



Development Plan Scheme & Draft Participation Statement 2025

Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan

INTRODUCTION

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar is required to prepare an annual Development Plan Scheme (DPS) statement. The DPS provides stakeholders and the general public with an update of the work programme for the Development Plan and details of how and when to get involved. The DPS 2025 sets out work on: the **current Local Development Plan**; the **new Local Development Plan** - proposed timings for various stages of the Plan, what is involved with each stage; and a draft **Participation Statement** setting out how we hope to engage with the community and other stakeholders, in relation to our work.

CYBER ATTACK CONTEXT

In preparing and consulting on the DPS and draft Participation Statement the Comhairle notes, the continuing impact of the cyber-attack it has experienced. In November 2023 the Comhairle was subject to a criminal cyber attack which resulted in the inability to access servers where data and files were stored, and the loss of its website. This continues to impact on the Development Plan timetable as, while some key primary data has been recovered from third party sources, a significant proportion of research, background and baseline information and the monitoring notes of the current Plan remain inaccessible.

THE CURRENT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Since November 2018 the Comhairle has adopted the [Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan](#) (LDP) and associated Supplementary Guidance and other supporting documents, as the Development Plan to guide development in the Outer Hebrides. This is the Comhairle's current Policy on the future use of land and informs the assessment of planning applications in the Islands. The fourth National Planning Framework, when adopted by the Scottish Government in February 2023 became part of the Development Plan also.

NEW LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (LDP3)

The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 has changed the way in which LDPs are produced, including opportunities for earlier and wider community and stakeholder engagement in Planning. The LDP's have moved from having a life span of 5 years, to 10 years and are required to be place based, people centred and delivery focused. LDP's will be more map based focusing on communities and should have less written text and policy. The intention is that there will be early engagement with communities, key agencies and stakeholders to ensure that the LDP is reflective of the place it serves. The Town and Country Planning (Development Planning) (Scotland) Regulations 2023 came into full effect on the 19 May 2023, and have provided further detail on the preparation of LDPs and their relationship with wider plans and strategies.

(Cover image: Leanna an t-Struth, Leverburgh - credit George Stewart, CnES)

Figure 1 below sets out the key expectations of new style Plans. There will be more collaboration with Key Agencies and the local community. The Comhairle has initiated the process of preparing a new LDP under this legislation. The Development Planning team have established a dedicated [web page](#) for the new LPD Plan and its associated aspects, on the latest Comhairle website.

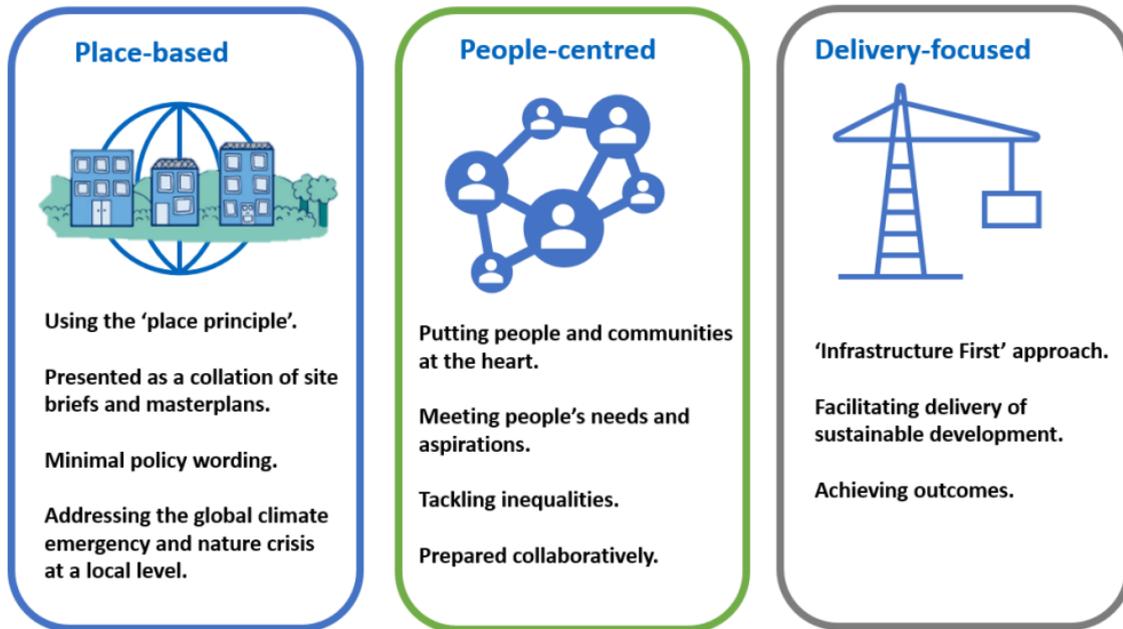


Fig 1: Key expectations of Local Development Plans

Evidence Report (Current stage)

The purpose of the Evidence Report is to provide a baseline for future monitoring and to inform the content of the Proposed Plan. The Town and Country Planning (Development Planning) (Scotland) Regulations 2023 sets out who the Comhairle must consult as part of this process, the requirement to take these views into account and the content and considerations to be reported. The regulations and guidance produced by the Scottish Government do not prescribe the format of the Evidence Report, though good practice is evolving. The report has to be agreed by Full Council before being submitted for the ‘Gate Check’ by the Scottish Government’s Planning and Environmental Appeals Division (DPEA).

