



Building Standards

Annual Verification Performance Report 2024 to 2025



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1.0.1	30/07/2024	2024/25 Annual Performance Report
1.0.2	29/10/2024	Staffing update
1.0.3	24/01/2025	Q3 Update

1. Introduction to the verifier

Standard Statement

The verification performance report is a strategic planning and management tool that provides information about the local authority building standards service, communicates the vision and strategy, and sets out performance against strategic goals and targets.

Building standards verifiers in Scotland are required to utilise the performance report to manage, monitor, review and develop strategies for their business, and should focus on the performance framework's core perspectives and cross-cutting themes.

Orkney

Lying off the north-east coast of Scotland, between John O'Groats and the Shetland Isles, Orkney is an archipelago of over 70 islands and skerries, 17 off which are inhabited. With a coastline totalling 570 miles, the islands cover an area of 376 square miles, more than half of which is taken up by the Mainland, the group's largest island.

Orkney can be divided into three distinct regions – the North Isles, the South Isles, and the Mainland. Although Burray and South Ronaldsay are 'islands' they are connected to the Orkney mainland via causeways called the Churchill Barriers.

With a population of just over 22,000 - the majority of people live on the Mainland, with the greatest population concentrations around the main towns of Kirkwall and Stromness. Kirkwall, the capital, is the administrative centre of Orkney with a population of 9,293.

Orkney map.



Environment

The islands of Orkney are mainly low lying with a landscape of green fields, heather moorland heath and lochs. The underlying sandstone rock breaks-down easily to

form good fertile soils and much of the landscape is farmed. The exception is the island of Hoy which is famous for dramatic hills and valleys and spectacular cliffs.

Employment

Farming and fishing continue in the top employment sectors of the islands, with beef farming being the mainstay of the agricultural community, Orkney is renowned for its quality beef production. The white and crab fishing fleets are well established, and Orkney has the largest crab processing plant in the UK. The oil industry provides important employment opportunity with the Flotta Oil Terminal remaining active 45 years after becoming fully operational in 1976. Tourism and food processing have become increasingly important and Orkney has become one of the busiest ports in Scotland for visiting cruise ships and liners. Orkney has fast become a key player in the renewable energy sector with wind, wave, and tidal developments all prevalent on the islands. The construction industry remains buoyant and continues to be a major source of employment. Orkney Islands Council is the largest employer with a workforce of approximately 2,000 staff.

