

Planning Applications Statistics 2023/24: Quarterly (April 2023 to September 2023)

Contents

Key Points	3
Local Development Applications	3
Major Development Applications	3
Introduction	3
An Official Statistics Publication for Scotland	3
Local Developments	5
All Local Developments	5
Local Housing Developments	6
Major Developments	6
All Major Developments	6
Major Housing Developments	7
Glossary	8
Categories of Planning Applications	8
Stopping the Clock	8
Legacy Cases	8
Data and Methodology	9
Uses of the Statistics	9
Small Numbers of Major Applications	9
Calculation of Decision Times	9
Tell us what you think	10
Feedback survey	10
Enquiries	10
Join our mailing list	10
Future publications	10

Key Points

Local Development Applications

Over 11,700 applications were decided in the first two quarters of 2023/24. This was 11 per cent lower than the same period in 2022/23. Average decision times remained longer than before the pandemic.

Major Development Applications

The number of major applications continued to decline. There were 111 decisions in the first two quarters of 2023/24 compared to 121 in the same period in 2022/23.

Introduction

This publication presents a summary of statistics on planning applications and timescales for decisions for April 2023 to September 2023 (Quarters 1 and 2). It is based on data collected by the Scottish Government from planning authorities. A set of tables is also produced.

An Official Statistics Publication for Scotland

These statistics are official statistics. Official statistics are statistics that are produced by crown bodies, those acting on behalf of crown bodies, or those specified in statutory orders, as defined in the [Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007](#).

Scottish Government statistics are regulated by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). OSR sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) that all producers of official statistics should adhere to.

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Scottish Government Policy Context

The key objective of the planning statistics is to allow Scottish Government and planning authorities to monitor the planning system with regard to the volume of applications submitted and timeliness of deciding those applications. These statistics form part of the wider planning performance framework ([Go to Planning Performance Framework – Heads Of Planning Scotland web page](#)).

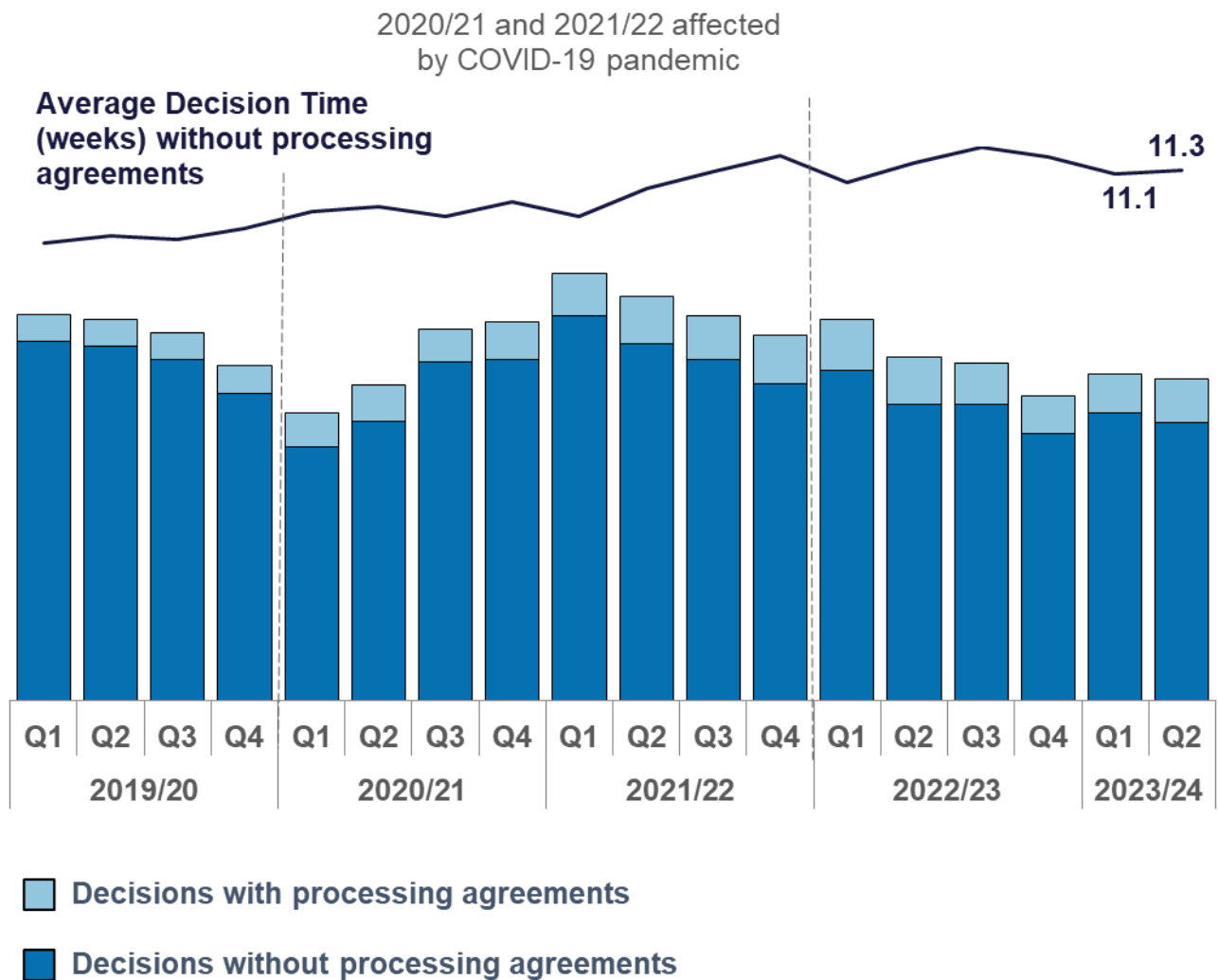
Everyone involved in planning has a role to play in the effective delivery of the planning service. The Planning Performance Framework offers a balanced measurement of the overall quality of each planning service and is used to promote continuous improvement. The Framework captures key elements of a high-performing planning service and comprises a mix of qualitative and quantitative performance measures which show the variety of work that takes place in authorities, their cross-cutting role and the places that are created through planning and decision-making.

