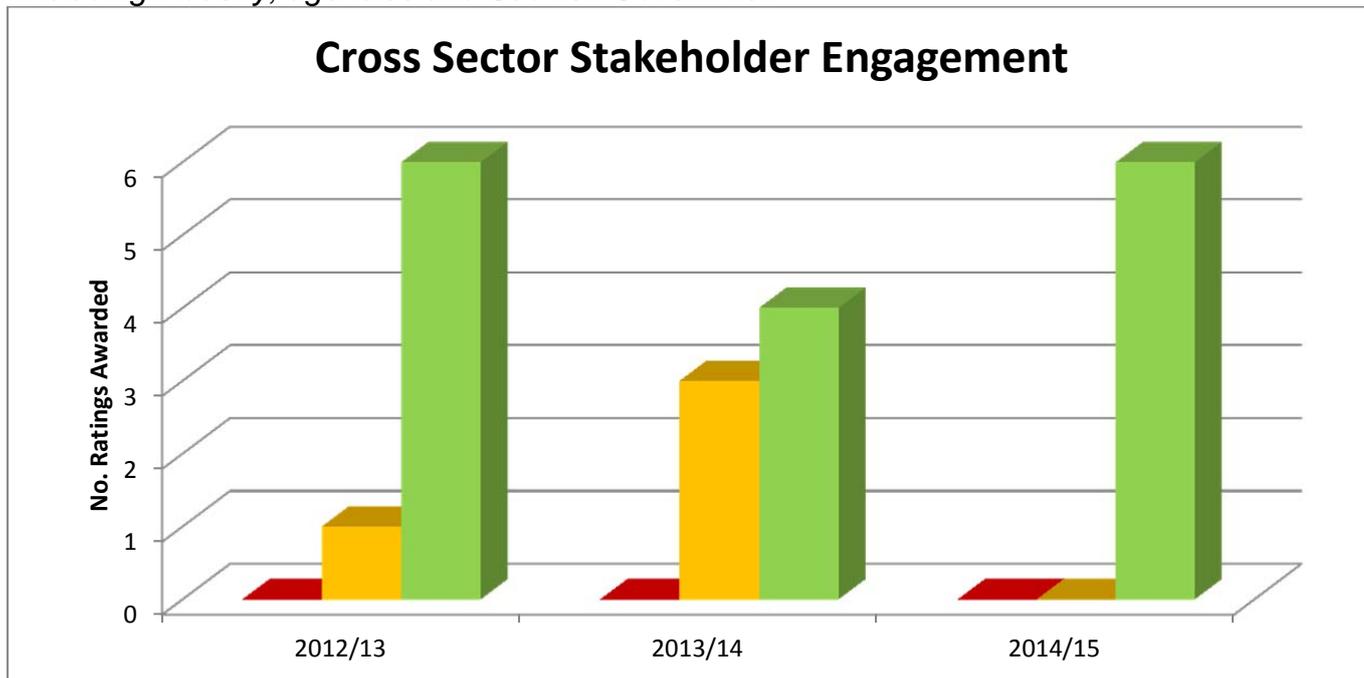
There is a strong improvement with this marker this year, with a complete turnaround in terms of the amber and green markings. 5 agencies now show as green, improving their decision making timescales, their early collaboration and completion of service improvements.



