

Planning, Climate & Sustainability Service Annual Service Report 2026

Introduction

This report reflects the performance of Planning, Climate & Sustainability for 2026. It covers the period April 2025 to March 2026, highlighting our delivery, progress, change and improvement plans for 2026-7.

The Service has considered our performance in relation to the council’s policy priorities set out in the Plan for Fife; key indicators; financial and workforce pressures and how we compare in relation to other similar services in other Scottish councils, through the Local Government Benchmarking Framework. Performance is also considered through the National Planning Champion (Improvement Service) and the work with other Planning Authorities to consider ongoing continuous improvement.

Individual service indicators and results are published online in advance of this annual review to facilitate scrutiny and feedback.

These are available at www.fife.gov.uk/councilperformance

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Service overview

Planning Services play a crucial role in shaping Fife's places through sustainable development, addressing climate emergency and assisting in growing Fife's economy. Achieved by working with communities, developers, and other stakeholders to deliver high-quality places that meet the needs of people and businesses. The Service leads on a range of place-based plans and strategies, projects, strategic development and infrastructure, and planning applications.

The Service has achieved a number of national awards including:

- Climate Literacy gold accreditation
- Planning Authority of the Year, Royal Town Planning Scotland
- Vicki West shortlisted, National Student Award, Women in Property
- Emma Baxter Royal Town Planning Scotland Young Planner of the Year
- APSE Striving for Excellence award, Waste & Recycling for WARP-It
- Dunfermline Learning campus – the role of Planning - Royal Town Planning Scotland

Service Areas include: -

- **Policy and Place**

Leads the Local Development Plan, the spatial strategy of the Plan4Fife, related planning policy, and built and natural environment activities. Supports place-based solutions with key stakeholders.

- **Climate Change and Zero Waste Team**

Addressing climate change and nature by promoting sustainability initiatives and developing strategies i.e. to reduce carbon emissions, increase resilience to climate impacts, raise awareness and encourage sustainable practices.

- **Development Management**

Reviewing planning applications and permissions, enforcements and make decisions on local policies through its statutory duties through over 4,000 applications to planning during 2025/26.

- **Conservation and Heritage**

Protection of Fife's build heritage and natural environment, preserving and providing guidance on conservations practices.

- **Strategic Development**

Reviewing and working in partnership with key stakeholders to assist delivery of Fife's 9 Strategic Growth Areas with projected £3 billion investment over next 20 years. Working through ESES City Region Deal to deliver strategic transport interventions.

- **Transportation**

Reviewing development proposals and Road Construction Consents.

Service vision

Service Vision

The vision of Planning Services is to:

- Align with Plan4Fife, the new Local Development Plan will be the spatial expression of Plan4Fife.
- Aligning community planning with the Local Development Plan including Local Place Plans.
- Strengthening climate strategy ownership and delivery on agreed actions from Climate Fife. Delivering on the 3 Big Moves, including Local Heat Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) and development of the Climate Resilience Delivery Programme. Embedding climate considerations in decision-making and ensuring mandatory climate literacy training for the leadership team.
- Delivering an effective and efficient Development Management service.
- Facilitating the development of Fife's Strategic Development Area's and associated strategic infrastructure aligned with the Council's Capital Plan and Developer Obligations.
- Facilitating the delivery of new homes across Fife to assist in meeting Fife's housing needs and assisting in addressing the housing emergency.
- Maintaining and enhancing workforce development, including developing skills and building further resilience.
- Developing a Service which has the skills required to deliver ongoing statutory functions, with an aligned Service structure.
- Becoming digitally enabled through further automation, improved access to information and enhanced digital skills including data and spatial analysis.
- Mitigating budget pressures through increased income, prioritising resource allocation, and improving efficiency where possible.

Demand & Delivery Overview

Planning Application Performance – Average Number of weeks to decision 2025/26

- Avg time per major planning application – 20.4 weeks
- Avg time per non-householder planning application – 7.58 weeks
- Avg time per minor planning application – 6.6 weeks
- Customer Satisfaction – 89%
- Total number of all applications to planning received – 4,008 (not all determined in period 2025/26)

Enforcement 2025/26

- New Cases Received – 563
- Breaches resolved – 226
- Applications derived from enforcement action – 49
- Enforcement Action taken – 117
- Enforcement Notice Served – 4

Fife Place Plan (LDP2)

The review of the Local Development Plan (LDP2) is ongoing. The Evidence Report recently was concluded through the Gatecheck process and work on the Proposed Plan is progressing. The LDP2 '*Fife's Place Plan*' is being progressed alongside the Plan4Fife, essentially as the spatial expression of the Plan4Fife.

It was anticipated that the LDP2 Proposed Plan would be prepared for consideration by the Council in December. This timescale is not

now deliverable, and work is ongoing to finalise a new timeline to align with the revised Plan4Fife review timescales. Following the Council's approval of the Proposed Plan, a period for public engagement will be undertaken.

Planning application numbers remain buoyant, including for major developments. This is important for Fife's economy as well as assisting in addressing the housing emergency. A significant amount of work is ongoing to assist with the delivery of sites, particularly related to infrastructure aligned with new housing development within the strategic development sites.

Performance in respect of speed of decision making remains positive and is closely monitored by Service managers. Nevertheless, speed of decision making has to be balanced with achieving positive outcomes wherever possible with 95% (1,941) of statutory planning applications approved in 2025/26. This is a proportion of the total number of applications received to planning (4,008) which includes pre-applications, condition compliance, non-material variations etc.).