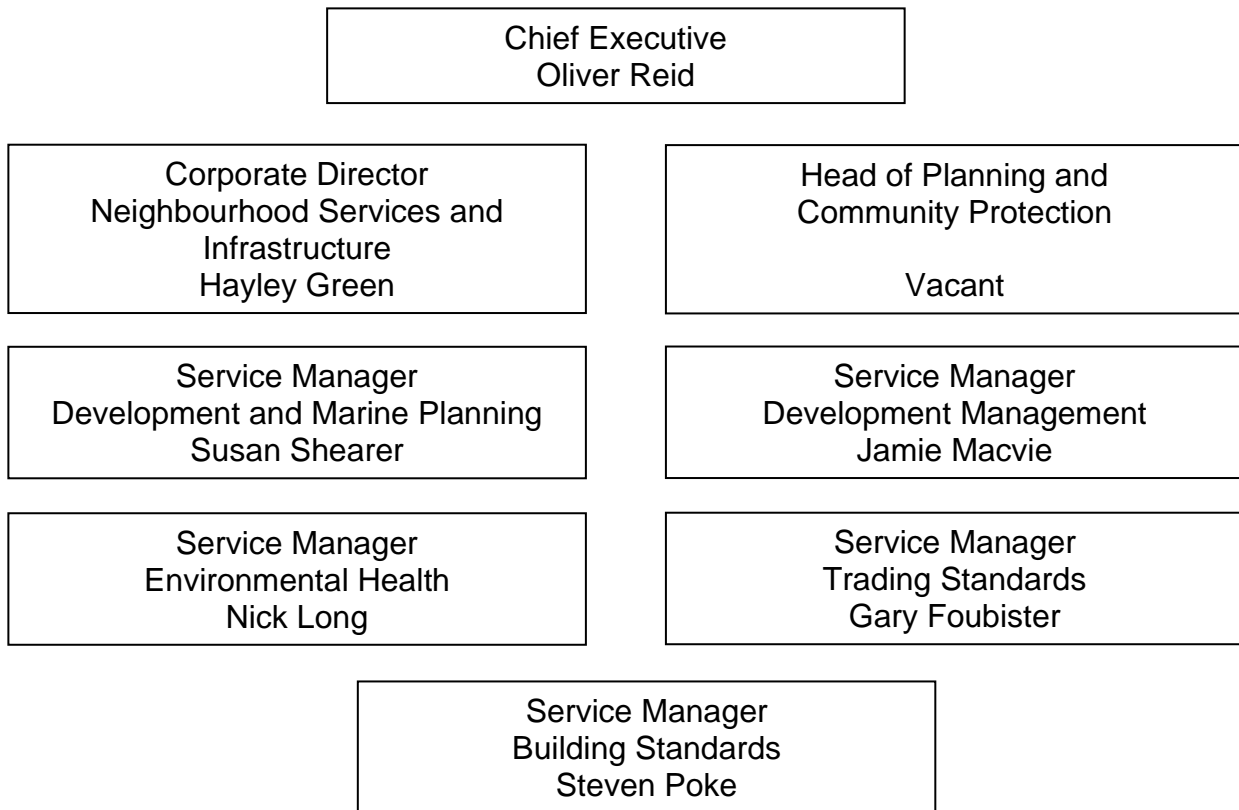
Responsibilities

In addition to the main verification services, Building Standards also provide or assist with the following:

- Licensing - provide expert technical advice, inspection services and certification relating to applications made under the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982.
- Home Improvement Grant – provide assessment and inspection services in conjunction with Orkney Health and Care for Disabled Adaptation Housing Grants made under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 and the Council's Scheme of Assistance.
- Small Repairs Grant Scheme - administer and provide an inspection service for the Council's Small Repairs Grant Scheme in conjunction with Orkney Care and Repair.
- Property Enquiry Certificates - accommodate requests for Property Enquiry Certificates.
- Information requests from internal and external bodies - e.g. Council's Corporate Services, Local Authority Building Standards Scotland, Scottish Government Building Standards Division (BSD), Freedom of Information requests.
- Collection of housing statistics for onward transmission to the Scottish Government, i.e. NB1-2 and Stock4. (NB1 – National House Building Statistics – Private Sector, NB2 – National House Building Statistics – Local Authority, Stock 4 – Changes to Housing Stock).

Organisational Chart

The following chart identifies the council's organisational structure from the Chief Executive to the Service Manager Building Standards:



2. Building Standards Verification Service Information

Building Standards

The Building Standards service is located at The Council Offices, School Place, Kirkwall, KW15 1NY, and our verification responsibilities include:

Provision of the Verification service for the determination of Building Warrant applications and Completion Certificate submissions to ensure that buildings are constructed or adapted to:

- Secure the health, safety, welfare, and convenience of persons in or about buildings and of others who may be affected by buildings or matters connected with buildings.
- Further the conservation of fuel and power.
- Further the achievement of sustainable development.
- Enforcement activity empowered by the Building (Scotland) Act 2003.
- Maintenance of the Building Standards Register.

Public Interest Statement

The purpose of the building standards system is to protect the public interest. The system sets out the essential standards that are required to be met when building work or conversion of a building takes place in order to meet building regulations.