In the past year the Development Plan team has undertaken monitoring of the existing Plan, stakeholder survey work, a review of the national policy context and has continued to gather and analyse data and information, as prescribed in the Regulations. To prepare the Evidence Report in the coming year, the work outline above will be brought together into ‘topic papers’ for each of the 33 National Planning Framework (NPF) topics and informed by the ongoing engagement received, including the current ‘Call for Ideas’ consultation. Additional topic papers to covering the distinct ‘island’ planning context, and as appropriate any specific spatial or area issues will also be prepared. These draft topic papers are a key element of the Evidence Report, and will be subject to Members, Key Agency, stakeholder and public scrutiny through consultation, before submission for Gate Check.

The Comhairle is currently working on the Evidence Report stage, which is outlined above and below: Figure 2 below illustrates the various stages of the Plan.

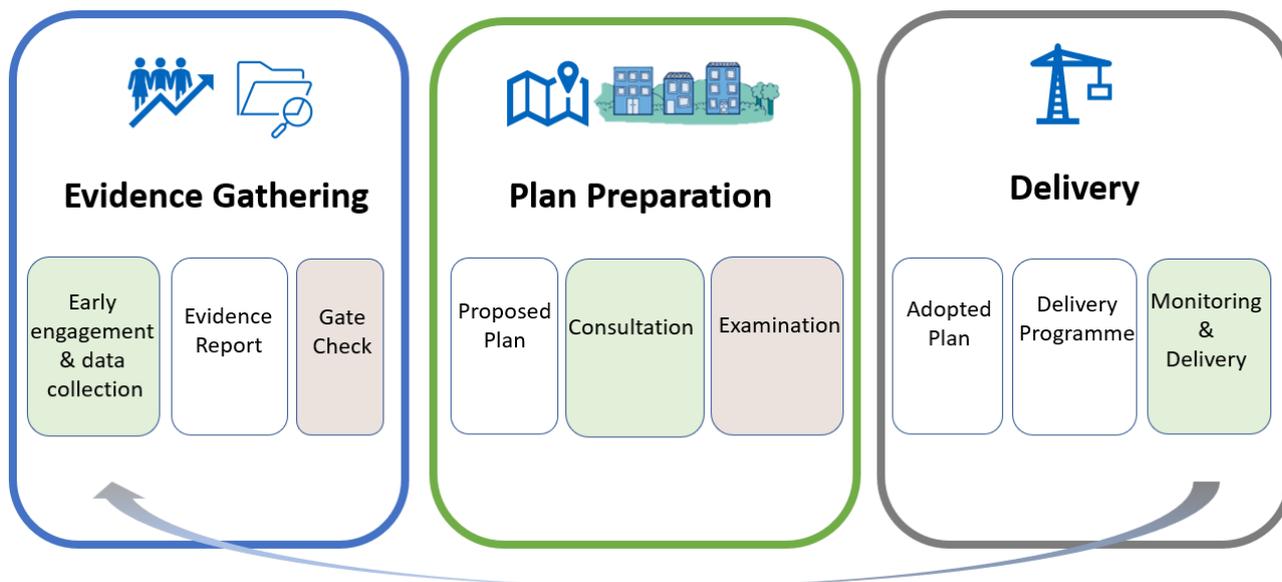


Fig 2: Local Development Plans stages

Gate Check

The ‘Gate Check’ of the Evidence Report is a new assessment stage usually carried out by a Reporter from the DPEA. The purpose of the process is to determine if the Comhairle has sufficient information in order to prepare our LDP. If it is determined that there is sufficient information, then the Comhairle can proceed with the next stage, Plan preparation. However, if there is insufficient information the Comhairle will have to revise the Evidence Report per the recommendations of the Assessment Report and resubmit the Evidence Report to the Gate Check.

Proposed Plan Stage

The new LDPs are expected to be place based with an emphasis on maps, development briefs and masterplans. It is intended that the user will be able to find what is relevant to an area in one section of the plan.

