



The Planning Inspectorate
Yr Arolygiaeth Gynllunio

The Planning Inspectorate Annual Report and Accounts 2020/21



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Presented to the House of Commons pursuant to Section 7 of the Government Resources and Accounts Act 2000.

Ordered by the House of Commons to be printed on 8th July 2021.

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This publication is available in:
Welsh - contact the Inspectorate's Cardiff office.
Large Print - contact the Inspectorate's Bristol Office.

Mae'r cyhoeddiad hwn hefyd ar gael yn Saesneg
trwy gysylltu â Swyddfa'r Arolygiaeth yng
Nghaerdydd, ac mewn print bras trwy gysylltu â
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This publication is available at www.gov.uk/official-documents.

ISBN 978-1-5286-2720-7
CCS 0121932882 07/21

Printed on paper containing 75% recycled fibre minimum content.

Printed in the UK by the APS Group on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

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Introduction

As the Planning Inspectorate we are fair when it comes to listening to differing views, open in the way we work, impartial in our examinations, deciding appeals and handling applications and focused on delivering for our customers.

Across England and Wales, our Inspectors deliver decisions and recommendations across our three public services: examinations, appeals and applications.

To do this, we make sure development is carefully considered, that the right homes are constructed in the right places, and that green spaces are protected. We make sure that proposed developments meet future needs for the economy, environment and society and that the community's views on large infrastructure applications are heard. We uphold and promote quality, assuring the checks and balances of the planning system, so that decisions are fair, impartial and open. We examine the local plans from Local Authorities that set the framework for economic, social and environmental priorities. We have specialist experts able to advise and decide cases on specialist subjects across environmental, ecological, historic and arboricultural matters. The work of our Inspectors is supported by skilled professionals delivering casework support, specialist advice, customer service, corporate services, knowledge management, project management and digital expertise.



Examination service



Appeal service



Application service

To be customer focused

We have diverse customers with diverse needs. We know most customers want a better service, delivered in a timely manner and our information to be clear, consistent and easily accessible. Beyond this, we are using the insights from the Institute of Customer Service's survey to improve our customer service.

Activities delivered in 2020/21

- We merged customer-facing roles into one team and created new roles to improve our customer service.
- We benchmarked our customer service through the Institute of Customer Service.

Strategic risks

- S11 Data protection
- S13 Failure to manage stakeholders
- S17 Missing opportunities to improve customers' experience

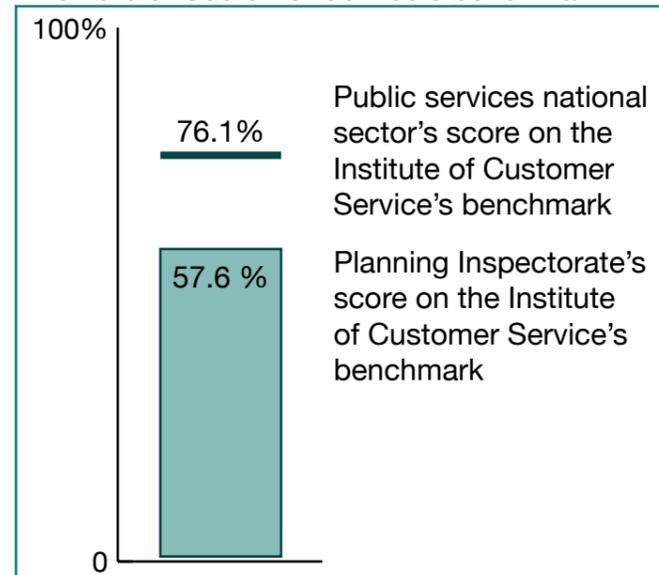
Activities planned for 2021/22

- We will develop a customer strategy to deepen our understanding and gain insights about our customers' needs and expectations.
- We will use those insights from customers to drive and prioritise changes and innovation.
- We will take actions on the findings from the Institute of Customer Service survey ([read more](#)).

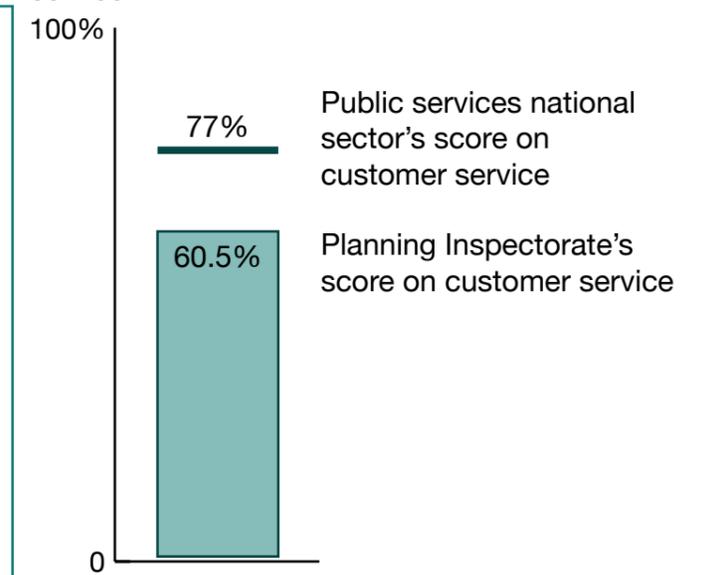
Performance

- The Institute of Customer Service surveyed a sample of our customers. We scored 57.6% on the benchmark scale (the public services national sector score is 76.1%) and scored 60.5% on customer service (the public services national sector score is 77%).
- These results provide us with the important insights we need to enable us to improve and meet the expectations of our customers.

Graph 1. Inspectorate's score against the Institute of Customer Service's benchmark



Graph 2. Inspectorate's score on customer service



To effectively and efficiently serve people, places and the economy

Our work results in well-informed decisions, reports and recommendations that serve people, places and the economy. As part of the country's recovery from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, we'll play our part by focusing on delivering our work in a timely manner.

Activities delivered in 2020/21

- We adapted the way we work to keep casework moving despite the pandemic. This year we made around 17,000 recommendations and decisions in England and over 500 in Wales.
- We implemented safety measures for site visits and held over 700 virtual hearings and inquiries.
- We developed a more advanced modelling capability to improve Inspector programming, optimising our use of skills and resources.

Strategic risks

- S1 Capability and capacity
- S3 Change projects' benefit realisation
- S4 Operational performance
- S12 Failure to embed changes
- S15 Impact of national infrastructure applications

Activities planned for 2021/22

- We will simplify the way we write and publish decisions and recommendations, to improve accessibility for our customers.
- We will use a hybrid of procedures, mixing elements from written representations, hearings and inquiries, in order to improve the flexibility of our operations.
- We will continue to develop and trial digital public services for our customers.
- We will liaise with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to improve how our performance is measured.
- We will invest to improve our performance.

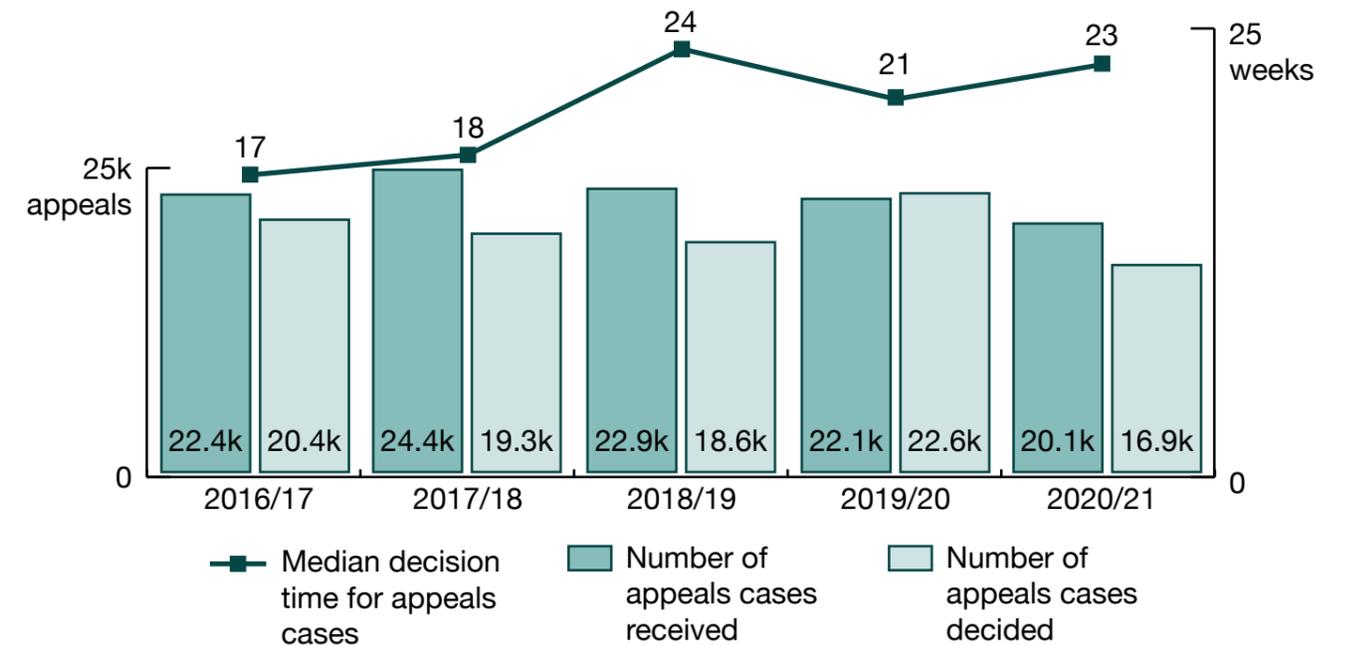
Performance in England

- We issued 32 reports following the examination of local plans and issued 10 reports in response to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project applications.
- We made over 16,800 decisions in response to appeals.
- The pandemic impacted our capacity to make decisions for appeals. In consequence the median decision time increased from 21 weeks in 2019/20 to 23 weeks.

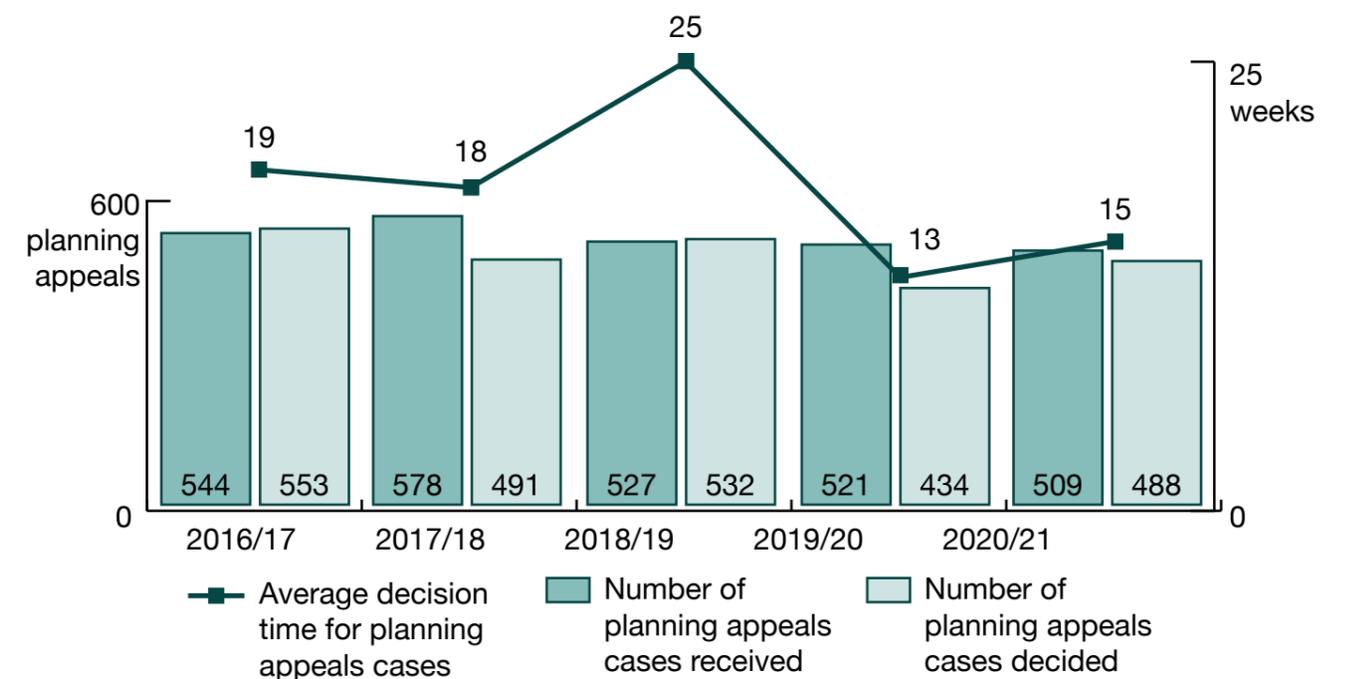
Performance in Wales

- We issued one report following a local development plan examination and two reports in response to Development of National Significance applications.
- We made 500 decisions in response to appeals.
- The pandemic impacted our capacity to make decisions for appeals in Wales as well. In consequence the average decision time for planning appeals increased from 13 weeks in 2019/20 to 15 weeks.

Graph 3. Appeals in England over the last five years



Graph 4. Planning appeals in Wales over the last five years



To be an attractive and inclusive organisation

As part of being a safe and attractive place to work, we want to develop our people and improve our equality, diversity and inclusivity. We must also maintain our strengths as trusted experts, that embody our organisational values (fair, open, impartial and customer-focused).

Activities delivered in 2020/21

- We kept our people safe during the pandemic, supported those with caring responsibilities and promoted the importance of health and wellbeing.
- We transitioned into a new operating model, including recruiting to over 200 posts.
- We developed an employee equality, diversity and inclusion approach, as a contribution to our Public Sector Equalities Duty and to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Strategic risks

- S7 Change in the organisation
- S16 Health, safety and wellbeing

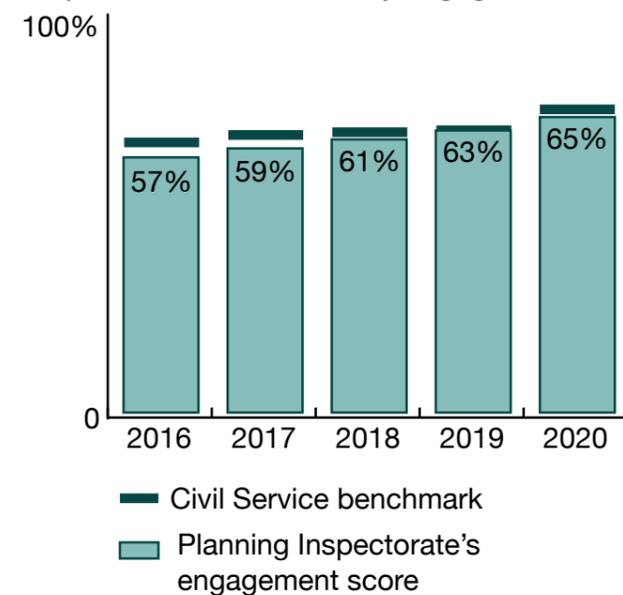
Activities planned for 2021/22

- We will continuously develop our pay and reward approach to ensure equal pay for equal work.
- We will implement our equality, diversity and inclusion approach to attract a diverse pool of applicants for new positions that better reflect the communities that we serve.
- We will develop our professions to ensure we retain a skilled workforce to meet our current and future challenges.
- We will develop an environmental policy and start benchmarking our performance.

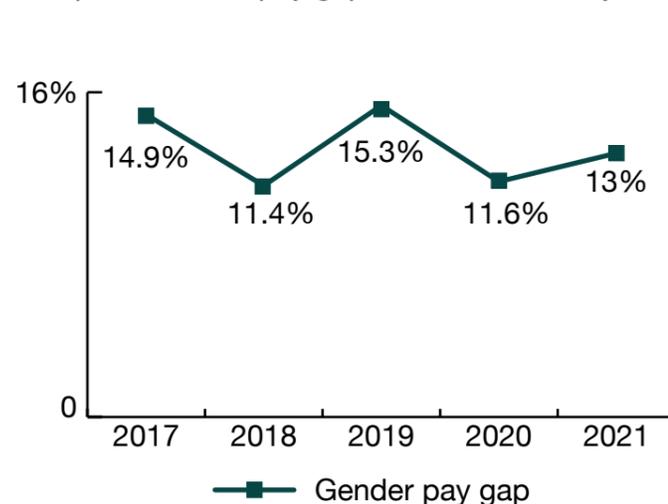
Performance

- Our 65% employee engagement score is very close to the civil service benchmark of 66%.
- Our gender pay gap in March 2021 was 13%, similar to our performance over the last five years.

Graph 5. Civil service survey engagement



Graph 6. Gender pay gap over the last five years



To plan for the future

We need to become a more agile organisation, able to anticipate and respond to changes. This will enable us to sustainably deliver an effective and efficient service across all our services.

Activities delivered in 2020/21

- We worked with stakeholders to identify improvements to the application service as part of Project Speed.
- We prepared for new policies and processes resulting from the Environment Bill 2020.
- We established capabilities in strategic workforce planning, horizon scanning, innovation and continuous improvement.
- We progressed the transformation programme to improve digital public services
- We scaled up our capacity for virtual events.

Strategic risks

- S2 Horizon scanning and resource planning
- S14 Planning for the future and Project Speed

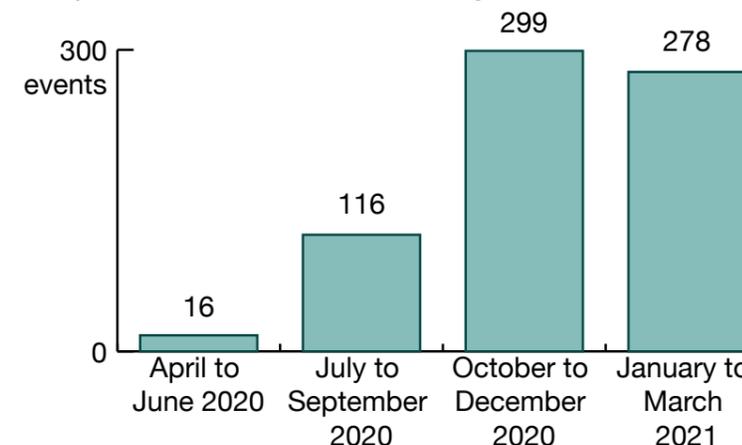
Activities planned for 2021/22

- We will work with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to contribute our knowledge and expertise at the design stage of Planning for the future.
- We will continue to work on Project Speed.
- Engaging with stakeholders, we will explore how we can improve our approach to future events in a post-pandemic world.
- We will continue to develop and trial digital public services for our customers.

Performance

- From June to September 2020, we scaled up our capacity to host virtual events. Since October we have held on average about 90 events a month. (There are some concerns about the quality and accuracy of the data collection methods for this data on virtual events. See our [statistical releases](#) and background quality reports for more details.)
- Over the last five years our expenditure on change has increased year on year, culminating at £7.1m in 2020/21.

Graph 7. Virtual events held in England in 2020/21



Graph 8. Change expenditure



Chief Executive's Statement

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic dominated our thoughts and influenced our actions throughout last year. My overarching feeling is of pride in our response to change and the achievements the Planning Inspectorate has made.

In 2019/20, we reported the successful rollout of our performance recovery programme. We significantly improved our casework performance. We made substantial progress with implementing the recommendations of the Rosewell review, and the average time taken to decide appeal inquiries was nearly halved. We had planned to continue with this drive in 2020/21, but the COVID-19 pandemic impacted our plans.

'I'm immensely proud of the work our people have done to keep casework moving.'

From the start of lockdown in late March 2020, I set three clear priorities: ensuring our people's wellbeing, keeping casework moving and supporting the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. Throughout the year, I'm pleased to say that we have continued our work in these exceptional circumstances, and I'm immensely proud of the work our people have done to keep casework moving.

The lockdowns restrictions have reduced the availability of our Inspectors due to shielding and caring responsibilities, limited our capacity to conduct site visits and hold the events needed to progress our cases. In response, we have shown resilience in implementing safe changes to our operations, which have allowed us to progress our customers' cases as quickly as possible. The implementation of virtual events has meant that we've been able to hold hearings and inquiries safely. It has allowed customers and stakeholders that wouldn't normally have had the opportunity to be involved, to attend or watch such events. This achievement was recognised by two nominations for the Royal Town Planning Institute's Planning Excellence Awards.

This year we have also completed the second stage of our organisational redesign, with filling over 200 new positions. Developments in our data, innovation, governance, commercial, customer services, and knowledge management and horizon scanning, have resulted in better resource planning and greater resilience to future changes.

Looking forward to the next 12 months, we will have many new challenges. The results from the Institute of Customer Service survey have provided us with a road map of what we need to do to improve our services. We have a programme of activities to improve our operations. We will be focusing on equality, diversity and making the Inspectorate even more inclusive. Towards the end of 2021, we will see the completion of our transformation programme, which will improve the way we work and the interactions our customers have with us. Implementing our innovation strategy will help us get ready for the next set of changes.

'In 2021/22 we'll be preparing for a radical planning reform.'

In 2021/22, we'll be preparing for a radical reform of the planning system and we have been working closely with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. The Planning Bill, due in autumn 2021, will have a major impact on both the work we do and how we do it. We are also at the heart of a ministerial initiative called Project Speed, which focusses on speeding up the development of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects. The creation of an independent Inspectorate for Wales, the Welsh Planning Inspectorate, planned for October 2021, is another change we will deliver in partnership with both our governmental sponsors.

You will notice that we have made changes to the way we report, analyse and present data and information about our performance. I hope you find this improved format more accessible and easier to understand. If you have any comments or feedback, you can find our contact details earlier in this document.

Once again, I'd like to say how proud I am of our people at the Planning Inspectorate in what has been a truly challenging time.

Sarah Richards

Board Chair's statement

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic reshaped the world. Its impact has been monumental on a human, organisational and societal level. I commend the Inspectorate's response: adapting at pace while maintaining its strategic focus and principles.

I am proud of the way the Inspectorate has responded to the challenges of the year, it has demonstrated its resilience and commitment to delivering its purpose. I am grateful for the collaborative way partners have worked with the Inspectorate to progress their work in new ways. I am also grateful to Ministers for their support and interest in the Inspectorate's work.

'The Planning Inspectorate has transformed itself: most visibly through the introduction of virtual events, with over 700 held by the end of March 2021.'

The investment over recent years technology and training, as well as a maturing approach to risk management meant the Planning Inspectorate was well-prepared for an immediate switch to home working, drawing on the experience of home-based Inspectors. The focus the Inspectorate gave to wellbeing and support has been invaluable, borne out in the increased employee engagement score. The Planning Inspectorate has transformed itself: most visibly through the introduction of virtual events, with over 700 held by the end of March 2021. Public interest and engagement in planning showed, with over 15,000 people viewing the South Oxfordshire local plan examination for example. The level of change has been significant, much has been learned, with more to come as a result.

The impact of the pandemic slowed the progress on improving timeliness, but it has not blown the Inspectorate off course. Throughout the year, the Board received robust assurance around strategic delivery. The Inspectorate has continued to make progress against its plans by: implementing the Rosewell recommendations, improving the digital journey with Local Planning Authorities, implementing organisational redesign and welcoming six apprentices, improving approaches to equality, diversity and inclusion and to health, safety and wellbeing.

The Inspectorate was also able to support the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government with its response to the pandemic and preparations for leaving the European Union. The Ministry has drawn on the knowledge and experience of Inspectors in their work on Planning for the future and on expertise on the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects for Project Speed. The Welsh Government is working with the Inspectorate on the creation of an independent Welsh appeal regime scheduled to go live in October 2021.

'The Inspectorate's work will be vital as we all seek to recover from the impact of the pandemic.'

The Inspectorate's work in normal times is critical to the wellbeing of our nations by supporting the creation of sustainable communities, enabling the delivery of homes, jobs and infrastructure, protecting the environment and focusing on what matters to local communities. This helps deliver the United Kingdom's commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development goals. The Inspectorate's work will be vital as we all seek to recover from the impact of the pandemic.

On behalf of myself and fellow Non-Executive Directors, I wish to thank Sarah Richards, her executive team and the resilient and skilled colleagues across the Inspectorate for their inspirational work this year. The nominations for the Royal Town Planning Institute's awards were certainly well-deserved.

Trudi Elliott

Our stakeholders and customers

In our [Strategic Plan](#), we outline our ambitions to increase our customer focus, recognising the importance of gaining a deeper understanding of who our customers are and the best ways to serve them and their diverse needs.

Our customers

We have a varied group of customers across our appeals, applications, and examinations services. Our customers are made up of appellants, planning agents, Local Planning Authorities, other Government agencies, developers, landowners, parish councils and many more.

We are deepening our understanding of our customers' needs and expectations to align our services to them. This year we became a member of The Institute of Customer Service to benefit from their guidance and best practice. The Institute of Customer Service also ran a survey on our behalf to benchmark our service against other public services and organisations in other sectors. We published a [blog](#) about the results and show the highlights in the [Performance Overview page 3](#). This is the first step in our ambition to improve our focus on customers, as we look to shape our Customer Strategy in the months ahead.

Our stakeholders

We know the importance of good stakeholder relationships, and the benefit they can bring to the Inspectorate. In addition to our customers, our key stakeholders include: ministers and officials at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and at the Welsh Government; Local Planning Authorities; statutory consultees; professional bodies and groups.

Keeping our stakeholders informed about our activities, successes and challenges is important to us. We have continued to engage with key stakeholders and taken part in numerous speaking engagements and webinars. We know that there is more that we can do in this space and will be building from our current stakeholder map. We are creating a communications and stakeholder strategy to support the delivery of the [Strategic Plan](#). It will further identify our stakeholder segments and outline best practice for engagement and communication.

In our efforts to raise the profile and understanding of the Planning Inspectorate and our role in the planning system, we have created and published a [new 'flagship' corporate film](#). It is a high-level summary of our roles and responsibilities and since January 2021, it has been included in our recruitment packs issued to potential candidates.

	Examinations	Appeals	Applications
Direct customers	Local Planning Authorities	Appellants and planning agents	Applicants, including other Government agencies
Indirect customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory consultees Local residents Special interest groups Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Planning Authorities Local residents Special interest groups Developers Landowners Parish councils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Planning Authorities Local residents Special interest groups Governmental departments
Overall stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministers and officials at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and at the Welsh Government Local and national elected officials Professional bodies and groups News and trade media 		

COVID-19 pandemic response to customers and stakeholders

From April 2020 to March 2021, the year has been dominated with managing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. We rapidly adapted to working differently and keeping our customers and our people informed on our website, Intranet and social media channels. In May, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government released a Written Ministerial Statement creating the policy expectation that all hearings and inquiries should be delivered virtually with only a few exceptions. We scaled up our efforts to conduct events online and switched from physical events to virtual ones. This was an innovative and ambitious project that allowed us to keep casework moving and widen attendance. Despite positive feedback, we recognise it is not a perfect solution for all parties, the future role for virtual events is being developed in conjunction with our stakeholders. Notably a webinar was held in December 2020, chaired by Bridget Rosewell, that sought to gather views from a cross-section of the planning community to inform our future direction.



Website

Over 328k page views of Planning Inspectorate content on GOV.UK.



Twitter

We gained 791 new followers; received 650k tweet impressions; and were mentioned 3k times.



Press enquiries

On average we respond to 7 journalist queries per week.



LinkedIn

We gained 4k new followers and received 600k impressions.



Mentions in the press

On average, the Planning Inspectorate is mentioned around 120 times per week in the news.



Youtube

Over 675 people subscribed to our channel and we have 128k views.

Our statutory framework

Our work is bound by a statutory framework within which we are expected to operate. Acts of Parliament and of the National Assembly for Wales, set out most key rights within the planning system.

Defining the planning system

As part of our three public services, we examine the soundness of local plans, determine a range of appeals and applications, and make recommendations on Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects. In Wales, where planning is a devolved matter, we also make recommendations on Developments of National Significance.

The planning system within which we operate is described as plan-led and is defined by a number of Acts. Four key pieces of legislation are particularly significant for our work. These are:

- The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, covers the local plans system, as well as the statutory duty to determine planning applications and appeals in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- The Town and Country Planning Act 1990, covers the right to appeal for planning, enforcement, and lawful development certificate cases, as well as our ability to determine the procedure for a variety of case types.
- The Planning Act 2008, covers the consenting regime for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects in England. It also includes some limited provisions relevant to Wales, that are separate from the Developments of National Significance.
- The Planning (Wales) Act 2015 covering the Developments of National Significance regime in Wales.

Other Acts and related legislation cover Listed Buildings and other, less common, areas of our work, such as rights of way, and environmental appeals.

Defining the rules and regulations

Secondary legislation provides the detail that supports the planning system. It defines what development may be lawfully permitted without seeking planning permission, as well as when prior approval should be sought. It sets out the form in which an appeal should be made as well as establishing our procedures for handling those appeals.

Meeting our statutory duties

The statutory framework ensures the fair operation of the planning system. But we are also bound by other statutory duties, for example, those relating to data protection as set out in the General Data Protection Regulation or the Public Sector Equality Duty. At all times, we are required to ensure that we comply with relevant legislation, but we must also ensure that parties involved in our casework meet their own obligations.

Key planning legislation	Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004	Town and Country Planning Act 1990
	Planning Act 2008	Planning (Wales) Act 2015
Secondary legislation	Provides the detail that supports the planning system. Defines permitted developments. Establishes procedures for handling appeals.	
Examples of other statutory duties	General Data Protection Regulation	Public Sector Equality Duty
	Future Wales: the national plan 2040	Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
Potential upcoming changes	Planning for the Future White Paper (England only)	Project Speed

Future Wales

In Wales, the Welsh Government has published Future Wales: the national plan 2040. It provides a spatial context for facilitating the delivery of development in Wales over the next 20 years, and contributes to the broader ambitions of the Welsh Government and to the well-being of communities. We have a pivotal role to play in this.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 seeks to place Wales on a sustainable path to improving wellbeing. The Future Generations Commissioner has reported that getting planning right can help meet wellbeing goals, and acknowledges we are starting to reinforce the requirements of the act in our approach to decision making. We must look to maximise the principles of the Act both within our organisation and through our decision making.

Changing legislation now, and in the future

We must ensure we respond to any changes in legislation that affect our work. These will not only regulate parts of our work but may also open up avenues for new types of casework, or provide us with greater flexibility to manage our casework in the interests of our customers.

In England, in response to the pandemic, changes to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 allowed for the life of expiring planning permissions to be extended, resulting in new work. Other changes now allow us to use a combination of procedures to determine appeals casework, creating greater flexibility and efficiency for the benefit of our customers (see [Our operations pages 36-37](#)).

Future changes may be more wide-ranging in England. The planning White Paper Planning for the future proposes a number of radical reforms to the current plan-led system, setting out to streamline and modernise the planning process. It will require us to respond and adapt, changing both the nature of our work and the way we conduct that work. Project Speed is another government-led initiative that aims to improve the process for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects. It will challenge stakeholders to remove barriers and work faster together within the current framework of the Planning Act 2008.

Whatever the scope of the changes that come forward, we will continue to ensure we operate within the statutory framework in the interests of all those involved in the planning system.

Our strategy

Our purpose is to work together to deliver decisions, recommendations and advice to customers in an open, fair, impartial and timely manner. Our strategy maps the way we deliver our purpose, live our values and realise our vision.

In anticipation of the changes laid out in the Planning for the future White Paper, we did a light touch refresh of our [Strategic Plan](#) in 2020. We published this in January 2021 following approval from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Welsh Government. We built the revised [Strategic Plan](#) with the customer at its heart, with most changes relating to objectives. We kept our vision and the essence of our strategic priorities, which are:

To be customer-focused

We continue to seek opportunities to shape our systems and processes to deliver improved services that meet our customers' and stakeholders' expectations.

To effectively and efficiently serve people, places and the economy

Our work plays a critical part in both the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government achieving its objective of delivering the homes the country needs, and in the Welsh Government delivering the principles of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

To be an attractive and inclusive organisation

We plan to develop an inclusive, skilled, and engaged workforce, representative of our customers and reducing any existing inequalities. We also adhere to the principles of sustainable development and aim to evaluate our impact on communities and the environment.

To plan for the future

Building a culture of innovation and continuous improvement is key to our readiness for the future. This will include us partnering and supporting others to improve the planning system at a local and national level.