Local Developments

Please note that these statistics are estimates for quarters 1 and 2 of 2023/24. See note in Data and Methodology section.

All Local Developments

Figure 1: All Local Developments



There were over 11,700 decisions on local developments in the first two quarters of 2023/24. This was 11 per cent lower than the same period in the previous year. The long-term trend is downward. The average decision time remains higher than before the COVID-19 pandemic at 11.1 weeks in Q1 and 11.3 weeks in Q2.

In Q1 there were 706 local development applications with processing agreements, almost three-quarters 72% met agreed timescales that had been set between developers and local authorities. In Q2 there were 783 with 70% meeting the agreed timescales.

Local Housing Developments

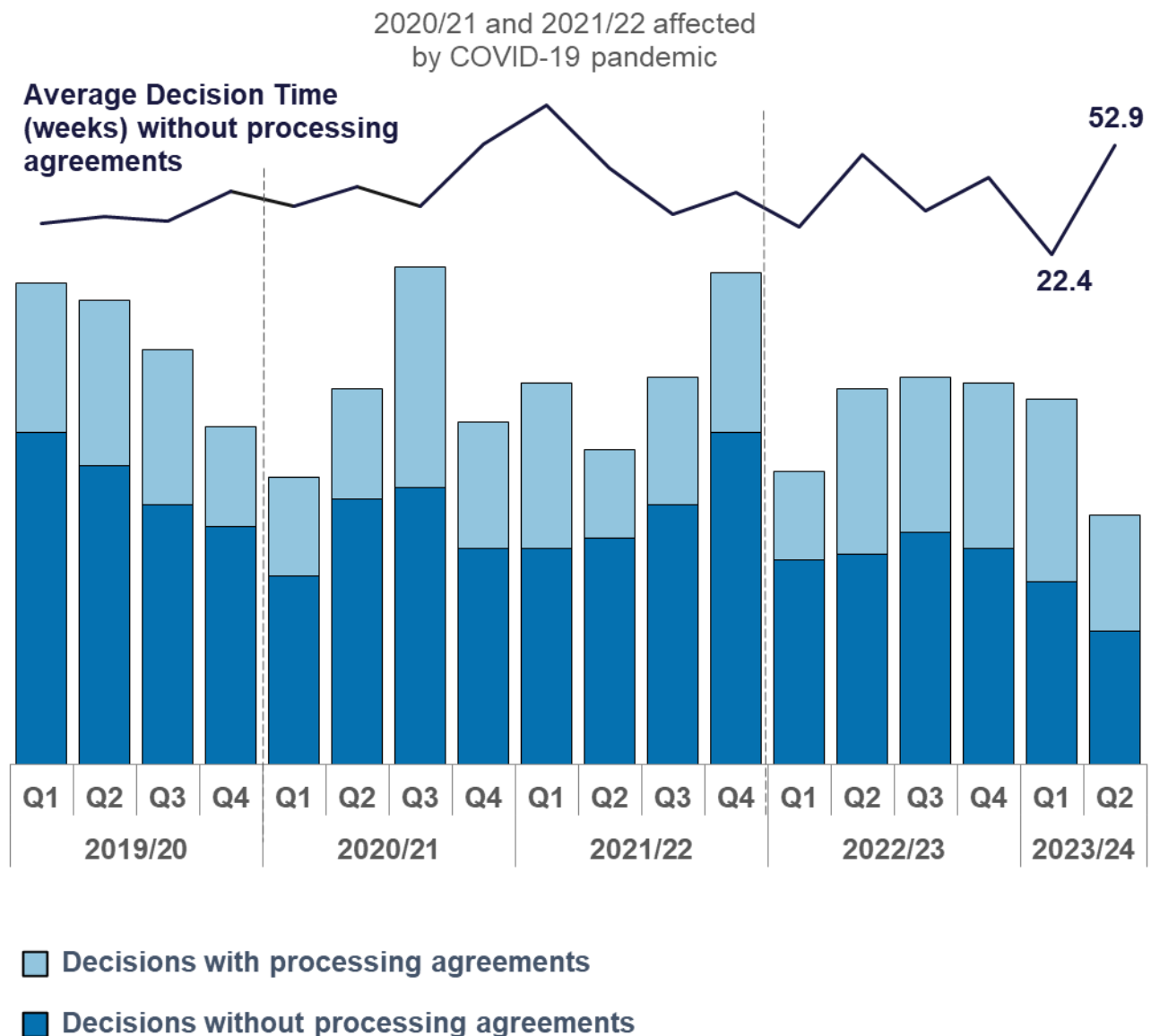
There were over 1,400 local housing developments not subject to processing agreements decided during the first two quarters of 2023/24. This was 18 per cent lower than the same period in the previous year. Average decision times continued to be higher than before the pandemic (17.6 weeks in Q1 and 17.0 weeks in Q2). Around 40 per cent of decisions were made in less than two months. Where processing agreements were in place, almost two-thirds met agreed timescales.