There is a requirement for the Comhairle to have regard to the Evidence Report that has been successful through the Gate Check process and a number of prescribed documents set out in the Regulations. The Comhairle is required to work with Key Agencies, communities, and specified groups during the preparation of the Proposed Plan. The draft Proposed Plan is required to be approved by the full Council before a minimum 12 week public consultation. At the same time as the publication of the draft Proposed Plan, the Evidence Report and the proposed Delivery Programme must also be published. Following the consultation period the Comhairle may modify the plan taking into account representations made by Key Agencies and the general public before submitting the Proposed Plan to the Scottish Ministers for examination of unresolved

issues.

Examination

The Examination is the process of considering of any unresolved issues raised during the formal consultation of the Proposed Plan that can't be solved through modifications and consideration of consultation and involvement of the public. The Examination is carried out by someone appointed by the Scottish Ministers usually a DPEA Reporter. The process allows for negotiations over representations. The Reporter must also be satisfied that there is sufficient land allocated to meet the Local Housing Land Requirement in the Plan.

Adoption and Delivery

Following the publication of the Examination Report, the Comhairle may have to make modifications to the Proposed Plan before it is adopted and becomes part of the Development Plan which planning applications are assessed against. The adopted Plan will replace the current Local Development Plan previously adopted in 2018

Within three months of the adoption of the LDP the Comhairle must adopt and publish the associated Delivery Programme. This document supports the delivery of the Plan including sites and proposals. The Delivery Programme will require a collaborative approach with Key Agencies, stakeholders, landowners and communities to ensure that the Plan is deliverable.

Another key part to the new style LDP is the monitoring of the LDP once it is adopted. This process allows the review of the effectiveness of the LDP, can help identify barriers to delivery and provides an evidence base for the next LDP.

Table 1 below sets out the stages of the Plan preparation and when engagement and consultation will occur.

OTHER ALIGNED LDP ACTIVITIES

Key Agency Group (KAG) Collaborative LDP Offer

The Comhairle was one of five Councils offered assistance under a pilot scheme from the statutory national Key Agencies. The KAG offer is to support the preparation and implementation of the new style LDP, initially supporting a place-based collaborative approach to evidence gathering and the Evidence Report.

In January 2024 the KAG group hosted an online 'Whole Place workshop' which included representatives from within and out with the Comhairle. The workshop used the interactive 'Miro' platform to run engagement sessions and record information. The event looked at sharing successful examples of place, areas to focus on, audience prioritisation, what community information is already available and how to secure leadership commitment to a whole place collaborative approach. In June 2024 a further workshop, including relevant Key Agencies, Comhairle officers, and community interest groups, was held looking at South Uist and Barra,

and identified relevant data for the area and emerging issues. The learning outcomes from this workshop will be replicated at a whole islands level to assess the sufficiency of 'data and evidence' for the Evidence Report and identify gaps.

Local Place Plans

A new mechanism to encourage community engagement and opportunities to inform the new LDP are Local Place Plans. LPPs are community-led plans that have a statutory role in the planning process and once registered by the Comhairle must be taken into account when preparing the LDP. Initially communities were invited to prepare LPPs for submission by Autumn 2024. This date has now been extended to September 2025. It is hoped that this will allow more time for local communities to prepare and submit their LPPs. There is a dedicated [webpage](#) with guidance and information to assist communities in the preparation of LPPs. Several areas and local community groups are currently preparing LPPs.

Engagement and Call for Ideas

The new Plan process actively encourages and through the Gatecheck process audits public and stakeholder engagement. In addition to the formal structured engagement with statutory bodies and Key Agencies, a more informal '[Call for Ideas](#)' is being run to actively seek individuals and groups' input into the Plan process. This is distinct from the separate 'Call for Sites' process which will run separately.

Strategic Environmental Assessment and other Assessments

Concurrently with the work being undertaken for the Evidence Report, the environmental baseline data will be updated. This will be followed by the Scoping for the statutory Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Appraisal of the Plan. The new Plan process has introduced a number of other concurrent assessment processes outlined in table 1 below, which are all intended to inform the Plan.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN PROGRAMME

Table 1 below summarises the outline programme for preparing the new LDP3 which will replace the current LDP. As with many planning authorities in Scotland, the early stages of the plan process were delayed due to uncertainties around the final content and timescale for implementation of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019. Scottish Government has confirmed that the target is to have new LDP's in place within 5 years of NPF4 (2023) being adopted, by May 2028, and that the LDP timetable be specified in year quarters.

For clarification in table 1 Q1 is April to June, Q2 is July to September, Q3 is October to December Q4 is January to March.

