

Argyll and Bute



Document History

| <u>Version</u> | <u>Issue Date</u> | <u>Summary of Changes</u> |
|----------------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| 2023-25 | 28/03/2024 | Updated Document – Version 1 |

The Building Standards Section is part of Planning and Regulatory Services within the Development and Infrastructure Services Directorate of Argyll and Bute

Because of the rural nature of the area, the pattern of employment in Argyll and Bute is different to the Scottish average.

The Building Standards Service provides a devolved service from four areas offices strategically located throughout Argyll and Bute, with officers working a hybrid model involving home working, from offices and onsite visits, as appropriate.

These being:

- x Bute and Cowal area office located in Dunoon town centre.
- x Helensburgh and Lomond area office located in the Helensburgh and Lomond Civic Centre in Helensburgh.
- x Mid Argyll, Kintyre and Islay area office located in Lochgilphead
- x Oban, Lorn and the Isles area office located in Oban town centre

Area teams generally comprise a team leader, qualified and experienced surveyors, and assistant/trainee surveyors, with shared area administration support staff, from within Development and Infrastructure Services.

Building Standards Other Duties

Building Standards also has other responsibilities, which while not directly part of the verifier's functions. This work accounts for approximately 19% of all officer time, averaged over the authority. However due to the continuing lack of property maintenance within the urban landscape, there is an increasing trend towards additional officer time, in these areas, being occupied by responding to and dealing with dangerous/defective buildings or structures.

x **Dangerous Structures**

There are occasions when risks to public safety may arise due to the condition of buildings.

If action is required to safeguard the occupants or general public, Building Standards will take whatever action is necessary to remove the danger by enforcing the requirements of the Building (Scotland) Act 2003. Building Standards responds to numerous reports of Dangerous Buildings every year.

x **Unauthorised Works**

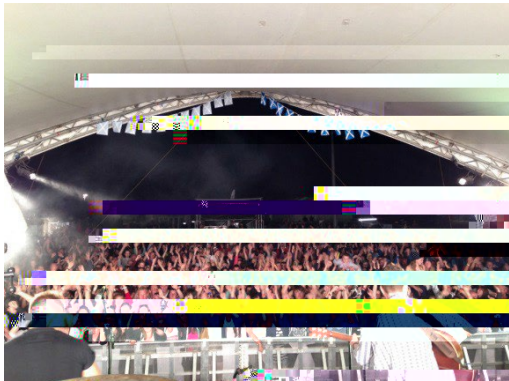
Building Standards is responsible for enforcing the requirements of the Building (Scotland) Act 2003 on buildings constructed without warrant or in contravention of conditions of warrant, and buildings whose limited life has expired.

x **Licensing**

Building Standards advises the independent Licensing Board and other Council services on suitability of premises such as public houses, restaurants, cinemas, theatres, entertainment venues, Houses in Multiple Occupation and other licenses. Building

x **Built Environment Regeneration**

Building Standards plays a key role in the Council's physical regeneration projects and are a member of the project team providing advice, legislative interventions and monitoring work as necessary.

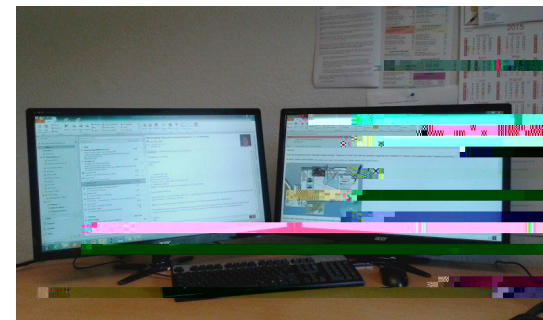


x **Public Events**

Building Standards has a considerable input into major events outdoor venues, particularly in relation to crowd capacity, means of escape, raised structures, crowd control barriers and general safety matters. Such events include the annual Cowal Highland Gathering, Dunoon and numerous Music Festivals throughout the area.