Stakeholder Engagement at pre-MIR Stage

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

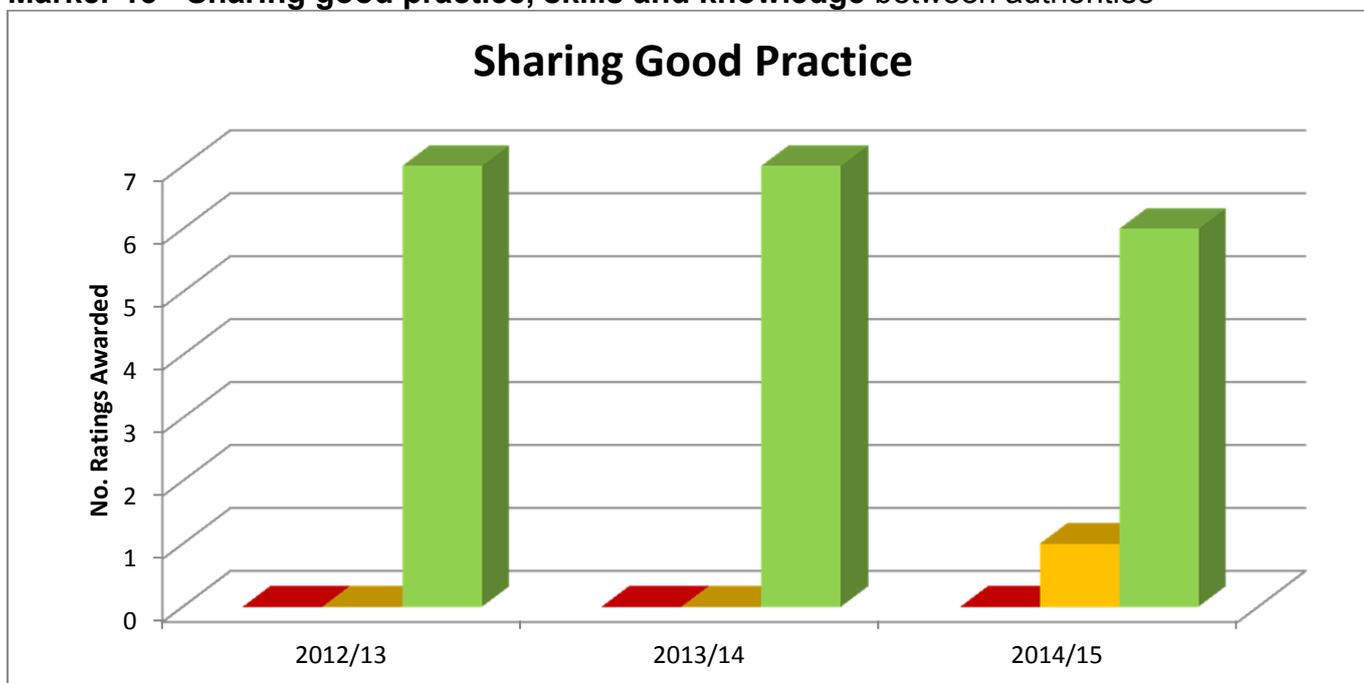
**including industry, agencies and Scottish Government*



This year has seen a marked improvement in the evidence provided to support this marker. All agencies were awarded a green marker this year with good examples of engaging with planning authorities at a number of SDP and LDP stages, not only at policy level but at site level too.