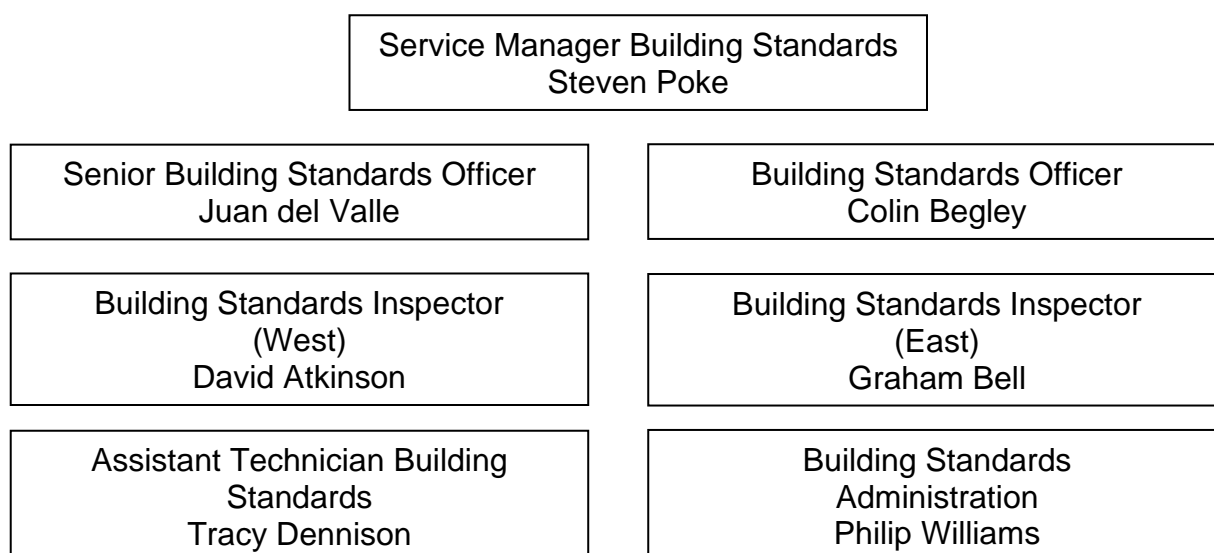
The building standards system checks that proposed building work or conversion of a building meets standards; inspections are limited to a minimal necessary to ensure

that legislation is not avoided. The control of work on site is not down to the system but is a matter for contracts and arrangements in place between a builder and client.

Verifiers, appointed by Scottish Ministers are responsible for the independent checking of applications for Building Warrants (BWs) to construct or demolish buildings, to provide services, fittings, or equipment in buildings, or for conversions.

Organisational Chart

The following chart identifies the organisational structure for the Building Standards team.



Staffing Position at 31 December 2024

The Building Standards service has recently experienced a number of staff changes which is reflected in the organisational chart shown above.

	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4
Head of Building Standards Verification Service			1	

Note: Tier 1 = Chief Executive; Tier 2 = Directors; Tier 3 = Heads of Service; Tier 4 = Managers.

		Building Standards Verification Service	Other
Managers	No. posts	1	
	Vacant		

Senior surveyor	No. posts	1	
	Vacant		
Surveyor	No. posts	1	
	Vacant		
Inspector	No. posts	2	
	Vacant		
Assistant technician	No. posts	1	
	Vacant		
Office support/ clerical	No. posts		1
	Vacant		
TOTAL		6	1

Note: Managers are those staff responsible for the operational management of a team/division. They are not necessarily line managers.

Staff age profile	Number
Under 30	0
30-39	0
40-49	3
50 and over	4

3. Strategic Objectives

The Council Plan 2023-2028

Orkney Islands Council shares its mission and values with The Orkney Partnership and the Council Plan supports the strategic priorities of the Community Plan.

Our shared mission is: Working together for Orkney.

Our pledges are as follows:



The Council's strategic priorities for 2023-2028, developed together with the Orkney community, are:



The Council Plan 2023-2028

Core principles:

- Protecting our environment and combating climate change.
- Equality, fairness and inclusion, particularly for vulnerable and remote communities like the ferry-linked isles.
- Sustainable and accessible services for all.
- Community wellbeing and mental health.
- Community wealth building for future generations.

Departmental issues to be addressed in the coming year

The purpose of Neighbourhood Services and Infrastructure is to support the Council's mission statement of "Working together for Orkney".

Neighbourhood Services and Infrastructure is a public facing directorate whose activities underpin all aspects of day to day life in Orkney. It provides front line services including marine and terrestrial planning, building standards, environmental health, trading standards, domestic and commercial waste collection and disposal and recycling , Our planned, cyclical, reactive and emergency resilience service within the Roads team, the provision and management of the Council fleet, A quarrying service for aggregates and Tarmacadam production, Internal ferry and towage services, public transport provision which covers buses and our air transportation services. We are the delivery agents for the council's capital programme covering a vast array of new build, alteration, and maintenance projects. We implement national legislative requirements and ensure all our services discharge their duties in a safe, compliant, and resilient way, seeking to protect our customers and service users at all times, within the financial and political constraints the council set.

