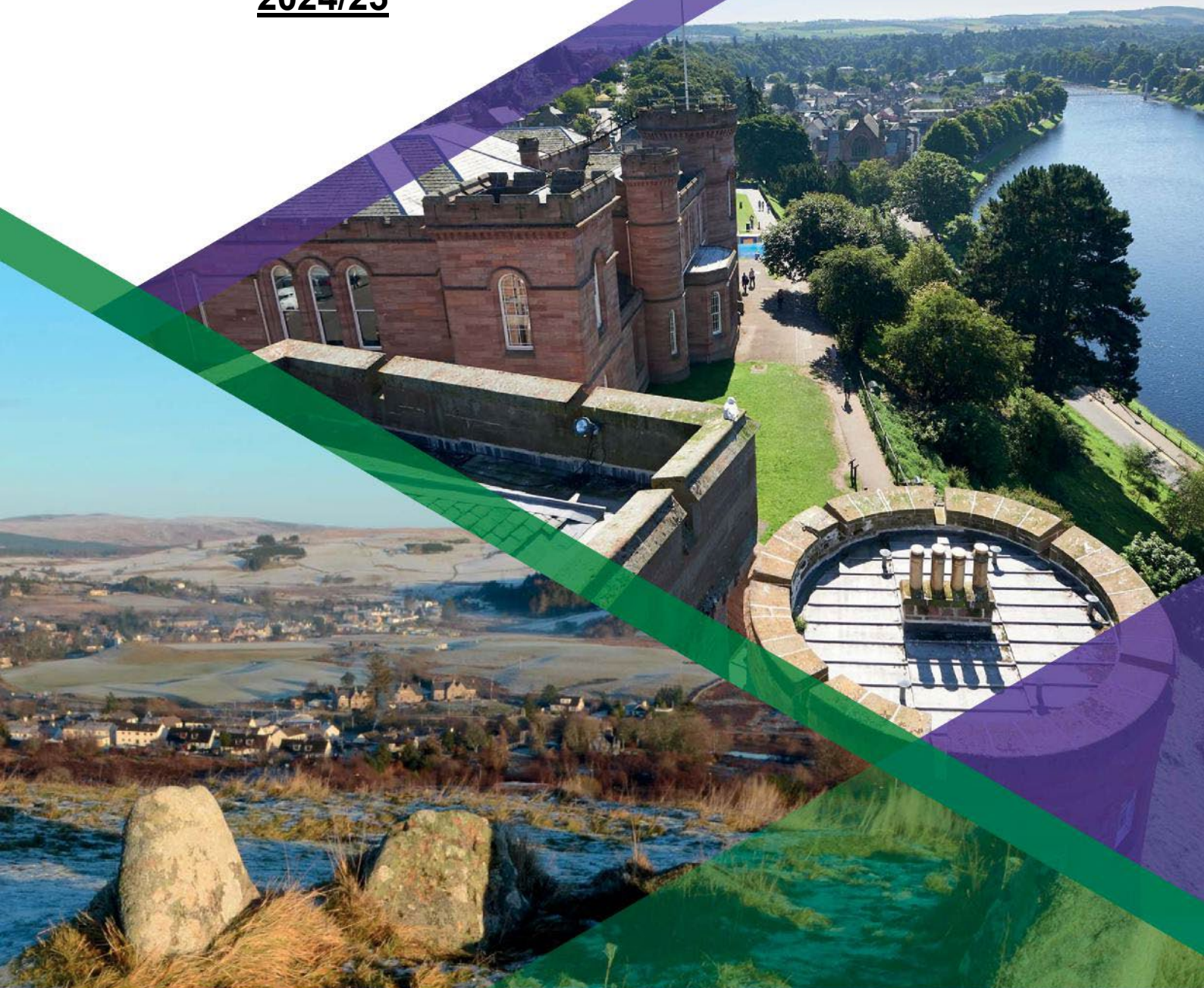


The Highland Council

Comhairle Na Gaidhealtachd

**Building Standards Customer
Charter Annual Report**

2024/25



Document Record

Version	Description of Change	Date
1.0	Publication of 2023/24 Customer Charter – Q1	July 2024
1.1	Publication of 2023/24 Customer Charter – Q2	Oct 2024
1.2	Publication of 2023/24 Customer Charter – Q3	Jan 2025
1.3	Publication of 2023/24 Customer Charter – Q4	May 2025

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Introduction

The purpose of the building standards system in Scotland is to protect the public interest by ensuring buildings are safe for people to occupy/use. The system sets out the essential minimum standards that are required to be met when building work or conversion of a building takes place in order to meet building regulations.