Sharing Good Practice, Skills and Knowledge

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

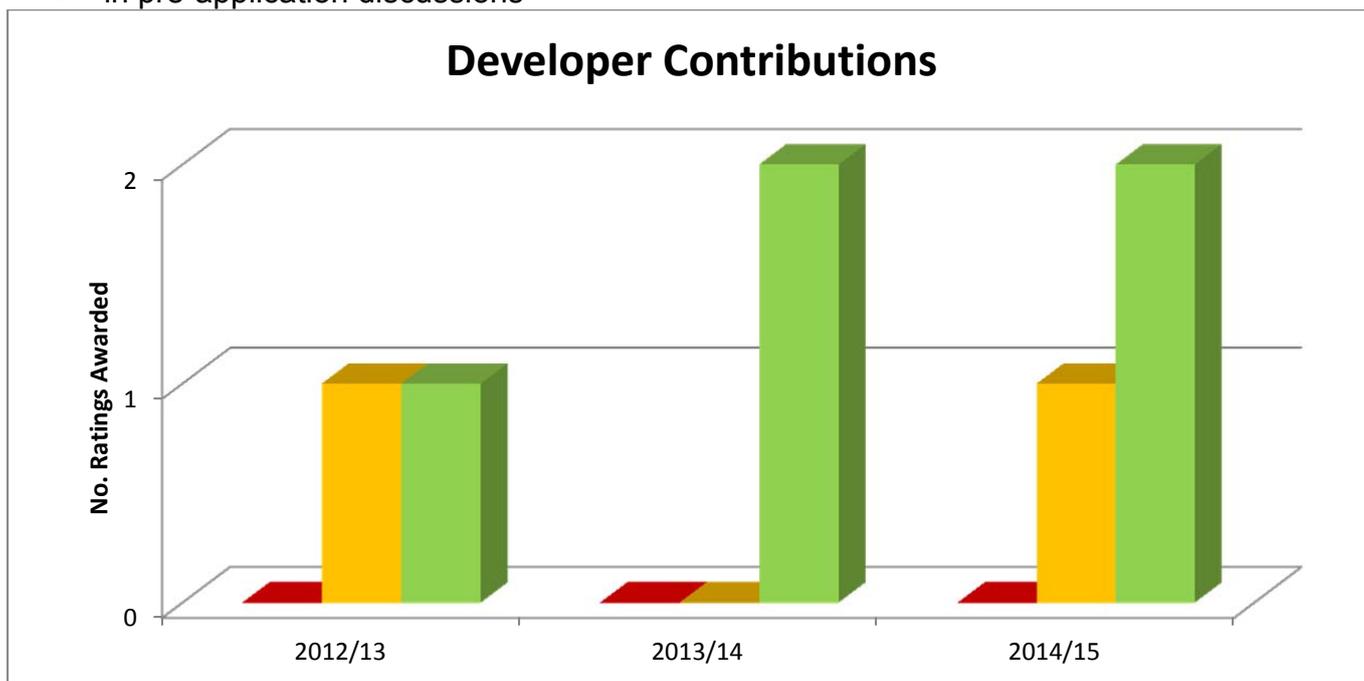


One amber marking was awarded this year for the first time, this was due to a lack of evidence within the report. Partnership working is a strong feature of the reports. The use of the Key Agencies Group is clearly helping to provide a forum for discussion around skills and good practice. Agencies are also pro-active in organising events for not only themselves but for stakeholders. The PPF also provided a note of more innovative practice, for example, the creation of a video to support good practice on Onshore Windfarms and the use of newsletters and social media.

Developer Contributions

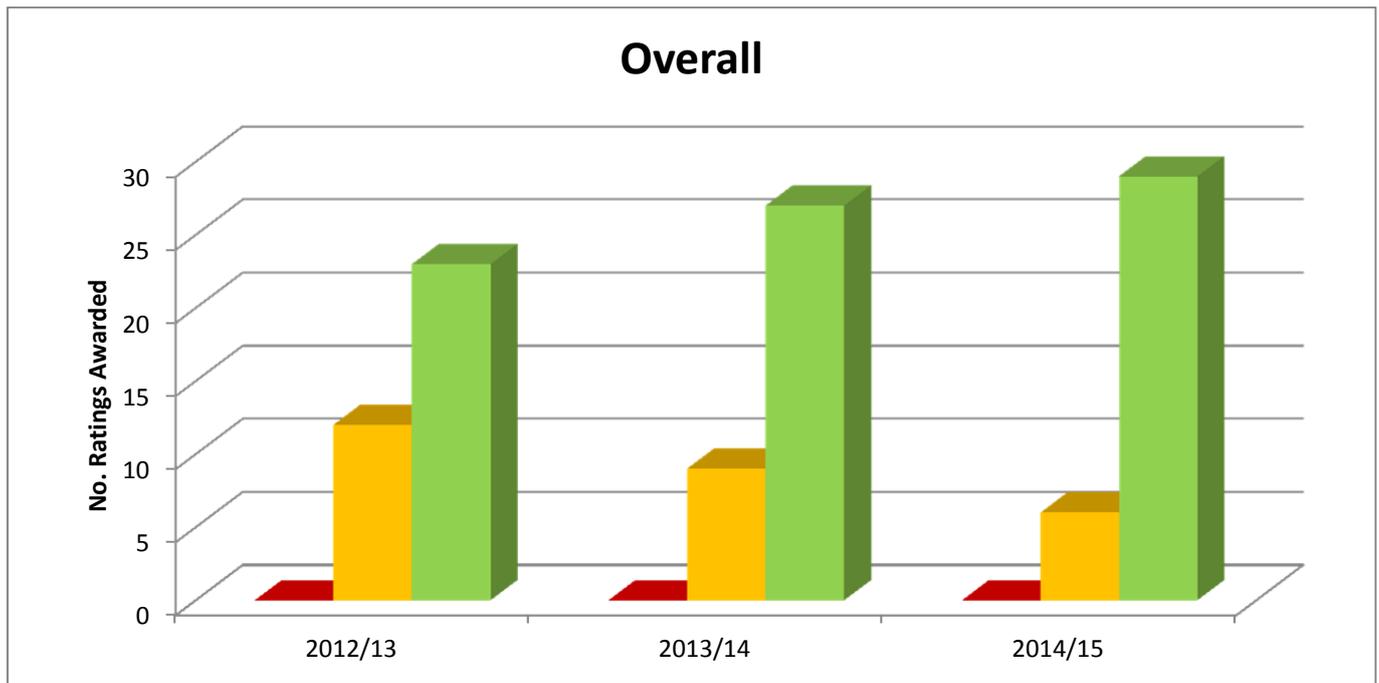
Marker 15 - Developer contributions: clear and proportionate expectations

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



Only 3 agencies were assessed against this marker. The two authorities that received a green rating provided clear examples of how their early engagement and their publications ensured the necessary contributions were identified at the outset.

Overall RAG Ratings for Key Agencies 2012/13 - 2014/15



Once again the reports published by the Key Agencies were of a high quality, providing an insight into the broad range of work they undertake. It is clear, as noted above that the performance markers do not neatly fit the work undertaken by the key agencies and we will work with them to tailor these in the future to make them more meaningful.