Document Searches

Building Standards can provide information about properties where Building Warrants, Completion Certificates or 'Letters of Comfort' have been issued. Building Standards records (25 years for domestic and 50 years for large non-domestic applications) date from 1964 and information can be viewed or copied on request.



3.0– Achievements and Highlights of 2022

- x Argyll and Bute Building Standards service has a strong commitment to managing performance which forms the basis of our Service and team plans with regular internal and external audits and reviews.
- x The Building Standards Service has consistently performed well, meeting or exceeding targets for performance over which it has control. This has been achieved despite new ways of working post-Covid, a reduction in available budgets and continued need for significant change instigated through the Scottish Government's Building Standards Performance Improvement agenda and Council priorities.
- x Post pandemic, the on-going economic downturn, high costs of living and availability of building materials and consequential reduction in both private and public finance are continued challenges the service continues to face. There is also a shortage of qualified building standards surveyors across Scotland which poses recruitments and workforce planning issues, emphasising the importance of developing and retaining a skilled and competent workforce with sufficient capability to embrace new working practices and increased workloads is also recognised.
- x The service was awarded the Local Authority Building Standards Scotland Award for best local authority in Scotland for the “customer focus” category
- x The Scottish Government has categorised the Councils Building Standards as a “strong-performing local authority” and reissued its verifiers licence for a six year period from May 2023
- x Key highlights and achievements are highlighted in the table below

Better use of
digital
technology

a.

Challenges and issues

- x Recruitment is an ongoing issue with attempts to recruit qualified Building Standards Surveyor being unsuccessful. This position is reflected nationally. Our "Growing our Own" Initiative has been successful in previous years and with the national shortage of qualified building surveyors, we will continue to participate in national workforce discussions, whilst continuing with this strategy. However the negative is that this places additional pressure on existing officers and reduces capacity across the team.
- x Our reliance on commercial income from other local authorities is unsustainable as there has been a downturn in building warrant numbers across Scotland. This creates an additional budget pressure and action.
- x Due to budget savings measures, Building Standards have lost a 0.5 FTE Building Standards Surveyor post. This reduces capacity and resilience.
- x Buildings in disrepair. There is an increasing workload associated with the assessment of buildings in disrepair and whether they pose a risk to public safety. Building Standards have powers under the Building Standards (Scotland) Regulations 2013 (as amended) to require the repair of buildings in disrepair.

8. Maximising our use of digital technology and new ways of working including remote verification and improvements to software information management systems
9. Migration of Document Management System in line with e-Building Standards.
10. Make preparations for assessment in respect of Customer Service Excellence.
11. Working and supporting our customers and stakeholders
12. Working with service partners as part of Argyll Property Action Group (APAG) in tackling non-maintained properties prior to any potential enforcement action
13. Maintain performance focus and meet key performance targets
14. Retention and improvement on CSE award criteria
15. Effective budget management and exploring opportunities for improving efficiencies and to maximising income.
16. Work corporately to address the Councils financial challenges
17. Achieving performance targets (see appendix I) and reporting performance corporately and nationally.
18. Continue to engage with customer and stakeholders to develop the Building Standards User Forum ,provide regular newsletters and complete our customer service improvement plans
19. Deliver the Action Plan relating to the Councils internal audit of building standards 2023 report

Appendix A: Key performance measures and targets for 2023-25

| Key National Performance measure | 2023-25 Target |
|--|-----------------------|
| The percentage of requests for a building warrant responded to within 20 days | 95% |
| The average time taken to respond to a requests for completion certificate | 3 days |
| The percentage of building warrants issues (or otherwise determined) within ten days | 90% |
| The percentage of completion certificates issued/accepted (or otherwise determined) within 3 days | 90% |
| The percentage of applicants providing feedback who were either satisfied or very satisfied with our service | 90% |



Argyll and Bute Council
Comhairle Earra-Ghàidheal agus Bhòid