Planning enforcement can be a positive way in which to address any unauthorised development, however the statutory powers do remain limited. The Service seeks to address any breach through a planning application being submitted or the issue being resolved in another way. The Council's Planning Enforcement Charter provides the guidance and explains the role of enforcement.

Demand & Delivery Overview

Good progress is being made in delivering against the Climate Milestones (as set out in the Climate Strategy) from April 2025 - March 2027. These are set out below.

2025/26

Q1- Q4

- 2025/26 Climate Literacy: targeting senior leadership teams, grounds maintenance & more
- Climate Ready South East Scotland 2025/26

September 2025

- Dunfermline & Rosyth Energy Plan
- Fife Climate Youth Festival
- Heat network (wider energy) delivery vehicle review phase 1 (legal review)

October 2025

- Heat network (wider energy) delivery vehicle review phase 1 (National Wealth Fund Workshops) - (TBD 2026/27)
- Heat network (wider energy) delivery vehicle review phase 2 (investment prospectus; strategic outline case; OBC - (TBD 2026/27)

- "Mining Remediation Authority Pitfirrane Day Level: Mine Water Heat Desktop Study"
- Transforming Fife's Greenspace project confirmed by Heritage Lottery's Nature Towns and Cities Fund

November 2025

- Fife Climate Milestone event
- Climate Resilience Officers Workshop

January 2026

- Climate Resilience Councillors workshop
- First of the Transforming Fife's Greenspace staff in post
- Fife Nature Biological Records Centre and associated duties joined the Service

March 2026

- Thermal store feasibility study (extension of Dunfermline & Rosyth Energy Plan)
- Kirkcaldy Heat Network Feasibility Study "Mining Remediation Authority Pitfirrane Day Level: Mine Water Heat Water Analysis and surveys"
- Regional Energy Masterplan phase 2 2025/26 Completed

2026/27 (programmed)

April 2026

- Climate, Nature and Sustainability Team created to replace the former Climate Change and Zero Waste Team
- Biodiversity Officer and associated duties joined the Service
- Fife Nature awarded funding from NatureScot

May 2026

- Local Biodiversity Action Plan was approved and published (launch event June 26)
- Won Silver in APSE Energy Striving for Excellence Awards for strategic approach to WARP-It for reuse

June 2026

- Citizen Science project - Tree Canopy Survey developed

July 2026

- Fife Council's Community Climate Adaptation Fund launched in partnership with Fife Climate Hub

August 2026

- Discovering Nature in Fife – biodiversity recording week for people across Fife
- Mandatory climate e-learning rolled out for all Council staff, and accredited

learning for Extended Council Leadership Team

- First meeting of Fife Council's Climate Champions network
- CN&S policies included in the Local Development Plan process

September 2026

- Climate Fife's Big Community Move Action Plan to be launched
- KIMO UK AGM in Fife, supported by the team
- Conclusion of Climate Place, having engaged 120 people in climate and nature, September 2026
- Kirkcaldy Solar Opportunity Study
- Transforming Fife's Greenspace (TGF) Community Aspirational Survey developed and launched

October 2026

- Climate View Dashboard published
- Climate Fife Portal published
- Climate, Nature and Sustainability public facing web pages launched
- Launch of Nature and Climate Web Ministers

November 2026

- Climate Change Public Bodies Report 2025/26
- Biodiversity Duties 3 year Report 2025/26
- Climate Resilience Delivery Programme to be launched
- Climate Fife's Big Energy Move updated
- Energy Conference as part of the Housebuilders Forum 2026
- Climate Literacy Day – training 100 people in 1 day
- Transforming Fife's Greenspace stakeholder event
- LHEES Strategy Review

December 2026

- TFG - Outcome assessment Tool Designed and developed (Dec'26)

January 2027

- Nature networks out for consultation as part of the LDP process

March 2027

- Climate and Nature Project pipeline operational & informing investment and resource priorities
- Strategic Outline Business Case completed for Kirkcaldy heat network
- Outline Business Case completed for Fife-wide heat Delivery Vehicle

Our People

Workforce Profile, including headcount

- 90 headcount, 85.16 FTE. Represents 0.5% of Fife Council's headcount.
- 85.6% are full time, 83.3% permanent and 37.8% female.

Workforce age

- Average workforce age is 43.8, comparable to 43.2 in 2024/5. This is below the Fife Council average age of 44.8.
- Average age of leavers is 33.8 and new starts 31.8.
- 11.1% of the workforce is aged 24 and under, up from 8.1% in 2024/5.

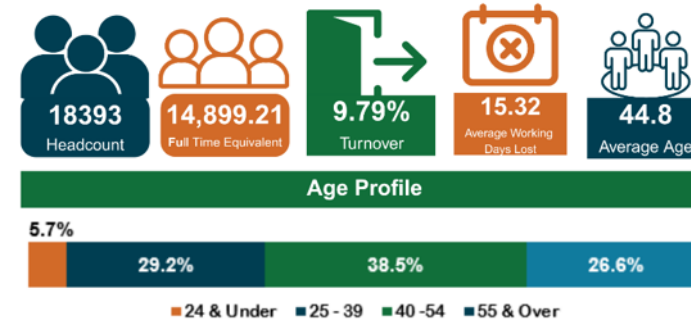
Workforce Turnover

- Turnover rate is 12.2%, lower than 14.0% in 2024/25
- 18.2% of leavers were aged 55 and over. The top reported leaver reason was other employment.

