

Development Plan Project Management Review

November 2015

Introduction

Effective development plan preparation is the result of the controlled management of the project's scope, activities, resources, stakeholder engagement and timescales. However, it can be difficult for a manager or organisation to judge objectively whether the project is progressing adequately or is in fact at risk. An independent review can offer recommendations designed to increase the opportunities for successful plan preparation.

We have been working with Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority (LLTNPA) and Orkney Islands Council to pilot a Gateway Review style process to assist in the project management of the Local Development Plan (LDP) process. The process involves setting up an independent review team to advise whether the project is adequately progressing. The focus is on project management of the process not the quality of the plans policies. The LLTNPA review was carried out in June 2014 and Orkney in March 2015. Feedback from all stakeholders of both reviews was very positive.

Key benefits include:

- Independent review provides credibility to the findings;
- The final report provides a balance of good points and areas for improvement;
- Process completed in 3 days;
- Opportunity to learn new skills and learn from other authorities experience.

Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority (LLTNPA)

LLTNPA were the first Authority to pilot undertaking a gateway style review of their local development plan process. The NPA responded to a request from the Scottish Government for authorities which were at or were soon going to be at either the Main Issues Report or Proposed Plan stage of their LDP preparation. Following publication of their Main Issues Report in May 2014 a review of the preparation process was undertaken.

Review Team

Review Team Leader:	John Harkin
Review Team Members:	Scott Dalgarno – Highland Council, Tony Cain - Stirling Council and Scott Nisbet – LLTNPA

Prior to the review taking place an exercise was undertaken to identify the key stakeholders who had engaged in the preparation of the Main Issues Report. These stakeholders were invited to take part in the interviews as part of the review. A briefing note was issued to each interviewee outlining the background to the review, the process and what their expected input would be (this note is attached at Annex B). The key thing for stakeholders to note was that the review was concentrated on the preparation process and not the content of the Main Issues Report.

List of Interviewees:

NPAA	Kilmaronock Community Council
Argyll & Bute Council (Housing)	Forestry Commission
Arrochar & Tarbet Community Development Trust	Stirling Council (Transport)
Geddes Consulting	Blairmore Village Trust
Felsham Planning and Development	Planning Team Manager, SNH
Callander Community Council	Balloch Community Council
Transport Scotland	

The review was carried out from 17 June 2014 to 19 June 2014 at the NPA HQ, Balloch and the NPA office, Callander with the draft recommendations being submitted to the Senior Reporting

Officer (SRO) at the end of the final day of the review. Some minor comments were submitted by the SRO and the final report was issued on 23 June 2014.

Highlights

The review team highlighted the following positive aspects of the LDP process:

- Project planning and management approach has been well received.
- Strong cross-team organisational commitment to the process.
- High levels of trust in the NPA, project team and plan process was expressed by community organisations.
- Community stakeholders have greatly appreciated the highly energised engagement undertaken and in particular where the Charrette process has been used.

Recommendations

The review team also made a number of recommendations:

- Establish a project board to oversee delivery of the plan
- Create an appropriately detailed project plan
- Maintain a high level of engagement with communities
- Establish an improved and regular engagement with partner agencies
- Establish a more comprehensive risk management processes
- Share learning with other local authorities and stakeholders

Feedback

This was a welcome opportunity to seek external review of our working practices and how we might ensure there was efficient and proportionate project management of the plan process. The recommendations and commentary were very useful in validating the benefit of project management and highlighting both what we were doing well and what could be approached differently. This has been a useful reference point. Bringing in the views of external organisations or community groups was also of huge help as it engaged with some of those we work with on a regular basis.

Stuart Mearns, Head of Planning & Rural Development

Loch Lomond and Trossachs provided feedback on their experiences to the Scottish Government's Heads of Planning event in November 2014.

Orkney Islands Council

Following the presentation given by Loch Lomond and Trossachs at the Heads of Planning Event in November 2014 Orkney Islands Council (OIC) indicated that they would be interested in piloting the gateway review approach and that they would be in a position to do this by the end of March 2015 after the publication of their Main Issues Report.

The review team was smaller this time around with John Harkin returning as chair, Jan Falconer, Strategic Development and Regeneration, Orkney Islands Council and Austin Taylor, Shetland Islands Council making up the rest the review team. It was particularly helpful to include Austin as this provided the review team with somebody who was both familiar with planning and the unique issues faced by the Scottish Islands when creating a plan.

Review Team

Review Team Leader:	John Harkin
Review Team Members:	Austin Taylor and Jan Falconer

To assist in setting up the review the materials used to support the Loch Lomond and Trossachs review were used to inform stakeholders of their intended role.

List of Interviewees:

Head of Planning and Regulatory Services, OIC	Chair of Development & Infrastructure Committee, OIC
Planning Manager, OIC	Chair of Planning Committee, OIC
Development Management Team, OIC	Scottish National Heritage (SNH)
Senior Planner, Development Planning OIC	Historic Scotland
Roads Services, OIC	SEPA
Environmental Health, OIC	RSPB
Development Management Team, OIC	Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation
Community Council Liaison Officer, OIC	Local Planning Agent
	Local Builders Federation

The review was carried out from 24 March 2015 to 26 March 2015 at Orkney Islands Council Building, Kirkwall. The draft recommendations were submitted to the SRO on the final day of the review with the final recommendations being submitted on 3rd April 2015.