Neighbourhood Services and Infrastructure are currently allocated to three Heads of Service portfolios with Planning, Development and Regulatory Services underpinning the Building Standards Service.

Planning and Community Protection – Includes development management, development and marine planning, building standards, environmental health, and trading standards. Also, EU Liaison and LEADER, economic development, Business Gateway and regeneration projects and project funding activities and BREXIT/Shared Prosperity Fund arrangements. The team is also leading on arrangements for new Crown Estates licencing governance and management.

The Neighbourhood Services and Infrastructure Action Plan target outcomes relative to the Planning, Development and Regulatory Service includes:

- To ensure delivery of Council strategic priorities in the context of realistic and efficient allocation of personnel and material resources.
- To complete a Development and Infrastructure wide customer survey and provide feedback.
- Ensure up-to-date Local Development Plan and relevant suite of Supplementary Guidance following new Planning Actions.
- To deliver successful Regional Marine Partnership and Crown Estates Pilot.

- To ensure the best projects and programmes are developed, sufficiently funded and implemented in order to ensure both energy efficiency and lower carbon emissions across the council estate.
- Pursue and deliver major projects that align to the Council Plan through Service and Council decisions e.g. Campus, Hydrogen, community wind, Islands Deal.
- Ensure viable land supply for development, including addressing constraints to housing in Kirkwall.
- Pursue the delivery of 21st century digital and Broadband capability including wireless connectivity.

Service Key Strategic Objectives

The Assistant Technician (Building Standards) post was established in February 2019 as a temporary post lasting for a maximum 2 years to assist the Building Standards team with the administration of applications received via the eBuilding Standards Portal. The service worked to establish the post as full-time permanent by demonstrating that the position is essential in meeting the targets set as a condition of Verifier Appointment and reappointment from 30 April 2023.

Continued development of electronic systems to ensure the effective delivery of eBuilding Standards for our customers, with ongoing maintenance and expansion of our electronic processes to ensure the effective management of the eBuilding Standards programme.

Having successfully been reappointed as Building Standards Verifier for our geographical area for a further six-year period, commencing 1 May 2023, reappointment will continue to follow the operational and performance framework that was effective from 1 April 2017. To ensure these challenging performance targets are achieved we will promote a positive approach to collection, review and reporting statistical information. In the event any benchmark has not been achieved we will investigate and introduce remedial measures wherever possible to ensure we deliver the level of service expected by our customers and as a condition of our verification appointment.

4. Key Performance Outcomes and Targets

The national verification performance framework is based on three core perspectives:

- Professional Expertise and Technical Processes.
- Quality Customer Experience.
- Operational and Financial Efficiency.

There are also three cross-cutting themes, comprising:

- Public Interest.
- Continuous Improvement.
- Partnership Working.

Summary of Key Performance Outcomes (KPOs)

Professional Expertise and Technical Processes	
KPO1	Minimise time taken to issue a first report or issue a Building Warrant or amendment to Building Warrant.
KPO2	Increase quality of compliance assessment during the construction processes.
Quality Customer Experience	
KPO3	Commit to the building standards customer charter.
KPO4	Understand and respond to the customer experience.
Operational and Financial Efficiency	
KPO5	Maintain financial governance.
KPO6	Commit to eBuilding Standards.
KPO7	Commit to objectives outlined in the annual performance report.

Summary of Key Performance Targets

KPO1 Targets	
1.1	95% of first reports (for Building Warrants and amendments) issued within 20 days – all first reports (including BWs and amendments issued without a first report).
1.2	90% of Building Warrants and amendments issued within 10 days from receipt of all satisfactory information – all Building Warrants and amendments (not including BWs and amendments issued without a first report).
KOP2 Targets	
	Targets to be developed as part of future review of KPO2.
KPO3 Targets	
3.1	National customer charter is published prominently on the website and incorporates version control detailing reviews (reviewed at least quarterly).
3.2	95% of BSD requests for information on a BSD 'Verifier Performance Reporting Service for Customers' case responded to by verifier within 5 days.
KPO4 Targets	
4.1	Minimum overall average satisfaction rating of 7.5 out of 10.