The building standards system checks that proposed building work or conversion of a building meets the minimum standards. Inspections of work on site are carried out to ensure that legislation is not avoided. The control of work on site is not down to the system but is a matter for contracts and arrangements in place between a builder and client.

Verification is that part of the building standards service responsible for processing building warrant applications; inspecting work on site and issuing the acceptance of the completion certificate submission. Verifiers are appointed by Scottish Ministers to provide the independent, accountable and transparent checking of applications.

The Highland Council was appointed by the Scottish Minister in May 2023, as verifier for their geographical area for the period of 6 year to April 2029, and is responsible for providing an independent and impartial check of applications for building warrant to construct, demolish or convert buildings. The council is additionally responsible for enforcement work under the Building (Scotland) Act 2003, as amended e.g. unauthorised work, dealing with defective and/or dangerous building incidents. Also, to provide responses to consultations and certification related to Licensing work.

Purpose of the Customer Charter

The Building Standards Customer Charter provides information about the standards of service that all verifiers should meet. This offers customers the reassurance that an independent and consistent, high quality service will be delivered no matter which verifier provides the service.

It is divided into two parts:

- 1) National Charter; and
- 2) Local Charter.



Photo by Ewen Weatherspoon

Part 1: National Charter

Aims

To grant building warrant and accept completion certificates:

- To secure the health, safety, welfare and convenience of persons in and about buildings and others who may be affected by buildings or matters connected with buildings;
- Furthering the conservation of fuel and power; and
- Furthering the achievement of sustainable development.

Vision/values

Provide a professional and informative service to all customers.

Commitments

Nationally all verifiers will:

1. Seek to minimise the time taken for customers to obtain a building warrant or amendment to building warrant.
2. Ensure continuous improvement around the robustness of verification assessments to ensure compliance.
3. Meet and seek to exceed customer expectations.
4. Carry out local customer satisfaction research, such as surveys, focus groups etc.
5. Address feedback obtained through local and national customer satisfaction research (including a National Customer Surveys) to improve the customer experience.
6. Provide information on local formal complaints procedures, the LABSS Dispute Resolution Process, and the BSD Customer Performance Reporting Service, and refer customers as appropriate.
7. Provide accurate financial data that is evidence-based.
8. Engage and participate in partnership working at local and national level to identify and embed service improvements at a national level.
9. Work collaboratively with the Scottish Building Standards Hub (SBSH).
10. Adhere to a national annual performance report outlining objectives, targets and performance.
11. Fully adhere to the commitments outlined in this Charter (including information on customer dissatisfaction in relation to building warrant processing timescales, processes and technical interpretation
12. Use a consistent format for continuous improvement plans.

National Key Performance Outcomes (KPO) and Performance Targets

KPO1	Minimise the time taken to issue a first report or to issue a building warrant or amendment to building warrant
1.1	95% of first reports (for building warrants and amendments) issued within 20 days – all first reports (including BWs and amendments issued without a first report).
1.2	90% of building warrants and amendments issued within 10 days from receipt of all satisfactory information – all building warrants and amendments (not including BWs and amendments issued without a first report).

KPO2	Increase quality of compliance assessment during the construction process
	Targets to be developed as part of future review of KPO2.
KPO3	Commitment to building standards customer charter
3.1	National customer charter is published prominently on the website and incorporates version control detailing reviews (reviewed at least quarterly).
3.2	95% of BSD requests for information on a BSD 'Verifier Performance Reporting Service for Customers' case responded to by verifier within 5 days.
KPO4	Understand and respond to the customer experience
4.1	Minimum overall average satisfaction rating of 7.5 out of 10.
KPO5	Maintain financial governance
5.1	Building standards verification fee income to cover indicative verification service costs (staff costs plus 30%).
KPO6	Commit to eBuilding Standards
6.1	Details of eBuilding Standards to be published prominently on the verifier's website.
6.2	75% of each key building warrant related process being done electronically: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Plan checking <input type="checkbox"/> Building warrant or amendments (and plans) being issued <input type="checkbox"/> Verification during construction <input type="checkbox"/> Completion certificates being accepted.
KPO7	Commit to objectives outlined in the annual performance report
7.1	Annual performance report published prominently on website with version control (reviewed at least quarterly).
7.2	Annual performance report to include performance data in line with KPOs and associated targets (annually covering previous year e.g. April 2016 – March 2017).

Information

National information on the verification performance framework can be found at the [Scottish Government website](#). Our performance against these targets, which came into effect on 1st April 2017, is published within our [Annual Performance Report](#) which is available online.