We identified 15 strategic objectives for 2020/24 that will realise our priorities and created a framework to enable us to monitor our progress and performance. The business plans for 2020/21 and 2021/22 support the delivery of these objectives. Our strategic objectives and business plans align with the priorities set for us by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government as our sponsoring department.

We are required to have a three-year rolling strategic plan. In 2021/22 we will reshape our [Strategic Plan](#) in response to our changing customer expectations, operating environment and legislative changes.

Purpose:
To work together to deliver decisions, recommendations and advice to customers in an open, fair, impartial and timely manner.

Values:
Customer-focused; Open; Impartial; Fair.

Vision:
To provide a customer-focused, professional and innovative centre of excellence with trusted, independent planning experts, meeting the Government's objectives at a local and national level whilst working with others to improve the planning system.

To be customer-focused.



To effectively and efficiently serve people, places and the economy.



To be an attractive and inclusive organisation.



To plan for the future.



Our 15 objectives

Improve how we engage with our customers.

Provide clear, accurate, easily accessible, transparent and robust information, to enable a modern, efficient and continuously improving planning process.

Continue to strongly uphold our reputation for values of fairness, openness and impartiality, and the quality of our decision making.

Improve our casework performance and meet the changing demands of the planning system.

Deliver improved assurance on the efficiency, quality, fairness, openness and impartiality of our decisions.

Work alongside the Ministry to deliver legislative change, improving the planning system and the end-to-end experience for customers.

Analyse and share best practice with Local Planning Authorities, to improve the customer experience of the overall planning system.

Develop our culture of inclusivity to attract, engage and retain a diverse workforce that increasingly represents the communities we

serve, ensuring we have the skills for the future.

Undertake work to identify our community and environmental impact and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This allows us to adjust our working practices, contributing to the achievement of sustainable development goals.

Effectively manage performance and talent to continuously develop our organisational capabilities. This will ensure flexible and customer-focused delivery of service and readiness for the future.

Empower our people to raise issues and consider risks.

Develop and implement a digital strategy that will maximise the benefits of digital technology to meet evolving customer expectations and to provide greater value to the taxpayer.

Encourage and value creativity, new ideas and acceptable risk-taking in the development of new services and improvement of current ones.

Use our data to enable the planning sector to operate more efficiently.

Increase our ability to see what is coming so we can prepare for changes.

Our risk profile

As the world challenges us and as we change and evolve, we use risk management to systematically mitigate the threats that could keep us from realising our strategy.

Strategic risk management

Our risk management process identifies, assesses, addresses, records and mitigates uncertainties to the delivery of our strategic priorities, objectives and activities. The strategic risks are the most important threats to delivering our strategic priorities, we focus on those here. Each risk is assessed using a five-by-five scoring matrix. We rate the impact by considering the consequences of a risk on our ambitions, people, customers and stakeholders. We rate the likelihood by considering the probability of a risk to materialise.

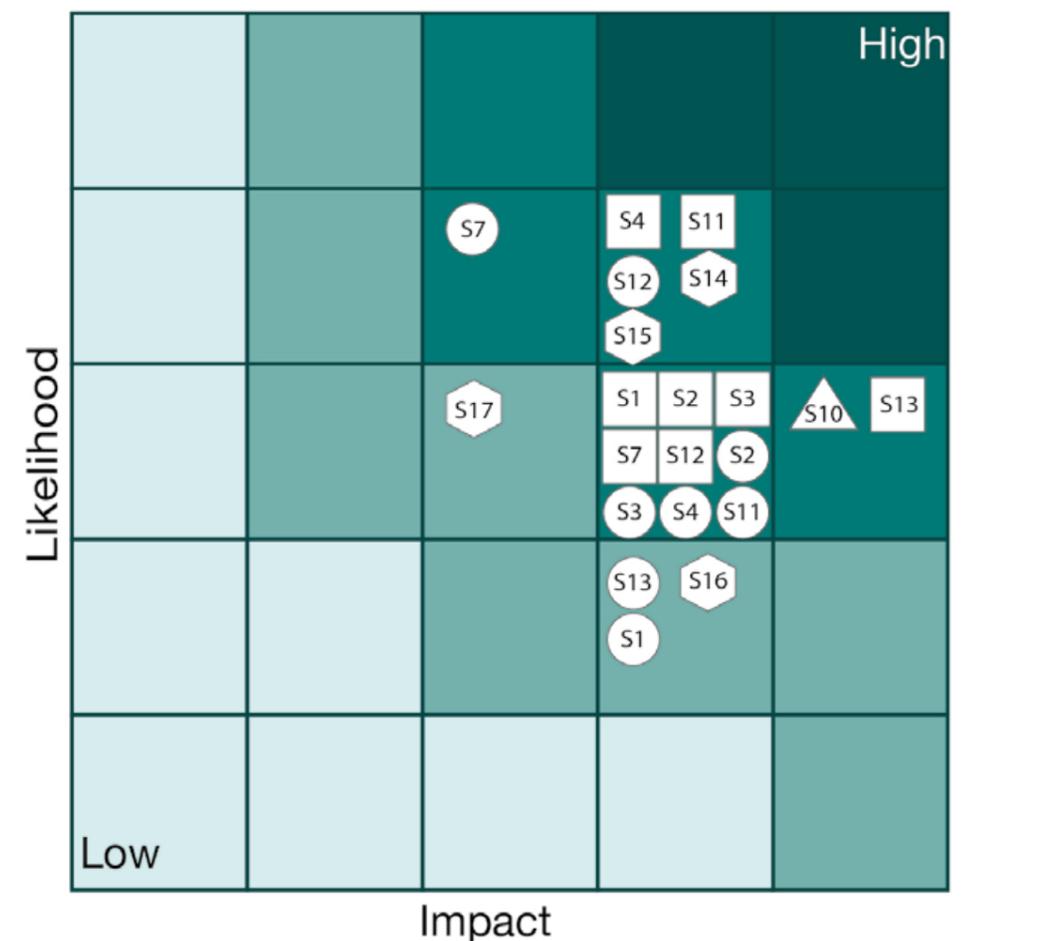
Our risk appetites express the amount of risk we are willing to take on, by type of risk. Appetites vary according to the activity: for example, we are willing to take on uncertainty when innovating but we are conservative for risks that could impact our reputation. The illustration below shows the strategic risks plotted under the risk appetite categories. A large proportion of our strategic risks would impact our operational delivery (S1, S4, S12 and S15), or our reputation and credibility (S2, S13, S14 and S17). The remaining four risks would impact our finances (S3), our ability to innovate (S7), our people (S16) and our compliance to legal and regulatory requirements (S11).

Reputation and Credibility	Operational Delivery	Financial
S2 Horizon scanning and resource planning	S1 Capability and capacity	S3 Change projects' benefit realisation
S13 Failure to manage stakeholders	S4 Operational performance	Compliance, legal or regulatory
S14 Planning for the future and Project Speed	S12 Failure to embed changes	S11 Data protection
S17 Missing opportunities to improve customer experience	S15 Impact of national infrastructure applications	People
	Innovation	S16 Health, safety & wellbeing
	S7 Change in the organisation	

Our risk profile through 2020/21

Our strategic risk profile changed throughout 2020/21. This was due to external events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic or the Planning for the future White Paper, and to internal changes and pressures. The following pages show in detail how each risk score changed and explains the mitigations implemented as well as the ones planned for the future.

We identified four new strategic risks (S14, S15, S16 and S17). We closed one risk, about the Heathrow Project (S10), since S15, one of the newly logged risks, covers Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects in general. We updated and re-assessed all other risks: one score increased (S12), three risks remained stable overall (S2, S3 and S7) and four risks reduced by the end of the year (S1, S4, S11 and S13). Strategic risks S5, S6, S8 and S9 were closed in previous years. The heat map below shows our strategic risks and how they evolved in 2020/21.



Score April 2020
 Score March 2021
 New risk
 Closed risk

S1 - Capability and capacity

Lack of business-critical people could keep the Inspectorate from meeting the requirements and needs of our customers and stakeholders.



Mitigations delivered in 2020/21

- Prepared a thorough funding bid to ensure we have the resources needed to meet the demand and deliver our services.
- Developed a learning and development approach for 2020/25 and a 2021/22 plan to ensure our people have the right skills.
- Switched to virtual recruitment methods that allowed us to fill the vast majority of vacant posts and complete our restructure.

Change in scoring

The likelihood of this risk occurring reduced.



Future mitigations

- Develop a five-year workforce plan detailing the size and skill of our current workforce, what we will need in the future, and an action plan for developing those skills.
- Review our latest organisation design to ensure it is fit for purpose.
- Develop key professions with clear professional development pathways.

S2 - Horizon scanning and resource planning

Inability to understand the future planning environment could lead to insufficient numbers of skilled people, limiting our ability to deliver our public services.



Mitigations delivered in 2020/21

- Liaised with Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and other public bodies to identify possible future changes to policy.
- Developed our capacity and capability to understand external factors through the creation of our horizon scanning function.

Change in scoring - No change.



Future mitigations

- Develop a five-year workforce plan, detailing the size and skill of our current workforce, what we will need in the future, and an action plan for developing those skills.
- Develop a systematic approach to horizon scanning.

S3 - Change projects' benefit realisation

Failure to realise benefits from our change projects could keep us from delivering our strategy and required savings.



Mitigations delivered in 2020/21

- Improved project management capacity and capability to ensure we can fully benefit from each change.

Change in scoring - No change.

Future mitigations

- Implement controls to systematically track delivery of savings and benefits.
- Promote culture change to enable successful delivery.



S4 - Operational performance

Mismatch between demand for services and our ability to deliver could lead to inability to sustain the level of performance required by our sponsors and customers.



Mitigations delivered in 2020/21

- Trialled approaches in an 'experimental team' to challenge assumptions and behaviours and break down the complexity keeping us from responding to the changes in customers' demands.
- Revised resourcing models to reliably inform decision-making.

Change in scoring

The likelihood of this risk occurring reduced.

Future mitigations

- Establish a recruitment and training cycle for Inspectors.
- Review the training approach for both new and existing Inspectors to support increased flexibility.
- Review Inspectors specialisms to increase flexibility.
- Develop a five-year workforce plan, detailing the size and skill of our current workforce, what we will need in the future and an action plan for developing those skills.



S7 - Change in the organisation

Resistance to change and lack of change leadership prevent us from doing things differently, achieving our strategic priorities and responding to external pressures.



Mitigations delivered in 2020/21

- Implemented an 'agile' approach for our change projects as well as early engagement. The new services were tested in a controlled live environment.
- Used feedback from the controlled live environment testing to improve service.
- Trained line managers to role model a positive approach to change and to offer support to our people.



Change in scoring

While the likelihood of this risk increased, we were able to decrease its impact. No overall change in score.

Future mitigations

- Build on experience of the pandemic as we have shown that we can respond to change very quickly.
- Implement controls that will encourage flexible use of our people to limit the use of contractors.

S10 - Impact of Heathrow Airport expansion submission

The scale, complexity and profile of the Heathrow Airport expansion could lead us to underestimate the costs and the level of Inspectors' input required to process the application.



Mitigations delivered in 2020/21

- Secured funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for project.
- Maintained a dedicated project team to manage and assure our work.
- Included Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects as part of the transformation programme.

Risk closed

Covered as part of risk S15 Impact of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project applications.

S11 - Data protection

The lack of robust controls and an immature culture of data governance could lead to a data breach as we fail to comply with our legal and regulatory obligations.



Mitigations delivered in 2020/21

- Delivered training on general data governance to some of our people prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Delivered specialised training to people with key roles and responsibilities.
- Updated processing activities and information asset register.
- Completed data protection impact assessments.
- Enabled virtual events by carrying out a data protection risk assessment and setting up data sharing agreements.
- Risk assessed all new processing of personal data.
- Improved data sharing agreements for new local plan examinations.
- Updated people and recruitment privacy notice and the casework privacy notice.



Change in scoring

The likelihood of this risk occurring reduced.

Future mitigations

- Continue implementation of the record retention and disposal policy as part of the information management system.
- Deliver e-learning package and additional bespoke training.
- Risk assess historic processing of personal data.
- Put in place data sharing agreements for ongoing data sharing with customers and stakeholders.

S12 - Failure to embed changes

The digital public services developed by the transformation programme are not sufficiently integrated into our processes and are not developed further after the programme ends.



Mitigations delivered in 2020/21

- Started to implement new ways of working aligned to the service model, in line with the Government's digital agenda.

Change in scoring

The likelihood of this risk occurring increased.



Future mitigations

- Update governance processes to support an agile approach.
- Integrate the transformation programme team and their learning with our digital team.
- Embed digital work practices, throughout the Inspectorate, and particularly in the Digital Services team, through a specific project.

S13 - Failure to manage stakeholders

Failure to manage stakeholder relationships and communications or a badly handled error could impact our reputation.



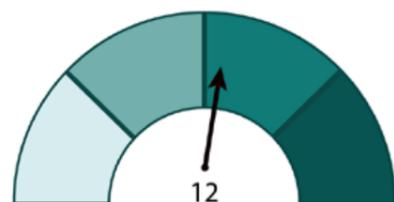
Score in April 2020

Mitigations delivered in 2020/21

- Monitored customer feedback through a variety of channels.
- Captured, shared and used insights from monitoring.
- Promoted a strong corporate narrative for our people and proactively communicated to customers and key stakeholders.
- Used a risk-based approach to train our people in areas known to cause significant reputation damage, such as data protection.

Change in scoring

The likelihood of this risk occurring reduced.



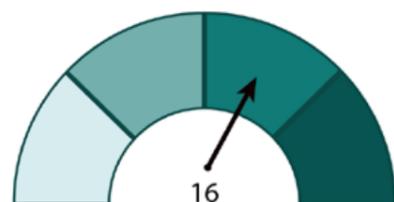
Score in March 2021

Future mitigations

- Develop a stakeholder management strategy.
- Systematically use continuous improvement to solve issues promptly and improve customer experience.

S14 - Planning for the future and Project Speed

Uncertainty, lack of resources, capacity and skills could delay or prevent the implementation of the changes triggered by Planning for the future and Project Speed.



Score in March 2021

Mitigations delivered in 2020/21

- Worked with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to give early insights into Planning for the future.
- Worked with key stakeholders to limit policy constraints and to identify the most beneficial changes to the end-to-end delivery as part of Project Speed.
- Secured appropriate resourcing.

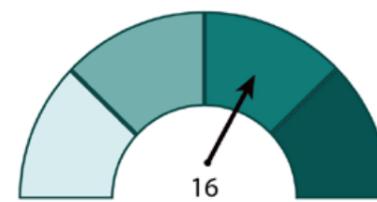
Change in scoring - This is a new risk.

Future mitigations

- Project manage our approach using early experience with the pilot applications and risk management.
- Forecast the skills and resource needed (including any transitional phase) and recruit as necessary.
- Design and deliver a training programme.
- Work with stakeholders, Local Planning Authorities and customers to help them be prepared and engaged with us in the new system.

S15 - Impact of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project applications

The submission of a single, large, complex, high profile and controversial application, or overlapping of several smaller cases, could surpass our capacity to deliver.



Score in March 2021

Mitigations delivered in 2020/21

- Trained Inspectors to increase capacity.
- Progressed change projects and ensured benefits' realisation.
- Identified and engaged with key stakeholders to improve forecasting accuracy.
- Involved Inspectors early in the pre-application phase.
- Used Inspectors more flexibly across several applications.

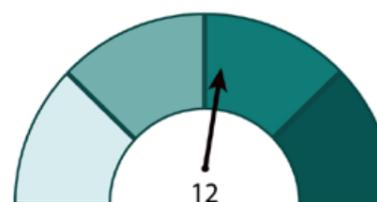
Change in scoring - This is a new risk.

Future mitigations

- Trial changes arising from Project Speed.

S16 - Health, safety and wellbeing

Failure to address health, safety or wellbeing could result in a major accident, incident, near miss or ill health.



Score in March 2021

Mitigations delivered in 2020/21

- Implemented a home working health and safety checklist and a COVID-19 personal risk assessment, providing support and advice to our people as needed.
- Set up social distancing measures in our offices and used weekly risk assessments to allow our people to work safely.
- Provided regular updates of the guidance for site visits.
- Prepared an action plan to improve reporting and strengthen controls following an internal audit and critical friend review.
- Expanded membership of the health, safety and wellbeing committee to represent all our people and Trade Union representatives.
- Developed and updated health, safety and wellbeing approach, policies and procedures and recruited a manager.

Change in scoring - This is a new risk.

Future mitigations

- Roll out updated approach, policy, and procedures.
- Roll out role-specific training on health, safety and wellbeing.
- Review occupational stress and implement an action plan.
- Implement a continuous review of risk assessments, including personal safety, lone working, working at height and visiting construction sites.
- Ensure our office remains COVID-19 secure.

S17 - Missing opportunities to improve customers' experience

Insufficient focus on innovation, user needs and end-to-end experience could lead us to miss opportunities to transform customers' experience.



Mitigations delivered in 2020/21

- Held change project 'Show and tells' to share learning and best practice and encourage embedment within the organisation.
- Considered and implemented good practice from elsewhere in Government to improve assurance and challenge of our approach to change.

Change in scoring - This is a new risk.

Future mitigations

- Develop a systematic approach to horizon scanning.
- Roll out the Customer Strategy and the Innovation Strategy.



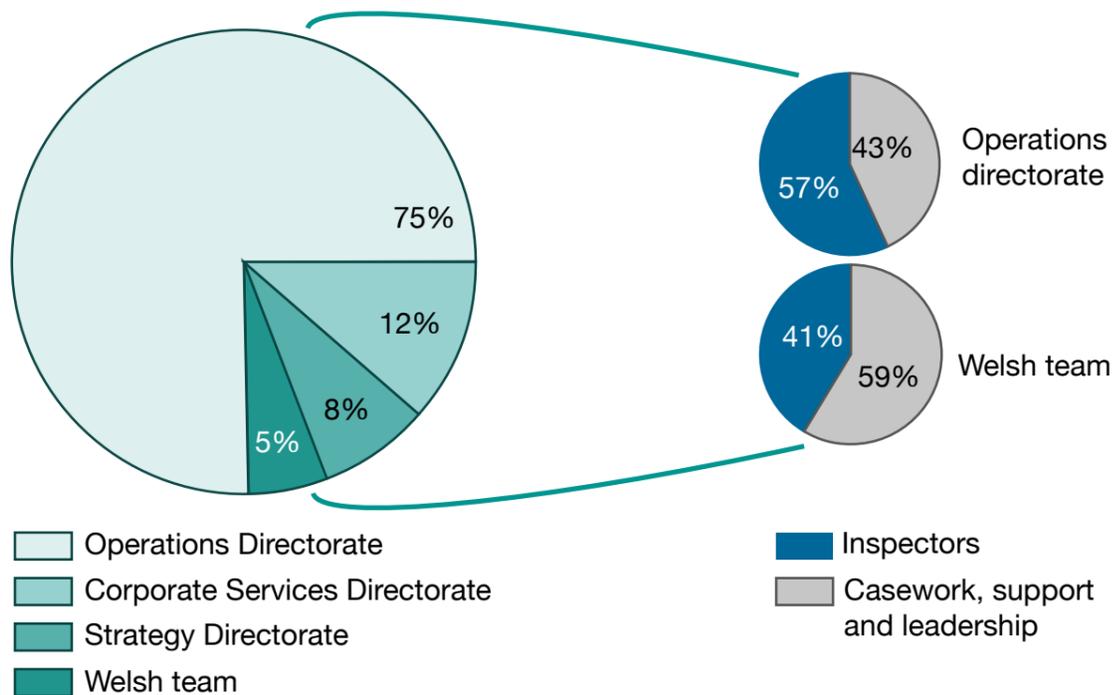
Our organisation

Our organisational resilience was tested by the pandemic. We focused on keeping our people safe and supported them as they balanced work with life in lockdown, which often included extra caring responsibilities. We also implemented a new organisational design, improved our engagement and started to improve our inclusivity.

Organisational design

At the same time as we were managing the impact of the pandemic, we implemented the organisational design programme that was prepared in 2019. Two hundred and seventeen people have been either promoted, recruited externally or moved to another role. 50% of our promotions were from internal candidates. Almost 80% of our people are Inspectors or involved directly in delivering our services. The remaining 20% are split between the Corporate Services Directorate (12%) and the Strategy Directorate (8%).

Graph 9. The Inspectorate's workforce



The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

We provided proactive health, safety and wellbeing support to our people when we transitioned to home working in March 2020. While the Inspectors were already home based, the rest of the organisation responded by adapting fantastically well to working from home. The pandemic has challenged our people and we supported them as they balanced work with caring responsibilities such as home schooling, caring for relatives but also self-care. We are currently reflecting on the lessons we have learned throughout the pandemic and how this might improve how we work in the future.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

We are shaping our approach to improve equality, diversity and inclusion for our people. Led by our Chief Executive, Sarah Richards, both our established and new networks are gaining confidence to lead change throughout the organisation. We are progressively adopting a different perspective to the way we approach everyday business. We have established a dedicated recruitment team, bringing together specialist skills to attract and retain the right people with the highest quality skills at the right time. This team will be enhancing our apprenticeships and outreach programme to widen our appeal across the communities we are based in.

We have started reviewing our pay strategy and this work will be completed during the next year, addressing the gender pay gap and ensuring our commitment to equal pay will be at the centre of our future strategy.

Learning and development

In 2020, we established a central learning and development function to modernise and develop a consistent approach to learning across our organisation. The pandemic challenged our traditional methods of learning and the new structure allowed for innovation in our delivery. We have met emerging learning needs, established a central learning resource and set out our approach for learning over the next five years, which underpins our People Strategy and [Strategic Plan](#).

Engagement

Our people engagement score in 2020 was 65%, which is two percentage points higher than our 2019 score but still one percentage point behind the Civil Service high performing benchmark. This result confirms a steady year-on-year improvement trend that started in 2015, when our engagement score was 56%. We hope this increased engagement is the result of our investment in supporting and developing our people and commitments outlined in our People Strategy. Next year our focus will be on leadership and line manager development as well as progressing the implementation of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion approach.

The creation of the Welsh Inspectorate

A first Planning Inspectorate for the Welsh Government

As planning law in England and Wales continues to diverge, it challenges the operational model of one Inspectorate consistently serving two separate governments, that have competing needs, different social, environmental, economic and planning policies.

Establishing a separate, independent Planning Inspectorate for Wales, has been a topical debate for many years. The current arrangement is a legacy of pre-devolution arrangements, which has continued post devolution with no identified need for change. There has been ongoing political pressure to consider the possibility of a dedicated Welsh Inspectorate. A separate structure will bring Wales into line with the other devolved administrations as Wales is the only devolved administration not to have its own dedicated Inspectorate.

The Welsh Government's Minister for Housing and Local Government concluded, on 29 March 2019, that officials should begin work to explore options for a separate Welsh Inspectorate. The objectives of the new Inspectorate are to continue determining planning appeals and related casework on behalf of the Welsh Ministers and provide high levels of service to all stakeholders in the system.

The planning system is pivotal in the delivery of the Welsh National Strategies, as it governs what development should take place and where. The new Wales Planning Inspectorate Service will be key in supporting the delivery of a robust planning system.

Casework processed by the new Inspectorate will be of significant importance to the economy in Wales. As well as dealing with a wide variety of planning applications, it will handle casework relating to transport, marine and energy applications.

The Head of the new Inspectorate will need to provide impartial views and advice on the planning process to politicians and practitioners across a range of interests. This role has been pivotal in achieving political and professional culture change within the Welsh planning service before, during and after the creation of the Planning (Wales) Act 2015. The value of the new independent Planning Inspectorate to the Welsh planning service cannot be overstated.



Source: Flickr, Author: eNil, Date: November 17 2007

Our three public services

Across our three services, our independent, experienced Inspectors decide cases and make recommendations in an open, fair and impartial way. This means they consider the evidence, make sure everyone can respond to evidence of others and keep an open mind without prejudging one view compared to another.

Examinations service

Independently assess English local plans and Welsh local development plans.

Appeals service

Independently consider decisions from councils.

Planning appeals

Enforcement appeals

Specialist appeals

Applications service

Make independent recommendations.

National significantly infrastructure projects

Developments of national significance

Compulsory purchase orders

Common land

Examinations service

The places where we live and work significantly affect our lives and wellbeing.

English councils and some other organisations produce local plans and other plans with their communities to identify how they will prepare for the future. We independently assess if the plans meet the legal, procedural and policy tests for them to be used.

The Welsh Government's commitment to delivering sustainable development is underpinned by local development plans. They contain the strategy, policies and allocations to address key issues in an area, based on robust evidence. We examine those plans to ensure they will provide a solid base to support decision making once they are adopted.

Appeals service

Councils can refuse planning and related applications, and they can fail to make a decision in time or give you an enforcement notice requiring you to do something or stop doing something.

The Inspectorate is here if you want someone independent to consider the decisions from councils. Our Inspectors independently review the information and evidence and, in most cases, visit the site and nearby area before deciding the case.

This service also provides independent Inspectors to consider evidence and make decisions for specialist work including:

- Tree preservation order works, hedgerow removal and anti-social high hedge appeals.
- Public rights of way such as when proposals include changes to access rights to the network or when there are objections to a new right of way.

As part of our transformation programme we conducted extensive user research with appellants, agents and local planning authorities. We used this research to design an Alpha development phase solution. In August 2020, we were able to meet the Government service standard.

Householder appeals have been developed as the first element and launched to a pilot group of local planning authorities. Over the next year, we will make this available to more authorities and also include additional appeal types.

Applications service

[National Significantly Infrastructure Projects in England and Wales and Developments of National Significance in Wales](#)

We all use and rely on national infrastructure. We all rely on our power stations and wind farms to generate electricity. We all rely on our major roads, railways, ports and airports to move people, food and other products around the country and between countries. We all rely on reservoirs for fresh water when we turn our taps and sewage treatment works when we flush our toilets.

These are the largest and most complex development projects in the country. They take many years to develop. We provide advice during that period, identifying where the projects need improvement or where more evidence is needed to justify a design decision.

We consider the interests of developers, local authorities, local communities and other interested parties, implement government policy and consider anything else that is relevant. We recommend to the Secretary of State or the Welsh Ministers whether these projects should go ahead.

As part of our transformation programme, we have completed the discovery phase for our applications service and we are now designing an Alpha development phase solution with a focus on Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, with a service assessment planned for 2021.

Common land

We also decide other applications for government, like applications for work on common land. Common land has a long history based on ancient rights under British common law and remaining common land is now publicly accessible.

Compulsory purchase orders

Some organisations can purchase land even if the owner does not want to sell. This is normally because the land is needed for an important project like a road, railway or a development important for the area. We independently assess whether the compulsory purchase order should go ahead.

Our quality assurance process

The quality of our work is important to maintain the confidence of all those involved in planning, including the Public, politicians and developers. By quality we mean everything relating to the content of the final decision and the procedures and processes that lead up to that.

Individual Inspectors are responsible for the decisions and recommendations they make, and are ultimately responsible for the quality of their own work. As an organisation, how do we support them to achieve the right quality?

This will vary depending on the type of work, but it all starts with the training we provide for new Inspectors. It focuses on the importance of weighing up opposing views to reach well-justified conclusions and on the application of the Franks Principles – open, fair and impartial.

Beyond this, the Inspectorate is responsible for providing training, quality assurance processes and knowledge management. We provide all Inspectors with a monthly update of key developments in the planning world including about significant legal judgments and policy matters.

Examinations

All Inspectors new to local plan work receive training backed by written advice about process and best practice. Training, advice and briefings are provided at two specific events each year and more regularly as needed, for example through monthly meetings. These allow good practice to be shared and discussed.

All local plan reports and soundness letters are quality assured by a panel. Quality assurance is focused on the standard of the reasoning and drafting and Inspectors are never told what conclusions they should reach. Quality is also considered at monthly line manager meetings and in monthly conversations with Inspectors. We regularly consider the outcomes of the quality assurance process, legal challenges and complaints to assess whether we need to change anything.

Appeals

Most Inspectors decide planning or enforcement appeals at some point during their careers. The initial training is rigorous and extensive and covers the key principles for decision-makers. Guidance is provided on the approach that should be taken, having regard to legislation, policy and case law. However, we do not provide anything more than is in national policy and guidance regarding the importance to be given to relevant considerations. The outcome of any appeal is a matter for the individual Inspector’s judgement.

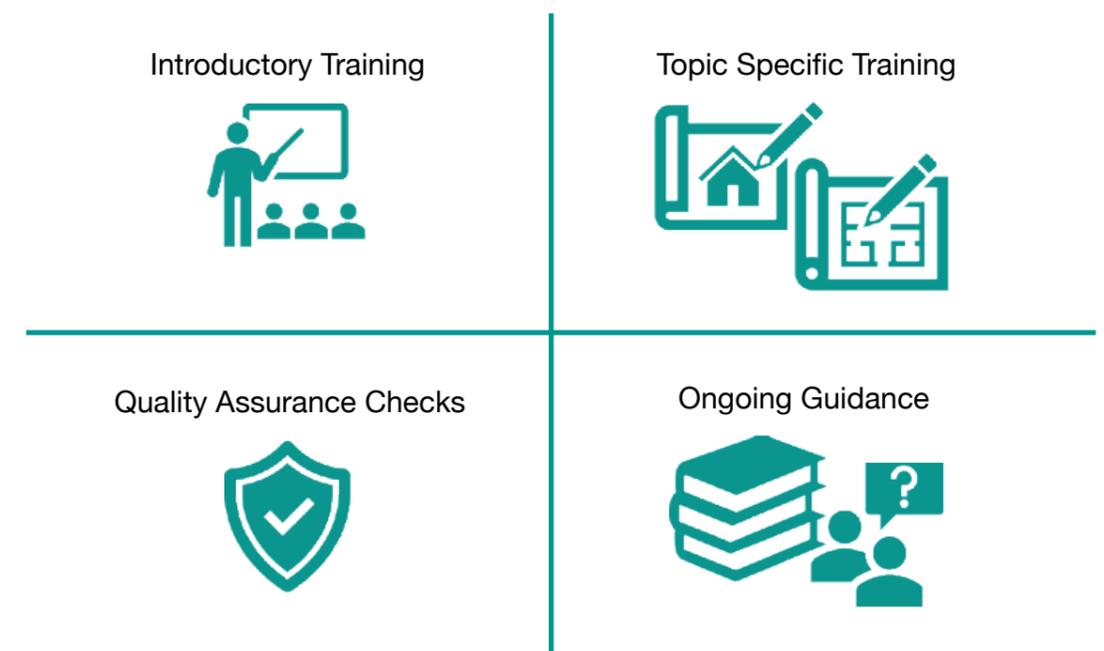
Training on specific topics and a legal update is delivered at twice yearly events. This often involves sharing good practice and experience. Training materials are also used in smaller meetings and in webinars.

In England, a sample of appeal decisions are reviewed by line managers after they have been issued and feedback is given. We circulate any lessons that arise from complaints or challenges to all Inspectors. In Wales all decisions are checked before issue to ensure that factual matters such as the case reference, and plan numbers are correct.

In some cases, appeals are decided by the Secretary of State or the Welsh Ministers rather than by the Inspector. In these cases the Inspector’s report is reviewed by a quality assurance panel before submission. This review focuses on the standard of the reasoning and drafting, rather than on what recommendations an Inspector should make.

Applications

Quality assurance for applications is a similar process to that of examinations and appeals. Comprehensive initial training takes place to ensure Inspectors are ready to examine, assess and make recommendations. There are two main training events each year and regular updates take place on best practice and matters of policy and law. All reports are quality assured on drafting and reasoning, and not on the nature of the recommendation the Examination Panel make.



Our operations

Our Inspectors use three different procedures to consider evidence. The approach they use depends on the case, the type of evidence and how they can best find out what they need to make their decision or recommendation.

Adapting operations to the pandemic

While we maintained a high level of performance in Wales, in 2019/20 we significantly improved our operational performance in England. We decided many more cases than we received, and our decisions were getting faster ([see our performance analysis from page 38](#)). We planned to continue that progress in 2020/21 but the COVID-19 pandemic impacted our operations and priorities.

Keeping our employees and customers safe was our immediate priority. We then focused on keeping casework moving where it was safe to do so and supporting the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government as part of the wider government response.

