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STATISTICAL PRESS RELEASE

PUBLICATION OF NORTHERN IRELAND PLANNING STATISTICS: FIRST QUARTER 2017/18 STATISTICAL BULLETIN

28 September 2017

Provisional planning statistics for the first quarter of 2017/18 are now available. These data provide an overall view of planning activity across the north of Ireland. Alongside this there is a summary of council performance across the three statutory targets for major development applications, local development applications and enforcement cases as laid out in the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015.

The publication is available on the Department for Infrastructure website at:

<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/planning-activity-statistics>

KEY POINTS

The key points from the Northern Ireland Planning Statistics First Quarter 2017/18 Statistical Bulletin are:

- There were 3,337 planning applications received during April to June 2017 (Q1), similar to the previous quarter (3,346) but down by 3% on the same period a year earlier. This comprised 3,297 local, 39 major and 1 regionally significant development application.
- During the first quarter of 2017/18, 3,301 planning applications were decided, an increase of nearly 2% over the quarter but a decrease of almost 6% when compared to the same period a year earlier.



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- The average processing time for major applications during Q1 was 56 weeks across all councils; an improvement of nearly 10 weeks from the 65 weeks reported for the first quarter last year. This is over 25 weeks longer than the statutory processing time target of 30 weeks, although it is still a relatively early stage in the year.
- The number of local planning applications received was 3,297, similar to the number received in the previous quarter but down by over 3% on the same period a year earlier. Across councils, Belfast City (445), Newry, Mourne and Down (400) and Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon (387) received the highest number of local planning applications during Q1.
- Across councils it took, on average, just over 15 weeks to process local applications to decision or withdrawal, an improvement of nearly 2 weeks on the same period last year. Five of the eleven councils were within the 15 week target during the first 3 months of 2017/18. The shortest average processing time for local applications across councils was just below 10 weeks in Mid and East Antrim, whilst the longest was nearly 24 weeks in Lisburn and Castlereagh.
- The number of enforcement cases opened was 840, a decrease of 11% on the same period last year. Apart from the 943 cases recorded in Q1 last year, this is still the highest number of enforcement cases opened in any first quarter since 2010/11 when 1,028 cases were opened. Across the councils, Belfast City (127) and Ards and North Down (110) opened the largest number of cases in Q1.
- More than three out of every four (77%) of enforcement cases were concluded within 39 weeks, nearly 7 percentage points above the statutory target but just over 4 percentage points lower than the equivalent period last year. Ten of the eleven councils are on track to meet the target with performance ranging from a high of 96% concluded within 39 weeks in Antrim and Newtownabbey to 57% in Newry, Mourne and Down.
- The approval rate for all planning applications for the quarter was 94%, similar to the rates for the previous quarter and a year earlier. First quarter approval rates varied across councils from 89% to 98%.
- The 13 renewable energy applications received was by far the lowest first quarter figure in thirteen years (since 2004/05). Less than one quarter (23%) of these were for single wind turbines, compared with nearly half (48%) a year earlier. The average processing time for renewable energy applications was almost 96 weeks in Q1, over 42 weeks longer than the same period last year.

NOTES TO EDITORS

Background to Northern Ireland Planning Statistics First Quarter 2017/18 Statistical Bulletin.

1. This is the latest in a regular series of statistical bulletins related to Development Management (Planning) functions in the north of Ireland. The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 sets out the legislative framework for development management and provides that, from 1 April 2015, councils now largely have responsibility for this planning function. This statistical bulletin reports on activity and performance for the first quarter of 2017/18 (1st April 2017 – 30th June 2017).
2. A new classification hierarchy for planning applications came into effect on 1st April 2014 in advance of the transfer of planning functions to local government from 1st April 2015. The development categories are – major and local development applications, processed by councils, and regionally significant development applications processed within the Department. Note that the ‘major development’ category is based on a completely different definition to the previous ‘major’ category so figures relating to this category should not be compared with those from earlier bulletins (i.e. pre-2014/15).
3. There are three legislative performance targets covered in the report related to the processing of local development decisions within an average of 15 weeks; major development decisions within an average of 30 weeks; and processing 70% of enforcement cases to target conclusion within 39 weeks.
4. The final records of all applications from 1st April 2017 – 30th June 2017 were transferred in August 2017 from a live database and inspected for consistency in coding before figures were prepared for publication. These figures are regarded as ‘provisional’ and will be subject to further scheduled revisions as further updates are made to records in the live database environment. Finalised annual figures for 2017/18 will be released at the end of June 2018.

Quarterly data are provided in more detailed accompanying Excel tables together with comparable data from the previous financial year, where possible.

5. Electronic copies of the Bulletin, associated Excel tables and summary infographic are available free of charge from:
<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/planning-activity-statistics>

Official Statistics

This is an Official Statistics publication and therefore follows the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. You can find further information about the Code of Practice at:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html>

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