KPO5 Targets	
5.1	Building standards verification fee income to cover indicative verification service costs (staff costs plus 30%).
KPO6 Targets	
6.1	Details of eBuilding Standards to be published prominently on the verifier's website.
6.2	75% of each key Building Warrant related process being done electronically. Plan checking. Building Warrant or amendments (and plans) being issued. Verification during construction. Completion Certificates being accepted.
KPO7 Targets	
7.1	Annual performance report published prominently on website with version control (reviewed at least quarterly).
7.2	Annual performance report to include performance data in line with KPOs and associated targets (annually covering previous year e.g. April 2021 – March 2022).

5.2. Professional Expertise and Technical Processes

Protocols for dealing with work

A number of risk management protocols have been developed for key processes and are continually under review.

Performance management systems

Performance management systems (Development and Infrastructure Service Action Plan, Annual Verification Performance Report, “How Good is our Council” self-evaluation assessment) will be adapted to reflect service priorities and objectives.

Training and development/CPD

Staff are encouraged and supported in development and training through the annual Employee Review and Development process. We will work with the Scottish Building Standards Division (BSD), Local Authority Building Standards in Scotland (LABSS), Highlands and Islands Consortium (H and IC) and Glasgow Caledonian University to identify and participate in training relevant to service delivery. Continued participation with our local CPD group, and with the Chartered Association of Building Engineers. Support and participate in the councils Corporate Learning and Development Policy with particular emphasis on the iLearn modules.

Benchmarking/shared services

Continued benchmarking and sharing of good practice through our membership of LABSS and the Highlands and Islands Consortium. Promote partnership working with the relevant person during reasonable inquiry and Completion Certificate process.

Succession planning

In 2010 a review was carried out of the Council’s workforce management arrangements which highlighted a number of weaknesses. As a result, the Council approved a framework of policies including a Learning and Development Policy; a competency framework; and a revised Performance Review and Development Scheme. We will continue to apply these policies during the coming year. In addition, the Neighbourhood Services and Infrastructure service developed a Workforce Plan in autumn 2016 identifying any future staffing requirements and the impact predicted budget cuts may have on delivery of services.

5.3. Quality Customer Experience

Customer communication strategies

Customer communication is primarily by letter or email; regular information updates are emailed to our agents group and posted on our website. Documents can be made available on request in accessible formats for those with sensory impairment or who have a first language other than English. Loop induction systems are available at the One Stop Shop and throughout the Council’s premises. The introduction of Office 365 has offered Skype for Business and Teams platforms which allow individual workstation video link.

Customer Charter

Our BS Customer Charter, which incorporates a national and local customer charter, is reviewed annually, with quarterly updates to promote KPO and eBuildingStandards progress. The charter is available to view at our offices and published prominently on the council website.

Customer feedback (national/local)/analysing and changes to systems

Maintain the local Customer Satisfaction Questionnaire process to bring customer driven improvements to service delivery. Previous upgrades include continuation of service during lunchtime; information updates posted regularly on our website, arrange new regulation training events, dedicated phone line for each member of staff, deliver a formal procedure for electronic communication, establish a local procedure for the number of documents presented with the initial warrant application, provide clear guidance to ensure a consistent approach when calculating the estimated cost of works and associated warrant fee. We will participate in the national questionnaire and encourage our stakeholders to do the same, making all the information readily available on our BS website.

Accessibility of service

Accessibility of our service is described in the BS Customer Charter. We will expand on recent accessibility improvements and consult our customers on how best to enhance service accessibility for their convenience. Recent improvements include the provision of a direct dial facility for each member of the team and a continuation of the service at the Council's One Stop Shop between 09:00 - 17:00.

Pre-application advice

Pre-application advice is freely available, and we provide an open-door approach to public consultation at the Council Offices during normal office hours Monday – Friday 10:00 - 12:00 and 14:00 – 16:00. Although appointments are usually preferred.