In March 2020, we paused visiting appeal sites and postponed all hearings and inquiries. In the first six weeks of the spring 2020 lockdown we successfully:

- Issued decisions where site visits had already taken place;
- Trialled issuing decisions without visiting the site in some cases;
- Prepared to re-start hearings and inquiries virtually;
- Prepared to re-start site visits safely when travel was permitted; and
- Seconded 30 Inspectors to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government support the wider government response.

Throughout the rest of the year, we adapted how we work and supported our employees with their shielding and caring responsibilities. Safe site visits re-started in mid-May. Hearings and inquiries re-started virtually. We have now held more than 700 events using Microsoft Teams and Youtube to connect with all relevant parties. We made over 17,500 recommendations and decisions on examinations, appeals and applications during the year.

Written representations

Most of our cases are decided by Inspectors after seeing written evidence and usually visiting the site. This is often called “written representations”. The appellant, the Council, local people and businesses and anyone else interested in the appeal make their comments in writing and the Inspector decides the case after reviewing the evidence.

Hearings

Our national infrastructure applications, local plan examinations and some appeal cases are decided after the Inspector has held a hearing. In these cases the appellant or applicant, the Council, local people and businesses and anyone else interested in the case make their comments in writing. The Inspector then chairs a structured discussion around some or all of the issues to help them test the evidence. Hearings for applications and examinations can take place over days or weeks, but hearings for appeals cases are much shorter. Inspectors often visit the site as well, and then prepare their decision or recommendation.

Inquiries

Inquiries are held for the most complex appeals and for some other casework like compulsory purchase orders and called in planning applications. The appellant or applicant, the Council, local people and businesses and anyone else interested in the case also make their comments in writing. At the discretion of the Inspector, people can also make their views known verbally at the inquiry. Inquiries are more formal than hearings and evidence is tested by cross examination, normally by barristers representing the main parties interested in the appeal. After visiting the site, the Inspector then makes their decision or recommendation.

Inspectors have historically used one of the three procedures for the entirety of a case. Legal changes now make it clear that Inspectors can use more than one procedure on a single case, we call these hybrid procedures.

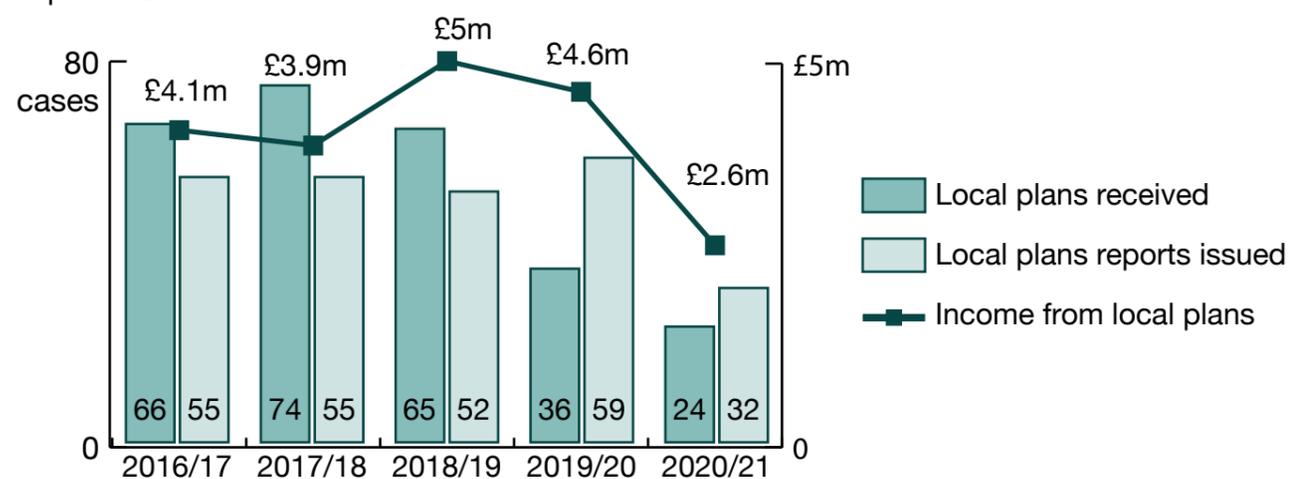
Examining local plans in England

Local plans continued to be prepared and submitted to us through the year. We examined them virtually so that these important plans for local communities and the economy were not delayed.

Twenty-four plans were submitted to us for examination this year, a fall of 12 compared to 2019/20. This is fewer than were expected at the beginning of the year, with the COVID-19 pandemic being the likely biggest factor in plans progressing more slowly than councils had expected. Our income decreased significantly to £2.6 million in 2020/21, the lowest it has been since at least 2016.

We held 72 virtual events so that the plans would not be delayed by lockdown measures and issued 32 reports on local plans we examined. All our reports concluded that the Duty to Co-operate had been met by local planning authorities. The Duty to Co-operate is a legal requirement of local planning authorities in the way they prepare their plans. In these cases the plan cannot continue as it is about the way the plan has been prepared, not the content of the plan itself. In all cases our reports recommended changes to improve soundness and pass the legal, procedural and policy tests. Sometimes this meant removing unjustified policies or introducing new ones, amending the wording of a policy or changing a housing requirement. We worked pragmatically and constructively to help them achieve this. The planning authorities (normally councils) were then able to adopt their plans and start making positive changes for their communities even during a pandemic.

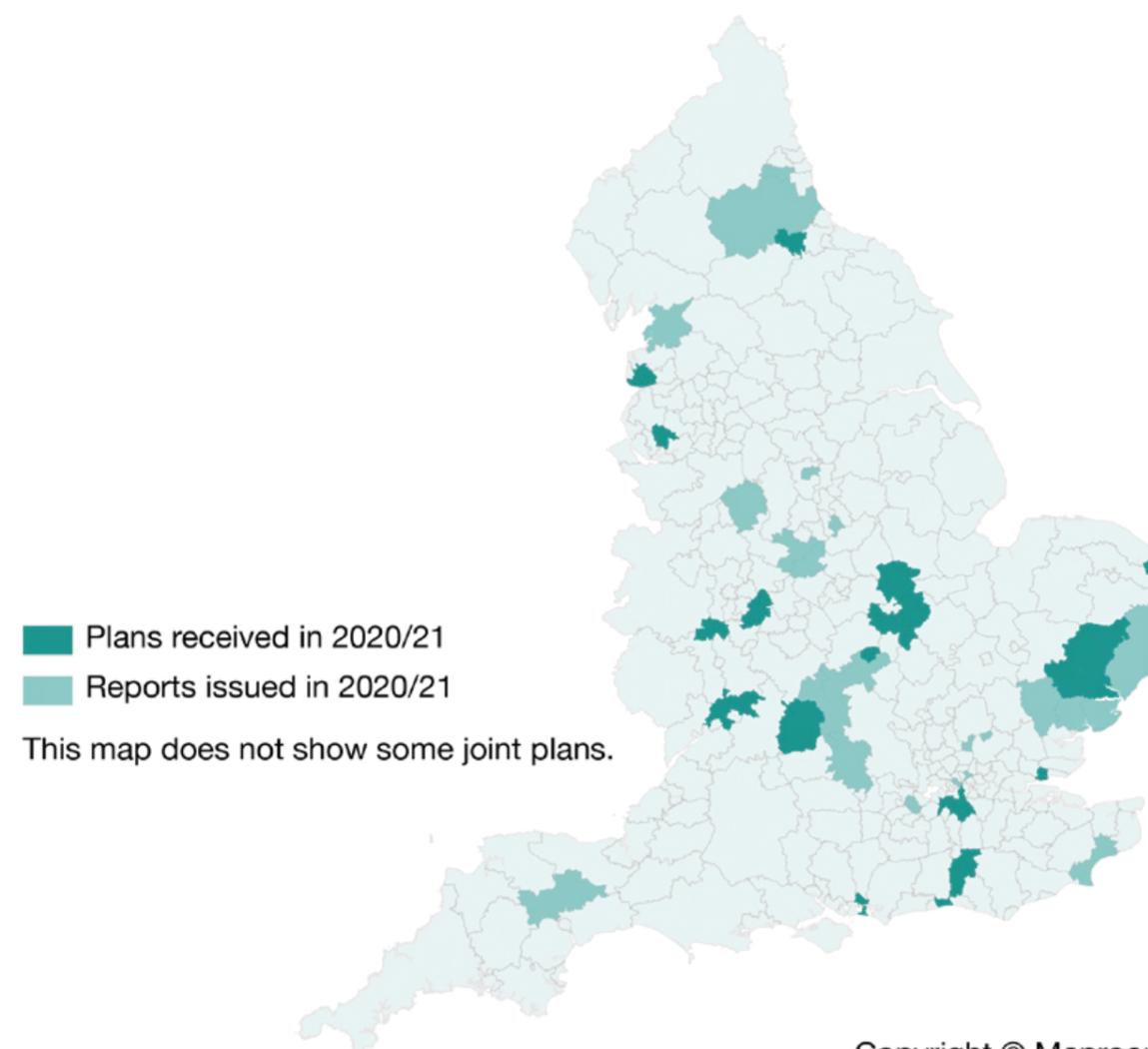
Graph 10. Local Plans received and issued



Local Plans across England provide for 3.7 million homes

Source: <https://local-plans-prototype.herokuapp.com/>

Local plan housing requirement data reflects the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's understanding of adopted plans as at the end of December 2020. The data is experimental, updated monthly, and is subject to limited validation. It therefore shouldn't be relied upon as a reliable 'real-time' representation of local plan progress or content.



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South Oxfordshire Local Plan - A case study

South Oxfordshire is the first plan examination in which all the hearings were conducted virtually. It had a high level of public interest. The hearings were livestreamed on our YouTube channel.



South Oxfordshire is a district that extends south-eastwards from Oxford, as far as the northern fringes of Reading, taking in a substantial part of the Oxford Green Belt and the Chiltern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and a smaller area of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The District contains the attractive and thriving market towns of Wallingford, Thame and Henley-on-Thames, the expanding garden town of Didcot, a range of different villages, and much pleasant open countryside.

South Oxfordshire, the City of Oxford, and the County of Oxfordshire have a strong and growing economy, but housing is not affordable for many. South Oxfordshire has a significant need for all kinds of housing, including affordable housing, and the neighbouring city of Oxford is unable to accommodate all its own housing need within its boundaries. There are also some significant infrastructure issues to address.

Source: South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035

The South Oxfordshire Local Plan sets out how development will be planned and delivered across South Oxfordshire until 2035. It identifies appropriate areas and sites for new development, such as new homes, shops and community facilities. It sets out how valuable historic and natural environments will be protected and enhanced. The policies in the plan will help make decisions on planning applications in the District until it is replaced.

The Council started developing the plan in 2014 and supported it with a detailed evidence base consisting of 18 studies and plans. The Council undertook numerous public consultations as part of developing the plan and the evidence base.

The Local Plan was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for examination on 29 March 2019, but on 3 October 2019, the Council's Cabinet decided to recommend withdrawing it. Various interventions from the Secretary of State followed, with the last one just two weeks before the spring 2020 lockdown. On 3 March 2020 the Secretary of State issued new directions to the

Council, including that it should progress the plan through examination.

With the spring 2020 lockdown, along with likely continued restrictions in the following months, it was clear that the normal approach to local plan examination was not possible. The Council's offices were closed, as were other meeting venues. Large meetings of people from different households was not safe and often not allowed.

With the Council's co-operation we agreed the hearings would be the first to be fully undertaken virtually and it would be livestreamed over the internet. Although many people are now used to using video technology, far fewer were familiar in spring 2020. Could it be done?

The Council acted swiftly by providing responses to the Inspector's comments and questions through April and May 2020. At the same time preparations were in full swing behind the scenes. The technology needed to be set up and tested for such a large scale event. Guidance for all those taking part was prepared. Measures were tested to make sure participants weren't prejudiced, including being able to join the meeting from a range of computers, phones and tablets with different browsers. Data privacy requirements were designed into the process. We also needed to ensure the Inspector could join the virtual meeting without sharing his contact details, ensuring he remained impartial and everyone was seeing the same evidence.

With co-operation from the Council, the Programme Officer and a team effort from across the Inspectorate, the Inspector opened the examination on 14 July 2020. It ended on 7 August 2020 with 469 witness appearances and 15,203 YouTube views.

The virtual hearings were conducted in a very similar way to physical hearings. The Inspector was able to gain all the information they needed, and at the end of the examination they found the plan sound, subject to a list of modifications. The Council agreed to incorporate the recommended modifications into the plan, and the plan was adopted in December 2020.

There were no direct complaints about the virtual format after the event. Feedback from the Council was very positive with the virtual format and they added that they would not want to go back to physical hearings for a local plan examination. The District now has an up-to-date Local Plan to guide and manage development despite the impact of the pandemic. The plan provides for 23,550 homes with seven strategic housing sites and 12,403 jobs with up to 47.64 hectares of employment land.

March 2019	Local Plan submitted by South Oxfordshire.
October 2019	Council decided to withdraw submission but Secretary of State issued a holding direction.
March 2020	Secretary of State issued a new direction to proceed.
July to August 2020	Four weeks of inquiry conducted virtually.
November 2020	Report issued by Inspector.
December 2020	Plan adopted by the South Oxfordshire district.

By 2035 the plan could enable:

- 23,550 Homes**
Seven new strategic housing sites
- 12,403 Jobs**
47.94 Hectares of employment land

Appeals in England

We have successfully kept casework moving through the pandemic by working differently. The lockdown's restrictions and our reduced capacity through the year have affected our customers' experience, particularly for hearings and inquiries. However, our overall decision times were improving by the last quarter.

We receive a wide range of appeals, as shown in Graph 14, but we group them in three categories, detailed below from the most to the least common.

Planning appeals

This is our largest area of work. Despite the pandemic, new planning appeals being submitted remained high, only around 7% lower than 2019/20.

We decided fewer appeals than we received through spring and early summer 2020. This is the result of suspending site visits, hearings and inquiries during spring to keep our employees and customers safe. We also had reduced Inspectors' capacity due to shielding and caring activities through the year. Putting in place virtual hearings and inquiries as well as changes to safely conduct site visits allowed us to keep on top of the overall number of new cases being submitted during the early 2021 lockdown.

Enforcement appeals

We received 21% less enforcement appeals compared to 2019/20. This could be because fewer enforcement notices were served by councils while they focused on COVID-19 pandemic related priorities.

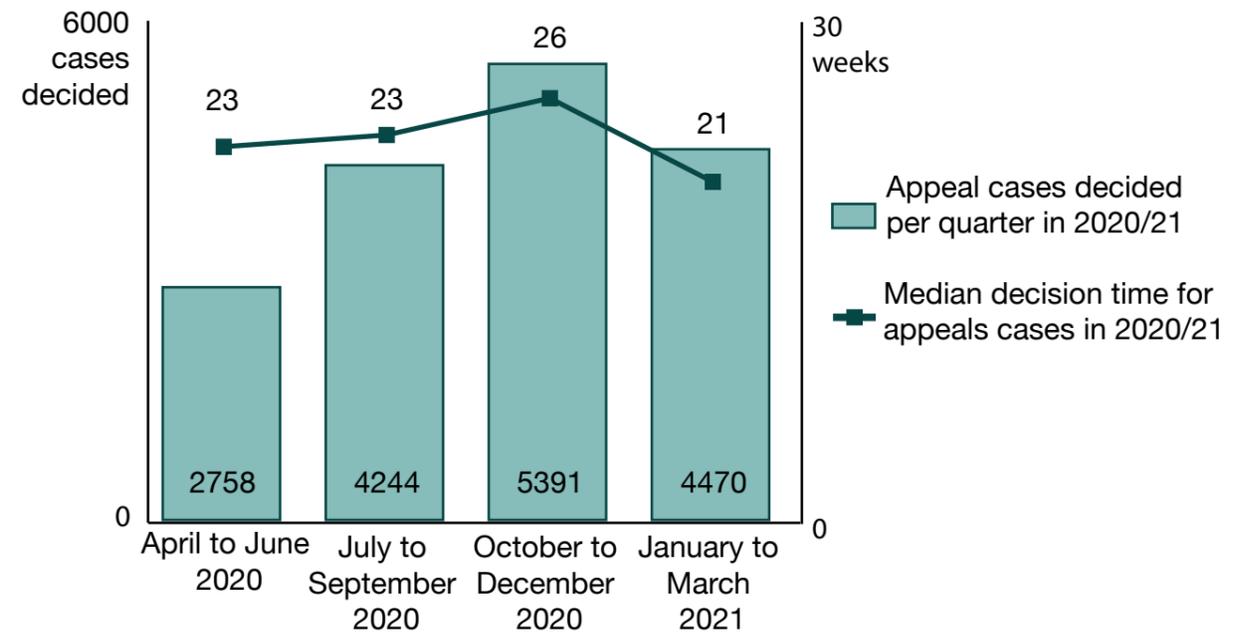
In 2019/20, we were able to consider a high number of enforcement appeals. Before we were able to see the effect of our efforts in 2020/21, site visits, hearings and inquiries were suspended reducing our ability to make decisions. We were able to limit the increase in the numbers of open cases through the year, putting us in a good position to reduce decision times for hearings and inquiries next year.

Specialist appeals

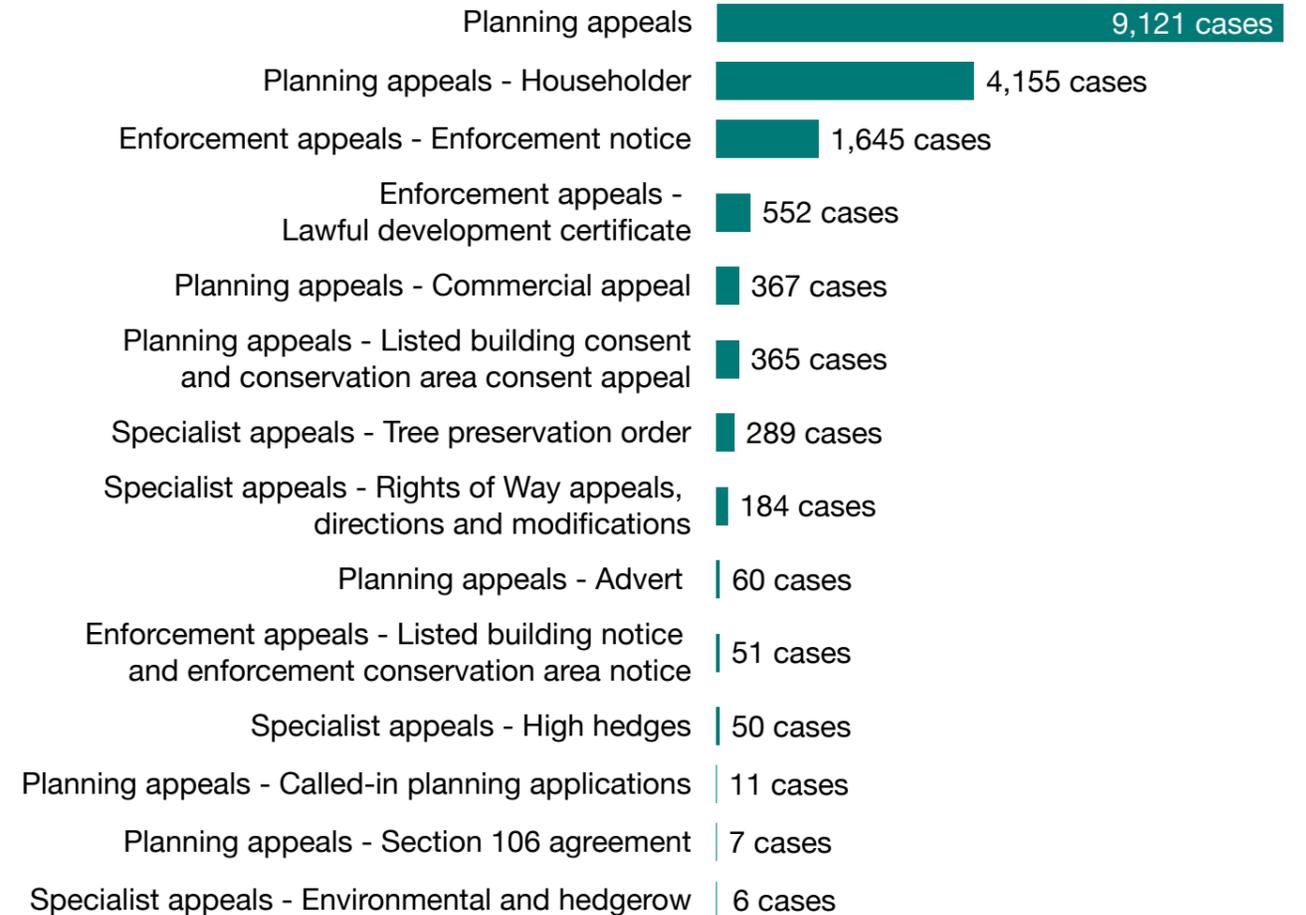
Specialist casework dealt with by our appeals service includes works to protected trees by a tree preservation order, environmental, hedgerow regulation and high hedge appeals and a range of casework relating to public rights of way.

New cases received were 8% lower than 2019/20. The biggest fall (around 40%) was in rights of way casework. This could also be because councils focused on pandemic related priorities and reduced rights of way activities.

Graph 11. Appeal cases decided by quarter in 2020/21



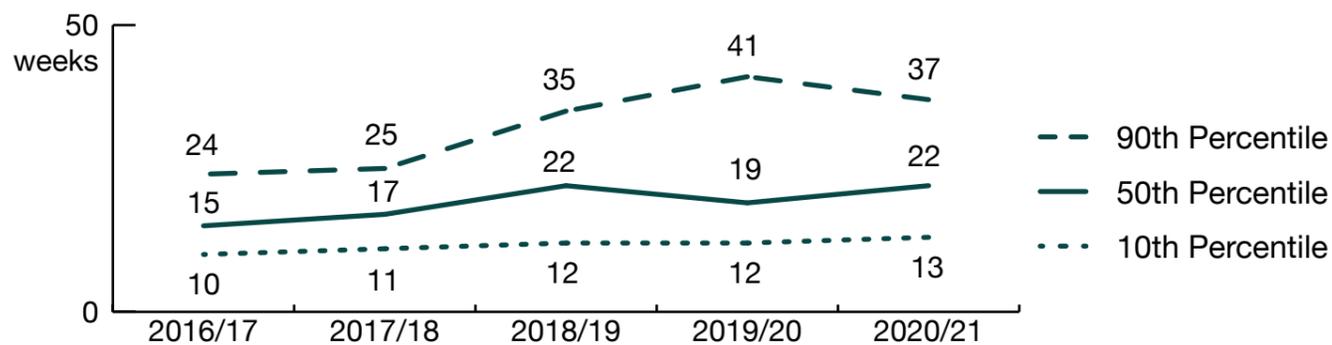
Graph 12. Appeal cases decided by type in 2020/21



Planning appeals decided by written representations

Appeals were held up during the Spring 2020 lockdown. This led to customers experiencing a longer wait for decisions during summer and autumn. As restrictions were lifted, our Inspectors' availability increased and site visits became possible again, and we made good progress in deciding cases which built up earlier in the year. We steadily improved back to pre-pandemic speeds during winter. We improved our consistency this year and we decided 90% of our cases within 37 weeks, four weeks faster than last year. But there were fewer very quick decisions, with 10% of cases decided in 13 weeks rather than 12; and the median decision time rising from 19 weeks to 22.

Graph 13. Median decision time for planning appeal cases decided by written representations



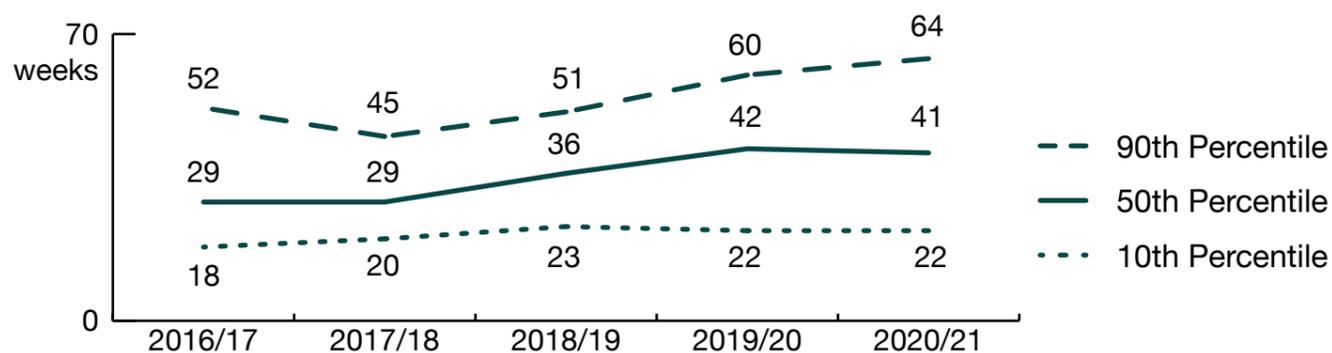
Planning appeals decided after hearings

Previously, hearings were hosted by local planning authorities in their buildings and took place in person, so they were postponed at the start of the Spring 2020 lockdown. Virtual hearings allowed us to continue our work despite the COVID-19 pandemic but we had to organise and host them ourselves instead of relying on local planning authorities.

We are now holding around 50 planning appeals by virtual hearing every month, but we need to increase this further to meet demand. We are sharing our learning with local planning authorities so they can once again organise and host hearings. This will help us increase the number of hearings back to pre-pandemic levels and speed up decisions.

In consequence, some cases took longer to decide than the year before, with 10% taking more than 64 weeks, and our consistency worsened. However, we were able to decide as many cases quickly, and even reduce our median decision time by a week compared with the year before.

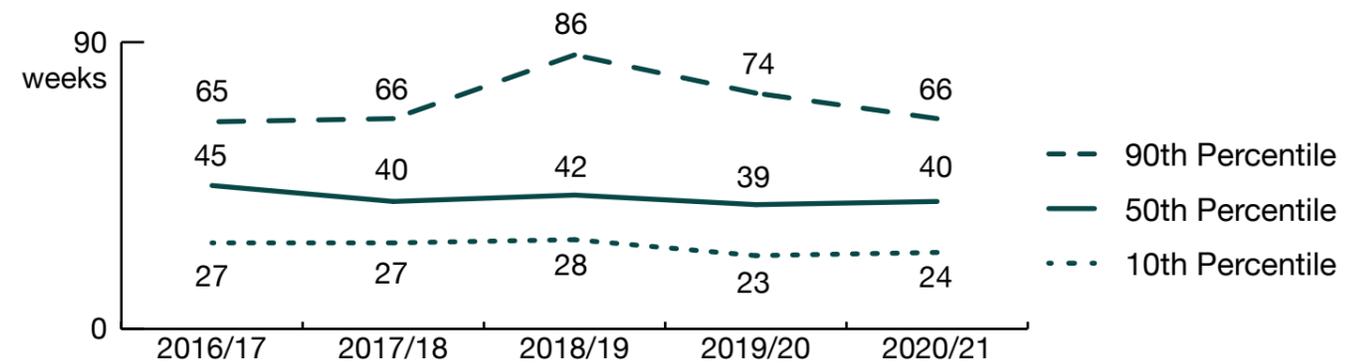
Graph 14. Median decision time for planning appeal cases decided by hearings



Planning appeals decided after inquiries

Like planning appeals by hearing, inquiries were postponed during the Spring 2020 lockdown. We have been holding them virtually since June 2020. In early 2021, the high number of inquiries being held virtually should have further reduced decision times, but the winter lockdown reduced our capacity again. Despite those limits on our capacity, we improved our consistency this year and we decided 90% of our cases within 66 weeks, eight weeks faster than last year. But it took slightly longer to decide the quickest cases compared to last year.

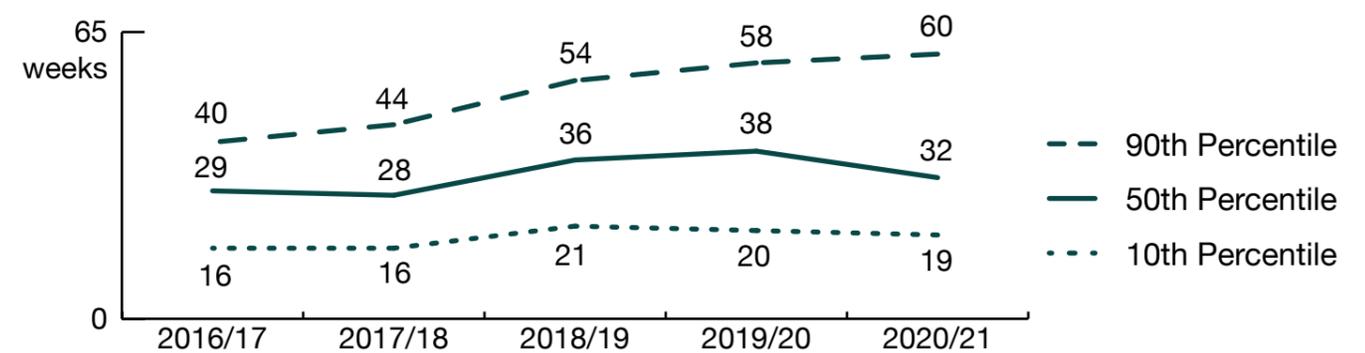
Graph 15. Median decision time for planning appeal cases decided by inquiries



Enforcement appeals decided by written representations

We have reduced the number of open appeals by around 300 or about 11% over the year. As with planning appeals, enforcement appeals were held up during the Spring 2020 lockdown. This led to customers experiencing a longer wait for decisions during summer and autumn. As restrictions were lifted, our Inspectors' availability increased and site visits became possible again, we made good progress in deciding cases which built up earlier in the year. We improved steadily back to pre-pandemic speeds during winter. In consequence, our decision time for the slowest cases increased by two weeks to 60 weeks, and our overall consistency worsened. However, we were able to improve our decision time for the 10% quickest cases, with decisions being made a week faster compared to last year, and our median decision time was six weeks faster.

Graph 16. Median decision time for enforcement appeal cases decided by written representations



Enforcement appeals decided after hearings and inquiries

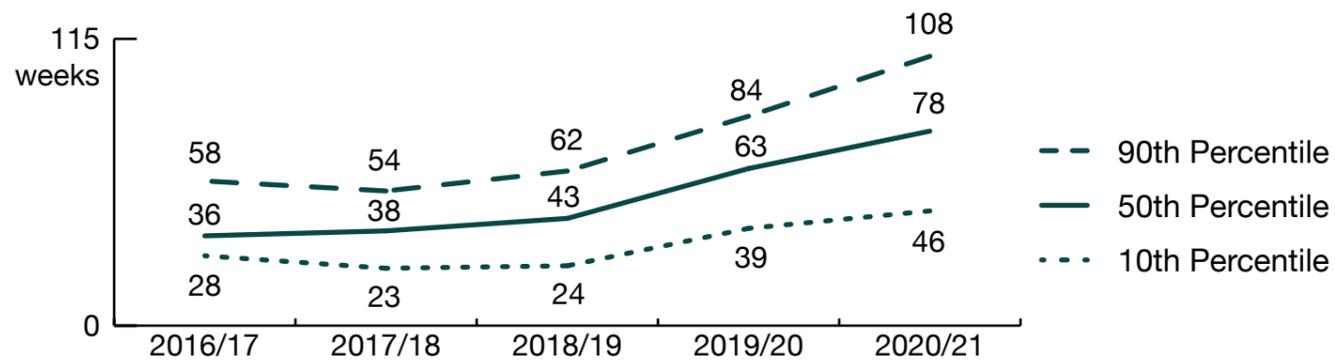
We are now holding more enforcement hearings and inquiries each month than we are receiving. But we still need to increase this further to reduce current case-load. We also need to hold physical events when it's safe to do so to decide those cases that we have not been able to hold virtually because that would have prejudiced at least one party. The knock-on effects of the COVID-19 pandemic worsened the waiting time for inquiry and hearing cases.

For hearings, the median decision time for the fastest cases increased by seven weeks compared to last year and for 10% of our cases, the decision time increased by 24 weeks. Our consistency also suffered.