Highlights

The review team highlighted the following positive aspects of the LDP process:

- Using lessons learned from previous LDP preparation process provided a clear understanding of the key elements of the plan preparation process.
- Consistent and positive feedback has been received on the frequency and quality of communication within the council.
- Positive feedback was also received from external stakeholders with regards to communications and engagement.
- Project management skills are being developed through the PRINCE2 training programme.

Recommendations

The review team also made a number of recommendations:

- Document the current LDP development risks; develop specific mitigation plans to address each of them; and ensure sufficient resources are allocated to carry the plans out.
- Develop a detailed project plan paying particular attention to identifying robust delivery dates and the resources required to deliver.
- Roles should be more clearly defined and separated, with the Planning Manager becoming the Project Manager and a better defined role for the Senior Planner as the project lead.
- Reassess the resource requirements needed to produce a high quality LDP (resource and financial) and increase / redeploy more resource in order to deliver an accessible, high quality LDP on time.
- Put in place clear contingency arrangements to handle cover for all critical resources within the project team.
- Produce a short communications plan setting out how key sectors of the community will be reached (e.g. young people, businesses, employers, developers, visitors etc.) and the channels of communication to be used.

Feedback

I would like to thank Scottish Government for providing my authority with the opportunity to participate in such a professional and open process. It was well led and having such a small but focussed process was excellent.

The particular mix of participants, of a peer planning professional, a peer local authority Chief Officer along with the expert professional lead certainly gave both gravitas, pace and focus to the process. It was a learning journey for me, which I found both professionally and personally gratifying. Spatial planning is so important to the future of Orkney as it is for all Local Authorities where ever they maybe. This experience has certainly provided our authority with an excellent opportunity as a Chief Officer I am keen to support its implementation.

Jan Falconer, Strategic Development and Regeneration, Orkney Islands Council - Review Team Member

I very much appreciated and enjoyed the opportunity. I thoroughly enjoyed the feedback sessions with partners/ customers/ agents etc because of their openness and candour that has given me a lot of insight. The way of working and the team completing the report on the final day meant that the sense of shared achievement was immediate and I really valued us being able to deliver our findings and get immediate feedback.

Austin Taylor, Team Leader, Development Plans and Heritage, Shetland Islands Council – Review Team member

Process

The following methodology outlines the key steps to be taken to carry out a review (see Annex A for more detail).

- **Identify a suitable time within your project to carry out a review (e.g. MIR or Proposed Plan Stage)**
- **Identify a Senior Reporting Officer**
- **Identify review team members**
- **Identify stakeholders**
- **Invite stakeholders for interviews (briefing template at Annex B)**
- **Arrange meeting facilities**
- **Finalise the review itinerary for the 3 days – this should include time to meet internal and external stakeholders and the project team**
- **Relevant paperwork should be provided to review team one week in advance**
- **Review undertaken**
- **End of each day a round up session should be held and recommendations drafted**
- **Final day finish drafting report and present to the SRO and project team**
- **Report should be finalised within one week of completion of the review**

Annex A

How to do a Review

When should the reviews be held?

Reviews can be carried out at the conclusion of a key stage of plan preparation. A review report should include a suggested timescale for undertaking the next review. Repeat reviews or more regular reviews may be recommended where projects are at significant risk.

Who are the review team?

The review team should encompass senior personnel with extensive experience of running projects. At least one of the members of the team should have a good understanding of the planning system and experience of working with or assessing developments plans.

As an illustration the review team could encompass:

- An external assessor (chair) - likely to be a management consultant or project management specialist – this could be somebody from within another Local Authority Department with project management experience
- A senior planning manager from an authority with a good track record of plan preparation.
- A senior manager from another local authority department with an understanding of authority processes.

The Assessment Meeting

The meeting allows the Senior reporting Officer (SRO) and Project Team to:

- confirm the initiative is ready for review, or record specifically why it is not to be reviewed
- determine what they should like to achieve from the review
- identify the required skill-set and experience for the review team, identify review team members and provisional dates for the planning meeting and the review
- Identify stakeholders to involve in review

The Planning Meeting

This is held about four weeks ahead of the actual review. The meeting is chaired by the Review Team Leader (RTL) and provides an opportunity for Review Team Members (RTM) to meet each other and find out more about the initiative, finalise the list of stakeholders, documentation and logistics for the review.

Following the planning meeting the RTL assumes responsibility for liaising with the team delivering the initiative about the interview schedule etc.

Following a planning meeting the SRO should send all relevant project documentation to the review team, set up interviews with agreed stakeholders and book meeting rooms.

What approach should be taken?

