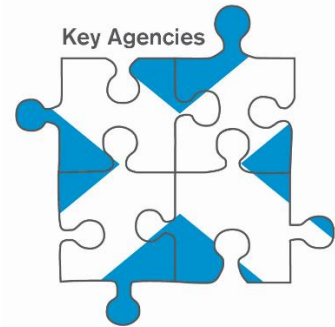


# The Key Agencies Group

@KeyAgenciesScot



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## Who are the Key Agencies?

The Key Agencies Group was initially established in 2008 and comprises a group of public bodies that are recognised as supporting the delivery of culture change through improved joint working. A list of Key Agencies is included as an annex to this note (annex 1).

## Purpose

The Key Agencies have a pivotal role to play in the delivery of the Scottish Government's overarching purpose of creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth.

The Group meets quarterly to review our progress under our committed targets and seek to engage with all sectors in the planning system. The Group has a number of core commitments, focused around:



The Group also deliver specific actions and projects through topic focused sub-groups as required. Some frequently asked questions are included as an annex to this note (annex 2).

The planning system is critical to creating and maintaining successful places and increasing sustainable economic growth. It should be one of the main creative driving forces behind the delivery of better places, helping the public sector, development industry and communities work together to make good development happen in the right place. The Key Agencies will continue to progress our commitments and will work together and with the planning and development sectors to achieve a more effective, efficient outcome focussed planning system.

## Annex 1 – who are the Key Agencies?

Key agencies are bodies specified by Scottish Ministers who are under a duty to co-operate with planning authorities at the following stages in the development plan process:

- the compilation of the Main Issues Reports;
- the preparation of the proposed Strategic and Local Development Plans; and
- the preparation of Action Programmes and proposed Action Programmes.

The planning regulations define the Key Agencies as:

- [Scottish Natural Heritage](#);
- [Historic Environment Scotland](#);
- [The Scottish Environment Protection Agency](#);
- [Scottish Water](#);
- [Scottish Enterprise](#) (only in its area of jurisdiction);
- [Highland and Islands Enterprise](#) (only in its area of jurisdiction);
- [Regional Transport Partnerships](#) (only in relevant areas of jurisdiction);
- [Crofters Commission](#) (only in crofting counties); and
- [Health Boards](#).

While legislation cannot specify them individually, the following bodies should have the same level of involvement in the development plan process:

- [Transport Scotland](#);
- [Forestry Commission Scotland](#);
- [Marine Scotland](#); and
- [Architecture & Design Scotland](#).

The Group also works in partnership with a number of other organisations that support the planning system, including:

- [COSLA](#);
- [British Geological Survey](#);
- [SportScotland](#);
- [Visit Scotland](#);
- [Improvement Service](#); and
- [Planning Aid Scotland](#).

Several members of the Key Agencies Group prepare annual planning performance reports detailing their engagement in the planning system for the current year.

## **Annex 2 – Frequently Asked Questions in relation to Key Agency involvement in planning**

How do agencies feed into production of development plans and supplementary guidance?

Agencies are involved in all stages of the plan-making process. We, provide information to inform environmental reports, help shape the vision and policies in the plan and help the planners make decisions about where to allocate land for new development.

What happens if agencies have outstanding issues on development plans?

We work with local authorities to resolve as many outstanding issues as we can. Where there are issues we cannot resolve these are considered at examination stage. We consider the development plan to be a partnership document and once adopted we will support decisions made in line with that plan.

When do agencies get involved in planning applications and other consents?

Regulations set out when and on what cases agencies need to be consulted. In general, agencies will get involved where we have the expertise and resources to provide advice to decision makers that adds value to the outcome.

What stage of the process do agencies get involved in planning applications and other consents?

We have made it clear in our statement on pre-application engagement that for national and major developments, we wish to get involved as early as possible. In this way, we can ensure we add value the process and the outcome.

There are many applications received where local authorities have the skills and expertise to deal with the issues without our intervention. We support that through training and on-line guidance.

What happens if an agency objects to an application that a local authority wants to approve?

Agencies provide advice on their individual areas of expertise. We expect local authorities to take that advice into account in reaching a balanced decision. In some cases Ministers need to be notified if local authorities are minded to set that advice aside. We will only ask Ministers to 'call in' applications for their determination where we consider it raises issues of national significance.

Why do agencies often not support the refusal of permission by local authorities when there are adverse impacts on the natural or built environment?

Agencies provide advice on the impacts a development may have on the built and natural environment and, if possible, how to mitigate or avoid those impacts. Agencies will, however, only object to a proposal where it raises issues of national significance. This does not mean agencies support proposals that result in harm to the natural or built environment and local authorities need to take the decision that is appropriate to their local area on the basis of national policy and the relevant development plan.