Major Developments

Please note that these statistics are estimates for quarters 1 and 2 of 2023/24. See note in Data and Methodology section.

All Major Developments

Figure 2: All Major Developments



The number of decisions on major developments in the first two quarters of 2023/24 was 111 (there were 121 in the same period in the previous year). The average decision times for applications without processing agreements were 22.4 weeks in Q1 and 52.9 weeks in Q2. (Average times for these applications can be skewed by one or two particularly large values).

Major Housing Developments

There were 19 major housing developments not subject to processing agreements decided during the first two quarters of 2023/24. The average decision times were 24.4 weeks in Q1 and 99.8 weeks in Q2. (Average times for these applications can be skewed by one or two particularly large values). There were 22 applications with processing agreements. Timescales were met for 64 per cent in Q1 and 38 per cent in Q2.

Glossary

Categories of Planning Applications

For planning applications, developments are put into one of five categories: local, major, other, Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and national. This publication covers the first four as National Developments are dealt with by Scottish Ministers.

Local developments include applications for changes to individual houses, smaller developments of less than 50 homes, less than 2 hectares and less than 20 megawatts. Major developments include applications for 50 or more homes, greater than 2 hectares or more than 20 megawatts.

The full range of applications can include changes to properties, new builds, minerals, business & industry, waste management, electricity generation, freshwater fish farming, marine finfish farming, marine shellfish farming, telecommunications, Approval of Matters Specified in Conditions, Prior Notifications and other developments. The classification of all development types can be found in the planning series circular [Go to Hierarchy of Developments web page](#).

Stopping the Clock

In some cases it is appropriate to remove a length of time from the total decision time. "Stopping the clock" is used where there has been a lengthy delay caused by the applicant or external consultees. This is not under the planning authority's control and the authority cannot progress with an application.

Legacy Cases

On 3rd August 2009 changes were made to the statutory development management system and handling of planning applications. A few legacy cases from before then remain. They can have a large effect on average decision times so they are not included in the main analysis. They are reported separately in tables in the supporting spreadsheet file. No legacy cases were reported in the six month period.

Data and Methodology

Details for all categories of development are available in the tables in the supporting spreadsheet file for this publication. All files for the publication can be found on our web page. [View Scottish Government planning statistics webpage.](#)

Information on quality assurance, revisions policy, uses of the data and historic publications can also be found on our web page. [View the Scottish Government planning statistics web page.](#)

Data for Na h-Eileanan Siar for quarters 1 and 2 2023/24

Due to a criminal Cyber incident which affected IT systems, no data could be submitted. Data for quarters 1 and 2 2022/23 have been substituted for the missing data to enable national estimates to be published.

Uses of the Statistics

The statistics allow Scottish Government and the planning authorities to monitor the numbers of planning applications and time taken to decide them. More uses are listed on our web pages. [View Scottish Government planning statistics web page.](#)

Small Numbers of Major Applications

Typically there are only a small number of decisions made for major developments each quarter and therefore average decision times are likely to vary greatly.

Calculation of Decision Times

The average decision time in weeks is calculated in days from the date of validation (the date when the final piece of information for an application is received) to the date the decision is issued. The average weeks are then calculated by dividing the number of days by seven. Some planning authorities use processing agreements where the developer and the planning authority agree on timescales for decisions. These are not included in average decision times.

Tell us what you think

We are always interested to hear from our users about how our statistics are used, and how they can be improved.

Feedback survey

We'd appreciate it if you would complete our short [feedback survey](#) on this publication.

Enquiries

For enquiries about this publication please contact:

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Future publications

Details of future publications can be found on our [forthcoming publications](#) page.

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