An open and honest dialogue should be maintained throughout the process. The emerging findings should be shared at the end of each day. This should allow the Head of Planning the opportunity to correct any misinterpretations or 'off track' thinking. There should be no surprises within the Review Team's final report.

Recommendations should be based on the evidence presented and on the interviews with stakeholders that take place during the review. The review process is intended to be supportive and forward looking, taking into account future plans.

The Review Days

Reviews are normally conducted over three days. The first days of the review are for stakeholder interviews and evidence gathering, the last day is for finalising the draft report.

The review team discuss 'emerging findings' with the SRO at the end of each day, allowing them to share their early thoughts on the way the review is progressing and offer the SRO the opportunity to correct any misinterpretations or 'off track' thinking to ensure there are no surprises within the review team's report.

The draft report is presented to the SRO on the last day of the review and provides an opportunity to discuss its contents with the review team.

What should be contained in the Review Report?

The main elements of the Review Report should include:

- Project Background;
- Purpose and Conduct of the Review;
- Review Conclusion and Delivery Confidence Assessment;
- Findings and Recommendations;
- An appendix listing the Review Team membership and list of interviewees;
- An appendix containing a Summary of Recommendations.

Who should see the review report and how should it be used?

The report should be sent to the Head of Planning. With the development planning manager they should agree a set of actions against each of the recommendations. For example appropriate actions may include changes to the project plan, additional resources, further stakeholder engagement, improved or new project documentation, clarification of issues or redrafting sections of the plan.

Costs

The average cost for each of the pilot gateway reviews which we carried out was £7500. The main expense was the inclusion of a gateway review expert which was approximately £1000 per day plus travel and accommodation. The other expenses incurred was the travel and accommodation of the other review team members. Additional expenses could include travel expenses for interviewees, catering for interviews and the review team, and meeting room and equipment hire.

Authorities could keep costs to a minimum by arranging a reciprocal agreement whereby they could each participate in reviews for each other. Additional savings could be made through using authorities own meeting facilities and utilising telephone and video conference technology to minimise the need to pay for travel expenses.

Additional Support

The Scottish Government has published a guide to Gateway Review on our website. This outlines the process and some key considerations which should be taken into account during the interviews.

The guide can be accessed at:

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Government/ProgrammeProjectDelivery/IAOverview>

You can also contact the Programme and Project Management Centre of Expertise (PPM-CoE) (<mailto:PPM-CoE@gov.scot>) for assistance in setting up your review.

Annex B – Supporting Documents

Draft Stakeholder Invite

As you will be aware we published our [\[insert publication title\]](#) for consultation on [\[insert publication date\]](#) (see [\[insert weblink\]](#)). In order to help monitor our process to prepare this document, I should like to invite you to participate in a short external review in [\[insert month\]](#). Further background and details are outlined below.

Background

As a stakeholder in the development planning process, you will be aware of the importance of policies and actions with development and land use implications to be clearly articulated in the Local Development Plan (LDP). This plan provides the focus for supporting change and action in the Local Authority, and by keeping it updated we are able to respond to changing circumstances within the Local Authority and in the wider community. Engagement with the Local Authority's communities, the development industry, national bodies/organisations and local authority partners is, therefore, integral to policy development and the delivery of the LDP.

A successfully prepared development plan is the result of controlled management of the project's scope, activities, resources, stakeholder engagement and timescales. However, it can be particularly difficult for any organisation to self-determine whether a project's management is progressing effectively in terms of process.

We have therefore agreed to participate in an initiative to review progress of the development plan process (up to the publication of the Main Issues Report stage) and to do this effectively we need the involvement of people who have been an integral part of that process to date.

The review will be undertaken by a team of three/four members, including an external project management expert together with team members with independent development planning experience and internal and external understanding of the processes involved. They intend to hold brief interviews with various Local Authority staff, partner organisations and community organisation representatives about their involvement in the process and how they consider it has been administered. You should be asked to provide your own views of your interaction with the process to date and perhaps suggest where the process could be improved upon. Please note that the focus is on project management and not the content of the Main Issues Report.

The review team will use this evidence base to prepare a report setting out recommendations which should assist the Local Authority to achieve a successful plan, delivered in a timely, efficient and appropriate way making best use of available resources. It will also offer an opportunity for lessons learned to be disseminated and incorporated into subsequent planning processes.

Details

The interviews are to be held at Local Authority headquarters in [\[insert location\]](#) on [\[insert date\]](#) and [\[insert date\]](#) and are likely to last between half an hour and an hour, dependent upon the requirements of the review team.

Alternative arrangements, for example, telephone conferencing, can be made for those who are unable to travel to [\[insert location\]](#). Travel expenses may, of course, be reimbursed.

As one of our key stakeholders with experience and involvement in the Main Issues Report process to date, it should be greatly appreciated if you could participate in this review process. I

should appreciate if you could respond to my colleague **[insert contact]** – copied into this email - by **[insert date]**, indicating your availability on the **[insert dates]**.

If you have any queries or questions please don't hesitate to contact **[insert contact]**.

I look forward to hearing from you.