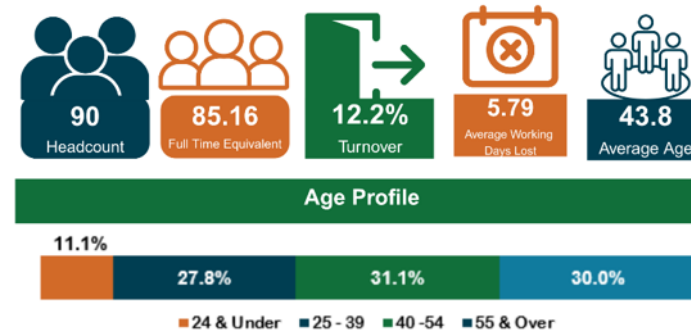
Working days lost

- Average WDL to sickness absence was 5.79, this is higher than 3.59 in 2024/25.
- Short term absences account for 2.2 working days lost and 3.6 for longer term absences (over 28 calendar days).

Fife Council Workforce 2025/26



Planning, Climate & Sustainability Workforce 2025/26



Our People

People Plan Priorities

- Strengthen recruitment and retention to build workforce capacity and agility to meet changing demands.
- Develop a climate-aware workforce with shared knowledge and skills to enhance resourcing flexibility.
- Continue our early career programme.
- Deliver a co-ordinated programme of training, development and CPD to build an informed, skilled and flexible workforce, supported by an up-to-date skills matrix and effective induction for new colleagues.
- Promote workforce wellbeing through supportive management, colleague networks and regular engagement to inform continuous improvement.

The Service is in a positive position with regards to workforce strategy. With 87% staff happy at their work (2025).

The Service's focus on workforce strategy over the past decade has transformed the Service to one where retention is good, staff are well-trained and happy at work, the people profiles' are positive in terms of length of service, age etc. and the Service has a positive reputation as a good place to work.

The workforce has a hybrid work style, generally working from Fife House 2 days pw. Teams have regular huddles and meetings; individuals are kept connected and supported.

The Place CPD programme is led by the service and delivers a range of learning through internal and external speakers bringing together officers from across different services. In 2025/26 19 events were held with 1,200+ officers attending. These events not only develop knowledge but assist in connecting officers across services around matters that relate to place.

The Service's focus in continuing to develop a climate-aware workforce is essential, and we again achieved Climate Literacy Gold accreditation. To assist in addressing the climate emergency and embedding climate awareness and action across all the Council services is essential.

The Service has a mental health first aider within the service and have a supportive culture across the service.

Health & Safety Framework, Risk Profile and Service level stress risk assessments were reviewed in early 2026. Business continuity is being reviewed to increase resilience particularly in respect of any significant loss of digital systems.

The Place Directorate has set out a Workforce and people Strategy and finalised an Action Plan that seeks to address cross cutting challenges and improvements across those services.

Our budget

Business Area	Budget 25/26 £m	Provisional Outturn 25/26 £m	Variance 25/26 £m
Development Management	0.323	(0.324)	(0.647)
Planning Administration	0.143	0.135	(0.009)
Climate Change & Zero Waste	0.699	0.741	0.042
Policy & Place	1.179	1.021	(0.157)
Total Net Expenditure	2.344	1.573	(0.771)

	Budget 25/26 £m	Provisional Expenditure / (Income) 25/26 £m	Variance Overspend/ (Underspend) 25/26 £m
Staff Costs	5.096	5.133	0.037
Property Costs	0.000	0.009	0.009
Transport Costs	0.024	0.023	(0.000)
Supplies and Services	0.480	0.633	0.153
Third Party Payments	0.000	0.212	0.212
Transfer Payments	0.000	(0.008)	(0.008)
Support Services Charges	0.000	0.003	0.003
Total Expenditure	5.599	6.005	0.406
Internal Income	(0.183)	(0.200)	(0.017)
External Income	(3.072)	(4.232)	(1.160)
Total Income	(3.255)	(4.432)	(1.177)
Net Expenditure	2.344	1.573	(0.771)

Our budget

The main variances against the budget are summarised below

Staff Costs	
Climate Change Graduate Planner costs funded from external income	0.042
Supplies & Services	
<i>Provision for legal costs of decisions</i>	0.252
Third Party payments	
<i>Payments for climate change initiatives budgeted within</i>	0.212
<i>Supplies and Services</i>	
External Income	
<i>Over recovery on planning fee income due to level of proposed developme</i>	(1.043)
Policy and Place external funding toward Local Development Costs	(0.110)
Climate Change additional external funding	(0.078)

Business Area	Budget 25/26 £m	Provisional Outturn 25/26 £m	Variance 25/26 £m
Development Management	0.323	(0.324)	(0.647)
Planning Administration	0.143	0.135	(0.009)
Climate Change & Zero Waste	0.699	0.741	0.042
Policy & Place	1.179	1.021	(0.157)
Total Net Expenditure	2.344	1.573	(0.771)

Key points

In 2025/26 income through planning applications and related work was very positive. The main reason for underspend is over recovery on planning fee income of (£1.043m). This has been partly offset by provision for legal costs of decisions £0.279m.

The over recovery is positive as it is a clear indication of the level of proposed development and investment in Fife, including new homes to assist in addressing the Housing Emergency.

Moving into the current budget year some re-alignment of budget has been provided to meet the projected budget needs of the Local Development Plan and implement staffing changes aligned to need. Underspend on vacancies was minimal due to successful recruitment.