Customer agreements

A customer agreement policy is adopted for complex Building Warrant applications or those with an estimated cost of works in excess of £2 million.

Customer dissatisfaction (procedural or technical)

For technical or procedural matters relating to the verification service we would guide customers in the direction of the LABSS - Dispute Resolution Process. Where that process could not satisfy customer concerns forward to the Scottish Government Performance Reporting Service for Customers. Alternatively, the Council's formal complaints procedure would be followed.

Recognised external customer service accreditations

Our service presently holds no recognised external accreditations. Our council have been successful in gaining accreditation via 'Investors in People (Standard)' a service level. This is an ongoing process led by the Executive Director Development and Infrastructure.

5.4. Operational and Financial Efficiency

Team structure

Our small team structure is indicated earlier in this document, area splits have been maintained for the purpose of reasonable inquiry and in particular the completion of Construction Compliance and Notification Plans. Each member of staff possess specialism's, and due to our close knit and open office working environment these are shared daily with colleagues. Other specialist functions such as engineering assessment is outsourced to our council's engineering team and e.g. Fire Engineering checks by qualified staff from other local authority verifiers.

Time recording system

Our time recording system was developed to assist in providing accurate reporting for costs associated with expenditure on the verification service. The system is simple, can be easily modified, and has proved a useful tool for various reporting purposes.

Financial monitoring/governance

Financial monitoring is robust and undertaken monthly by the Building Standards Service Manager on receipt of statements from the Finance Department. The monthly statements clearly identify income and spend patterns and sums can be transferred between cost centres to suit service activity or pressures. Real-time monitoring of budgets is facilitated by accessing the online Integra finance system.

IT systems

Our most effective IT system is the Uniform building standards database used to record all matters concerning Building Warrant and Completion Certificate activity. The system was introduced for all applications received from August 2006, and historic data was captured from January 2000. To support the database, we were successful in our funding bid for the Public Access Register which was connected in August 2011 and allows the public remote monitoring of application progress. The integrated document management system offers efficiencies relating to the accessibility and retention of records. Recent IT upgrades include a move to Office 365 incorporating Outlook which provides Out of Office alerts to those not directly connected to our council's servers. Video link equipment has been provided in two service meeting rooms to aid video conferencing opportunities.

Digital services

Since the introduction of eBuilding Standards in August 2016 we have experienced a significant increase in electronic submissions with approximately 80% of Building Warrant applications currently received via the portal. To administer electronic applications, we have invested heavily in additional software/hardware including dual 28-inch monitors for our assessment team and tablets for inspectors to support site inspection.

Finance systems

The main finance system used by the council is Integra supported by Capita for electronic and online payment services. Building Standards have recently introduced an online payment facility for BS services.

Internal communication strategies

Internal communication strategies include the staff portal, electronic newsletters, electronic bulletins, and conveyance of information from Corporate Management Team – Planning, Development and Regulatory Services (P&RS) Management Team - Building Standards Team meetings. The Chair and Vice-chair Development and Infrastructure Committee are invited to attend P&RS management meetings and cascade service information back to interested elected members.

6. Service Improvements and Partnership Working

In the previous 12 months (2023-2024) we did:

Number	Continuous improvement action	Status
1	With the average time to grant a warrant creeping up during 2020-2021 (which we have attributed to enforced disruption to service delivery as a result of Covid-19 pandemic, and demise of the current HEPS: ABS grant scheme, where warrants were fast-tracked through the assessment process) we will monitor performance against KPO1(a) and make any necessary adjustments, where the increase can be linked to our assessment procedures.	Ongoing
2	While there is currently no national target set in relation to KPO2 we will seek to realise our local target of 80% CCNPs fully achieved by the relevant person and the verifier. We will assist with any review of KPO2 to ensure that proposed targets and procedures are practical and seen to enhance the reasonable inquiry process.	Ongoing
3	Continued support for the National Customer Charter to include quarterly updates and prominent posting on the local authority verifier website.	Ongoing
4	Having consistently exceeded the target for overall average satisfaction rating for the national customer survey, we will continue to work with our customers to maintain a high level of customer satisfaction.	Ongoing