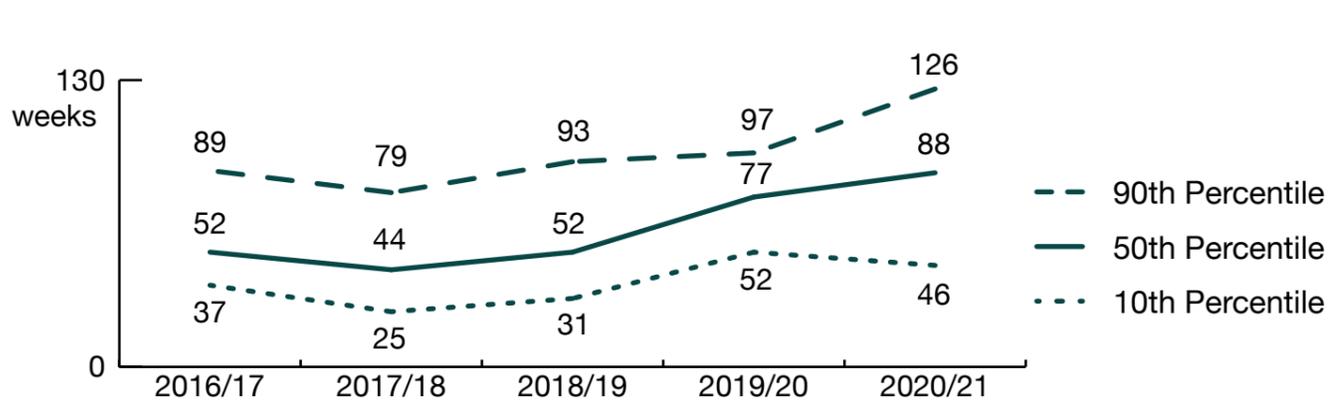
For inquiries, we were not able to continue on the positive progress we made last year to improve our consistency and speed. While our decision time decreased by six weeks compared to last year for the 10% quickest cases, our decision time increased by 29 weeks for the 10% slowest cases. The median decision time also increased by 11 weeks.

We have organised and hosted all virtual hearings and inquiries during the COVID-19 pandemic, whereas local planning authorities hosted physical events previously. We are now sharing our learning with local planning authorities so they can once again organise them. Increasing the number of enforcement hearings and inquiries will begin to reduce this delay again.

Graph 17. Median decision time for enforcement appeal cases decided by hearings



Graph 18. Median decision time for enforcement appeal cases decided by inquiries

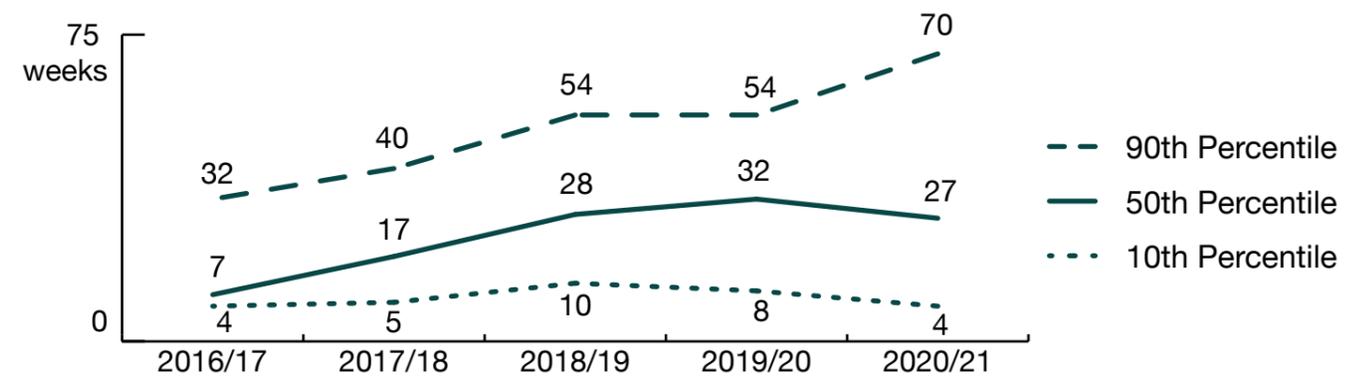


Rights of way

We continued to decide rights of way casework throughout the COVID-19 pandemic by exchanging written evidence and holding virtual hearings and inquiries. Some of our rights of way trained Inspectors worked on other casework during the COVID-19 pandemic to help us keep making decisions.

Our consistency has worsened this year, but the decision time halved for 10% of our cases and the median decision time decreased by five weeks. However, 10% of our cases took longer to decide, with an increase of 16 weeks. There are different types of rights of way case. Desk based procedural decisions are quick whereas some require inquiries, which take longer.

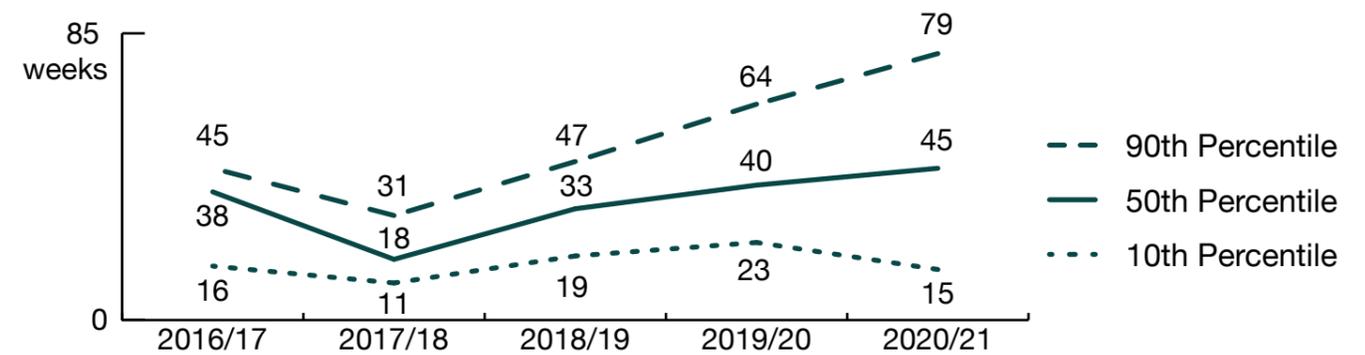
Graph 19. Median decision time for rights of way appeals



Tree preservation order, high hedge and hedgerow appeals

We used less Inspector capacity than normal to decide these appeals through the COVID-19 pandemic to help us manage our overall case-load. Again, we were able to decrease our decision time by eight weeks for the 10% fastest cases, but our overall consistency continued to worsen, with cases in the slowest 10% taking an extra 15 weeks to be decided.

Graph 20. Median decision time for tree preservation order, high hedge and hedgerow appeal cases



Appeals in England - A case study

Many of our appeals relate to small or medium sized schemes. Careful consideration of the issues is just as important in small schemes as in larger ones. The right decision is rarely clear, and Inspectors need to balance issues, concerns and tensions between different objectives.

The scheme proposed converting an unused public house into two homes just off the A44 near the village of Whitbourne, Herefordshire.

The Herefordshire Local Plan and the Whitbourne Neighbourhood Plan supported retaining these facilities. Public houses, particularly in rural settlements are often at the heart of the community, offering a place to socialise. The District Council (as the Planning Authority) was concerned that public houses and other rural services were becoming threatened and it was essential that facilities could continue to serve their local communities. The District Council was supported by the Campaign for Real Ale. While accepting that public houses sometimes close, the District Council was not satisfied that this pub might not re-open with the right owner and business.



Source: Herefordshire council's submission.

However, Whitbourne Parish Council supported the principle of the change of use and the tidying up of the site. Reusing an existing dilapidated building and improving its appearance was also positive, as was the potential for the future residents of the homes to support the local community and its facilities.

The Inspector considered all the evidence provided and visited the site and the surrounding area. They recognised that the two new homes would be positive and would contribute to the Council achieving a five-year supply of land for new homes. However, the Inspector dismissed the appeal and refused planning permission. The permanent loss of the pub and the community facility it provided was a main factor in this, as was the likelihood that the people living in the homes would nearly always have to drive to access facilities. It was also not clear that highway safety could be maintained or that the necessary work to protect bats, a legally protected species, had been undertaken.

Key facts:

- Current use: vacant public house
- Proposed development: conversion to two homes

Plans in place:

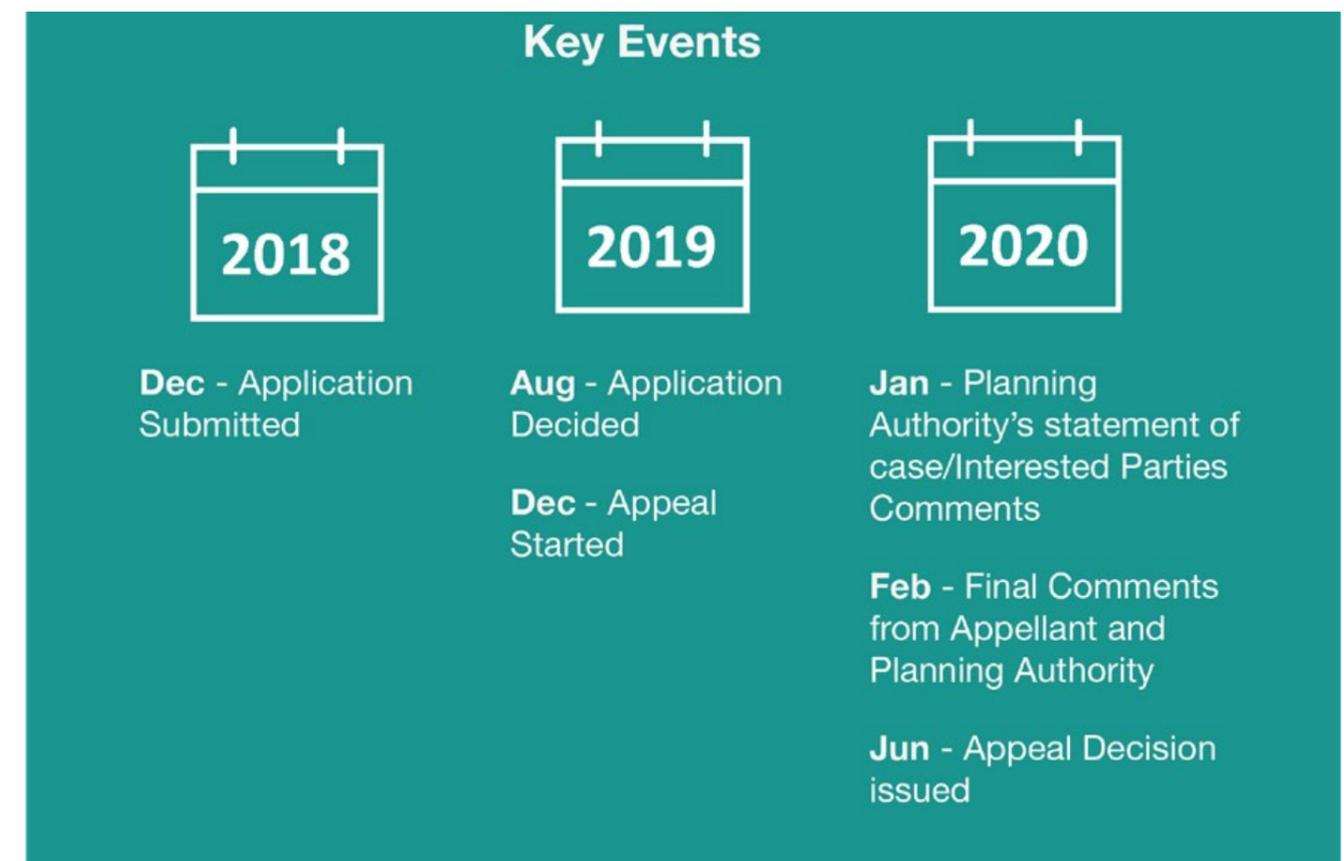
- Local Plan: Herefordshire Local Plan October 2015
- Neighbourhood Plan: Whitbourne Neighbourhood Plan December 2016

Main considerations:

- Local and national policies for local services and community facilities
- Highway safety
- Protected species

Inspector's decision:

- Appeal dismissed



Applications

Planning for our essential national infrastructure continued through the COVID-19 pandemic. Our public hearings were held virtually so these vital projects were not delayed by our examination.

Applications for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects in England and Wales

Pandemic or no pandemic, we all expect to have electricity, water and gas when we need it, to travel safely where we are needed and to access the food and other goods we need at home and at work. Planning for the infrastructures the country needs has carried on throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Our role in examining which projects should go ahead also continued, but virtually, to progress every project we could, in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is especially important for infrastructure projects, as delays can lead to uncertainty for communities, infrastructure not being ready when needed, increased costs for the taxpayer and some projects no longer being financially viable.

We engaged with our stakeholders to agree new timeframes following the cancellation of physical hearings during the Spring 2020 lockdown. We reorganised hearings so that they took place virtually allowing us to deliver to the revised timeframes and limiting the delay for our customers. The uncertainty generated by the pandemic has impacted our income. It had been increasing since 2018 but it decreased by almost half, to £4.7 million, in 2020/21.

Common land

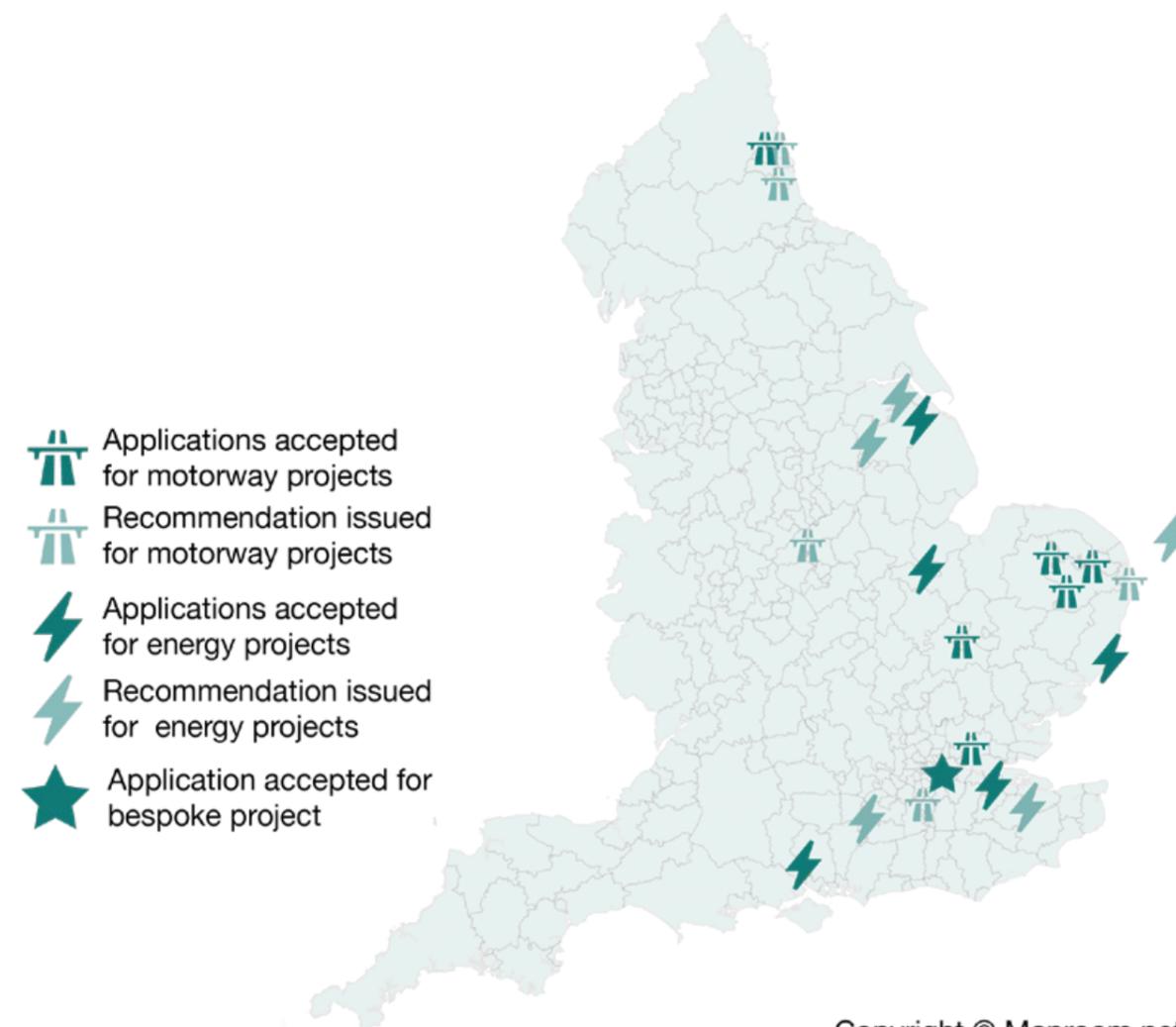
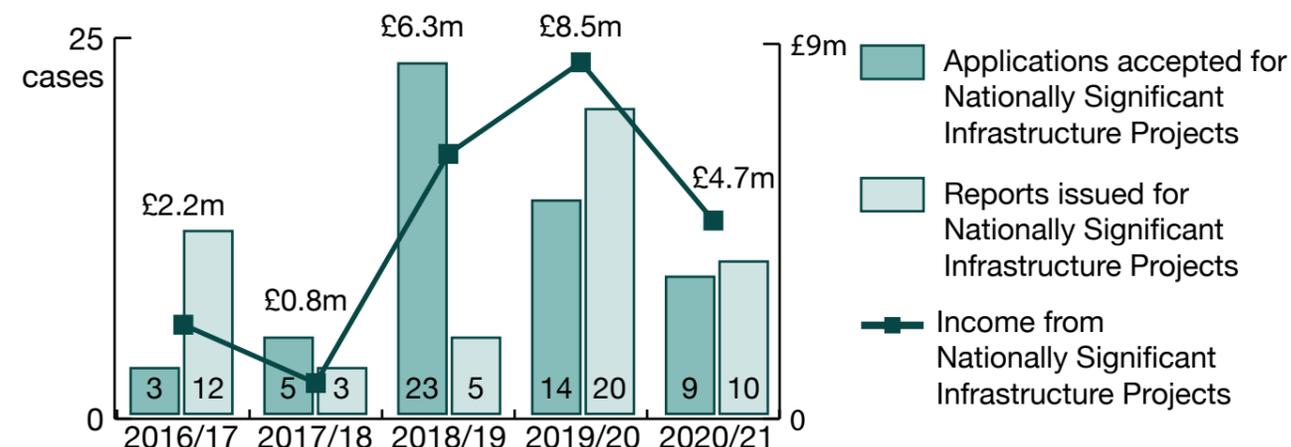
Many applications for works on Common Land can be small, but they are often key to providing electricity or gas as essential services, for public safety or for local councils providing safe footways or public transport facilities.

We decided 69 of these applications throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the summer, average times increased as delayed cases were decided, but our timescales then returned to normal.

Compulsory purchase orders

Compulsory purchase orders can help important schemes go ahead but requiring someone to sell their land is a very significant step. These cases often involve inspectors hearing evidence on very sensitive and important issues. Once virtual inquiries started, we continued to decide cases when we could do so without prejudicing those involved. We decided five cases during the year and have many more cases in the pipeline.

Graph 21. Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project accepted and issued in 2020/21



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Cleve Hill Solar Park

- A case study

The Cleve Hill Solar Park could generate electricity to power more than 15,000 homes a year but concerns from interested parties included its landscape harm and its effect on protected species. We examined the project independently, heard the evidence and recommended it should go ahead.



The site is approximately 2km north-east of Faversham and 5km west of Whitstable on the north Kent coast. It is predominantly in arable use, with some freshwater grazing marsh. The area also includes an existing coastal flood defence and the existing Cleve Hill substation. The arable farmland was previously marshland within the wider Thames Estuary that was progressively drained from the medieval period. It broadly achieved its current form by the nineteenth century though continued to evolve into the twentieth century, as evidenced by World War Two defensive structures. Most recently, the local landscape was affected by infrastructure associated with high voltage lines and pylons and an offshore wind farm.

Source: Cleve Hill Solar Park's application . The freshwater grazing marsh is of nature conservation value, forming part of the Swale Site of Special Scientific Interest, a Special Protection Area and Ramsar site. The Saxon Shore Way long distance footpath and seven further public footpaths run adjacent to or across the site. Much of the proposed development site lies within a locally designated Area of High Landscape Value.

The application was submitted November 2018 and accepted for examination in December 2018. The proposal included approximately 886,000 solar panels and associated battery storage over 491.2 hectares. The Examining Authority was appointed in March and June 2019 with a total of three Inspectors on the panel. Between May and November 2019, they considered all the evidence. They held six hearings in public to consider specific issues, two hearings in public about compulsorily acquiring land to allow the project to take place and a further three open floor hearings. There were two rounds of written questions from the Examining Authority to the parties, and the Examining Authority considered 886 relevant representations.



A panel of three Inspectors

886 Relevant representations



Two rounds of written questions

Two compulsory acquisition hearings
Six issue specific hearings
Three open floor hearing



In February 2020, the Examining Authority report recommended to the Secretary of State that the project be approved. The report reached a range of conclusions too long to summarise here, but it recognised the important contribution the solar photovoltaic energy would make towards the need for additional renewable energy generation. This was consistent with government policy identifying a need for low-carbon and renewable energy projects of scale to address climate change, to meet the country's legal commitment to reaching "net zero" carbon emissions by 2050, and to ensure a secure, diverse and affordable energy supply.

The Examining Authority also identified major and significant adverse landscape effects on the Area of High Landscape Value in the immediate vicinity of the development. With adequate mitigation secured through the Development Consent Order, the Examining Authority found no reason to prevent the project because of its impact on biodiversity and nature conservation.

The Secretary of State approved the project on 28 May 2020.



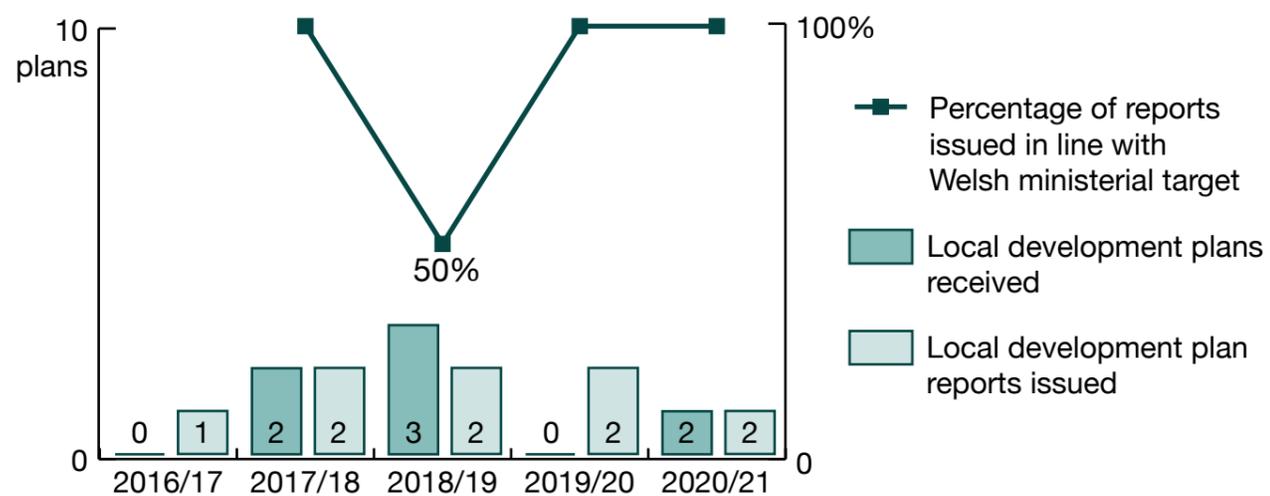
Local development plans in Wales

Local development plans in Wales show how specific communities will be transformed in years to come, following the strategic direction set in Future Wales: The National Plan 2040.



The restrictions put in place in response to the COVID-19 pandemic led to a delay in holding the hearing for the Wrexham Local Plan examination as we shifted from in person to virtual sessions. Alongside the examination into the Wrexham plan, we also started the examination into the Flintshire local plan. These were ultimately held virtually and were the first virtual events we were involved with. We submitted our report for the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority plan, meeting both our Ministerial Targets in doing so.

Graph 22. Local development plans received and issued



Development of National Significance in Wales

Numbers of applications submitted for examination are rising.

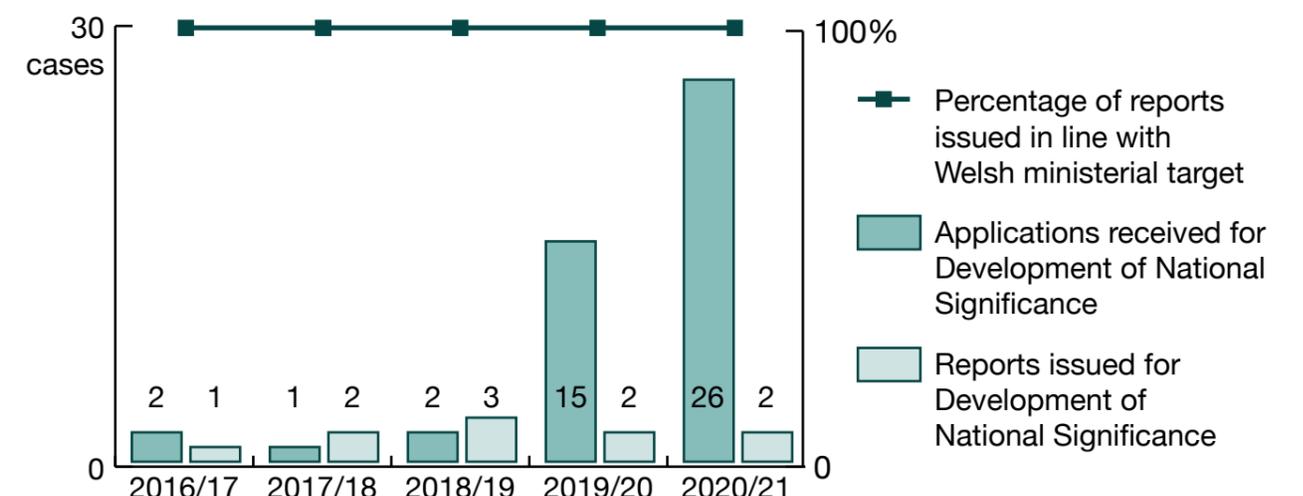


Source: Mor Hafren BioPower project website

Initially the COVID-19 pandemic slowed down the consultation and community engagement process that is required before submission of a Development of National Significance application which resulted in some slippage of expected submissions.

In 2020/21, we accepted four Developments of National Significance applications for examination in the year. Two reports and recommendations were submitted to Welsh Ministers in 2020/21 (Felindre STOR and Wentloog Solar). Both were submitted in line with the ministerial target. A Chief Planning Officer letter in May 2020, made changes to pre-application consultation procedures allowing information required to be made available for inspection, on a website.

Graph 23. Applications for Development of National Significance received and issued



Appeals in Wales

Collaboration and team working kept casework moving and the First Harbour Revision Order to be handled by Planning Inspectorate Wales was received.

Planning and enforcement appeals

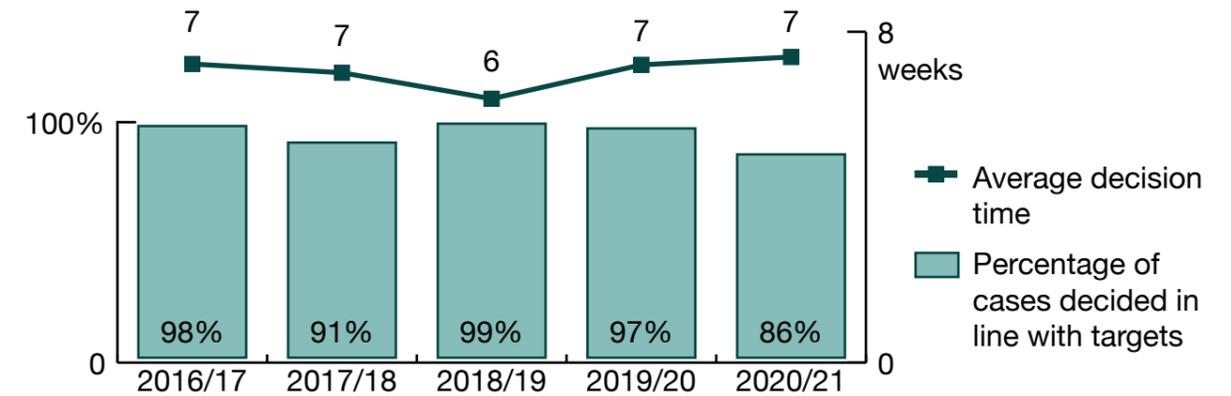
The COVID-19 pandemic had a serious impact on our ability to deliver reliable timely service to our customers. Site visits were suspended and public events postponed. This would have been disappointing and frustrating for all parties involved in the appeal process, with developments delayed and the economy impacted. The full effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on our performance against ministerial targets was noticeable starting from May 2020. This positively coincided with some lockdown restrictions easing and with the issue of a letter from the Chief Planning Officer of the Welsh Government.

The letter allowed Inspectors and other planning officials, to carry out site visits. From this point, we were able to give certainty to those engaged in the process as to when they could expect resolution. All cases were triaged within Planning Inspectorate Wales to assess if an accompanied site visit could be done by access required only, or as an unaccompanied visit. To protect our people and members of the public, we did not carry out any site visit where entry into a building was necessary. The communication needed with the parties to facilitate this did result in an increased burden on resources.

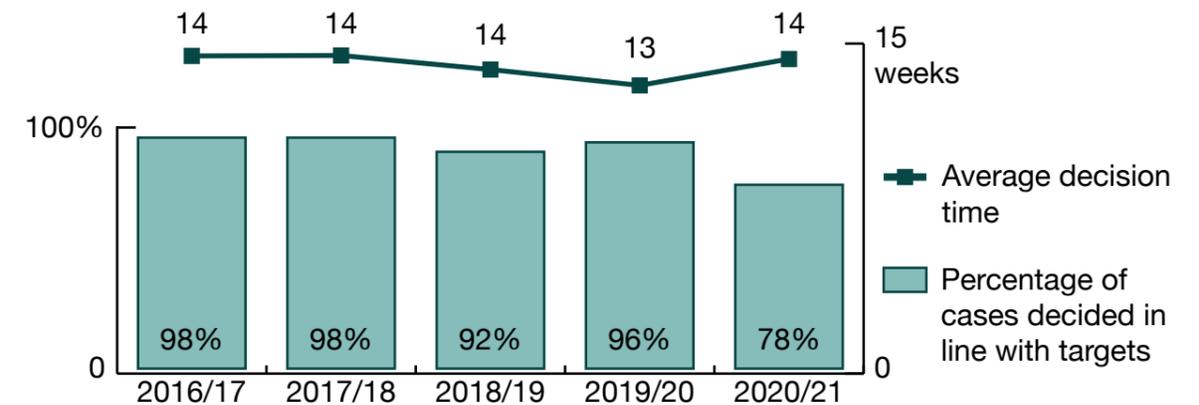
We worked with Local Planning Authorities who had varying levels of access to offices and equipment to be able to process appeals. We agreed with each one a plan aiming to hold events virtually once we found a solution for simultaneous translation between Welsh and English. With a solution in place, virtual events started in earnest in January 2021. The first decision following a virtually held hearing has been issued within target.

We received marginally fewer new cases but we issued more decisions than last year. To ensure casework keeps moving and our performance continues to improve, we have drafted a recovery plan which is reviewed regularly and amended where appropriate.