Our budget

Climate Change

Business Area	Budget 25/26 £m	Provisional Outturn 25/26 £m	Variance 25/26 £m
Climate Change & Zero Waste	0.699	0.741	0.04
Total Net Expenditure	0.699	0.741	0.04
	Budget 25/26 £m	Provisional Expenditure / (Income) 25/26 £m	Variance Overspend/ (Underspend) 25/26 £m
Staff Costs	0.777	0.921	0.14
Property Costs	0.000	0.009	0.00
Transport Costs	0.005	0.004	(0.001)
Supplies and Services	0.316	0.105	(0.211)
Third Party Payments	0.000	0.212	0.21
Transfer Payments	0.000	(0.008)	(0.008)
Support Services Charges	0.000	0.003	0.00
Total Expenditure	1.097	1.246	0.14
Internal Income	0.000	(0.060)	(0.060)
External Income	(0.398)	(0.445)	(0.046)
Total Income	(0.398)	(0.505)	(0.106)
Net Expenditure	0.699	0.741	0.04

Key points

The subjective analysis shows large variances due to differences between coding of project budgets and coding of the actual expenditure on delivery of the project. These variances are offsetting and not budgetary issues.

There is limited variance within the Climate Change budget. The team are successful in securing external funding to deliver projects, such as the Nature Towns and Cities with aligned staffing to deliver. Whilst this increases the Service's temporary contracts this is managed through project delivery. Funding for 2 graduates was also achieved through the Workforce Youth Investment programme.

Our risks

Risk	Mitigation
Failure to Address Climate Change	Further assessment being undertaken as part of Climate Fife Strategy and Risk & Vulnerability assessment, with mitigating actions to be set in the Big Resilience Move and Big Community Move action plans, and LHEES delivery plan by March 2026. Delivery in response to Climate Audit recommendations will identify further mitigating actions.
Planned developments fail to be delivered	Planning Policy and guidance to facilitate development is kept up to date. Continued engagement with. House Builders and other investors. Proposed local housing land requirement as set out in Local Development Plan Evidence Report.

Risk	Mitigation
ICT Failure	Through ICT/Digital Strategy. Planning related systems are listed as business critical.
Workforce Challenges	Planning Services workforce strategy has assisted in addressing recruitment and retention. The Service has undertaken a skills survey which will inform any service redesign.
Data / Records Management	Information Security Policy, Procedures and Guidance in Place. Mandatory eLearning for staff.
Failure to adopt Local Development Plan by May 2028	Project Plan regularly monitored and parallel working in place.
Large Derelict Contaminated Sites	Independent advisors are commissioned and have commenced suit on sites.

Performance assessment – Priorities & Progress

Introduction - service delivery context and challenges

The Planning, Climate & Sustainability Service is customer-centric, focused on delivering statutory functions like facilitating new development, how Fife's places should change, and addressing climate change. It has a diverse workforce and a strong culture of continuous improvement.

Enhancing corporate policy integration, improving digital capabilities, and developing workforce skills inc. leadership, data and spatial analysis.

Priorities & progress

The Service will continue to work to implement improvements across all core performance indicators. In 2025/26 the service focussed on the on the main change and improvement goals as listed below:

Local Development Plan 2 and Community Engagement Align community planning with LDP, including Local Place Plans, and the Plan4Fife.

Addressing Climate Change Delivering the 2025 climate audit recommendations improving the Climate Fife 2024 portal, establish collaborative partnerships, identify delivery opportunities and build on the ongoing climate literacy to expand mandatory training and foster a culture of climate-conscious decision-making. Developing

approach to biodiversity through Transforming Fife's Greenspace and Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

Leadership and Workforce Development

Maintaining and enhancing workforce development, including developing skills and building resilience through our skills survey findings.

Digital Transformation and Data Intelligence Further developing Power BI use, development of AI to assist in the processing of applications and investing in staff digital skills development.

Service Delivery and Performance

Facilitating the development of Fife's Strategic Development Area's and associated strategic infrastructure aligned with the Council's Capital Plan.

Promoting and facilitating the delivery of new homes across Fife to assist in meeting Fife's housing needs and addressing the housing emergency.

Improvement actions from National Planning Improvement Framework (NPIF) Continue to implement and review actions in the NPIF Improvement action plan as well as annually reviewing any additional actions required.

Performance assessment – Priorities & Progress

Priority 1 Local Development Plan 2 and Community Engagement

Deliver a spatial strategy through Local Development Plan 2 – *Fife's Place Plan*

Progress

The Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2) 'Fife's Place Plan' is progressing and the appointed DPEA Reporter concluded the assessment and formally ruled the Evidence Report sufficient in June 2026.

The Evidence Report supports the LDP2, summarising the evidence base for those proposals and policies to be set out in the Proposed Plan and demonstrates that appropriate consultation has been undertaken, and regard given to the views of the community.

The delay in the DEPA concluding their assessment has had knock-on impact in the overall work programme together with some staffing changes. Work is progressed in assessing potential new development sites, as well as sites currently allocated but not developed. This is a detailed and resource intense area of work and

it inter-dependent on several technical assessments, some of which are undertaken by external consultants, e.g. transport assessment, education capacity, and strategic flood risk assessment. Some of these technical areas of work have been delayed which is having a further impact for the service in preparing the plan.

LDP2 will be known as *Fife's Place Plan* to reflect its role as a corporate document acting as the spatial expression of the *Plan4Fife* Local Outcome Improvement Plan. The Local Development Plan will inform and be informed by the work being progressed on the *Plan4Fife*.

