

STATISTICAL PRESS RELEASE

The Northern Ireland Planning Statistics: First Quarter 2021/22 Statistical Bulletin, has been published today

~ Thursday 30 September 2021

Provisional planning statistics for the first quarter of 2021/22 are now available. These data provide an overall view of planning activity. 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:
www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/planning-activity-statistics

KEY POINTS

The key points from the Northern Ireland Planning Statistics: First Quarter 2021/22 Statistical Bulletin are:

- Planning activity and processing performance in 2020/21 were impacted by the restrictions put in place due to the coronavirus pandemic. This should be borne in mind and caution should be taken when interpreting these figures and when making comparisons with other time periods.

- There were 3,983 planning applications received during the first quarter of 2021/22; an increase of eight percent on the previous quarter and up by nearly three-quarters on the same period a year earlier. This comprised 3,949 local and 34 major applications.
- In the first quarter of 2021/22, 3,455 planning applications were decided upon; up by six percent over the quarter and up by over nine-tenths from the same period a year earlier. Decisions were issued on 3,421 local and 34 major applications during the most recent quarter.
- The average processing time for local applications brought to a decision or withdrawal during the first three months of 2021/22 was 15.8 weeks across all councils. This exceeds the 15 week target and represents a decrease of 1.6 weeks from the same period a year earlier. Five of the 11 councils were within the 15 week target after the first quarter of 2021/22.
- The average processing time for major applications brought to a decision or withdrawal during the first three months of 2021/22 was 53.6 weeks across all councils. This represents a decrease of 1.2 weeks compared with the same period a year earlier but is still considerably higher than the 30 week target.
- Across councils 72% of enforcement cases were concluded within 39 weeks during the first three months of 2021/22. This meets the statutory target of 70% and represents a substantial increase from the rate reported for the same period in 2020/21 (60%). Individually, eight of the 11 councils were within target after the first quarter of 2021/22.

Notes for Editors

Background to Northern Ireland Planning Statistics: First Quarter 2021/22 Statistical Bulletin.

1. This is the latest in a regular series of statistical bulletins related to Development Management (Planning) functions. 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 2021/22 (1 April 2021 – 30 June 2021). Year-to-date processing performance for the three month period (1 April 2020 – 30 June 2020) is also provided.
2. A new classification hierarchy for planning applications came into effect on 1 April 2014 in advance of the transfer of planning functions to local government from 1 April 2015. The development categories are – major and local development applications, processed primarily by councils, and regionally significant development applications, processed within the Department for Infrastructure. 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 1 April 2021 – 30 June 2021 were transferred in August 2021 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 2021/22 will be released in July 2022.

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

5. Following an independent assessment by the UK Statistics Authority, the NI Planning Statistics report received National Statistics accreditation in December 2020, demonstrating that it meets the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value.
6. Electronic copies of the bulletin, associated Excel tables and summary infographic are available free of charge from: www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/planning-activity-statistics

Official Statistics

This is a National Statistics publication and therefore follows the Code of Practice for Statistics. You can find further information about the Code of Practice at: www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/code-of-practice/

Additional Information

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