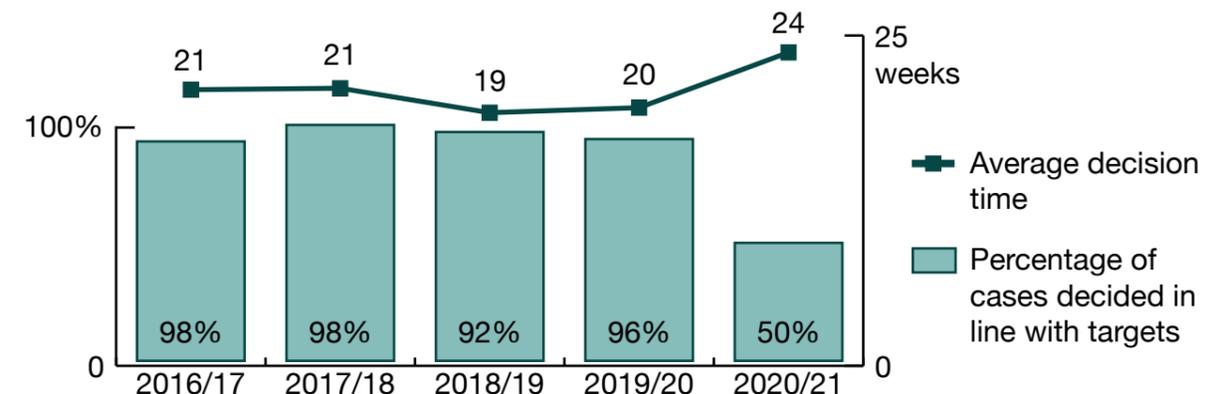
Graph 24. Planning appeals decided by written representations - Householder and minor commercial



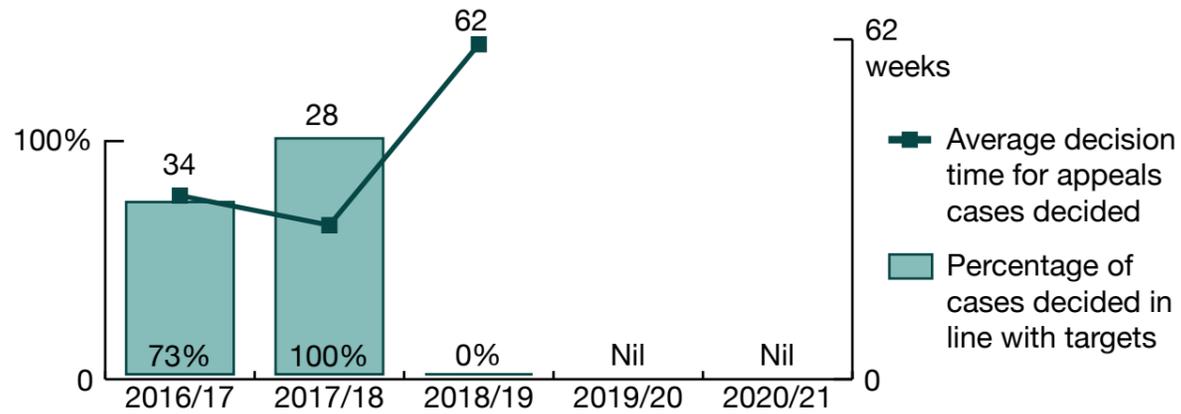
Graph 25. Other planning appeals decided by written representations



Graph 26. Planning appeals decided by hearings



Graph 27. Planning appeals decided by inquiries



Specialist appeals

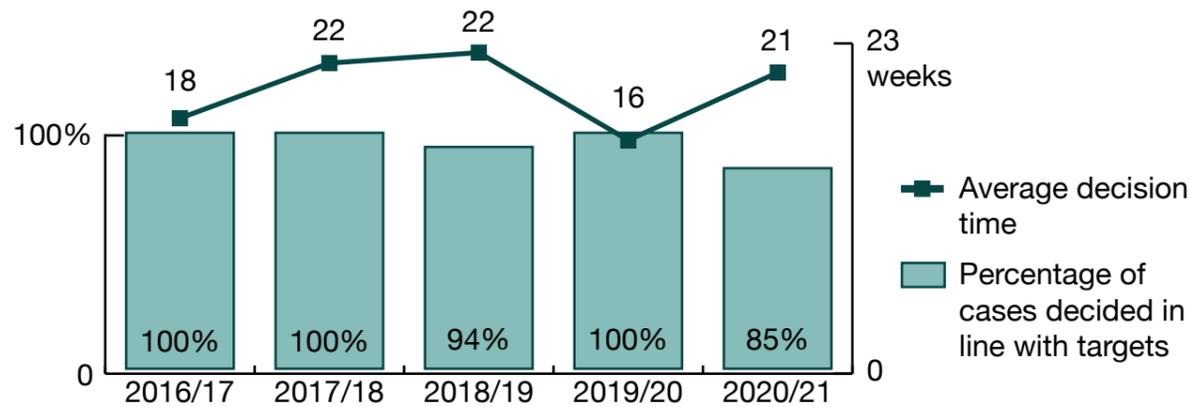
Rights of way work has been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, although numbers of cases received were less than in previous years. Most rights of way cases are managed using paper-based files so progress was slow when people were asked to work from home.

Environmental appeals were not as affected as rights of way work. The number of Wayleave cases handled in the year was considerably higher than in previous years.

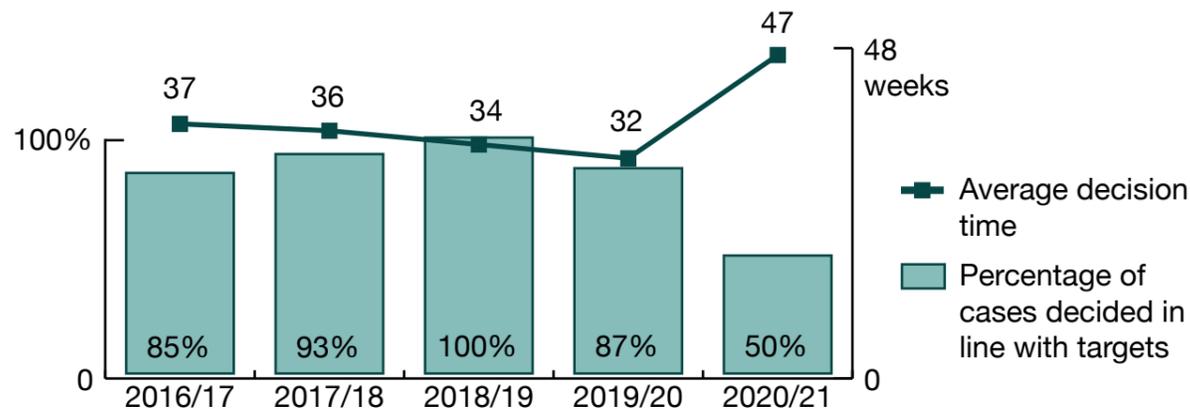
A Harbour Revision Order has been submitted and is being processed by Planning Inspectorate Wales. This is the first of its kind following the devolving of powers to Welsh Ministers.

Welsh Ministers have not set Ministerial targets for specialist types of casework but we monitor our performance against self-imposed targets to provide some level of assurance of when an outcome can be expected.

Graph 28. Enforcement appeals decided by written representations



Graph 29. Enforcement appeals decided by hearings and inquiries



Menter Mon, Morlais Demonstration Zone

Planning Inspectorate Wales' first virtual event: Menter Mon, Morlais Demonstration Zone is a Transport and Works Act Application.

Morlais Demonstration Zone is a 35 square kilometres area of seabed near Holy Island, Anglesey. This project proposes to provide an area for the installation and commercial demonstration of several tidal energy devices, for a maximum capacity of 240 Megawatts. The project also proposes to connect the tidal energy converters with communal substations and onshore electrical cable routes to export the electricity generated to the grid.

The application was made by Menter Mon under the Transport and Works Act 1992. The Inspector determined that an inquiry would be the best procedure to collect and consider the evidence. The inquiry was scheduled to open in December 2020 as the first virtual event hosted in Wales. With substantial interest in the project and therefore the inquiry itself, it was always going to be challenging to run this event, add to that we had never run a virtual event!

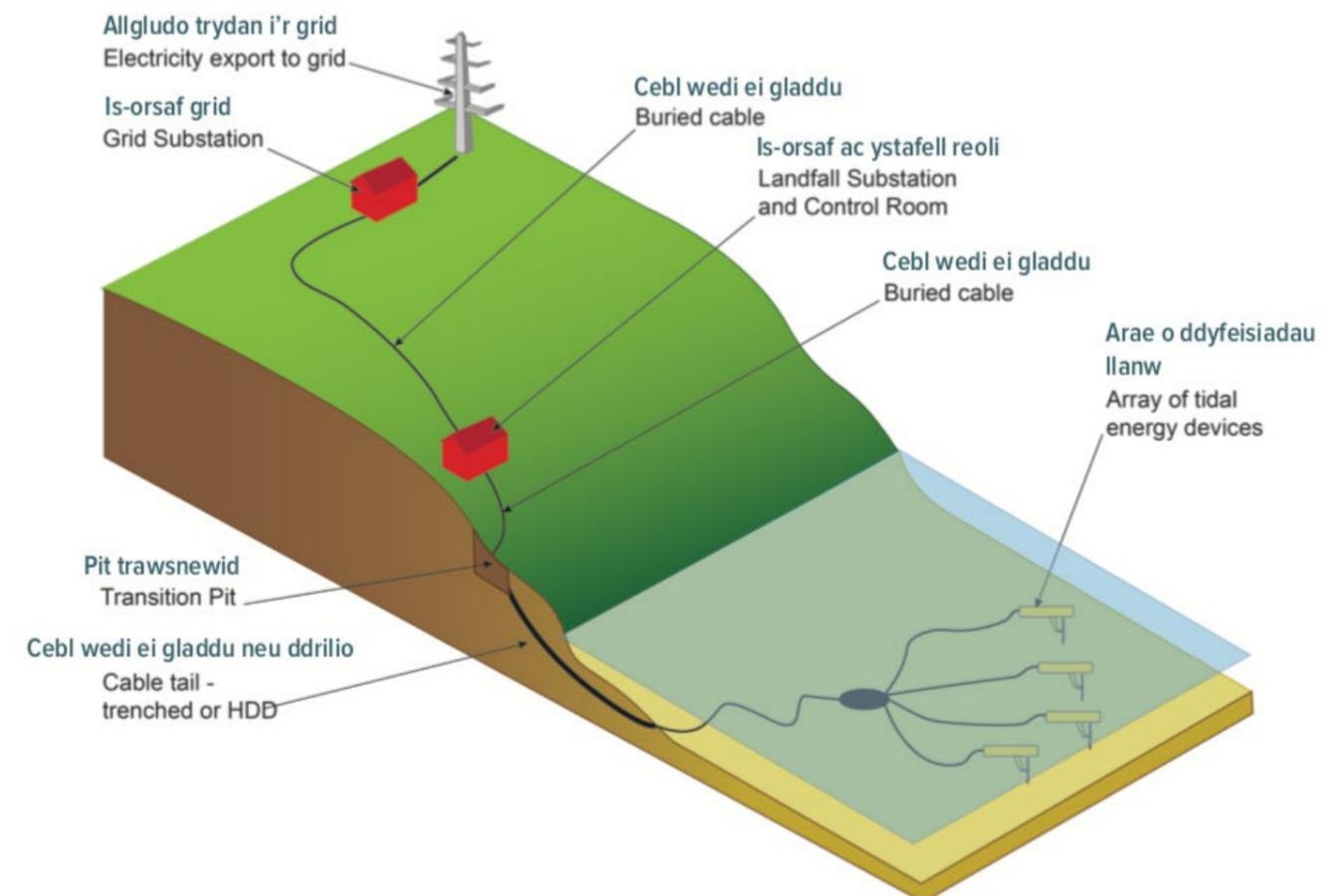
At this point virtual events had been held in England, but the Welsh Language Standards require all public meetings arranged by the Planning Inspectorate in Wales to have translation facilities available, should someone wish to speak in Welsh. Underpinning the standards, are the principles that both English and Welsh languages must be treated equally, and people should be able to speak in the language of their choice, without being treated less favourably. So, the challenge was to ensure that we could have in place a simultaneous translation solution between Welsh and English. After further investigations between the Case Officer processing the application and the developers working on the virtual events project, a solution was designed using Microsoft Teams. It was simple, but it allowed us to provide the opportunity for attendees to give their evidence in Welsh if they chose.

A document library had been set up to manage the large number of documents associated with the inquiry. When this was no longer possible, the Case Officer needed to investigate a way of formulating a library and making it accessible to all participants in an extraordinarily short period of time. This challenge was met, and the new document library was available at the opening of the inquiry.

The Inspector, holding their first virtual event, timetabled the inquiry to allow for regular breaks and set out clearly what was to be discussed at each session. An evening session was held for members of the public to air their views. The sessions were recorded and made available on our YouTube channel. This allowed anyone who was unable to make a particular session to view the recording of that session ahead of the next scheduled event. Recording the sessions helped run the inquiry smoothly and allow greater access to the proceedings. The recordings were published after review to ensure personal data was protected.

The commitment and willingness of Planning Inspectorate's team, the Case Officer and Inspector particularly, to look at different ways of working and to work collaboratively with others allowed us to deliver this inquiry.

The inquiry sat for 20 days, including an evening public event. Over 50 people attended the sessions to give evidence. The inquiry closed and the Inspector is now considering their recommendation. When they have finished writing their report it will, together with the recommendation, be submitted to Welsh Ministers for their decision.



Source: Menter Mon Tidal Demonstration Zone website.

Our customer service

We interact with a diverse range of customers and are committed to ensuring that all our casework is handled professionally, taking into account submissions from various parties. We help ensure our standards are upheld and feedback is provided when things go wrong.

Over the last year

As mentioned in the [Performance Overview page 3](#), for the first time this year we benchmarked our customer service through the Institute of Customer Service. We invited a wide range of customers to give us feedback and received 307 responses, about a 10% response rate. You can read more about the methodology, the results and the actions we are taking on our [blog](#).

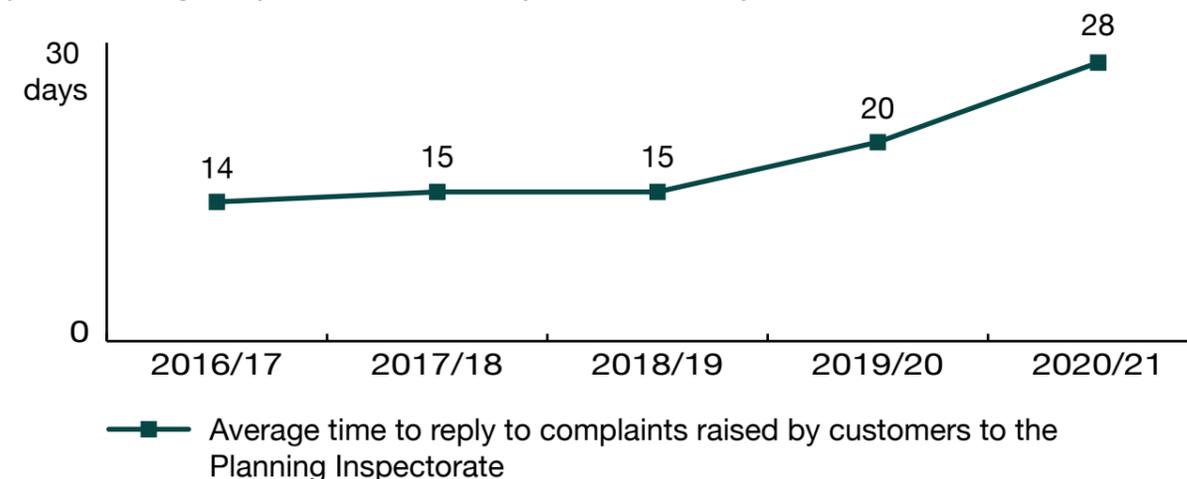
Handling customers' complaints is a key part of our customer service. Since 2018/2019, the average time to reply to complaints has increased from 15 days to 28 days this year. The number of complaints has remained stable during this period. The slow down in response time is the result of resourcing challenges. This was accentuated this year by the impact of the pandemic, with people leaving the organisation and others being re-assigned to operational work in the third quarter. This led to response times slowing down to 33 days. As new recruits were added to the team in the fourth quarter, our response times improved to 26 days.

Customers can escalate their complaints to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman if their complaints were not resolved by us. Over the last five years, the number of complaints escalated has remained consistent and proportionate to the number of complaints received each year. Thirty-nine complaints were escalated to the Ombudsman this year and none of those were upheld, at the time of publishing. This shows that despite the slower responses, we are handling our complaints as set out in our complaints procedure.

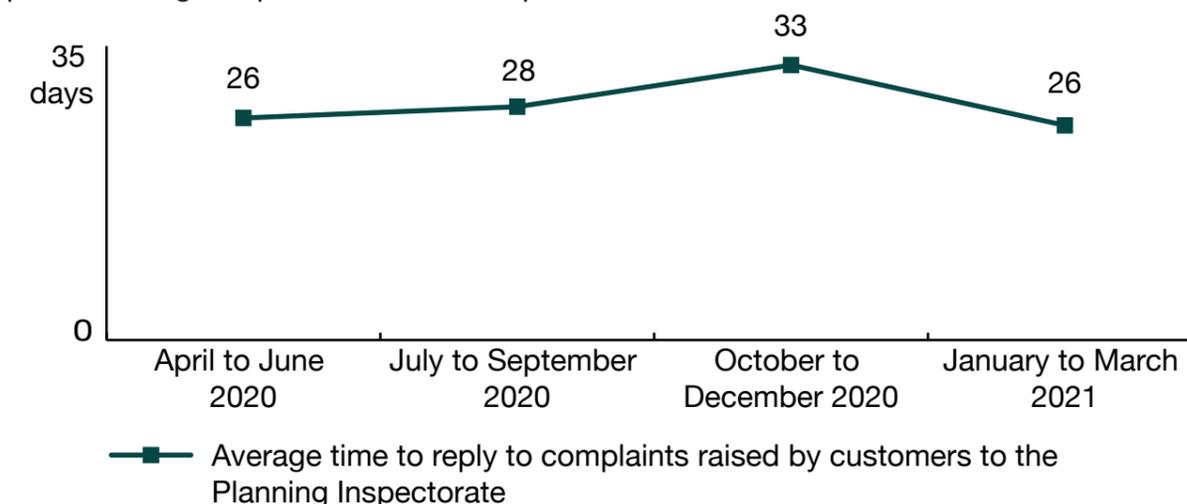
Our plans for next year

We will be reviewing the customer service structure, processes and systems to improve our efficiency, flexibility of our resource and customer experience. We have already identified a preferred software supplier to support more efficient working practices, and a more structured way of capturing complaints data. We will use this data to identify trends and themes running through our complaints from our customers' perspective, taking action where appropriate to drive down the volume of complaints we receive. We will also be reviewing our complaints procedure to ensure it remains fit for purpose, provides our customers with clear guidance on the types of complaints we can investigate and what to expect once we have received a complaint. Through undertaking reviews and improving our systems and processes we should see faster response times, as well as building a better understanding of why our customers complained and how we can improve as an organisation.

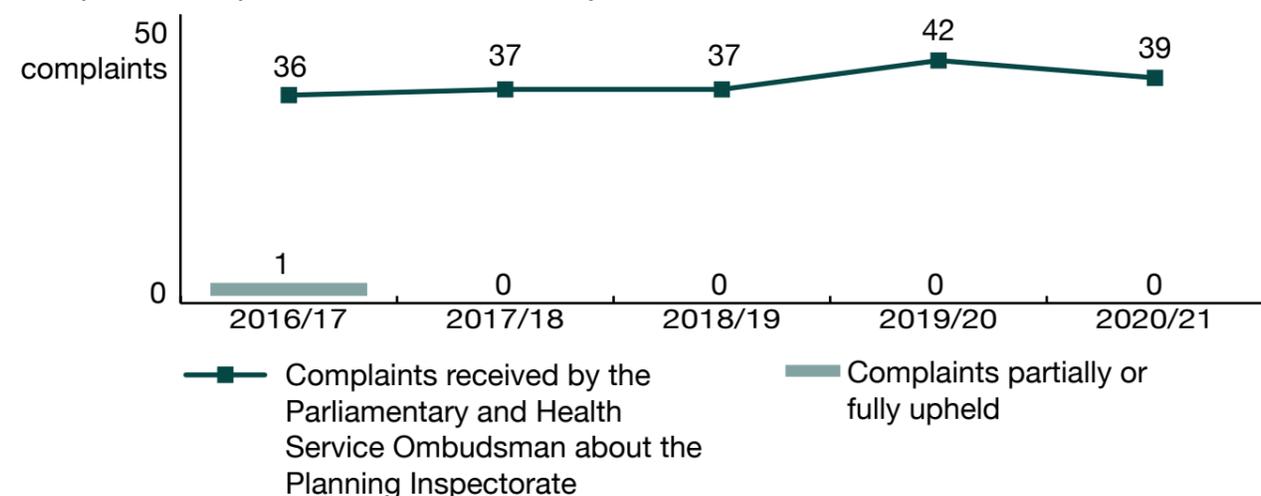
Graph 30. Average response times to complaints over five years



Graph 31. Average response times to complaints in 2020/21



Graph 32. Complaints to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman



Environmental performance and sustainability

Understanding our impact on sustainable development as an organisation and as a consequence of our decisions and recommendations.

The impact of our decisions and recommendations

Sustainable development is at the heart of the Government policies that set the framework for the decisions and recommendations our Inspectors make. All Inspectors are aware of their duty to ensure the planning system contributes to the achievement of sustainable development within our statutory framework. We do not create policies. But our Inspectors ensure that national and local policies are implemented throughout the planning system in England and Wales. This is particularly important for examinations of local plans and of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects that require detailed consideration of sustainability criteria, including social and environmental impacts.

We are considering ways in which the Inspectorate can more accurately report on the effect of decisions and recommendations on sustainable development and the achievement of the United Nations sustainable development goals. Five of them are particularly relevant to our role: #8 Economic growth, #9 Infrastructure, #11 Sustainable cities and communities, #12 Responsible consumption and production and #16 Strong institutions. This work has been delayed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and will be picked up again as part of the 2021/22 Business Plan.

The impact of our organisation

Our operating model, the way we undertake our work, has a physical footprint and an environmental impact. Our people are normally split between office based and home based. In both cases we have an environmental impact through transport, heating, lighting, waste, water and so on. Inspectors are primarily home based but their role requires them to undertake visits to all sites around the country. This is often the case for examinations, inquiries and hearings, to ensure they fully understand the relevant economic, social and environmental impact of the proposal they are considering. We conduct around 20,000 site visits per year and each one contributes to our environmental impact. The table on page 66 shows the impact of official business travel on emissions, which reduced by a third this year due to the lockdowns measures that limited site visits and due to the switch to virtual events.

So currently we measure some of our impact, but much more could be done. We plan to introduce new and improved measures and to deepen our understanding of our wider environmental footprint.

Our office space

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic our people were split between home-based Inspectors and office-based support teams in Bristol and Cardiff. Our offices in Bristol and Cardiff are located within easy reach of good bus and rail links that reduce the use of private transport. Our Inspectors occasionally work from these offices, making use of flexible workspace arrangements. From mid-March 2020 all our people were asked to work from home in line with the Government's response to the pandemic. As a consequence, there has been extremely limited use of our offices through the year, only when working from home was not possible. Table 1 shows the environmental impact of our Bristol office on some specific metrics. It doesn't show the environmental impact of our Welsh office, which is reported separately by the Welsh government, and it doesn't show the environmental impact of home-working employees. Despite our limited use of the offices, in our Bristol office we have seen an increase of the consumption of gas (19%), electricity (19%) and water (33%). The waste produced in this office has reduced by 40% for recyclable waste and 38% for landfill. We anticipate that home working has increased waste and energy use, as well as altered our resource efficiency, compared to office working, but we have not been able to quantify that impact.

Government greening commitment

As a tenant of Temple Quay House, we contributed to the Government Greening Commitment targets for sustainability, climate changed adaptation and rural proofing. We report our figures along with all Government Departments and arm's length bodies. As such we do not report on controllable impacts or influenced impacts. The Inspectorate also does not commission new construction.



Table 1. Environmental impact from Temple Quay House and business travel (part 1)

	2016/17 (34% occupancy)	2017/18 (34% occupancy)	2018/19 (34% occupancy)	2019/20 (22% occupancy) (Restated)	2020/21 (22% occupancy)
Greenhouse gas emissions					
Non-financial indicators					
Gross emissions for scopes 1 and 2 (tCO ₂ e)	424.84	289.51	172.37	83.53	136.47
Total net emissions for scopes 1 and 2 (tCO ₂ e)	0	0	0	0	0
Gross emissions for scope 3 official business travel (kgCO ₂)	503	467	459	453	302
Other scope 3 emissions	0	0	0	0	0
Related energy consumption (KW h)					
Electricity: green tariff	712,507	623,087	383,382	288,147	355,033
Gas	569,013	271,294	135,647	190,878	234,685
Liquid petroleum gas	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0
Financial indicators (£'000)					
Expenditure on energy	103.6	82.55	136.93	59.52	53.54
Carbon reduction commitment licence expenditure	0	0	0	0	0
Carbon reduction commitment income from recycling	0	0	0	0	0
Expenditure on official business travel	865.4	846.3	887.6	1,026	408
Finite resource consumption - water					
Non-financial indicators (m³)					
Water consumption - supplied	2,281	1,992	1,243.38	1,127	1,678
Water consumption - abstracted	0	0	0	0	0
Financial indicators (£'000)					
Water supply costs	7.0	6.63	4.22	4.9	5.55

Table 1. Environmental impact from Temple Quay House and business travel (part 2)

	2016/17 (34% occupancy)	2017/18 (34% occupancy)	2018/19 (34% occupancy)	2019/20 (22% occupancy) (Restated)	2020/21 (22% occupancy)
Waste					
Non-financial indicators (t)					
Total waste	15.55	29.76	42.74	61	36.44
Hazardous waste	0	0	0	0	0
Non-hazardous waste - landfill	2.33	2.80	1.41	0.8	0.5
Non-hazardous waste - reused or recycled	13.21	13.52	34.05	60	36
Non-hazardous waste - incinerated or energy created from waste	0	13.44	7.28	0	0
Financial indicators (£'000)					
Total disposal cost	5.3	10.65	5.65	0.1	0.2
Hazardous waste disposal cost	0	0	0	0	0
Non-hazardous waste - landfill	0.3	0.34	0.66	0.035	0.21
Non-hazardous waste - reused or recycled	5.0	1.60	1.18	0.063	0.051
Non-hazardous waste - incinerated or energy created from waste	0	8.72	3.80	0	0

A change in ownership and management of the office we lease in Temple Quay House has resulted in changes to the way the information about the building is collected and reported. Until 2018/19, the actual data was reported in the same reporting year. But starting in 2019/20, only the first three quarters were reported as actual and the fourth quarter data was based on estimates.

We can now report the actual data for the fourth quarter of 2019/20, replacing the estimates, as shown the restated figures in the table 1. The figures for 2020/21 are based on estimates for the fourth quarter and will be restated in 2021/22, when the actual numbers are known.



Sarah Richards
Chief Executive
29 June 2021

Financial performance

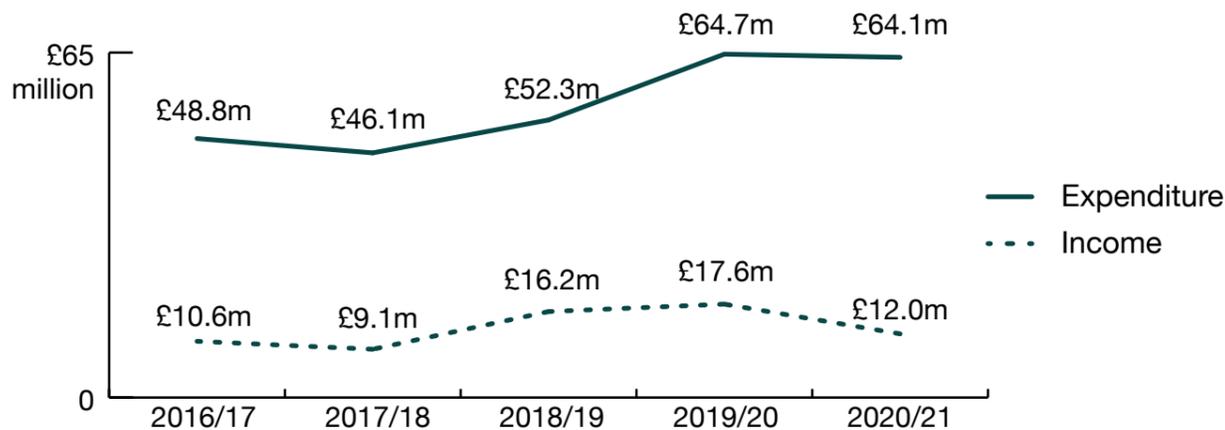
We manage our finances effectively and efficiently to support delivery of our [strategic plan](#). £52.1m of our spend is funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government with £12m from income on National Infrastructure, Local Plans and other casework.

In 2020/21 we spent £64.1m, £0.6m less than the previous year. The reduction in costs is largely a result of COVID-19 related travel restrictions having an impact on our travel and subsistence expenditure (down from £2.3m in 2019/20 to £0.7m in 2020/21).

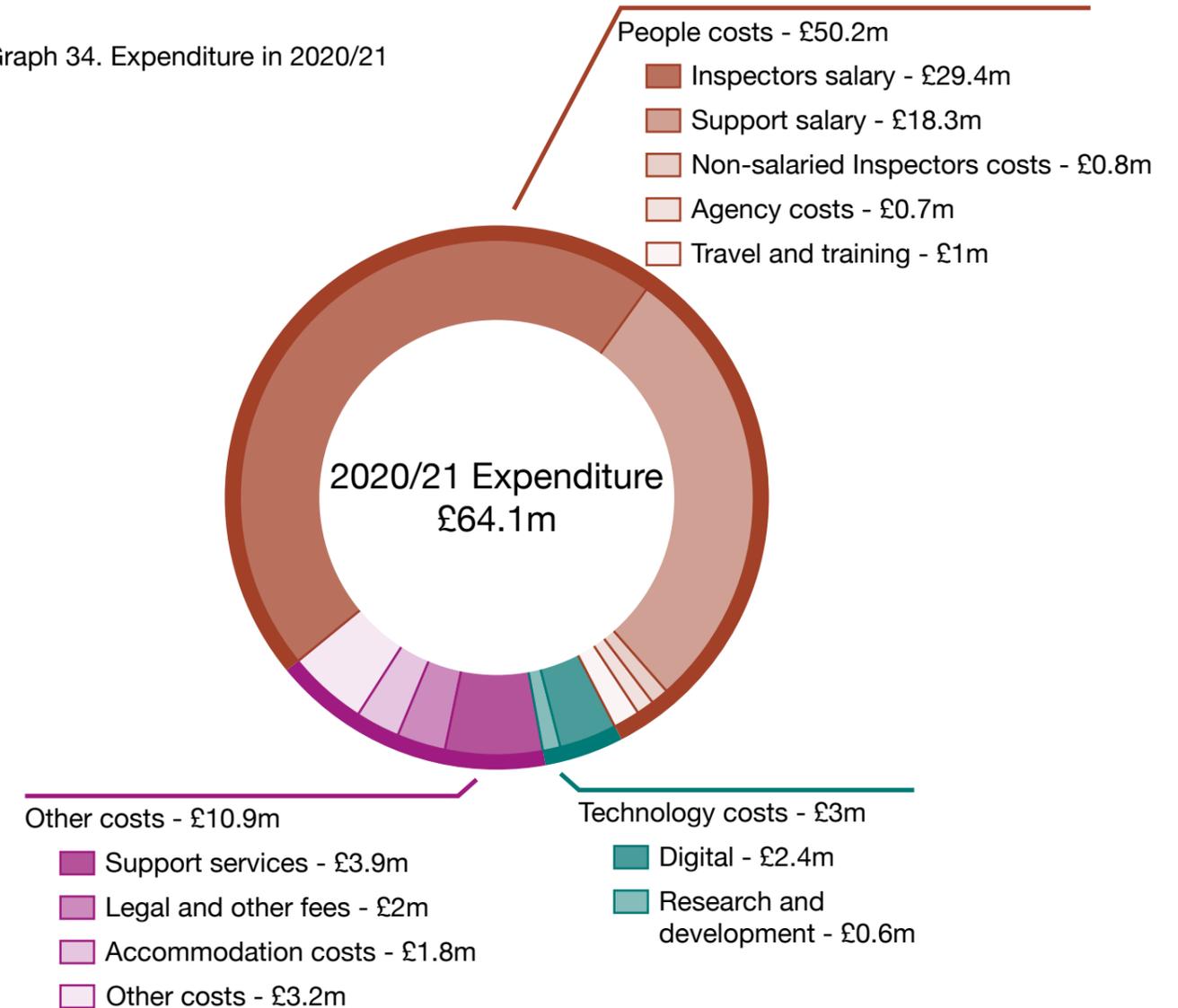
Our staff related costs of £50.2m are 78% of our total costs, an increase from 2019/20 when we spent £47.7m on people costs (74% of the total expenditure). Over the years we have been able to flex some of our costs in line with the income generated from activities (see Note 2 – Statement of Operating Costs by segment), such as our non-salaried Inspectors and temporary staff. This year we continued to spend on non-salaried Inspectors to keep casework moving through the pandemic.