It was anticipated that the LDP2 Proposed Plan would be prepared for consideration by the Council in December. This timescale is not deliverable, and work is ongoing to finalise a new timeline which would be followed by a period for public engagement. Delivery against this timescale is being monitored regularly. The revised timescales will seek to align with the revised timeline for the *Plan4Fife* review.

Areas for Improvement

Project management continues to be reviewed to improve the plan making process and optimising resources available to produce the plan and related engagement activities. Where possible, resources are moved within the Service to align with peak LDP work tasks. In parallel with this, joint activities are underway within the Council to co-ordinate the preparation of the Council's Local Outcome Improvement Plan, *Plan4Fife*.

Performance assessment – Priorities & Progress

Relevant KPI details

Adoption of LDP2 is within five years of the Town and Country Planning (Development Planning) (Scotland) Regulations 2023

coming into force – i.e. by May 2028 – the target date given in the Local Development Planning Guidance. The LDP Development Plan Scheme will be revised and presented to Cabinet later in 2027.

Performance assessment – Priorities & Progress

Priority 2 Addressing Climate Change

Delivering climate actions through working across Council services and with stakeholders.

Progress

Climate Ownership and knowledge Climate Literacy roll out continued during 2025/26, targeting Protective Services, Building Environment Services and the Health and Social Care Partnership. Several staff from other parts of the Council continued to volunteer to become accredited as Climate Literate, with 80 achieving accreditation and a further 86 staff and councillors completing Climate Literacy training during the year.

Progress was also made in strengthening climate governance across the Council. All Executive Directors were asked to appoint Service Climate Champions to join a network to improve climate connections and knowledge to inform Service Change Plans, and relevant strategies and service delivery.

Agreement was also secured from the Council Leadership Team to introduce mandatory climate e-learning for all staff and accredited Climate Literacy training for members of the Extended Council Leadership Team.

Reporting portal The Climate Fife portal is now live, available for Council staff to review progress against Climate Fife action themes. Mandatory Public Bodies Climate Change Duties reporting has been added to the portal.

The 3 Big Moves:

Big Community Move workshops and training with Community Learning and Development teams (Communities Directorate) is increasing the Council's reach to engage community climate action. Process maps for 5 types of community climate action have been tested with launch to follow.

The Fife Climate Youth Festival in September 2025 attracted more than 170 pupils representing every high school in Fife. The Climate Fife Milestone event in November 2025 attracted more than 100 members of the public. Both events inspired and engaged people to take more climate actions and encouraged senior Council staff to integrate climate in their decisions and services.

Big Energy Move progress included completion of the Dunfermline and Rosyth Energy Plan, phase 1 and 2 work to inform legal requirements, investment prospectus and strategic outline case for a Delivery Vehicle for heat networks.

To explore low carbon heat sources and develop strategy a Minewater Heat Desktop Study and then Feasibility Study for Pitfirran; thermal store feasibility study to complement the Dunfermline and Rosyth Energy Plan; and the Regional Energy Masterplan Phase 2 have all been completed.

Big Resilience Move A series of Stakeholder and councillor workshops in 2025/26 have engaged and informed the

Performance assessment – Priorities & Progress

development of the Climate Resilience Delivery Programme. This included Climate Ready South East Scotland's Climate Resilient Decision Making CPD for elected members which started a series of Resilience Investment training sessions.

Nature The Fife Nature Records Centre joined the Service in February 2026, and Transforming Fife's Greenspace is being initiated.

Areas for Improvement

Climate Ownership and knowledge Ongoing delivery of the climate literacy training and following completion rates of the mandatory e-learning will inform future engagement requirements.

The first meeting of Fife Council's climate champions network in August 2026 will identify a work plan and priorities for future activities.

Reporting portal Functionality of the portal will be improved, to streamline and automate data entry, analysis and reporting across the wider range of climate and nature activities. And the portal will be launched on Fife Council's intranet, and on Fife.gov.uk so it will also be available to the public.

The 3 Big Moves:

Big Community Move The focus in 2026/27 will be to complete and then deliver the Community Climate Action plan to enable more community climate actions. Work will also progress to create and roll out mandatory e-learning for all staff, to deliver the ECLT mandatory Climate Literacy training, and to play an active role in securing resources to deliver Climate Action Fife beyond June 2027.

Big Energy Move In 2026/27 work will continue to develop successful business cases for priority district heat developments: Kirkcaldy; Dunfermline and Rosyth. Work will also be progressed to create a Fife-wide Delivery Vehicle for district heat.

Guidance is due from Scottish Government on the next phase of LHEES, and this will be developed throughout 2026/27.

Big Resilience Move Further stakeholder engagement before the completed Climate Resilience Delivery Programme is discussed by E&E Scrutiny Committee in Nov 2026. This will be followed by ongoing delivery of the change programme until 2031.

Following a funding allocation by full council, the Climate, Nature & Sustainability Team will work with the Fife Climate Hub and the ACE Board to deploy community climate adaptation actions.

Nature The growth of strategic and local interventions to enhance nature and biodiversity will continue, with improvements in data and community engagement to inform outputs.

The operation of Fife Nature Records Centre by the Service will enhance understanding and informing of developments to improve biodiversity.