Photo by Ewen Weatherspoon

Part 2: The Highland Council Local Charter

This part of the Charter sets out the customer service standards that you can expect when you interact with Highland Council's Building Standards Service. It also explains how to give customer feedback which helps to shape and improve our services as well as what to do if things go wrong and you wish to make a complaint.

Who Are We?

Highland Council Building Standards Service has 31 professional posts; the operational activity of the service is decentralised to 7 area offices which operate under a Building Standards Management Team. Area offices are located in:

- Dingwall – serving Ross-shire
- Fort William – serving Lochaber
- Golspie – serving Sutherland and Easter Ross
- Inverness & Nairn – serving Inverness City, South, West, Ness-side, Culloden and Ardersier and Nairn
- Kingussie – serving Badenoch & Strathspey
- Broadford – serving Eilean A' Cheo (Skye) and Lochalsh
- Wick – serving Caithness

The Building Standards team is led by the Building Standards Manager who is responsible for protecting public interest by delivering a professional Building Standards and Verification service to the Highland community through managing and directing the operational teams of building standards staff in the network of area offices Highland-wide. The manager is supported by two Building Standards Team Leaders; each has a responsibility for warrant approvals and reasonable inquiry. Management of Non-Verification work e.g. Enforcement, Licensing, Defective and Dangerous Buildings etc is shared by the Building Standards Management Team.

The day to day management of the area offices is the responsibility of a Principal Building Standards Surveyor. The Principal has delegated authority and responsibility for:

- Risk assessments and allocating workloads
- Monitoring performance and staff development against a Competency Framework
- Dealing with minor personnel issues
- Absence management and
- Dealing with all building standards operations including taking enforcement action where unauthorised building operations are being carried out or where defective or dangerous building incidents occur.



What Do We Do?

The Highland Council is appointed by Scottish Ministers as 'verifier' for the Highland geographical area. The primary duty of which is to grant building warrant applications and completion certificate submissions.

Services provided:

- a) Provide an online service for the submission of building warrant and completion certificates via the Scottish Government's [eDevelopment portal](#).
- b) Encourage pre-application discussions/meeting/advice allowing a more streamlined and effective service to customer.
- c) Building standards surveyors are available for advice and guidance throughout the Highland area during office hours; from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday. A 'duty officer' facility is also available where general enquiries will be handled.
- d) We will 'fast-track' low risk applications, applications to improve facilities for disabled people, demolitions and applications which are considered of strategic importance to the long-term development of The Highland Council.
- e) Provide responses to Licensing consultations.
- f) Issue certificates under the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005.
- g) We will enforce legislation relating to unauthorised work and/or defective and/or dangerous building incidents.
- h) Provide a 24hr emergency call out service where reports of dangerous building incidents are reported.

Our commitment to you:

- a) Our team when undertaking site inspections will attempt to contact you first by telephone to arrange a mutually convenient time to inspect if this is related to stages related to the CCNP or completion certificate inspections. Routine inspections will be undertaken periodically.
- b) When our surveyor arrives on site the person will identify themselves by displaying a Highland Council ID badge and inform you of the purpose of their visit.
- c) Our team will be courteous, helpful and provide you with clear advice and guidance whether this is via a telephone call, e-mail, in writing or by face-to-face meetings.
- d) We will maintain a [Public Register](#) on the council's web pages where applications can be viewed, and progress monitored.
- e) The team will strive to provide a consistent interpretation of legislation.
- f) Provide a fair service irrespective of age, gender, disability, colour, ethnic origin, religion, or sexual orientation.
- g) Offer customer agreements to settle an appropriate response time to your application.
- h) The team will ask your opinion, listen to criticism, and react.
- i) Where changes to procedures are required, we will explain our decisions
- j) The team's aim is to continually improve; it's inherent in everything we do.

How We Measure Ourselves:

- a) We will report on the [council's web pages](#) the average time taken to issue a building warrant, the number of completion certificate acceptances and Key Performance Outcomes (KPOs)
- b) We aim to provide a full technical assessment and first report of your application within 20 working days.
- c) Inspecting building work against Construction Notification Compliance Plans (CCNP)

- d) Building Standards Performance measures including the above are recorded [here](#)
- e) We report to the Scottish Government quarterly on our performance.
- f) The building standards [Annual Performance Report](#) and other performance measures are published on the council's website.

Complaints Procedure:

If you are dissatisfied with the level of service provided you can in the first instance submit a formal complaint via the council's complain procedure that can be found [here](#).

Additionally, you can contact Scottish Government Building Standards Division at buildingstandards@scotland.gsi.gov.uk or phone: **01506 600400**

How to contact us:

- Our opening hours are, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.
- General Tel enquiries: **01349 886606**
- Email: buildingstandards@highland.gov.uk
- Website: www.highland.gov.uk



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