Income has varied over the past five years from the lowest at £9.1m in 2017/18 up to £17.6m in 2019/20. The original budget for income in 2020/21 was £17m (see table 16, page 103) but this was reduced to £12m. Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project Applications were our largest income area with £4.7m of work completed in the year compared to £8.5m in 2019/20 (see [graph 24, page 51](#)). The remainder of our costs are funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

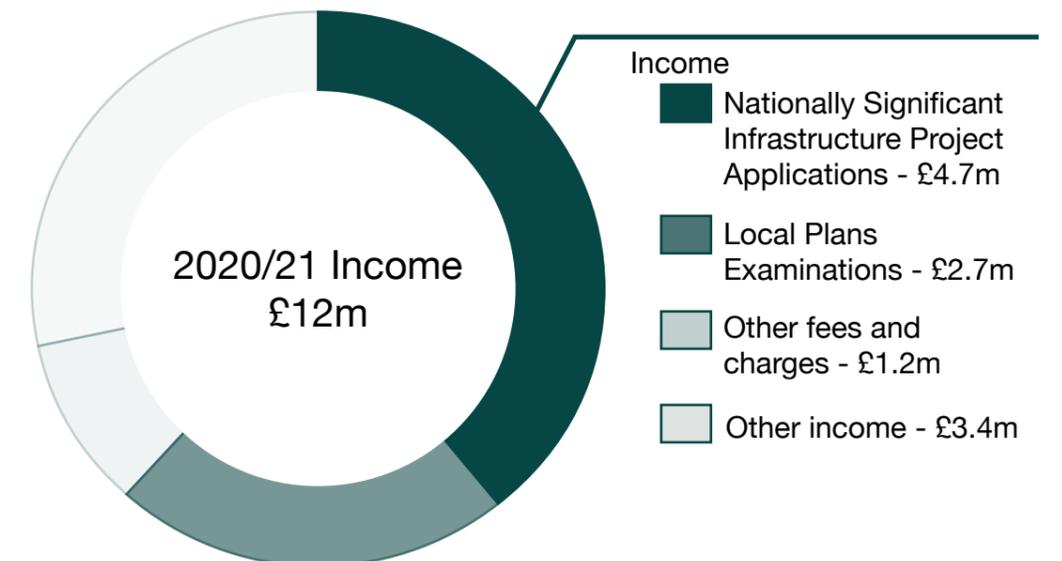
Graph 33. Expenditure and income over the last five years



Graph 34. Expenditure in 2020/21



Graph 35. Income in 2020/21





Statement of the Accounting Officer's responsibilities

Under Section 7(2) of the Government Resources and Accounts Act 2000, HM Treasury has directed the Planning Inspectorate to prepare for each financial year a statement of accounts in the form and on the basis set out in the Accounts Direction. The accounts are prepared on an accruals basis and must give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Inspectorate, of its income and expenditure, Statement of Financial Position and cash flows for the financial year.

In preparing the accounts, the Accounting Officer is required to comply with the requirements of the Government Financial Reporting Manual and in particular to:

- observe the Accounts Direction issued by HM Treasury, including the relevant accounting and disclosure requirements, and apply suitable accounting policies on a consistent basis;
- make judgements and estimates on a reasonable basis;
- state whether applicable accounting standards as set out in the Government Financial Reporting Manual have been followed and disclose and explain any material departures in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis; and
- confirm that the Annual Report and Accounts as a whole is fair, balanced and understandable and take personal responsibility for the Annual Report and Accounts and the judgements required for determining that it is fair, balanced and understandable.

The Departmental Accounting Officer at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has appointed the Chief Executive as Accounting Officer of the Planning Inspectorate. The responsibilities of an Accounting Officer, including responsibility for the propriety and regularity of the public finances for which the Accounting Officer is answerable, for keeping proper records and for safeguarding the Inspectorate's assets, are set out in Managing Public Money published by the HM Treasury.

As the Accounting Officer, I have taken all the steps that I ought to have taken to make myself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the Inspectorate's auditors are aware of that information. So far as I am aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the auditors are unaware.

I confirm that the Annual Report and Accounts as a whole is fair, balanced and understandable and I take personal responsibility for the annual report and accounts and the judgments required for determining that it is fair, balanced and understandable.

Sarah Richards

Sarah Richards,
Chief Executive
29 June 2021

Director's report

The Planning Inspectorate is led by a group of Executive and Non-Executive Directors.



Trudi Elliott
 Non-Executive Director and Chair of the Board
 Appointed 1st April 2018.
 Attended eight Boards, five Audit and Risk Assurance Committees and seven Panels.



Sally Dixon
 Non-Executive Director and rotational Chair of the Strategic Assurance Panels
 Appointed 22nd July 2019.
 Attended eight Boards, five Audit and Risk Assurance Committees and six Panels.



Stephen Tetlow
 Non-Executive Director and rotational Chair of the Strategic Assurance Panels
 Appointed 22nd July 2019.
 Attended eight Boards, five Audit and Risk Assurance Committees and seven Panels.



Rebecca Driver
 Non-Executive Director and Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee
 Appointed 31st December 2019.
 Attended eight Boards, five Audit and Risk Assurance Committees and seven Panels.



Sarah Richards
 Chief Executive
 Appointed 7th March 2016.
 Attended eight Boards, five Audit and Risk Assurance Committees and six Panels.



Navees Rahman
 Director of Corporate Services
 Appointed 5th December 2016.
 Attended two Boards, two Audit and Risk Assurance Committees and two Panels.



Paul McGuinness
 Interim Director of Corporate Services during parental leave
 Appointed 16th March 2020.
 Attended five Boards, three Audit and Risk Assurance Committees and four Panels.



Graham Stallwood
 Director of Operations
 Appointed 13th May 2019.
 Attended seven Boards and five Panels.



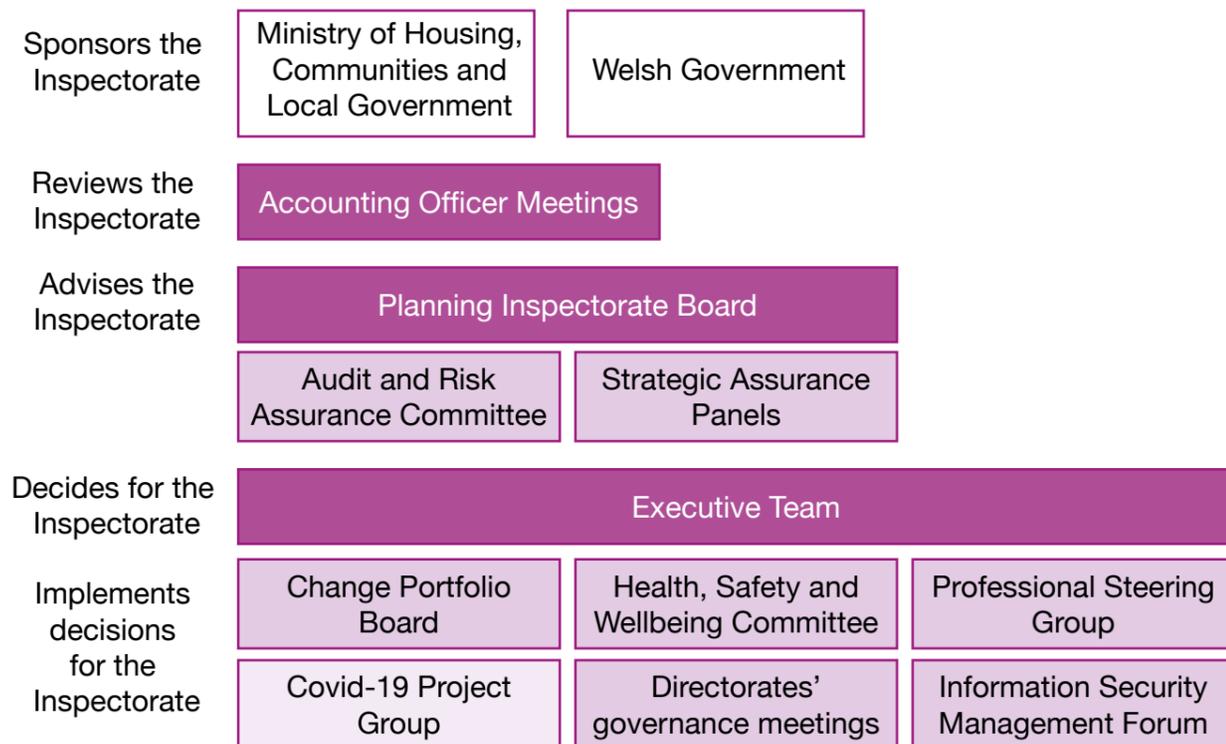
Christine Thorby
 Director of Strategy
 Appointed 1st April 2019.
 Attended six Boards and six Panels.

Our register of interests is published on the GOV.UK website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/register-of-planning-inspectorate-board-member-interests>

Governance Statement

The Planning Inspectorate is an arm's length body sponsored by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Welsh Government. Our governance arrangements are the controls we have in place to uphold our public duty with probity.

This Governance Statement covers the period from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. Our Chief Executive and designated Accounting Officer, Sarah Richards, is accountable for ensuring the effectiveness of governance arrangements and of the controls in place, including risk management and internal audits. She is personally responsible for the organisation's use of resources to carry out its functions and to manage the organisation in accordance with our Framework Document, with the Civil Service rules and best practice on propriety and value for money. She may be required to appear before the Public Accounts Committee in relation to her responsibilities as Accounting Officer. She is satisfied that she has the necessary level of assurance through rigorous reviews of the controls, especially risk management and audit findings, at the Board, Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and panels and through sign offs on changes at Executive Team meetings.



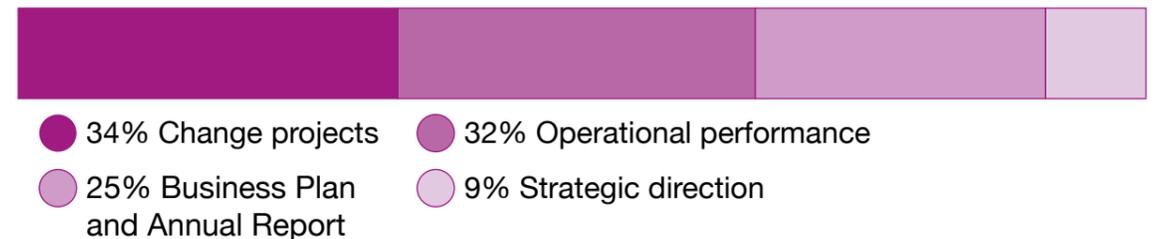
Planning Inspectorate Board

The Board is advisory. It aims to provide collective assurance to our sponsors about our progress in delivering our strategy by providing insight, challenge and support to the Executive Team.

Trudi Elliot is the independent Non-Executive Chair of the Board. Other members include the other Non-Executive Directors, all the Executive Directors, the Chief Executive, a representative from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, and a representative from the Welsh Government.

The Board met virtually eight times in 2020/21, having added an extra meeting in August to oversee the 2019/20 Annual Report and Accounts after it was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Attendance is shown in the [Director's Report pages 72-73](#).

Every meeting included updates from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and from the Welsh Government. Operational performance and change projects each occupied about a third of the discussions. The Board spent a quarter of their time challenging our business plan and annual report and the remaining time focusing on strategic thinking. Quality papers and presentations with relevant information supported most discussions.



Over the year, the Board also specifically reviewed and commented on:

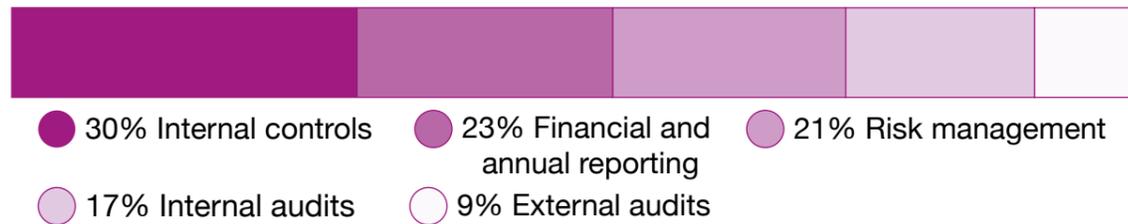
- our approach to ensuring the safety and welfare of our people and keeping casework moving through the pandemic;
- our new strategic risk on health and safety, our health, safety and wellbeing policy and associated action plan;
- our [2020/2024 Strategic Plan](#), 2021/22 Business Plan and the strategic dashboard that allows us to monitor progress and effectiveness;
- our financial position, including our response to the governmental spending review;
- our data governance, with a focus on data protection and information management;
- proposed changes to our change portfolio governance;
- the Planning for the future reform proposals; and
- our progress with Project Speed.

Stephen Tetlow, a Non-Executive Board member, carried out an independent review of the transformation programme. He concluded that the programme's leadership has improved following a shift of focus on end-to-end service delivery. He observed positive relationships with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and Government Digital Services as we work together on this programme. He also identified that progress needs to be made to embed the latest organisational design, establish key performance indicators and track benefits.

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee is an advisory sub-committee of the Board. It is chaired by Rebecca Driver. The other two members are Sally Dixon and Stephen Tetlow but the meetings are also attended by a wide range of executives and experts. It aims to support the Board by providing insight, challenge and support on risk management, auditing, management controls and governance. The committee also reviews the integrity of the annual report and accounts.

The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee met five times this year. Attendance is shown in the [Director's Report pages 72-73](#). Time was spent on reviewing internal controls, financial and annual reporting, risk management, internal and external audits, including management actions. Meetings included the review of a dashboard that showed key data on governance arrangements, data protection incidents, ex gratia payments, our strategic risk profile and other key assurance information.



Over the year, the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee advised on:

- the production of the 2019/20 and 2020/21 Annual Reports and Accounts;
- our risk management framework as well as the risk appetite;
- the design and delivery of the internal and external audit plans;
- our data governance arrangements;
- our revised whistleblowing policy;
- our approach to counter-fraud;
- the reporting framework for our 2021/22 Business Plan; and
- our developing measures on value for money and productivity.

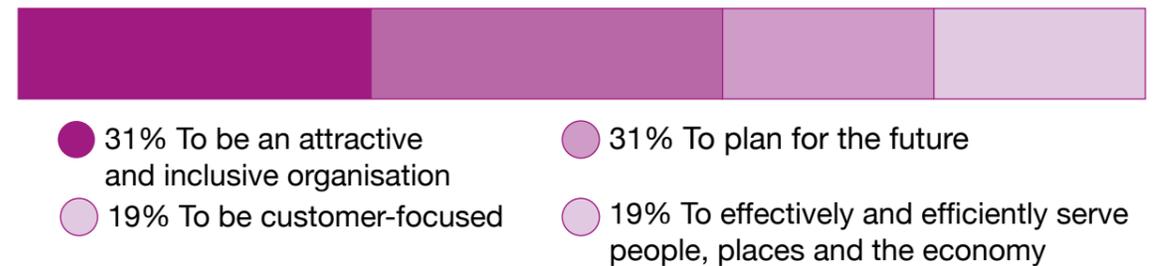
Following an internal audit on health and safety, the Committee recommended that the Executive Team reviewed their strategic risk profile. They decided to dedicate a specific strategic risk on health, safety and wellbeing, [see risk S16 page 25](#).

Strategic Assurance Panels

The Strategic Assurance Panels are advisory deep dives that complement the Board. They are chaired by a Non-Executive Director. Attendees are the other Non-Executive Directors, members of the Executive Team and experts with relevant knowledge. The panels aim to offer assurance on our delivery against our strategic priorities. They offer opportunities for the Non-Executive Directors to gain assurance by hearing directly from a wider range of senior leaders.

Eight Strategic Assurance Panels were conducted this year. Attendance is shown in the [Director's Report pages 72-73](#). The focus did not fall evenly across the priorities. This is due in part to the disruption of the pandemic but also because, while aiming to cover all priorities over the year, topics are prioritised based on risks and value.

The panels reviewed and commented on:



- our approach to innovation;
- our customer service during early impact of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- the development of our forecasting methodology;
- our strategic risks and risk appetite;
- the development of the 2021/22 Business Plan;
- the management of organisational change;
- our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion; and
- the results of the Civil Service People Survey.

The Non-Executive Directors offered insights at the Panels in a number of ways, including advising on the development of our innovation strategy, recommending we develop simple statements to explain our risk appetite and through challenging how we prioritised activities as part of the development of the 2021/22 Business Plan.

Accounting Officer meetings

The Accounting Officer meetings are called by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and are chaired by the Director General, Housing and Planning. Those meetings hold the Accounting Officer, Sarah Richards, to account for operational and financial performance and compliance with the Framework Document that formalise the relationship between the Inspectorate and its sponsors.

Executive Team meetings

The Executive Team is composed of our Chief Executive and Directors for Operations, Strategy and Corporate Services. This group sets and delivers our strategy. They met every two weeks to monitor our financial and non-financial performance, mitigate strategic risks and issues, manage our relationships with our key stakeholders and gave direction to the Inspectorate. The following specialist meetings supported the Executive Team's decision making process:

- Change Portfolio Board;
- Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee;
- Professional Steering Group;
- Information Security Management Forum;
- COVID-19 Project Group;
- Directorate governance meetings; and
- Senior Leadership Group (knowledge sharing forum).

COVID-19 Project Board

The COVID-19 Project Board was a temporary group established at the onset of the pandemic reporting into the Executive Team to ensure a quick and clear decision making process.

Frequency of the group meeting varied through the year in response to our changing needs.

The COVID-19 Project Board aimed to coordinate specific response activities to the impact of the pandemic and to the lockdown measures. Regular surveys were conducted to assess how our people perceived their physical and mental wellbeing, identify lost working hours and how the senior managers could best offer support. Following best practice, it followed a four-stage response: initial, short-term, medium-term and long-term. £148,160 of an allocated £150,000 was spent on project management costs and to finance the response, including enabling home working and additional welfare costs. The discussions and recommendations covered a wide range of subjects:

- Measures to ensure health, safety and wellbeing of our people (see [page 25](#) and [page 88](#)).
- Efforts to keep casework moving (see [page 36](#)).
- Support to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (see [page 36](#)).
- Business continuity plans (see [page 87](#)).
- Controls required to ensure information security and data protection (see [page 23](#) and [pages 83-84](#)).
- Communications with our customers and stakeholders (see [pages 12-13](#)).
- Supporting our people (see [pages 28-29](#) and [page 89](#)).
- Management information to inform decision-making (see [page 85](#)).

European exit working group

For the past three years, we have managed the risk of the European Union exit to our people and operations through a working group. The chair of the group was the Director of Corporate Services and membership included senior operational and corporate leaders.

The group identified and mitigated, to an acceptable level, most risks during the 2018/19 and 2019/20. These risks related to the continuity of operations, supply of goods and services, the accessibility and handling of data, and changes to government policy. Some are ongoing risks relating to how we will adapt to future changes in government policy and to the future provisions between the United Kingdom and European Union for data access and handling. The Group did not meet formally in 2020/21 and managed all business via correspondence or delegation to other forums such as the Information Management Security Forum on issues regarding data governance.

The equivalent of four full-time Inspectors were seconded to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for much of the year to support border infrastructure readiness and our environmental specialists supported this at key points in the process.

Effectiveness review

We conducted an internal effectiveness review of the Board, Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and Strategic Assurance Panels in the autumn and discussed the results at the Board in November 2020. We also conducted a separate internal effectiveness review of the Executive Team meetings at the same time, which was discussed with the Executive Team in January 2021. An external review on the corporate governance structure as a whole will be carried out in 2021/22.

The internal review found that the meetings were inclusive with views and challenges encouraged. They also found that most attendees have the appropriate level of skills and knowledge. The Strategic Assurance Panels were perceived as adding value and providing insight opportunities. However, greater clarity is needed about authority levels for decision-making and escalation routes across the relationships and reporting lines within the corporate governance structure.

Ensuring our governance is effective and our corporate governance meetings are responsive, inclusive and participatory with appropriate escalation routes in place contributes to the United Nations Sustainability Goal of 'Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions' (targets 16.6 and 16.7).

Impact of the creation of the Welsh Inspectorate on our governance arrangements

We are providing practical support to the Welsh government for creating the new Welsh Planning Inspectorate. The focus is on transferring employees and data as well as making the necessary changes to systems and processes so that the change is as seamless as possible for customers. From 1 October 2021, it is intended that the English Planning Inspectorate will no longer provide services on behalf of the Welsh Government and will no longer receive funding from the Welsh Government for these services and the associated overheads. The Framework Document that currently reflects the relationship between the Inspectorate and both governmental bodies will be reviewed and revised, to reflect the changes.

Compliance with the Corporate Governance Code

We assessed the compliance of our governance arrangements with the HM Treasury's Code of Good Practice for Central Government Departments. We determined that they were compliant with a few exceptions explained below.

The Corporate Governance Code is written with the assumption that the Board has a decision-making role but our Board is advisory. Therefore, some of the responsibilities the Code assigns the board are carried out by our Executive Team. Additionally, our Board Chair is not a Minister but our lead Non-Executive Director, who reports to the Director of Planning at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Contrary to the Code, we do not have a nominations committee for appointments. The Chair of the Board is involved in the recruitment process for Executives Directors, effectively carrying out the role of a committee. This is a proportionate arrangement given the size of our organisation and our Executive Team.

The Code states that effectiveness reviews will be led by a Non-Executive Board member and that they should periodically assess the mix of skills and experience of board members to ensure it is sufficient and relevant. Our lead Non-Executive Director carried out appraisals of the Non-Executive Directors, including an evaluation of skill mix and experience. The lead Non-Executive Director identified that more financial experience is required to provide adequate scrutiny at the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. In 2021/22, we will co-opt an additional Non-Executive Director to increase the skills and experience in this Committee.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic meant that an external effectiveness review was not carried out within the recommended three-year period, which also breached our Framework Document. We have discussed this with our Sponsors and they are comfortable that we will conduct on in 2021/22. In the interim, we conducted an annual internal effectiveness review of our corporate governance (see [page 79](#)). The scope of upcoming external effectiveness reviews will be shared with the lead Non-Executive Director who will approve this jointly with the Chief Executive.

Key controls

As part of our governance arrangements we have specific controls in place across the Inspectorate to ensure that we comply with legal and regulatory requirements as well as implement best practice.

Risk management

Our risk management processes are aligned to The Orange Book: Management of Risk - Principles and Concepts. The Executive Team are responsible for setting our risk appetite, which is reviewed by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. The strategic risks detailed in [pages 18-26](#) are owned by the Executive Team.

2 out of 12 strategic risks are at target rating for control

Changes made in 2020/21

- Included 'we will empower our people to raise issues and consider risks' as an objective within the [2020/24 Strategic Plan](#).
- Adopted a tiered risk management system with a strategic register, directorate registers and functional registers.
- Introduced a network of risk champions who oversee each register and ensure they are regularly reviewed and kept up-to-date.
- Produced risk appetite statements to increase understanding of our risk tolerance.
- Produced internal communications to increase awareness and understanding of risk management, encouraging our people to raise risks and building the desired risk management culture.
- Established a focus group to identify new risks and raise awareness throughout the Inspectorate.

Plans for 2021/22

- Systematically identify and manage risks related to health and safety, information management, business continuity and counter fraud.
- Systematically transfer project risks to business risk registers as a standard part of the project closure process.

Internal audits

We liaise with the Government Internal Audit Agency to put together a risk-based audit plan for the year. The plan is approved by the Accounting Officer following advice from the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. The audits are the bases for the annual overall assurance opinion.

The audits and the management actions designed to strengthen controls within the area audited, are reviewed and tracked by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

Moderate overall annual opinion for the year

Changes made in 2020/21

- Carried out all six audits remotely in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. One audit had two separate levels of assurance.
- Controls providing moderate assurance:
 - risk management;
 - IR35 contractor;
 - workforce planning;
 - information asset control environment;
 - business continuity; and
 - financial controls on payroll.
- Controls providing substantial assurance:
 - governance statement.
- Those internal audits raised 20 management actions:
 - no high priority actions;
 - 13 medium priority actions; and
 - 7 low priority actions.
- The overall audit opinion for the year is moderate, recognising that some improvements are required to enhance the adequacy and effectiveness of the framework of governance, risk management and control.

Plans for 2021/22

- Carry out internal audits on the following controls:
 - sustainability;
 - effectiveness review of corporate governance;
 - data quality;
 - public sector equality duties;
 - payroll;
 - General Data Protection Regulation;
 - resource and workforce planning; and
 - benefits management.

Legal controls

Decisions from Inspectors are covered by Crown Indemnity. This means that the Inspectorate is liable for decisions taken, not the individual Inspectors who made them. Our quality assurance processes test the legality of contentious or complex case decisions prior to any final decision being reached. Beyond our internal controls, the Government Legal Department advises and supports us on casework matters and in response to legal challenges. Successful challenges can be the result of human error but can also happen when the Inspector and a judge have interpreted the law differently. We respond to these either through training and/or revision of guidance on case law interpretation.

Our ex gratia policy is in place to compensate customers when we recognise that we have made a mistake ahead of a court's ruling. Awards are reviewed and authorised through independent and financial checks.

Changes made in 2020/21

- Updated Inspectors guidance in line with rulings.
- Improved ex gratia payment forecasting.

Plans for 2021/22

- Review ex gratia payment policy.
- Adapt our approach in line with increased risk of challenges following changes from Planning for the future.

Information security

We have controls in place to keep our customers' data as well as our business critical information safe. As part of our continuing security improvement programme, we are certified to Cyber Essentials Plus. This is an independent technical assessment of the cyber protection levels of our digital notebooks, mobile telephone devices, servers and networks.

We currently have three high priority areas: the threat of cyber-attacks, the automation of security patches and the use of hardware and software without prior approval.

Changes made in 2020/21

- Reviewed acceptable use of internet and security policies.
- Implemented stricter rules on Microsoft Office 365 to prevent data loss and to protect against advanced threats.
- Prevented incidents through protective monitoring of Microsoft Office 365.
- Implemented regular and automatic scans of external facing systems.
- Carried out a phishing simulation and updated training guidance for end users.

Plans for 2021/22

- Review the security operations of Microsoft Office 365 to control approval of applications.
- Produce and roll out tailored training package.
- Centralise security monitoring requirement.
- Audit third party digital service suppliers.

130 legal challenges received (<1% of decisions and recommendations)
67% High Court challenges successfully defended

No serious incidents

Data protection

We previously received an internal audit opinion of ‘limited’ assurance around our data governance and this led to us identifying data governance as a strategic risk.

As part of our corporate governance, the Information Security Management Forum oversees our data governance, a separate working group provide expertise while information owners and information experts support implementation.

We are expecting the number of reported data protection breaches to increase initially as a result of improved employees awareness, before falling in the long-term through increased compliance with controls.

3 data protection breaches reported to the Information Commissioner’s Office

Changes made in 2020/21 and Plans for 2021/22

See mitigations for risk S11 [page 23](#).

Complaint management

Complaints can be raised by customers because of administrative errors, factual errors, failure in our service standards, poor conduct and where our customers feel we have not followed planning policy or guidance, relevant legislation and our procedural guidance. We carry out a robust investigation into every complaint and provide feedback to the relevant area of the organisation where complaints are upheld. Customers can escalate their complaints to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman.

1,074 complaints received

Changes made in 2020/21

- Reviewed the complaint process and conducted lessons learned exercise, with proposed changes to be implemented into 2021/22.

Plans for 2021/22

- Implement changes identified in the 2020/21 review and ensure process is customer focused, robust and efficient.
- Analyse all complaints received to identify themes, share insights to drive service improvements and track benefit realisation.
- Implement customer service desk solution to capture customer interactions, drive efficiencies, structure data and identify consistent issues.

Table 2. Complaints in 2020/21

Complaints received by the Inspectorate	1,074 complaints
Complaints received by the Parliamentary Ombudsman	39 complaints
Complaints accepted for investigation by the Parliamentary Ombudsman	Nil complaints
Complaints upheld in full by the Parliamentary Ombudsman	N/A
Complaints upheld in part by the Parliamentary Ombudsman	N/A
Complaints not upheld by the Parliamentary Ombudsman	N/A
Recommendations made by the Parliamentary Ombudsman complied with	N/A
Recommendations made by the Parliamentary Ombudsman not complied with	N/A

Management information

We have started using data intelligently to inform key decisions. We are moving from measuring average casework performance to looking at variability as well as being able to run analysis and diagnosis. This information is used to provide [statistical releases](#) on our performance to customers and stakeholders.

[5 Statistical releases](#)

Changes made in 2020/21

- Created a dashboard to monitor sickness, special leave and people's capacity.
- Created a framework to measure our performance against the [2020/2024 Strategic Plan](#).
- Further developed our business information tool.
- Conducted analysis to support decision making and to understand the drivers of our performance.
- Hosted demonstrations of analytical capability and tool development to improve data literacy.
- Developed [statistical releases](#) in line with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Plans for 2021/22

- Establish a master data set and data standards to identify key data and improve quality.
- Develop management information for stakeholders.
- Expand monthly [statistical releases](#).
- Conduct analysis to support decision-making.
- Work with our sponsors to update our performance targets.
- Improve data literacy and set levels of knowledge and skills required.

Change management

The change portfolio includes the transformation programme and various projects that have a significant cost, impact, benefits and/or risk. The monthly Change Portfolio Board provides governance by challenging progress against delivery and budget. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government provides some funding through business cases.

10 running change projects with a total budget of £7.1 million

Changes made in 2020/21

- Established a new team to support the portfolio management approach and the delivery of key change projects.
- Submitted funding business case for transformation programme and got approval by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and HM Treasury.
- Undertaken an independent assurance of the transformation programme by a Non-Executive Director (see [page 75](#)).

Plans for 2021/22

- Implement new governance structure that will prioritise activities based on evidence of benefits' delivery.
- Roll out updated processes and templates to improve control and transparency, especially on benefit identification, planning and management.
- Put together a two-year plan for the change portfolio, including the impact of Planning for the future, Project Speed and a post COVID-19 operating model.
- Reduce reliance on contracted resource to deliver change.

Financial controls

We are accountable to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government about how we prepare and spend our budget allocation. Our processes comply with Managing Public Money. We operate effectively, efficiently and focus on providing value for money. We conduct quarterly reviews to assure our business plan delivery and financial management. We report to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee unplanned spend such as ex gratia payments, adverse costs and bad debt write-offs. There is a zero tolerance policy for project overspend and any variances must be approved by change board.

1.1% variance on net budget

Changes made in 2020/21

- Embedded the financial business partnering model, providing financial advice as a service through the Inspectorate.
- Held quarterly reviews to assure budget control and business plan delivery.

Plans for 2021/22

- Implement a new process to authorise funding requests outside of original budget.
- Align financial and people data to improve automation of resource forecasting and modelling.
- Develop a financial plan aligned to longer-term spending review and [Strategic Plan](#).
- Review of financial and commercial delegations from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to ensure they are appropriate and robust.
- Develop benefits report to ensure projects deliver their business case's commitments.

Commercial controls

Commercial controls ensure effective delivery of value for money contracts and compliance with procurement regulations. We manage supply chain risks and maintain procurement standards to support sustainability, prevent modern slavery and support economic growth. We manage suppliers through a range of techniques dependent on value, criticality and contract type. Wherever possible and appropriate, we take a collaborative approach to deliver best value for money, increase innovation and transfer skills to our people. We encourage controlled early supplier engagement and procurement involvement through the contract lifecycle. We share risks with suppliers, agree liabilities and insurances, as formalised in the terms and conditions of our contracts. We aim to pay invoices we receive within five days but we sometimes need more time to check and validate them.

58 new contracts awarded, 14 of those on a single tender basis.

Changes made in 2020/21

- Changed approach for commercial delivery of the transformation programme.
- Trained our people to create and manage purchase orders.
- Prepared new commercial strategy and procurement policy.

Plans for 2021/22

- Implement new commercial strategy and procurement policy.
- Improve commercial processes.
- Increase commercial expertise, capacity and effectiveness.