The Transforming Fife's Greenspace project will use datasets and engage local communities from Rosyth, Dunfermline, Kirkcaldy and Glenrothes to inform lessons to inform a Transformation Plan for Greenspace in 2028. In 2026/27 knowledge and confidence will be built to more effectively engage stakeholders, understand community barriers to accessing greenspace, propose greenspace improvements that will also deliver benefits for biodiversity, climate resilience, and health and wellbeing.

Performance assessment – Priorities & Progress

Relevant KPI details

Key performance indicators / benchmarking stats related to this priority work are set out below.

From Climate Fife progress portal: [Microsoft Power BI](#)

Climate Fife Action Theme	RAG status
Buildings	4 Green 4 Amber 1 Red
Low Carbon Energy	2 Green 5 Amber
Nature and Land	1 Green 5 Amber
Protecting and Supporting our Communities	7 Green 4 Amber
Transport and Travel	4 Green 1 Amber
Zero Waste	5 Green 2 Amber

Directorate	Climate Literacy courses completed 25/26	Successful Climate Literacy accreditations 25/26
Communities	5	5
Place	35	31
Fife HSCP	4	4
FCCT	0	0

Total	88	80
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Performance Indicator	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Number of Fife Council Staff and Councillors completed Climate Literacy Course	64	59	86
Number of Climate Literacy events, including wider engagement sessions and courses	5 Climate Literacy sessions.38 other events	4 Climate Literacy sessions25 other events	7 Climate Literacy sessions

Performance assessment – Priorities & Progress

Priority 3 Leadership and Workforce Development

Strengthen leadership capacity and align workforce skills with future service needs.

Progress

Work continues reviewing the Service to implement improvements where necessary to structure, operations and service and leadership development. Implementation has commenced and will continue into the 2026/2027 reporting period.

Work has been completed on our skills matrix, which will show skill strengths on topic areas within the Service and identify any gaps or training needs.

The Leadership Team have recently undertaken [‘Insights Discovery’](#) training, delivered by HR as part of our ongoing commitment to leadership development and to strengthen collaboration. This training marks a positive step in supporting our leadership approach, promoting self-awareness, and enhancing how we work together across the service. Building on this, short awareness sessions will be rolled out to the teams within the Service and an update on this will be given in our next annual report.

This initiative forms part of our ongoing commitment to developing high performing teams and embedding a consistent approach to leadership, engagement and service delivery. By increasing self-awareness and understanding across the workforce, the Service aims to enhance cross team working, strengthen relationships and support the delivery of high quality outcomes for customers and stakeholders.

The Service continues to work closely with Fife College and universities to promote careers in planning and support the development of the future workforce. Throughout the reporting period, officers have actively participated in career fairs, employer engagement events and guest lectures, providing students with insight into the planning profession. These partnerships help raise awareness of planning as a rewarding career and create opportunities for students to gain practical experience. As a result of this ongoing engagement, the service has continued to attract new talent, welcoming a number of temporary graduate placements and two student placements during the reporting period providing valuable learning opportunities for participants while helping the service build a strong pipeline of future planning professionals.

Performance assessment – Priorities & Progress

Areas for Improvement

There are no specific areas for improvement beyond the overall aim of the review of looking at the skills and structure of the service to best ensure the Service is able to deliver over next 5 years.

Relevant KPI details

Performance Indicator	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Target	Status	Long Trend
Planning staff who are happy at work (%)	75%	92%	90%	86%	87%	80%		
Planning Number of WYI Bids	2	2	1	2	2	Target not appropriate		

Performance assessment – Priorities & Progress

Priority 4 Digital Transformation and Data Intelligence

Enhance productivity, automation and decision making through digital tools and data intelligence to deliver a more efficient, responsive, and customer-focused Planning Service.

Progress

A key focus remains on increasing productivity and reducing manual processes through automation. Our use of **Power BI** continues to grow, providing richer performance reporting, enhanced data visualisation and improved management information to support evidence-based decision making.

The Service continues to explore opportunities presented by artificial intelligence. This includes assessing the potential for AI-assisted validation and other process improvements that could reduce administrative burdens, improve turnaround times and allow staff to focus on higher-value planning activities.

The Service Improvement Plan provides a clear framework for identifying, prioritising and delivering continuous improvement activities across the service. It plays a key role in shaping our approach to digital transformation by focusing on opportunities to improve customer experience, streamline processes and make

better use of technology. The Plan also supports the development of our data intelligence capabilities, helping us to strengthen performance monitoring, improve reporting and use evidence-based insights to inform decision-making. By aligning improvement actions with service priorities, we are continuing to enhance digital service delivery, increase efficiency and ensure that data is used more effectively to drive positive outcomes for customers, stakeholders and the wider organisation.

Areas for Improvement

Continue to work with case officers to explore ways to use AI to assist in summarising of representations for applications which have attracted a large number of objections.

Progress horizon scanning work on AI tools to assist with validation.

Working with Customer Solutions Team on further development for Fifes Online Assistant (FIONA) to develop planning related content leading to automated responses.

Further our resilience through a Business Continuity Plan, developed through working with other Planning Authorities.

Relevant KPI details

Performance Indicator	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Target	Status	Long Trend
Customers satisfied with planning service (%)	72.73%	78.57%	85.56%	91.05%	*89.47%	80%	✓	↑

Performance assessment – Priorities & Progress

Priority 5 Service Delivery and Performance

Sustainable economic growth through new development and associated infrastructure and improve service efficiency.