TABLE 1: DEVELOPMENT PLAN PROGRAMME

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN	CONSULTATION & ENGAGEMENT	CONCURRENT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT	PROGRAMME
Development Plan Scheme	Annual and ongoing		June 2025
CURRENT LDP 2			
Delivery Programme	Review current LDP Action Programme, update, consult and publish as <i>Delivery Programme</i>		Q2 & 3 2025/26
Housing Land Audit	Revise HLA, consult and publish		Q2 & 3 2025/26
NEW DEVELOPMENT PLAN (LDP 3)			
<i>Evidence Report Stage</i>			
Evidence Gathering	Collate and analyse baseline data for Evidence Report, identifying any data deficits.	Update environmental baseline	Ongoing
Preparatory stages	Assess presentation of primary data Catalogue engagement and representations Initiate assessments and publicly consult as required including for:	Scope LDP for SEA	Ongoing Q1 & Q2 2025/26 Concurrent with Plan programme

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN	CONSULTATION & ENGAGEMENT	CONCURRENT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT	PROGRAMME
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Targets • Open Space & Play Sufficiency • Infrastructure capacity study (including Blue and Green Infrastructure Audit) • Forestry and Woodland Strategy • Self-Build Demand Register • Housing Land Audit/ SHIP/HNDA • Local Heat and Energy • Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 		
Local Place Plans	Promotion of LPPs through Members, CC, CLD, mailings etc. Submission date for LPPs to inform LDP3 extended to September 2025	Assess against guidance	Active and ongoing
Call for Ideas	Call for Ideas launched and promoted		Active and ongoing
Call for Sites	Publish public Call for Sites (per site assessment template, to inform HLA and LDP	SEA site assessment/ identify reasonable alternative	Q2 2025/26 for HLA Repeat in 2026 for Proposed Plan
Evidence Report Draft Topic Papers	Prepare draft topic papers Informal consultation with Key Agencies Members workshop Public consultation Formal consultation with Key Agencies Formal Comhairle approval of collated Evidence Report		Q2 & Q3 2025/26 Q3 2025/26 Q3 2025/26 Q4 2025/26 Q4 2025/26 Q1 2025/27
Gate Check	Submit Evidence Report to DPEA for Gate Check		Q2 2026/27

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN	CONSULTATION & ENGAGEMENT	CONCURRENT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT	PROGRAMME
<i>Proposed Plan – Later Stages</i>			
Prepare Appraisals and Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport Appraisal • Play Sufficiency Assessment • Equalities Impact Assessment • Public Sector Equality Duty Assessment • Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment • Islands Communities Impact Assessment • Strategic Environmental Assessment • Habitats Regulations Appraisal 		Concurrent with Plan programme
Prepare Plan, Spatial Strategy and Delivery Programme	Proposed Plan and Delivery Programme approved by full Council Minimum 12-week consultation	SEA Policy Assessment Prepare SEA Environmental Report	Q3 & Q4 2026/27 Q1 2027/28
Prepare summary of unresolved reps			Q2 2027/28
Examination	Submission to Scottish Ministers for examination		Q3 2027/28
<u>Adoption of LDP</u>	Adopt and publish delivery programme within 3 months – keep under review / update every 2 yrs		Q1 2028/29

DRAFT PARTICIPATION STATEMENT

Community Engagement

The Comhairle's Development Plan Team is committed to meaningful community engagement. It seeks to:

- involve a range of interests, build on early engagement, particularly with communities, [Key Agencies](#), identified groups, and other stakeholders, to inform the shape of plans, proposals and guidance;
- engage with underrepresented/ hard to reach groups
- take into account the National Standards for Community Engagement;
- tailor consultation to different plan stages, document types and/or interest groups;
- provide communications/documents that are easily accessible and easy to understand;
- listen to and fully consider representations; and maintain an open and transparent consultation process.



DIAGRAM 1: WHO WE WILL CONSULT

Consultation Methods

A range of methods will be utilised to effectively engage with agencies and the public. As a result of Covid 19, subsequent legislation and guidance, consultations methods have evolved. The methods used will vary and will be tailored to the different interest groups to make the best use of resources, maximising participation, and inclusion. These are outlined in Diagram 2 and 3 and include:

- **Advertisements** in local and community papers;
- [New Plan webpage](#) and **Social-Media**; to publicise current progress and information on how to become involved;
- **Meetings**, particularly with agencies and with other community bodies;
- **Use of Storymap and MIRO** when presenting documents online and for interactive consultation and engagement;
- [Consultation response forms](#) to encourage input, whilst promoting use of online form platforms;
- **Place Standard Tool** - different versions of the tool will be used as required to engage with different audiences;
- Building Standards and Planning Service **Stakeholder Newsletter** is published regularly and provides updates on the LDP and wider Development Plan activities to stakeholders;
- Direct mailing of contact database;
- Flier in Council Tax mailing.



DIAGRAM 2: METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

DIAGRAM 3: PROPOSED ENGAGEMENT AT EACH LDP STAGE