Business continuity

We have robust business continuity management arrangements and comply with the government's Security Policy Framework. Our plans cover a range of scenarios (including non-availability of premises, systems or employees) and set out recovery strategies. A crisis management plan and team are in place, ready to be stood up following an incident. Functional areas also have individual plans.

18 Business Continuity Plans in place

Changes made in 2020/21

- Completed business impact analysis to review business continuity plans and risks as part of the COVID-19 pandemic response.
- Issued COVID-19 impact survey to all our people to identify lost working hours, support needs and caring responsibilities resulting from the pandemic.
- Updated the business continuity policy, framework and plans.
- Produced a report on key risks for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Plans for 2021/22

- Review business continuity plan template.
- Carry out testing of plans with scenario exercises.

Conflict of interests

Our Conflict of Interest policy requires all our people and Non-Executive Directors to declare any potential conflicts on appointment and later as they arise. A standing agenda item for the Board, Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and Executive Team Meetings makes provision for attendees to declare any interests. All Directors are required to check and update the declarations of interest register as part of the Annual Report and Accounts process. In addition, Inspectors do not work on cases set in areas where they have recent or ongoing connections.

No declarations made by Board members

Changes made in 2020/21

- Agreed to use a new tool for recording our people's declarations of interest, the SAP HR system. Directors are still using the register of interests published on the GOV.UK website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/register-of-planning-inspectorate-board-member-interests>.

Plans for 2021/22

- Improve the recording of declarations of interest through the introduction of a new application within the SAP HR system.
- Review the Conflict of Interest policy and recording procedures.
- Prompt all our people to refresh their declarations on an annual basis starting in 2021/22.

Whistleblowing

Our people can report misconduct anonymously via telephone or email using the ‘See, Hear, Speak up’ confidential service. Reports are routed to our Nominated Officer, who can also be approached by whistleblowers directly, and will co-ordinate a response to any received reports.

0 reports made

Changes made in 2020/21

- Published internal communication to raise awareness and demonstrate Executive Team’s desire to hear concerns and support whistleblowers, to build a culture of feeling safe to raise issues and challenge behaviours.
- Revised whistleblowing policy to include more information about the process following a report, managing expectations and offering reassurance to a potential whistleblower. The arrangements for whistleblowing were deemed effective.

Plans for 2021/22

- Review policy as part of the effort to align to the Civil Service policies as standard practice.

Fraud and bribery

We continue to work with the Cabinet Office Centre of Expertise for Counter Fraud and are looking at new ways identify and report on fraud and error.

0 reports of fraud or bribery

Changes made in 2020/21

- Submitted a fraud risk assessment to the Cabinet Office for review.
- Completed Cabinet Office Fraud Risk training.
- Joined the group of Government Counter Fraud Profession Risk Assessors.
- Raised awareness on how to identify and report fraud with an internal webinar on fraud prevention (150 participants) and with a serialised article about a fictitious fraud.

Plans for 2021/22

- Carry out fraud risk assessments before change projects start.
- Continue internal engagement to prevent fraud occurring and to increase the likelihood of identifying instances of fraud.

Health, safety and wellbeing

The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee reports to the Executive Team. They support the statutory responsibilities of the health and safety representatives and promote a positive and proactive safety culture where risks are identified and mitigated. They encourage a consistent approach to improving the health, safety and wellbeing of our people. All accidents and near misses are investigated to prevent repeat incidents.

4 accidents and 0 near misses recorded in the reporting year

Changes made in 2020/21 and plans for 2021/22

See mitigations for risk S16 [page 25](#).

Human resources controls

Our human resources controls are set out in our Framework Document. The Civil Service Commission regularly audits our systems to ensure compliance with the Framework, employment legislation and standards. We maintain recruitment and selection standards. We support our people in their work, development and wellbeing.

4,099 special days leave taken due to COVID-19

Changes made in 2020/21

- Developed and communicated an approach to improving equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Implemented a temporary policy on special paid leave and annual leave to support our people through the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Continued to embed our new operating model. Designed to ensure our strategic delivery is affordable and with appropriate resources.
- Continued to promote ongoing quality conversations as good line management practice and rolled out a new tool to improve consistency.
- Established a specialist learning and development function.
- Reviewed and improved partnerships with the Trade Unions.

Plans for 2021/22

- Establish a rolling programme of continuous improvement for all our human resources policies.
- Embed our public sector equality duty through improved training and use of equality impact assessments.
- Build learning and development systems to develop the capability of our people within each profession.
- Implement and improve our equality, diversity and inclusion approach.



Sarah Richards

Chief Executive

29 June 2021

Remuneration report

The remuneration report summarises our remuneration policy and disclosures on Directors' remuneration as required by Section 421 of the Companies Act 2006 adapted for the public sector context.

Directors' remuneration policy

The remuneration arrangements and performance appraisal that apply at Director level and above are those which apply to the Senior Civil Service generally. The main features of these arrangements are specified centrally by the Cabinet Office. In line with Senior Civil Service pay guidance as part of the work and recommendations of the Senior Salaries Review Body, annual salary is determined on an individual basis by the Chief Executive, with oversight from Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

The notice period of Directors is at least one month.

Remuneration and pension entitlements (including Cash Equivalent Transfer Values (CETV) disclosures) for Directors and Board members

This section of the document has been subject to audit.

The single total figures of remuneration for Directors, for the year ended 31 March 2021 and in brackets the comparative figures for the year ended 31 March 2020, are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Single total figures of remuneration for Directors for the year ended 31 March 2021 (part 1)

	Salary and fees paid	Bonus	Taxable benefits	Pension related benefits	Total for 2020/21 (2019/20)
	£'000 in bands of £5,000	£'000 in bands of £5,000	£ to the nearest £100	£ to the nearest £1,000	£'000 in bands of £5,000
Accounting Officer					
Sarah Richards Chief Executive	140-145 (140-145)	0-5 (-)	- (-)	56,000 (55,000)	200-205 (195-200)
Executive Directors					
Paul McGuinness Director of Corporate Services (from March 2020)	75-80 (0-5) (75-80 full-time equivalent)	0-5 (-)	- (-)	30,000 (1,000)	105-110 (0-5)
Navees Rahman Director of Corporate Services (to March 2020 and from December 2020)	85-90 (85-90)	0-5 (-)	- (-)	46,000 (51,000)	135-140 (135-140)
Graham Stallwood Director of Operations (from May 2019)	105-110 (90-95) (100-105 full-time equivalent)	0-5 (-)	- (-)	41,000 (36,000)	145-150 (125-130)
Christine Thorby Director of Strategy (from April 2019)	110-115 (110-115)	0-5 (-)	- (-)	40,000 (309,000)	150-155 (415-420)
Tim Guy Director of Transformation (to March 2020)	- (100-105) (105-110 full-time equivalent)	- (-)	- (-)	- (41,000)	- (145-150)
Phil Hammond Director of Volume Casework (to July 2019)	- (120-125) (75-80 full-time equivalent)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	- (120-125)

Table 3. Single total figures of remuneration for Directors for the year ended 31 March 2021 (part 2)

	Salary and fees paid	Bonus	Taxable benefits	Pension related benefits	Total for 2020/21 (2019/20)
	£'000 in bands of £5,000	£'000 in bands of £5,000	£ to the nearest £100	£ to the nearest £1,000	£'000 in bands of £5,000
Non-Executive Directors					
Trudi Elliott Chair, Non-Executive	20-25 (20-25)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	20-25 (20-25)
Sally Dixon Director, Non-Executive (from July 2019)	10-15 (5-10) (10-15 full-time equivalent)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	10-15 (5-10) (5-10)
Dr Rebecca Driver Director, Non-Executive (from December 2019)	10-15 (0-5) (10-15 full-time equivalent)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	10-15 (0-5) (0-5)
Stephen Tetlow Director, Non-Executive (from July 2019)	10-15 (5-10) (10-15 full-time equivalent)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	10-15 (5-10) (5-10)
Jayne Erskine Director, Non-Executive (to May 2019)	- (0-5) (10-15 full-time equivalent)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	- (0-5) (0-5)
David Holt Director, Non-Executive (to December 2019)	- (5-10) (10-15 full-time equivalent)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	- (5-10) (5-10)
Susan Johnson Director, Non-Executive (to July 2019)	- (0-5) (10-15 full-time equivalent)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	- (0-5) (0-5)

Non-Executive Directors are contracted for three to four years. Their notice period is usually one month long. There are some specific events that can trigger termination by the Secretary of State.

Directors' pension disclosure

This section of the document has been subject to audit.

Table 4. Directors' pension disclosure

	Real increase in pension and related lump sum at pension age	Total accrued pension at pension age at 31/03/21 and related lump sum	Cash Equivalent Transfer Value (CETV) in £'000 to the nearest £1,000		
			As at 31/03/20 (Restated)	As at 31/03/21	Real Increase
	£'000 in bands of £2,500	£'000 in bands of £5,000			
Sarah Richards Chief Executive	2.5-5	15-20	234	302	47
Paul McGuinness Director of Corporate Services (from March 2020)	0-2.5	20-25	188	212	11
Navees Rahman Director of Corporate Services (to March 2020 and from December 2020)	2.5-5	20-25	253	288	21
Graham Stallwood Director of Operations (from May 2019)	0-2.5	0-5	22	49	18
Christine Thorby Director of Strategy	0-2.5	50-55	1,050	1,131	41

Prior year figures for Cash Equivalent Transfer Value have been restated to reflect a change in pension benefit calculation. The Scheme Actuary has advised that from 17 January 2020, Guaranteed Minimum Pension (GMP) adjustment factors will no longer apply for some members. For further information go to www.civilservicepension.org.uk.

Cash Equivalent Transfer Values

A Cash Equivalent Transfer Value (CETV) is the actuarially assessed capitalised value of the pension scheme benefits accrued by a member at a particular point in time. The benefits valued are the member's accrued benefits and any contingent spouse's pension payable from the scheme. A CETV is a payment made by a pension scheme or arrangement to secure pension benefits in another pension scheme or arrangement when the member leaves a scheme and chooses to transfer the benefits accrued in their former scheme. The pension figures shown relate to the benefits that the individual has accrued as a consequence of their total membership of the pension scheme, not just their service in a senior capacity to which disclosure applies. The figures include the value of any pension benefit in another scheme or arrangement, which the member has transferred to the Civil Service pension arrangements. They also include any additional pension benefit accrued to the member as a result of their buying additional pension benefits at their own cost. CETVs are worked out in accordance with The Occupational Pension Schemes (Transfer Values) (Amendment) Regulations 2008 and do not take account of any actual or potential reduction to benefits resulting from Lifetime Allowance Tax which may be due when pension benefits are taken.

Real increase in Cash Equivalent Transfer Values

This reflects the increase in Cash Equivalent Transfer Values that is funded by the Exchequer. It does not include the increase in accrued pension due to inflation, contributions paid by the employee (including the value of any benefits transferred from another pension scheme or arrangement) and uses common market valuation factors for the start and end of the period.

Compensation on early retirement or loss of office

This section of the document has been subject to audit. No payments were required this financial year.

Payments to past Directors

This section of the document has been subject to audit. Directors do not have any entitlements to pay after their departure date.

Fair pay disclosure

This section of the document has been subject to audit. Reporting bodies are required to disclose the relationship between the remuneration of the highest paid Director in their organisation and the median remuneration of the organisation’s workforce. The calculation is based on the full-time equivalent staff at the reporting period-end date on an annualised basis.

Table 5. Fair pay disclosure

	2020/21	2019/20
Band of Highest Paid Director’s Total Remuneration (£’000)	140-145	140-145
Median Total – Inspector	£59,389	£58,837
Remuneration Ratio - Inspector	2.4	2.4
Median Total - Support	£27,607	£27,221
Remuneration Ratio - Support	5.2	5.2

The banded remuneration of the highest paid Director in the financial year 2020/21 was £140,000 - £145,000 (2019/20: £140,000 - £145,000). This was 2.4 times (Inspectors); 5.2 times (support) (2019/20: 2.4 (Inspectors); 5.2 (support)) the median remuneration of the workforce, which was £59,389 (Inspector); £27,607 (support) (2019/20: £58,837 (Inspector); £27,221 (support)).

We conducted an equal pay review based on employee’s average earnings in 2018/19 to establish whether the salaries paid are appropriate for the work done, and do not pose any equal pay challenges. This work will inform our ongoing pay approach.

Information on the gender pay gap for the Planning Inspectorate was published on GOV.UK at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mhclg-gender-pay-gap-report-and-data-2020>.

In 2020/21, nil employees received remuneration in excess of the highest paid Director (2019/20: nil). Remuneration ranged from £111,989 to £10,500 (2019/20 £110,762 to £10,500) excluding the highest paid Director. Total remuneration includes salary, non-consolidated performance-related pay and benefits-in-kind. It does not include severance payments, employer pension contributions and the cash equivalent transfer value of pensions.

Staff report

Staff numbers

This section of the document has been subject to audit.

For the financial year 2020/21, we employed (average, full-time equivalent) 759 staff (see table 6). This total was made up of 384 women and 471 men (average, full-time equivalent: 325 women; 423 men) which included two women and three men at Directorate level. Staff numbers include a mixture of full and part-time employees, home-based salaried Inspectors and office-based staff in the Cardiff and Bristol offices (office-based staff currently home-based during COVID-19 pandemic). We also used the services of 85 non-salaried Inspectors (2019/20: 94) on a fee-paid contractual basis to allow flexible resourcing and value for money.

Number of full-time equivalent persons permanently employed by us (including senior management) during the year was as follows in Table 6. Turnover rate in 2020/21 was 9%.

We used the services of, on average, two seconded-in staff during the year. These services were used at Director and management levels, for longer than six months, to support us with priority posts. There was also one seconded-out staff at management level for a longer-term post in another Government organisation. At 31 March 2021, 77 staff (75 as at 31 March 2020) were on contracts for a fixed term duration. Small numbers of staff were seconded outside of the Planning Inspectorate during 2020/21 to support Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government’s COVID-19 resources.

Table 6. Full time equivalent employed in year

Permanent (average)	2020/21	2019/20
Senior Civil Service Pay Band 2	1	1
Senior Civil Service Pay Band 1	4	4
Grade 6-7 (Senior Staff)	36	32
Salaried Inspector	352	331
Support	117	97
Caseworkers	238	260
Total	748	725
Less Secondments	(1)	-
Add Agency	12	11
Total Employed	759	736

Trade Unions

The organisation formally recognises two Unions: Public and Commercial Services, representing office-based staff, and Prospect, representing Inspectors. Formal consultation with the Unions took place largely through the 13 Whitley meetings held this year. We also work with the Unions and employees, both formally and informally, on management proposals that have a direct bearing on how staff work, ensuring that there is a common understanding of the impact on individuals. In 2020/21 a key consultation with Trade Unions was about the use of virtual events for hearings and inquiries.

We are required to publish information in the following tables in accordance with the Trade Union (Facility Time Publication Requirements) Regulations 2017.

Table 7. Trade Union representation

Employees who were relevant Union officials during the period	Full-time equivalent employees
19	17.92

Table 8. Percentage of time spent on facility time

Percentage of time	Number of employees
0%	9
1-50%	10
51-99%	0
100%	0

Table 9. Percentage of pay bill spent on facility time

Total Cost of facility time	£25,976.54
Total pay bill	£45,986,987.60
Facility time cost as percentage of pay bill	0.06%

The total pay bill figure is representative of salary payments, whereas the Staff costs include accounting adjustments necessary for the financial statements.

Table 10. Paid Trade Union activities

Time spent on paid Trade Union activities as a percentage of total paid facility time hours	100%
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Attendance management

The average working days lost through sickness absence in 2020/21 was 4.8 days (5.5 days in 2019/20). Some of the absence is due to complex disability related issues. We also have an average of 5.5 days paid special leave used specifically in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We are working closely with line managers to ensure that appropriate support is provided to individuals through reasonable adjustments, regular return to work interviews and use of the Employee Assistance Programme.

Staff policies

Remuneration policy

The remuneration report summarises our remuneration policy and disclosures on Directors' remuneration as required by Section 421 of the Companies Act 2006 adapted for the public sector context.

Recruitment

All recruitment is carried out on the basis of fair and open competition, and selection is made on merit. Recruitment processes are fair and are regularly reviewed to take account of any changes to employment legislation.

Equality and diversity

The proportion of staff that consider themselves to have a disability remains low at 7%, this figure is a slight decrease on 2019/20. When recruiting staff, we continue to guarantee an interview to disabled candidates who meet the core requirements of the job description and person specification under the Disability Confident scheme. We also offer support through reasonable adjustments to candidates. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have successfully conducted interviews virtually throughout 2020/21, while maintaining a high-quality selection and appointment process throughout. We will be incorporating this experience into future recruitment by offering the most suitable option to candidates wherever possible.

Staff costs

This section of the document has been subject to audit.

Table 11 includes the total staff costs for the 2020/21 financial year, as shown in the Financial Statements.

Table 11. Total Staff costs

	2020/21 £'000	2019/20 £'000
Wages and Salaries	34,450	31,223
Social security costs	3,857	3,439
Other pension costs	9,412	8,457
Sub Total	47,719	43,119
Agency staff	717	528
Total net staff costs	48,436	43,647

Pension benefits

Pension benefits are provided through the Civil Service pension arrangements. Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (PCSPS) and Civil Servants and Others Pension Scheme (CSOPS) – known as ‘Alpha’ are unfunded multi-employer defined benefit schemes in which we are unable to identify our share of the underlying assets and liabilities. The last full actuarial valuation was carried out as at 31 March 2016. For details, see the resource accounts of the Cabinet Office: Civil Superannuation (<http://www.civilservicepensionscheme.org.uk/about-us/resource-accounts/>).

For 2020/21, employers’ contributions of £8,945,700 were payable to the PCSPS (2019/20 : £8,338,082) as one of four rates in the range 26.6% to 30.3% (2019/20: 26.6% to 30.3%) of pensionable pay based on salary bands. The Scheme Actuary reviews employer contributions usually every four years following a full scheme valuation. The contribution rates are set to meet the cost of the benefits accruing during 2020/21 to be paid when the member retires and not the benefits paid during this period to existing pensioners.

Employees can opt to open a partnership pension account, a stakeholder pension with an employer contribution. Employer contributions of £34,084 (2019/20: £30,197) were paid to one or more of the panel of three appointed stakeholder pension providers. Employer contributions are age-related and range from 8% to 14.75% of pensionable earnings. Employers also match employee contributions up to 3% of pensionable earnings. In addition, employer contributions of £105 (0.5% of pensionable pay for those employees) were payable to the PCSPS to cover the cost of the future provision of lump-sum benefits on death in service or ill-health retirement of these employees.

Contributions due to the partnership pension providers at 31 March 2021 were £2,916 (2019/20: £2,550). Contributions prepaid at that date were £nil (2019/20: £nil).

Nil persons (2019/20: nil persons) retired early on ill-health grounds; the total additional accrued pension liabilities in the year amounted to £nil (2019/20: £nil).

Expenditure on consultancy and contingent labour

In 2020/21, the Planning Inspectorate incurred £345,000 (2019/20: £106,000) on contracts which were categorised as consultancy. However, none of these required Cabinet Office approval, as they were out of scope of the Cabinet Office spend controls.

Our contingent labour spend falls into three main categories:

- Agency staff – used to temporarily fill vacancies whilst we recruit and provide additional resource as needed.
- Specialist technical support – providing technical skills and resource where the capability and/or the capacity is not available.
- Non-salaried Inspectors – flexible Inspector resource engaged on a fee per case basis as and when work is available.

Our total contingent labour spend for 2020/21 was £6,791,000.

Off-payroll engagements

We engaged in off-payroll contracts (see the following tables for further analysis). Over 58% of these engagements were for the services of Non-salaried Inspectors (on a fee-paid contractual basis), to provide necessary flexibility in the Inspector workforce. The remainder of the off-payroll engagements supported a specific need in the organisation while transforming the organisation.

Table 12. Off-payroll engagements

Highly paid off-payroll worker engagements as at 31 March 2021, earning £245 per day or greater	As at March 2021
Number of existing engagements.	110
Of which...	
Number that have existed for less than one year at time of reporting.	11
Number that have existed for between one and two years at time of reporting.	23
Number that have existed for between two and three years at time of reporting.	76
Number that have existed for between three and four years at time of reporting.	-
Number that have existed for four or more years at time of reporting.	-

All the existing off-payroll engagements outlined above have been subject to a risk-based assessment as to whether assurance is required that the individual is paying the right amount of tax under Inland Revenue legislation 35 (IR35) and, where necessary, that assurance has been sought.

Table 13. All off-payroll engagements

All highly paid off-payroll workers engaged at any point during the year ended 31 March 2021, earning £245 per day or greater	As at March 2021
Number of temporary off-payroll workers engaged during the year ended 31 March 2021.	146
Of which...	
Not subject to off-payroll legislation.	-
Subject to off-payroll legislation and determined as in-scope of IR35.	8
Subject to off-payroll legislation and determined as out-of-scope of IR35.	138
Number of engagements reassessed for consistency/assurance purposes during the year.	134
Of which: Number of engagements that saw a change to IR35 status following the consistency review.	-

Table 14. Off-payroll engagements of Board members and senior officials

Any off-payroll engagements of Board members, and/or, senior officials with significant financial responsibility, between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021	As at March 2021
Number of off-payroll engagements of Board members, and/or senior officials with significant financial responsibility, during the financial year.	-
Total number of individuals on payroll and off-payroll that have been deemed 'board members, and/or senior officials with significant financial responsibility', during the financial year. This figure should include both on-payroll and off-payroll engagements.	9

Exit packages

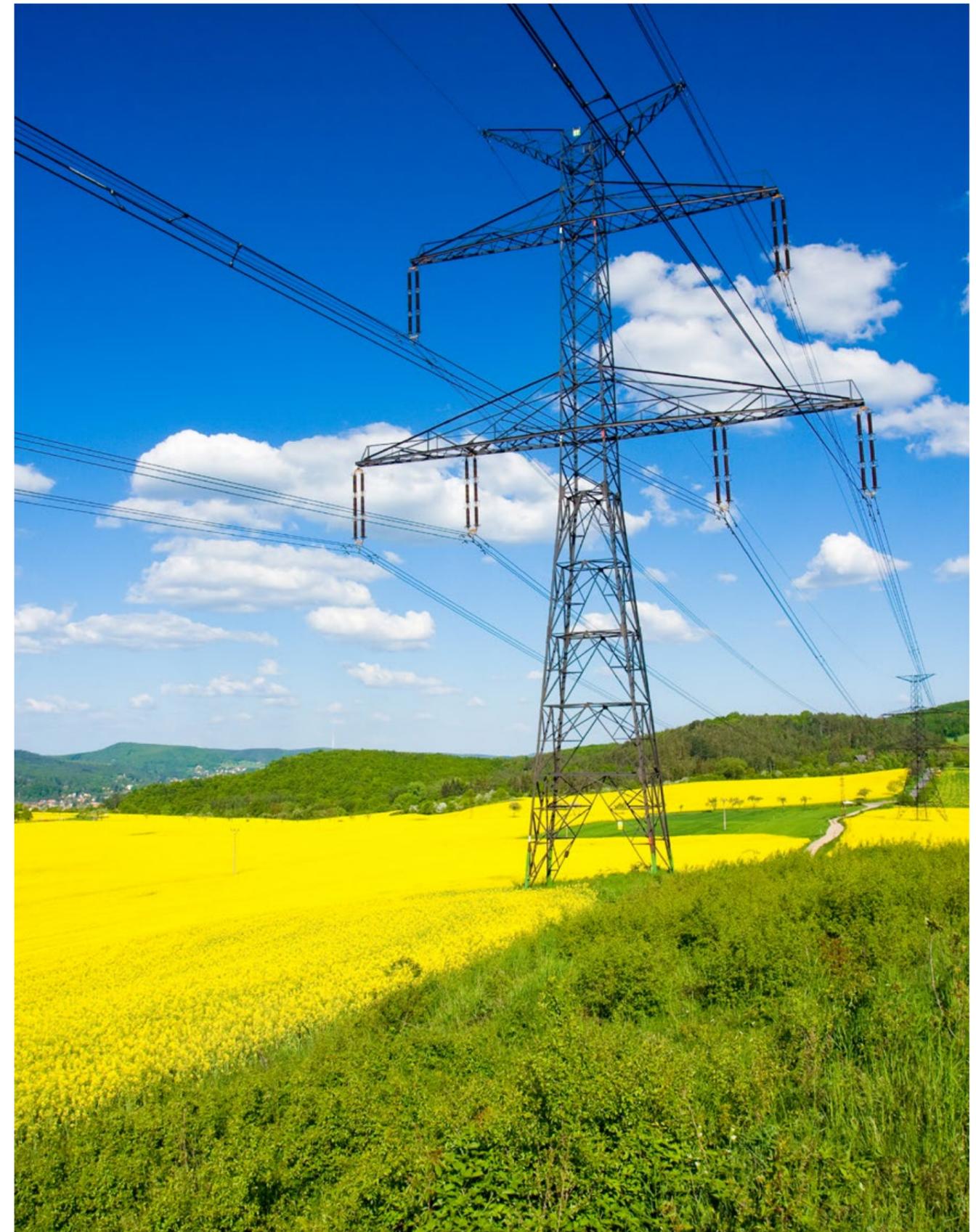
This section of the document has been subject to audit.

Exit costs are accounted for in full either in the year of departure or, where a binding commitment is made to leave in the subsequent year, costs are accrued. Ill-health retirement costs are met by the pension scheme.

There were nil compulsory redundancies or other departures in 2020/21. Other departure costs for 2019/20 were due to the organisational design project.

Table 15. Breakdown of Departure Costs

Number of other departures agreed	2020/21 £'000	2019/20 £'000
< £10,000	-	1
£10,000 - £25,000	-	-
£25,001 - £50,000	-	1
£50,001 - £100,000	-	1
Total number of exit packages	-	3
Total Resource cost (£)	-	128,401



Parliamentary accountability and audit report

This section provides the detailed disclosures we are required to make and is supported by the detail in the Financial Statements of this Annual Report.

Budget Allocations and Out-turn

The Planning Inspectorate is funded through the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Welsh Government. Initial indicative allocations are agreed as part of HM Treasury Spending Review exercises and are refined annually as necessary through the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government business planning round. Since 1st April 2020, we are fully funded from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government programme budgets and this classification of our funding is reviewed annually.

The detailed accounts for the 2020/21 financial year are included in the 'Financial Statements' part of this publication. A brief summary of our performance against budget is provided in Table 16.

During the year we managed our financial performance against budget across three main headings: staff and related costs; non-pay running costs; and income. The agreed net revenue budget at the start of the year was £49.6m (2019/20 £47.2m) and the capital budget was £5m. The approved budget from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government was uplifted by £2.7m in 2020/21 to support the impact of income reductions resulting from COVID-19. We ended the year with an underspend against revised budget of £0.5m, as shown in Table 16.

Our income from chargeable activities as shown in Note 4 was £5m lower than our original budget as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic deferring and reducing activities. It had a greater impact than expected on travel and subsistence costs where most of the underspend is. At the time of setting revised budgets there were plans to pick up travel activity in Quarter 4 but this wasn't possible due to ongoing lockdown rules and guidance.

With continued working from home for all staff across the organisation a decision was made to defer the purchase of new printers and plotters until the next financial year. This accounts for most of the £0.8m capital underspend.

Table 16. Budget, out-turn and underspend

	2020/21 Original budget £'000	2020/21 Revised budget (October 2020) £'000	2020/21 Out-turn £'000	2020/21 Underspend £'000
Staff & related costs	46,188	48,000	48,436	(436)
Non-pay running costs	17,698	15,000	14,099	901
Receipts	(17,047)	(12,000)	(12,046)	46
Net costs	46,839	51,000	50,489	511
Ring-fenced costs	2,550	1,000	968	32
Total programme costs	49,389	52,000	51,457	543
Non-cash costs (Annually Managed Expenditure - AME)	161	200	(29)	229
Total operating expenditure	49,550	52,200	51,428	772
Capital expenditure	5,041	5,041	4,251	790

Table 17 shows the current provisional allocations and working assumptions for the budget. The Planning Inspectorate received an indicative budget for 2021/22 financial year, which will be confirmed in a formal budget delegation. These figures are subject to change.

Table 17. Current provisional allocations.

	2021/22 £'000
Net Costs	52,028
Ring-fenced costs	1,500
Total programme costs	53,528
Annually managed expenditure	161
Total operating expenditure	53,689
Capital expenditure	5,292

Fees and charges

This section of the document has been subject to audit.

We have complied with the cost allocation and charging requirements set out in HM Treasury and Office of Public Sector Information guidance for fees and charges. Casework for which total fees exceed £1m are analysed below.

Table 18. Income and costs for casework activity

	2020/21			2019/20		
	Cost £'000	Income £'000	Net £'000	Cost £'000	Income £'000	Net £'000
National Infrastructure	11,669	(4,749)	6,920	9,103	(8,456)	647
Local Plans	7,712	(2,635)	5,077	6,807	(4,576)	2,231
Other Major Specialist	3,687	(1,109)	2,578	4,540	(1,277)	3,263
Totals	23,068	(8,493)	14,575	20,450	(14,309)	6,141

Regularity of expenditure

This section of the document has been subject to audit .

Expenditure on losses and special payments, as defined in Chapter 4 and Annexes 4.10 to 4.13 of Managing Public Money, is reported to HM Treasury through the parent Department. Losses and special payments that amount to greater than £300,000 are shown in the table 19.

Table 19. Losses and special payments

	2020/21		2019/20	
	Number of cases	£'000	Number of cases	£'000
Constructive loss	1	2	1	455
Special Payments	32	156	36	347

Special payments include ex gratia payments and damage to hire cars.

Details of cases over £300,000: there were nil reportable cases in 2020/21 (one reportable case of £455,000 in 2019/20).

Remote contingent liabilities

This section of the document has been subject to audit.

Ex gratia costs are non-statutory payments, generally made as a result of an acknowledged error causing unnecessary expenditure for the claimant. This can include cases where maladministration is found by the Parliamentary Ombudsman. Based on previous years, it is a remote possibility that we could have significant costs claims which relate to work completed prior to 31 March 2021 where the case has yet to be raised. Given the remote classification, it is not possible to estimate a value but, if required, we would seek additional funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government as part of our normal spending review submissions.

On 29 March 2017, the UK Government submitted its notification to leave the European Union (EU) in accordance with Article 50. The triggering of Article 50 started a two-year negotiation process between the UK and the EU. On 31 October 2019 the UK left the EU and entered into an initial transition phase ending on 31 December 2020. The Inspectorate is not directly funded by the EU, however, due to the potential impact from changes in legislation and regulation, an unquantifiable remote contingent liability is disclosed.

We are continuing to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on our key suppliers and contractors and at the time of writing there is nothing quantifiable to disclose.



Sarah Richards,
Chief Executive
29 June 2021

The certificate and report of the Comptroller and Auditor General to the House of Commons

Opinion on financial statements

I certify that I have audited the financial statements of the Planning Inspectorate for the year ended 31 March 2021 under the Government Resources and Accounts Act 2000. The financial statements comprise: Statements of Comprehensive Net Expenditure, Financial Position, Cash Flows, Changes in Taxpayers' Equity; and the related notes, including the significant accounting policies. These financial statements have been prepared under the accounting policies set out within them. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and international accounting standards as interpreted by HM Treasury's Government Financial Reporting Manual.

I have also audited the information in the Accountability Report that is described in that report as having been audited.

In my opinion, the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the Planning Inspectorate's affairs as at 31 March 2021 and of the Planning Inspectorate's net expenditure for the year then ended; and
- have been properly prepared in accordance with the Government Resources and Accounts Act 2000 and HM Treasury directions issued thereunder.

Opinion on regularity

In my opinion, in all material respects the income and expenditure recorded in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by Parliament and the financial transactions recorded in the financial statements conform to the authorities which govern them.

Basis for opinions

I conducted my audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISAs) (UK), applicable law and Practice Note 10 'Audit of Financial Statements of Public Sector Entities in the United Kingdom'. My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of my certificate.

Those standards require me and my staff to comply with the Financial Reporting Council's Revised Ethical Standard 2019. I have also elected to apply the ethical standards relevant to listed entities. I am independent of the Planning Inspectorate in accordance with the ethical requirements that

are relevant to my audit of the financial statements in the UK. My staff and I have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, I have concluded that the Planning Inspectorate's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work I have performed, I have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the Planning Inspectorate's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

My responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Accounting Officer with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this certificate.