Progress

The service plays a pivotal role in facilitating the development of Fife's Strategic Development Areas and associated infrastructure, aligned with the Council's Capital Plan and Developer Obligations. These areas are critical to delivering economic growth, sustainable communities, delivering homes and improved connectivity. In response to the housing emergency, the Service is actively supporting the delivery of new homes across Fife, helping to meet identified housing needs and contribute to both national and local housing targets. This includes enabling affordable housing, unlocking stalled sites, and supporting regeneration efforts.

The Service continues to take a proactive approach to meeting with developers, agents and consultants and the annual Housebuilders Forum.

The Service delivers continuous improvement to assist customers, investors, further develop staff, lean processes amongst other improvements. The % of invalid planning applications on receipt on

continues to remain high despite the Service undertaking training and providing further materials to assist agents and applicants. Work is being considered on how this could be partially automated to reduce officer's time.

Overall, the performance of the Service remains good despite challenging workloads. Aspects of the planning system nationally are much more complex than they were 10 years, with the implementation of the last Planning Act and National Planning Framework 4. The new Local Development Plan system is providing more complex and time consuming. With increased activity and delivery of actions required to address climate change, resources require to be prioritised and leadership teams across Council Services encouraged to act on addressing climate change through their own services, facilities and operations.

In addition to the Service's internal performance targets, there are national targets and for the Planning Authority performance is also reviewed through the National Planning Improvement Hub.

Areas for Improvement

Maintain planning application determination timescales further ensuring applicants receive timely decisions as well as improved communication.

Continued work with agents to reduce invalid submissions of planning applications.

Relevant KPI details

See demand and delivery overview

Performance assessment – Priorities & Progress

Priority 6 Improvement actions from National Planning Improvement Framework

Deliver continuous improvement aligned with national expectations and local priorities

Progress

The National Planning Improvement Framework (NPIF) is a statutory mechanism introduced under the Planning (Scotland) Act to support continuous improvement across Scotland's planning authorities. Fife was part of the initial cohort to implement the framework, and our assessment and action plan was endorsed in 2024.

The NPIF continues to play an important role in shaping our service improvement activity. Actions identified through the NPIF assessment process are incorporated into our Service Improvement Plan, ensuring that priorities and areas for development are translated into clear, measurable actions. This integrated approach enables the service to continually review performance, identify opportunities for improvement and deliver positive outcomes for customers and stakeholders. Progress is managed and monitored

by the Service Improvement Team, which provides oversight, coordination and to ensure improvements are delivered effectively and embedded across the service. Through this process, the service remains focused on continuous improvement, innovation and the delivery of a high-quality planning service.

Areas for Improvement

The Service is now in Year 3 of the NPIF process, where planning authorities are expected to build on their improvement action plans by demonstrating progress and refining their strategies. This includes implementing agreed actions, monitoring outcomes, and engaging in peer review to validate improvements. The Year 3 phase is critical for embedding learning, evaluating the effectiveness of interventions, and ensuring that planning services are responsive to evolving policy and community needs. Moving into year 4 a full detailed report and review will be required to be undertaken.

Actions continue to be monitored and completed as well as new actions being identified and added to the Service Improvement Plan.

Relevant KPI details

Key performance indicators / benchmarking stats related to this priority work are set out in the progress update

[Fife ImprovementActionProgressUpdate2025.pdf](#)

Performance assessment – Operational delivery

Overview of progress

All results against key indicators can be found in Appendix 1 and online at www.fife.gov.uk/councilperformance to facilitate feedback and scrutiny.

Progress

The Service is responsible for 7 Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) indicators, the latest set of LGBF data published covers 2024/25 as set out in the table. More detail can be found at [Explore the data | Benchmarking](#)

Good progress has been made to continually improve operational delivery. The LGBF indicators show that the cost per planning application has risen, which is expected given the increased complexity of the planning system. The data which is available relating to CO2 emissions generally is showing improvement.

The performance against targets as set out in Appendix One is good. Absenteeism has risen over the period, however still remains significantly less than the Council average. The Service does not consider there are any underlying work-related issues resulting in this increase.

Challenges

Investigating complaints, particularly at Stage 2, together with an increased number of Fols/EIRs whilst important is resource intensive. The Service is finding that complaints are becoming more complex and time consuming to investigate, in part due to customers using AI. The Service will give further consideration as to how this could be managed more efficiently, albeit with an existing staff resource overseeing these customer areas.

Beyond, seeking to maintain good performance, the Service management team will continue to manage and prioritise workload for teams and staff, and seek to ensure that the wellbeing of staff in work is a priority.

Performance Indicator	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
CO2 Emissions area wide per capita (LGBF)	7.61	7.74	8.01	7.57
CO2 Emissions area wide: within scope of LA per capita (LGBF)	4.56	4.26	4.81	4
CO2 Emissions from Transport per capita	27.79	30.2	32.64	31.31
CO2 Emissions from Electricity per capita	50	44.46	47.8	46
CO2 Emissions from Natural Gas per capita	54.83	50.22	48.87	43.07
Cost per planning application (LGBF)	£4,653.40	£5,698.23	£6,901.50	£8,305.02
Average time per business and industry planning application (weeks) (LGBF)	16.9	16.5	10.3	14.2

Our year ahead

Priorities for 2026/27

Digital Transformation and Innovation:

- Pilot AI-assisted processes including representation summarisation and explore ways to reduce invalid submissions.
- Pilot AI-assisted processes including representation summarisation and explore ways to reduce invalid submissions.
- Continue development of AI tools such as **FIONA** and explore further digital solutions to improve planning service delivery.
- Embed greater use of GIS and spatial analysis in planning decisions.