5	Being a small local authority with limited income it has proved difficult to achieve the performance target in relation to KPO 5.1. Building Standards verification fee income to cover indicative verification service costs (staff costs plus 30%). The purpose of this target is to ensure sufficient funding to be able to reinvest in the verification service. Reinvestment in the service has not been prevented, with any necessary funding available from other sources within the council. We will continue to review the financial position and seek to maximise fee income wherever possible.	Ongoing
6	Performance targets in relation to KPO6 have been achieved since the introduction of the Assistant Technician post in 2019. With that post secured as a permanent position from 01 April 2021 we will now investigate regular back-scanning of non-current records to meet our obligation in relation to Part 1 and Part 2 of the Building Standards Register.	Ongoing
7	We will continue our support for the annual performance report and ensure quarterly updates are published in a prominent position on our website.	Ongoing
8	The Workforce Strategy for the Building Standards Verification Service was launched by Scottish Ministers in October 2020, the strategy includes a Competency Assessment System (CAS) for building standards staff. Working with staff we will ensure a CAS Toolkit is completed for each member of the Building Standards Team to identify any perceived skills gaps and how those skills gaps may be filled.	Complete/ Ongoing

In the next 12 months (2024-2025) we will do:

Number	Continuous improvement action	Timescale
1	Maintain a professional, courteous, and efficient service to the customers of Orkney	Ongoing
2	Maintain a 'High Performing' team	Ongoing
3	Work to achieve targets set out in National Performance Framework	March 2025/Ongoing
4	Review/update policies and procedures	March 2025/Ongoing
5	Review Competency Assessment System carried out 2022-23 and continue staff training for key areas	Ongoing
6	Continued benchmarking and Consortium engagement	Ongoing
7	Recruit Building Standards Officer to vacant role	Complete

In the previous 12 months (2023-2024) we worked with:

- Scottish Building Standards Division on all matters relating to Building Standards.
- Local Authority Building Standards Scotland on all matters relating to the retention and provision of local authority Building Standards verification services across Scotland. Providing the technical representative for the Highlands and Islands Consortium Group in relation to LABSS Technical Working Group.
- Colleagues from the Highlands and Islands Consortium Group on technical and procedural matters ensuring a consistent approach to the delivery of building standards.
- eDevelopment.scot on issues relating to the ongoing delivery and future development of eBuilding Standards.
- National Building Standards Hub.

In the next 12 months (2024-2025) we will:

- Engage with other local authorities and groups, e.g. Local Authority Building Standards Scotland.
- Engage with external stakeholder organisations and groups.
- Provide external support for local training and development.
- Commit to work together on technical issues.
- Work in partnership with the National Building Standards Hub.

7. Building Standards - Additional Data

Verifiers provide returns to Scottish Government on their verification performance and workload. The performance data relates to the building standards verification performance framework and the workload data relates to the numbers of Building Warrant applications, Completion Certificates, fees, costs, certificates (certification, energy performance, sustainability), enforcement cases.

Activity for 2024-2025

Activity		2022/23	2023/24	2024/25 Q1 – Q4			=	Total
Building Warrants and amendments to warrant	Applications received	322	319	84	64	68		
	Applications determined	287	299	76	54	63		
Completion Certificates	Submissions	261	278	60	52	60		
	Decisions	238	238	35	75	46		
Certification	Design	15	18	5	5	8		
	Construction	25	30	7	4	10		
Energy Performance Certs	Domestic	57	45	32	14	10		
	Non-domestic	1	1	0	0	0		
Statements of Sustainability	Domestic	53	46	35	17	12		
	Non-domestic	1	0	0	0	0		
Fire Safety Summaries		0	0	0		0		
Enforcement	Notices served under Sections 25 to 30	0	1	1	0	1		
	Cases referred to Procurator Fiscal	0	0	0	0	0		
	Cases where the Council has had to undertake work	0	0	0	0	0		



Building Standards
Orkney Islands Council
Council Offices
School Place
Kirkwall
Orkney
KW15 1NY

01856 873535
Building.standards@orkney.gov.uk