The going concern basis of accounting for the Planning Inspectorate is adopted in consideration of the requirements set out in HM Treasury's Government Reporting Manual, which require entities to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements where it anticipated that the services which they provide will continue into the future.

Other information

The other information comprises information included in the Annual Report, but does not include the parts of the Accountability Report described in that report as having been audited, the financial statements and my auditor's certificate thereon. The Accounting Officer is responsible for the other information. My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in my certificate, I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon. In connection with my audit of the financial statements, my responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or my knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If I identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, I am required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact.

I have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on other matters

In my opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the parts of the Accountability Report to be audited have been properly prepared in accordance with HM Treasury directions made under the Government Resources and Accounts Act 2000; and
- the information given in the Performance and Accountability Reports for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements.

Matters on which I report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the Planning Inspectorate and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, I have not identified material misstatements in the performance and Accountability Report. I have nothing to report in respect of the following matters which I report to you if, in my opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept or returns adequate for my audit have not been received from branches not visited by my staff; or
- the financial statements and the parts of the Accountability Report to be audited are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of remuneration specified by HM Treasury's Government Financial Reporting Manual are not made; or
- I have not received all of the information and explanations I require for my audit; or
- the Governance Statement does not reflect compliance with HM Treasury's guidance.

Responsibilities of the Accounting Officer for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Statement of Accounting Officer's Responsibilities, the Chief Executive as Accounting Officer is responsible for:

- the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view;
- internal controls as the Chief Executive as Accounting Officer determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statement to be free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error; and
- assessing the Planning Inspectorate's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Chief Executive as Accounting Officer anticipates that the services provided by the Planning Inspectorate will not continue to be provided in the future.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

My responsibility is to audit, certify and report on the financial statements in accordance with the Government Resources and Accounts Act 2000.

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue a certificate that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

I design procedures in line with my responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of non-compliance with laws and regulation, including fraud.

My procedures included the following:

- Inquiring of management, the Planning Inspectorate's head of internal audit and those charged with governance, including obtaining and reviewing supporting documentation relating to the Planning Inspectorate's policies and procedures relating to:
 - evaluating and complying with laws and regulations and whether they were aware of any

instances of non-compliance;

- detecting and responding to the risks of fraud and whether they have knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud; and
- the internal controls established to mitigate risks related to fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations including the Planning Inspectorate's controls relating the Government Resources and Accounts Act 2000, Managing Public Money, the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Planning Act 2008.
- discussing among the engagement team and involving relevant internal and or external specialists, regarding how and where fraud might occur in the financial statements and any potential indicators of fraud. As part of this discussion, I identified potential for fraud in the following areas: revenue recognition and posting of unusual journals;
- obtaining an understanding of the Planning Inspectorate's framework of authority as well as other legal and regulatory frameworks that the Planning Inspectorate operates in, focusing on those laws and regulations that had a direct effect on the financial statements or that had a fundamental effect on the operations of the Planning Inspectorate. The key laws and regulations I considered in this context included Government Resources and Accounts Act 2000, Managing Public Money, the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Planning Act 2008, Employment Law and Tax Legislation; and
- inquiries of management regarding their assessment of the risk, processes for identifying and responding to the risks of fraud, knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud, inquiries of internal audit relating to fraud, non-compliance with laws and regulations and regularity.

In addition to the above, my procedures to respond to identified risks included the following:

- reviewing the financial statement disclosures and testing to supporting documentation to assess compliance with relevant laws and regulations discussed above;
- enquiring of management, the Audit Committee and in-house legal counsel concerning actual and potential litigation and claims;
- reading minutes of meetings of those charged with governance and the Board;
- in addressing the risk of fraud through management override of controls, testing the appropriateness of journal entries and other adjustments; assessing whether the judgements made in making accounting estimates are indicative of a potential bias; and evaluating the business rationale of any significant transactions that are unusual or outside the normal course of business; and
- review of internal audit reports, review of business documentation and correspondence relating to claims and major contracts entered into as part of our substantive testing, as well as continuous risk assessment procedures performed relating to fraud, non-compliance with laws and regulation or regularity as appropriate.

I also communicated relevant identified laws and regulations and potential fraud risks to all engagement team members including internal specialists and significant component audit teams and remained alert to any indications of fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations throughout the audit.

A further description of my responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of my certificate.

In addition, I am required to obtain evidence sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the income and expenditure reported in the financial statements have been applied to the purposes intended by Parliament and the financial transactions conform to the authorities which govern them.

I communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that I identify during my audit.

Report

I have no observations to make on these financial statements.

Gareth Davies
Comptroller and Auditor General

1 July 2021

National Audit Office
157-197 Buckingham Palace Road
Victoria
London
SW1W 9SP

Financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2021

The format and content of the financial statements in this section are in accordance with relevant Treasury and Cabinet Office guidance.

Statement of comprehensive net expenditure

	Note	2020/21 £'000	2019/20 £'000
Income from sale of goods and services		(2,893)	(2,584)
Other operating income		(9,153)	(14,982)
Operating income	4	(12,046)	(17,566)
Staff costs	3a	48,436	43,647
Other administrative costs	3b	15,643	21,041
Total operating expenditure		64,079	64,688
Net expenditure for the year		52,033	47,122

All income and expenditure is derived from continuing operations.
The Notes starting [page 116](#) form part of these accounts.

Statement of financial position

	Note	31 March 2021 £'000	31 March 2020 £'000
Non-current assets			
Property, plant and equipment	5	758	1,585
Intangible assets	6	3,631	126
Prepayments greater than one year	8	1	10
Total non-current assets		4,390	1,721
Current assets			
Trade and other receivables	8	6,258	6,383
Cash and cash equivalents	9	5,522	1,263
Total current assets		11,780	7,646
Total assets		16,170	9,367
Current liabilities			
Trade and other payables	10	(7,887)	(7,238)
Provisions	11	(109)	(138)
Total current liabilities		(7,996)	(7,376)
Assets less liabilities		8,174	1,991
Taxpayers' equity			
General fund		8,174	1,991
Total taxpayers' equity		8,174	1,991

The Notes starting [page 116](#) form part of these accounts.

The accounts on [pages 111 to 129](#) were approved by the Inspectorate's Board on 10 June 2021 and signed on its behalf by:



Sarah Richards,
Chief Executive
29 June 2021

Statement of cash flows

	Note	2020/21 £'000	2019/20 £'000
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net operating expenditure		(52,033)	(47,122)
Adjustments for non-cash transactions	3b, 4	1,253	1,238
(Increase)/Decrease in trade and other receivables	8	134	2,265
Less movement in bad debt provision	3b	(1)	30
Increase/(Decrease) in trade payables	10	649	(1,582)
Less movements in payables relating to items not passing through the SOCNE	5, 6	(13)	1,159
Use of provisions	11	(138)	(8)
Net cash outflow from operating activities		(50,149)	(44,020)
Cash flows from investing activities			
Purchase of property, plant and equipment	5	(65)	(1,344)
Purchase of intangible assets	6	(3,568)	-
Net cash outflow from investing activities		(3,633)	(1,344)
Cash flows from financing activities			
Funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government		58,041	44,150
Net cashflow used in financing activities		58,041	44,150
Net (decrease)/increase in cash and cash equivalents in the period	9	4,259	(1,214)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the period	9	1,263	2,477
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the period	9	5,522	1,263

The Notes starting [page 116](#) form part of these accounts.

Statement of changes in taxpayers' equity

	Note	2020/21 £'000
Balance at 31 March 2019		4,789
Changes in Taxpayers' Equity for 2019/20		
Total comprehensive expenditure		(47,122)
Non-cash charges – auditor's remuneration	3b	60
Notional charges	3b	114
Funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government		44,150
Balance at 31 March 2020		1,991
Changes in Taxpayers' Equity for 2020/21		
Total comprehensive expenditure		(52,033)
Non-cash charges – auditor's remuneration	3b	60
Notional charges	3b	115
Funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government		58,041
Balance at 31 March 2021		8,174

The Notes starting [page 116](#) form part of these accounts.

Notes to the Accounts

Note 1. Statement of accounting policies and estimates

Note 1.1 Accounting policies

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the 2020/21 Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) issued by HM Treasury.

The accounting policies contained in the Financial Reporting Manual apply International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) as adapted or interpreted for the public sector context. Where the Financial Reporting Manual permits a choice of accounting policy, the accounting policy which is judged to be most appropriate to the particular circumstances of the Inspectorate for the purpose of giving a true and fair view has been selected. The particular policies that we adopted are described below. They have been applied consistently in dealing with items considered material in relation to the accounts.

Note 1.1a Accounting convention

These accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention modified to account for the revaluation of property, plant and equipment.

Note 1.1b Accounting estimates and judgements

The preparation of financial information in conformity with the International Financial Reporting Standards requires the use of certain accounting estimates. It also requires management to exercise its judgement in the process of applying the accounting policies. The key accounting estimates and judgements are accruals (see Note 10), provisions (see Note 11) and contingent liabilities (see Note 12). Estimates are based on known information within the business and past trends.

Note 1.1c Value added tax

Most of the Planning Inspectorate's activities were outside the scope of VAT and, in general, output tax does not apply and input tax on purchases is not recoverable, other than under the terms of the Treasury Direction under section 41(3) Value Added Tax Act 1994. Irrecoverable VAT is charged to the relevant expenditure category or included in the capitalised purchase cost of fixed assets. Where output tax is charged, or input VAT is recoverable the amounts are stated net of VAT.

We are not separately registered for VAT but operate under the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's VAT registration.

Note 1.1d Operating income

Income is recognised when a performance obligation is satisfied e.g. by providing a service to a customer. The provision of services is by reference to time spent on casework. For casework,

such as Local Plan examinations, which can span financial years, income is calculated on the work completed to the end of the financial year and accrued on a pro-rata day rate basis. We are not disclosing the value of outstanding performance obligations as our contracts with customers are charged at a fixed rate that directly relates to the work completed to date.

The main services offered can be seen within the segmental analysis in Note 2 of the Financial Statements which describes the service areas and income received.

Note 1.1e Operating leases

Leases other than finance leases are classified as operating leases. Operating leases are charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure on a straight-line basis over the term of the lease, taking account of any lease incentives in accordance with the terms of International Accounting Standards (IAS) 17 – Disclosures and treatment of finance leases as separate from operating leases.

Note 1.1f Notional costs

In accordance with the FReM, notional costs at the appropriate rate are included for audit fees and for services provided by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, which have an equal reversing credit in the Statement of changes in taxpayers' equity. Additionally, notional costs in both income and expenditure reflect the use of the Apprenticeship levy.

Note 1.1g Property, plant and equipment

Property, plant and equipment are stated at fair value using depreciated historic cost. On initial recognition they are measured at cost including any costs, such as installation, directly attributable to bringing them into working condition. Property, plant and equipment is not revalued, as using indices published by the Office for National Statistics appropriate to the category of asset, the value would be immaterial. The minimum level for capitalisation of property, plant and equipment is £5,000, and £5,000 for aggregated items. Items falling below this value are charged as an expense and shown in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure.

Note 1.1h Depreciation

Property, plant and equipment are depreciated at rates calculated to write off the assets over their estimated useful lives on a straight-line basis, as follows:

Information Technology (Strategic IT) 3 years

Note 1.1i Intangible assets

Intangible assets comprise the capitalised value of systems developed in-house or bought-in software, software licences and systems under development. Intangible assets are valued at cost less amortisation and impairment. Intangible assets are not revalued; the organisation considers the amortised historic cost basis of valuation is not materially different from fair value.

A new in-house software is under construction for a workflow management system and will be amortised once it is brought into use.

Note 1.1j Amortisation and impairment

Intangible assets are amortised at rates calculated to write off the assets over their estimated useful lives on a straight-line basis, as follows:

Internally-generated software 8 years

Assets in the course of construction are amortised from the point at which the asset is brought into use. Amortisation is charged as an expense and shown in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure. The current document management system is still in use after eight years whilst the new replacement system is developed.

Note 1.1k Finance leases

The terms of all the Planning Inspectorate leases are reviewed and, where the risks and rewards of ownership rest with the Planning Inspectorate, leases are treated as finance leases.

The Planning Inspectorate also reviewed all service contracts (e.g. contracts for the supply of Information Technology services) to determine whether the contracts include an embedded finance lease, under the terms of IAS 17 as interpreted by International Financial Reporting Interpretations Committee 4 - Determining Whether an Arrangement Contains a Lease.

Note 1.1l Provisions

The Planning Inspectorate provides for legal or constructive obligations which are of uncertain timing or amount at the Statement of Financial Position date on the basis of the best estimate of the expenditure required to settle the obligation (see Note 11).

Note 1.1m Segmental reporting

The Planning Inspectorate, as an Executive Agency of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, reports under only one operating segment: Building better homes. It is therefore felt more appropriate to base the segmental analysis on major areas of casework, based on the internal reporting structure. The assets and liabilities have not been included in the segmental analysis as they are not apportioned but used across the organisation (see Note 2).

Note 1.1n Financial instruments

As our cash requirements are met through the Estimate process, financial instruments play a more limited role in creating and managing risk than would apply to a non-public sector body. Financial instruments relate to contracts to buy non-financial items in line with our expected purchase and usage requirements and we are therefore exposed to little credit, liquidity or market risk.

Note 1.1o Accounting standards and interpretations not yet adopted

The following standards, amendments and interpretations have been issued but are not yet effective:

Change published	Published by International Accounting Standards Board	Financial year for which the change first applies
International Financial Reporting Standards 16 Leases	January 2016	Effective from 2022/23
International Financial Reporting Standards 17 Insurance Contracts	May 2017	Effective from 2022/23

In the notes to the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2020 we disclosed the impact of capitalising the lease commitment we were expecting to make in the current financial year. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic we did not make fixed term lease agreements for either of our Bristol or Cardiff office bases at that time but continued with a short term rolling 12 month contract. As we are expecting the Welsh Inspectorate creation to complete in October 2021 this would be treated as a short term lease. The contract for our Bristol Office remains in place as at 31 March 2021 with no certainty of future lease commitments for either the value or the term of the agreement. As this lease agreement is short term and without future terms or costs, we are not able to calculate with any certainty the impacts of IFRS 16.

Note 1.1p Going concern

In common with other Government organisations, the future financing of our liabilities is to be met by resources approved annually by Parliament. Approval for amounts required for 2021/22 should be given before the Parliamentary Recess and there is no reason to believe that future approvals to support business as usual activities will not be made. It has accordingly been considered appropriate to adopt a going concern basis throughout this report and for the preparation of the 2020/21 Financial Statements.

Note 2. Statement of operating costs by segment

We report based on the segmental analysis on major areas of casework and other significant income and expenditure categories.

	2020/21			2019/20		
	Cost £'000	Income £'000	Net £'000	Cost £'000	Income £'000	Net £'000
Planning appeals	31,199	-	31,199	30,480	-	30,480
National infrastructure	11,669	(4,749)	6,920	9,103	(8,456)	647
Local plans	7,712	(2,635)	5,077	6,807	(4,576)	2,231
Enforcement appeals	5,393	-	5,393	5,066	-	5,066
Rights of way	1,046	-	1,046	1,658	-	1,658
Listed building planning appeals	323	-	323	261	-	261
Compulsory purchase orders	188	(123)	65	441	(213)	228
Other major specialist casework	3,687	(1,109)	2,578	4,540	(1,277)	3,263
Income from Welsh Government	-	(2,893)	(2,893)	-	(2,584)	(2,584)
Transformation programme	894	-	894	5,242	-	5,242
Other	1,968	(537)	1,431	1,090	(460)	630
Totals	64,079	(12,046)	52,033	64,688	(17,566)	47,122

The assets and liabilities have not been included in the segmental analysis as they are used across the organisation and are not apportioned or reported in this way to senior leadership.

The Planning Inspectorate receives most of its funding from Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government but approximately 19% of its costs in 2020/21 have been recovered by charging a mixture of other central government departments, local government bodies or private individuals and businesses.

Description of segments

1.Planning Appeals: This covers the usual planning appeals affecting householders, advertisement and minor commercial appeals.

2.National Infrastructure: This relates to work undertaken on large-scale proposals that support the economy, and vital public services, including railways, energy generation stations, harbours and airports. These costs include an element of pre-application work which occurs before the point of income recognition, so costs and associated income can span different financial years.

3. Local Plans: This covers work undertaken in relation to examination of Local Planning Authorities' local plans.

4. Enforcement appeals: This is where an appeal is made against enforcement notices when a development is carried out without planning permission or not in accordance with an approved planning application.

5. Rights of way: This is work undertaken in reviewing orders regarding rights of way.

6. Listed building planning appeals: This covers appeals in relation to work being undertaken with respect to listed buildings.

7. Compulsory purchase orders: This is work undertaken in respect of objections received in relation to a compulsory purchase order.

8. Other major specialist casework: This covers work undertaken on behalf of other government departments. These costs are only partially recovered from the work we undertake on behalf of other government departments.

9. Income from Welsh Government: this covers work undertaken on behalf of Welsh Government for which we recover costs as reflected in the Income Note to the Accounts.

10. Transformation programme: This is a large change programme which strives to deliver three strategic priorities: excellent customer service; improved efficiency and effectiveness; and increased staff engagement. For the purposes of segmental analysis, the costs are derived from elements which are funded by: Transformation; capital; and business as usual budgets.

11. Other: This covers all other casework not listed above and includes making cost decisions arising mainly from withdrawn appeals/enforcement notices and making decisions on Purchase Notice appeals. Such work can include subjects such as tree preservation orders and transport.

Note 3. Operating expenditure

Note 3a. Staff costs

Remuneration for Directors

Remuneration for Directors is included in Staff costs but further detail can be found in the [Remuneration Report](#).

Staff costs - Staff costs comprise:

	2020/21 £'000	2019/20 £'000
Wages and salaries	34,450	31,223
Social security costs	3,857	3,439
Other pension costs	9,412	8,457
Sub Total	47,719	43,119
Agency staff	717	528
Total net staff costs	48,436	43,647

Note 3b. Other administrative costs

Auditor's remuneration - Represents the notional audit fee in respect of the Comptroller and Auditor General's annual certification of the Planning Inspectorate's financial statements. There was no remuneration due for non-audit work.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government recharges are for the supply of accounting and human resources services.

Other administration costs include professional fees, publications, furniture and fittings and translation services.

	Note	2020/21 - £'000	2019/20 - £'000
Rentals under operating leases:			
Hire of plant and machinery		110	250
Other operating leases		957	1,024
Total		1,067	1,274
Non-cash items:			
Depreciation	5	905	832
Amortisation	6	63	126
Impairment of assets		-	-
Loss on disposal of asset		-	3
Provision for doubtful debt		1	(30)
Auditor's remuneration		60	60
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government recharges		115	114
Apprenticeship Levy Training Services		17	13
In-year increase in provision		109	138
Write-back of provisions		-	(5)
Total		1,270	1,251
Other expenditure:			
Fees to Non-salaried Inspectors		839	1,222
Travel, subsistence and hospitality		732	2,316
Accommodation costs		880	569
Legal and professional services		1,956	1,897
Support Services		3,889	3,613
Research and Development		605	3,260
Information Technology		2,293	2,696
Ex gratia costs		74	405
Adverse costs		685	325
Bad debts and write offs		128	496
Telecoms		143	130
Training and conferences		238	532
Postal services		47	175
Office supplies		77	150
Redundancy and other departure costs		-	128
Other administration costs		720	602
Total		13,306	18,516
Total		15,643	21,041

Note 4. Operating income

	2020/21 £'000	2019/20 £'000
Fees and charges		
Local plans	2,635	4,576
National infrastructure	4,749	8,456
Compulsory purchase orders	123	213
Other major specialist casework	1,109	1,277
Total Fees and charges	8,616	14,522
Goods and services		
Income from Welsh Government	2,893	2,584
Total Goods and services	2,893	2,584
Miscellaneous income		
Recovery of adverse costs	518	440
Other	2	7
Total Miscellaneous income	520	447
Total Miscellaneous notional income	17	13
Total Operating income	12,046	17,566

Note 5. Property, plant and equipment

The additions recorded in the Statement of Cash Flows do not include the movement in asset accruals for which there have been no cash flows.

	2020/2021 Information Technology £'000		2019/20 Information Technology £'000
Cost or valuation			
At 1 April 2020	2,616	At 1 April 2019	2,490
Additions	78	Additions	185
Disposals	-	Disposals	(59)
At 31 March 2021	2,694	At 31 March 2020	2,616
Depreciation			
At 1 April 2020	1,031	At 1 April 2019	255
Charged in year	905	Charged in year	832
Disposals	-	Disposals	(56)
At 31 March 2021	1,936	At 31 March 2020	1,031
Net book value at 31 March 2021	758	Net book value at 31 March 2020	1,585
At 31 March 2020	1,585	At 31 March 2019	2,235
Asset financing			
Owned at 31 March 2021	758	Owned at 31 March 2020	1,585

Note 6. Intangible assets

Internally Generated Information Technology

2020/21	Asset under construction £'000	In operation £'000	Total £'000
Cost or valuation			
At 1 April 2020	-	3,473	3,473
Additions	3,568	-	3,568
At 31 March 2021	3,568	3,473	7,041
Amortisation			
At 1 April 2020	-	3,347	3,347
Charged in year	-	63	63
At 31 March 2021	-	3,410	3,410
Net book value at 31 March 2021	3,568	63	3,631
At 31 March 2020	-	126	126
Asset financing			
Owned at 31 March 2021	3,568	63	3,631

2019/20	Asset under construction £'000	In operation £'000	Total £'000
Cost or valuation			
At 1 April 2019	-	3,473	3,473
Additions	-	-	-
At 31 March 2020	-	3,473	3,473
Amortisation			
At 1 April 2019	-	3,221	3,221
Charged in year	-	126	126
At 31 March 2020	-	3,347	3,347
Net book value at 31 March 2020	-	126	126
At 31 March 2019	-	252	252
Asset financing			
Owned at 31 March 2020	-	126	126

Note 7. Financial Instruments

As our cash requirements are met through the estimate process, financial instruments play a more limited role in creating and managing risk than would apply to a non-public sector body. The majority of financial instruments relate to contracts to buy non-financial items in line with our expected purchase and usage requirements and we are therefore exposed to little credit, liquidity or market risk.

Note 8. Trade receivables and other current assets

Other receivables includes balances due from organisations and other government departments which are not in relation to regular fee-based work and various payroll advances and recoveries.

Amounts falling due within one year	2020/21 £'000	2019/20 £'000
Trade receivables	1,365	825
Other receivables - VAT	360	361
Other receivables - Other	471	289
Prepayments and accrued income	4,062	4,908
Total	6,258	6,383
Prepayments falling due after one year	1	10
Total	6,259	6,393

Note 9. Cash and cash equivalents

All cash balances are held in the Government Banking Service.

	2020/21 £'000	2019/20 £'000
Balance at 1 April	1,263	2,477
Net change in cash and cash equivalent balances	4,259	(1,214)
Balance at 31 March	5,522	1,263

Note 10. Trade payables and other current liabilities

Amounts falling due within one year	2020/21 £'000	2019/20 £'000
Trade payables	65	23
Other payables - VAT, taxation and social security	990	927
Other payables - including payroll deductions	1,297	1,108
Accruals and deferred income	5,535	5,180
Total payables at 31 March	7,887	7,238

Note 11. Provisions

	Ex gratia £'000	Adverse costs £'000	Total £'000
Balance at 1 April 2020	138	-	138
Provided in the year	73	36	109
Utilised in the year	(138)	-	(138)
Balance at 31 March 2021	73	36	109
Balance at 1 April 2019	-	13	13
Provided in the year	138	-	138
Utilised in the year	-	(8)	(8)
Written back in the year	-	(5)	(5)
Balance at 31 March 2020	138	-	138

	2020/21 £'000	2019/20 £'000
Not later than one year	109	138

Ex gratia

Ex gratia payments are non-statutory payments, generally made as a result of an acknowledged error causing unnecessary expenditure for the claimant. This can include cases where maladministration is found by the Parliamentary Ombudsman. The provision is the best estimate based on the available information.

Adverse costs

Adverse costs are litigation costs which may be incurred following unsuccessful attempts to resist a High Court challenge to an Inspector's decision. The provision is the best estimate based on the available information.

Note 12. Contingent liabilities disclosed under IAS 37

There were two types of contingent liability which existed at 31 March 2021, and have not been provided for in the accounts. These were:

- (a) Ex gratia payments which may be made to appellants or other appeal parties as a result of an acknowledged error causing unnecessary expenditure for the claimant. The timing and value of these payments are very difficult to predict but a best estimate of the contingent liability is £188,000 (2019/20: £5,000);
- (b) Litigation costs which may be incurred following unsuccessful attempts to resist a High Court challenge to an Inspector's decision. The timing and value of such awards are difficult to predict. We have reviewed evidence from previous years on the number of cases which resulted in payment and, applying this trend to the cases in the current year, estimated a contingent liability of £70,000 (2019/20: £88,000).

Note 13. Commitments under leases

Two properties are occupied by the Inspectorate and used for operational activities, one in Cardiff (Wales) and one in Bristol (England). Both properties are provided through a memorandum of terms of occupation with other Crown bodies. To cancel the memorandum of terms of occupations, we are required to serve 12-months notice. Should either be terminated with less notice, the Inspectorate would be liable for the agreed costs for the full 12-month period.

Note 14. Other financial commitments

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government manages a significant contract for technology services on our behalf and the commitment is reflected in full in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's Annual Report and Accounts.

The payments to which we are committed, mainly for technology and telephony services, are as follows.

	2020/21 £'000	2019/20 £'000
Not later than one year	821	551
Later than one year and not more than five years	25	-

Note 15. Related-party transactions

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is the controlling related party and the ultimate controlling party.

Welsh Government is regarded as a related party, with which the Planning Inspectorate has had a significant number of material transactions during the year.

In addition, the Inspectorate has had a significant number of material transactions with other government departments, central government bodies and local government organisations, in relation to the usual course of business. The Departments with which the Inspectorate has the most significant transactions are: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; Department for Transport; Government Legal Department; Department for Education; and the Government Property Agency.

Non-Executive and Executive Board members must declare any personal or business interest which may, or may be perceived to, influence their judgement as a Board member. During the year no Board member, or other related parties, have undertaken any material transactions with us.

The remuneration of senior managers/Board members is set out in the [Remuneration Report](#).

Note 16. Events after the reporting period

The Planning Inspectorate's financial statements are laid before the Houses of Parliament by the Secretary of State of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

IAS 10 – Events After the Reporting Period requires us to disclose the date on which the accounts are authorised for issue. This is the date on which the certified accounts are despatched by the Planning Inspectorate's management to the Secretary of State of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

The financial statements are authorised for issue on the same date that the Comptroller and Auditor General signs the Certificate and Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Annex 1

Ministerial targets

The Performance Analysis of this Annual Report describes our performance through the year but we are also required to report on our performance against ministerial targets.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government ministerial targets shown here no longer reflect the core measures used by the Planning Inspectorate in England.

The [Performance Analysis section](#) of this report (pages 38 to 53) shows in detail the total decision time, starting from when a customer makes a valid appeal through to our decision being issued. The ministerial targets, on the other hand, start the clock only once an Inspector starts working on a case. So those measures are less relevant to our customers in understanding how long our decision-making takes since they don't show the time between a customer making a valid appeal case and an Inspector starting work on it. As explained in the Performance Analysis section, the pandemic impacted on our performance against targets this year.

The 2020/21 Business Plan included work to replace our ministerial targets with a new set of measures for England, to be agreed by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. We did not complete this work due to our focus on keeping casework moving during the pandemic. We will complete it in 2021/22.

Table 20: Ministerial targets in England

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
England - Applications for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects					
Issue 100% of all Environmental Impact Assessment scoping opinions within the statutory timeframe or the timeframe agreed with the Secretary of state (Target prior to 2020/21 was 42 days of receipt)	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Issue 100% of all Environmental Impact Assessment screening opinions within 21 days of receipt	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	100%
Decide a 100% of applications' acceptance within 28 days of receipt	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Complete 100% of all examinations within the 6 months statutory timeframe or within the timeframe agreed with the Secretary of State	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Submit 100% of all recommendations to the relevant Secretary of State within 3 months of receipt	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
England - Planning Appeals					
Determine 80% of written representations within 14 weeks of the start date	69%	77%	59%	50%	44%
Determine 80% of hearings within 14 weeks of the start date	17%	31%	24%	20%	17%
Determine 80% of inquiries (non-bespoke) within 22 weeks of the start date	11%	14%	0%	-	22%
Determine 100% of inquiries (bespoke) according to the agreed timetable	98%	99%	99%	95%	100%
Determine 90% of inquiries under the Rosewell review within 24 weeks	N/A	N/A	N/A	83%	21%
Determine 100% of inquiries under the Rosewell review within 26 weeks	N/A	N/A	N/A	99%	27%
Determine 80% of householder appeals within 8 weeks of the start date	60%	85%	76%	58%	36%
Determine 80% of commercial appeals within 8 weeks of the start date	48%	80%	63%	40%	37%

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
England - Enforcement Appeals					
Determine 80% of written representations within 32 weeks of the start date	72%	85%	89%	94%	87%
Determine 80% of hearings within 33 weeks of the start date	50%	58%	83%	64%	49%
Determine 80% of inquiries within 43 weeks of the start date	46%	56%	62%	42%	61%
England - Rights of way, Public Path Orders					
To determine 80% of written representations within 37 weeks of the valid date (Target prior to 2019/20 was 27 weeks of the start date)	96%	82%	81%	68%	17%
To determine 80% of hearings within 39 weeks of the valid date (Target prior to 2019/20 was 29 weeks of the start date)	100%	60%	33%	13%	0%
To determine 80% of inquiries within 45 weeks of the valid date (Target prior to 2019/20 was 35 weeks of the start date)	75%	72%	78%	57%	0%
England - Rights of way, Wildlife and Countryside					
To determine 80% of written representations within 37 weeks of the valid date (Target prior to 2019/20 was 27 weeks of the start date)	85%	92%	74%	42%	21%
To determine 80% of hearings within 39 weeks of the valid date (Target prior to 2019/20 was 29 weeks of the start date)	89%	78%	83%	33%	0%
To determine 80% of inquiries within 45 weeks of the valid date (Target prior to 2019/20 was 35 weeks of the start date)	85%	90%	78%	49%	29%
England - Schedule 14					
To determine 80% of directions within 21 weeks of the valid date (Target prior to 2019/20 was 17 weeks of the start date)	100%	83%	46%	89%	68%
To determine 80% of appeals within 30 weeks of the valid date (Target prior to 2019/20 was 26 weeks of the start date)	65%	99%	46%	30%	59%
England - Cost applications					
To determine 50% of all appeal types within 10 weeks of the start date	71%	59%	55%	63%	76%

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
England - Common Land					
To determine 80% of no objections within 18 weeks of the start date (Target prior to 2019/20 was 12 weeks of the start date)	97%	83%	89%	100%	82%
To determine 80% of those objected within 26 weeks of the start date	100%	94%	92%	93%	63%
To determine 80% of those objected (Inspector) within 40 weeks of the start (Target prior to 2019/20 was 52 weeks of the start date)	88%	100%	84%	87%	71%
England - Environmental Appeals					
To determine all types of appeal within 28 weeks of the start date	24%	25%	33%	50%	25%
England - Tree Preservation Orders					
To determine 80% of written representations within 14 weeks of the start date	6%	3%	1%	92%	10%
To determine 80% of hearings and inquiries within 26 weeks of the start date	22%	0%	13%	85%	0%
England - High Hedges					
To determine 80% of written representations within 24 weeks of start date	21%	2%	2%	87%	7%
England - Hedgerows					
To determine 80% of all appeal types within 28 weeks of the start date	23%	50%	0%	100%	N/A
England - Examination development plans					
Complete Development Plan (Local Plan) examinations within the timetable agreed with the Local Planning Authority	100%	98%	100%	100%	100%
Complete Community Infrastructure Levy examinations within the timetable agreed with the Local Planning Authority	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
England - Customer satisfaction					
To ensure that 80% of parties surveyed are satisfied or very satisfied with the appeal process/procedures (In 2020/21, this measure was replaced by the Institute of Customer Service benchmark see page 3).	100%	79%	74%	55%	N/A