Customer Engagement and Service Quality:

- Improve communication with customers through targeted staff training.
- Use customer feedback surveys to drive service improvements.

Workforce Development and skills:

- Continue with CPD programmes informed by the staff skills survey.
- Continue learning through site visits, peer review, appeals analysis and reflective practice.

Service Improvement:

- Use the Service Improvement Plan and NPIF actions to guide priorities and monitor performance.

Development Plan

- Progress the preparation of the Local Development Plan Proposed Plan aligned with the revised timescales for the *Plan4Fife*.
- **Big Community Move:** Complete and then deliver the Community Climate Action plan to enable more community climate actions. Progress work to create and roll out mandatory e-learning for all staff, to deliver the ECLT mandatory Climate Literacy training, and to play an active role in securing resources to deliver Climate Action Fife beyond June 2027.
- **Big Energy Move:** In 2026/27 work will continue to develop successful business cases for priority district heat developments: Kirkcaldy; Dunfermline and Rosyth. Work will also be progressed to create a Fife-wide Delivery Vehicle for district heat.
- **Big Resilience Move:** Further stakeholder engagement before followed by ongoing delivery of the change programme until 2031. Delivery of community climate adaptation actions.
- **Nature:** The growth of strategic and local interventions to enhance nature and biodiversity. The Transforming Fife's Greenspace project will engage with communities across 4 places to inform a Transformation Plan for Greenspace (2028).

Reference links

Links to plans, strategies, case studies and any other supporting information / docs

Links to:

[Climate action plan](#)

[LDP Evidence report](#)

[Climate Fife portal](#)

[NPIF Action Plan](#)

[Insights Discovery](#)

Appendix 1 – Key indicators

Key KPI Status:  OK  Warning  Alert  Data only  Unknown **Trend:**  Improving  No change  Getting worse

Customer

Performance Indicator	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Target	Status	Long Trend
Planning Stage 1 Complaints actioned < 5 days	77%	78%	100%	93%	83%	90%		
Planning Stage 2 Complaints actioned < 20 days	77%	62%	69%	49%	49%	85%		
Customers satisfied with planning service (%)	72.73%	78.57%	85.56%	91.05%	*89.47%	80%		

*Quarter 4 data is not yet available

P4F

Performance Indicator	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Target	Status	Long Trend
Number of housing completions per annum - Fife	1,096	1,263	1,083	1,074	Data not yet available	1130		
Area Wide Emissions (thousand tonnes of Carbon)	2840	2474.2	Data not yet available	Data not yet available	Data not yet available	2783		
Total Fife Council Carbon Footprint - tCO2e	54358	50153	52197.42	49001.634	Data not yet available	71366		

Resources

Performance Indicator	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Target	Status	Long Trend
Planning staff who are happy at work (%)	75%	92%	90%	86%	87%	80%		
Planning Service - Average WDL per FTE	DIV/0	6.51	6.26	3.59	5.8	3.5		
Planning Service - Average Long Term WDL per FTE	3.25	4.39	3.28	0.68	3.62	0.6		
Planning Workforce who are Female (%)	37.90%	33.30%	38.20%	39.50%	37.80%	Target not appropriate		
Planning Workforce who are Full-time (%)	84.80%	84.60%	88.20%	88.40%	85.60%	Target not appropriate		
Planning Workforce who are Permanent Employees (%)	92.40%	89.70%	83.80%	84.90%	83.30%	Target not appropriate		
Planning Employee Turnover	N/A	N/A	7.35%	13.95%	12.22%	10%		
Planning Employees aged 24 and under (%)	7.60%	9%	7.40%	7%	11.10%	Target not appropriate		
Planning Employees aged 25 to 39 (%)	18.18%	23.08%	30.88%	31.40%	27.78%	Target not appropriate		
Planning Employees aged 40 to 54 (%)	42.42%	41.03%	35.29%	32.56%	31.11%	Target not appropriate		
Planning Employees aged 55 and over (%)	31.80%	26.90%	26.50%	27.90%	30%	Target not appropriate		
Planning Number of Voluntary Redundancies (FTEs)	0	0	0	0	0	Target not appropriate		
Planning Number of WYI Bids	2	2	1	2	2	Target not appropriate		
Planning Number of WYI Programme new starts	2	2	1	2	3	Target not appropriate		

Service Operations

Performance Indicator	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Target	Status	Long Trend
Avg time per Major planning application - Fife (weeks)	34.1	16.6	26	18.4	0	37	✓	↑
Avg time per Major planning application - Scotland (weeks)	44.6	39.5	36.1	37.4	Data not yet available	Target not appropriate	○	↑
Avg time per Local planning application - Fife (weeks)	13	11.6	9.1	8.7	6.9	10	✓	↑
Avg time per Local planning application - Scotland (weeks)	10.8	11.5	11.6	11.8	Data not yet available	Target not appropriate	○	↑
Avg time per Minor planning application - Fife (weeks)	11	9.6	8	7.2	6.6	8	✓	↑
Avg time per Minor planning application - Scotland (weeks)	8.7	8.9	8.3	8.3	Data not yet available	Target not appropriate	○	↑
Avg time per Non Householder planning application - Fife (weeks)	15.7	15	10.6	10.9	7.5	10.8	✓	↑
Avg time per Non Householder planning application - Scotland (weeks)	13.5	14.4	14.8	15	Data not yet available	Target not appropriate	○	↓

Note – 2025/26 data is only to quarter 2, await data from Scottish Government