

**ANGUS COUNCIL****DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE**

26 September 1996

**SUBJECT : SCOTTISH OFFICE QUALITY INITIATIVES  
FOR SCOTTISH PLANNING SYSTEM****REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF PLANNING, TRANSPORT & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT****Abstract:**

**This Report deals with the recently announced Scottish Office Quality Initiatives for the Scottish Planning System.**

**1 RECOMMENDATION**

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Committee notes this Report.

**2 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 The Scottish Office on 11 September issued a press release on 'initiatives to improve quality throughout the planning system, including new targets for dealing with planning applications, an Audit Unit to improve performance and the development of Local Planning Charters to highlight best practice'. A copy of the press release is attached to this Report.

**3 COMMENT**

- 3.1 The proposals by the Scottish Office were not the subject of prior consultation with COSLA. Although a meeting is to be arranged with COSLA to discuss the proposals in the near future, it is not the intention of the Scottish Office to follow up the press release with an early advice note to Councils.
- 3.2 While measures to improve performance are to be welcomed, it is disappointing that there was no prior consultation on the proposals which is not conducive to partnership working between central and local government. The new targets for processing development proposals are a measure of time only and do not necessarily provide a measure of quality. It is important, particularly when dealing with sensitive proposals that they are given full and proper consideration. The issue of speed of processing needs to be balanced with the permanent nature of most developments. It is also the case that initial proposals can be modified through discussion to make them acceptable, thereby achieving a better outcome than a quicker recommendation of refusal.
- 3.3 For the planning system to work effectively, it also requires the Scottish Office to carry out its functions timeously. In this respect Members will be aware that the time taken by the Scottish Office to consider a number of Structure Plans (including the Tayside Structure Plan) is well in excess of the target of 12 months.

**4 CONCLUSION**

- 4.1 While initiatives to improve quality and reduce delays in the planning system are to be welcomed, it is disappointing that the Scottish Office did not consult on their proposals. The achievement of the higher processing times for planning applications will have to be given careful consideration.

**NOTE**

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above Report.

AA/AMF

18 September 1996

**Alex Anderson**  
**Director of Planning, Transport & Economic Development**

# COSLA

# Urgent

*Protecting Scottish Local Government*

## *Fax Message*

To : Chief Executives

**For the Attention of Directors and Heads of Planning**

From: Timothy Stone

### **SCOTTISH OFFICE QUALITY INITIATIVES FOR SCOTTISH PLANNING SYSTEM**

I attach a copy of a faxed press release issued today by the Scottish Office in relation to the above. This has significant potential implications for planning services. There was no prior consultation with COSLA on the proposals.

SODD are not planning to follow this press release up with an early advice letter to councils. However, a meeting will be arranged with COSLA to discuss the proposals in the near future. I will keep you informed of developments.

Timothy Stone  
Head of Policy Development

---

Document 1

Convention of Scottish Local Authorities  
Rosebery House 9 Haymarket Terrace Edinburgh EH12 5XZ  
Telephone 0151 474 9200 Fax 0151 474 9290  
DX No. ED407 Edinburgh

No. 4159 P. 1/5

18 Sep 1998 16:57

11 September/1448/96

MICHAEL FORSYTH ANNOUNCES QUALITY INITIATIVES  
FOR SCOTTISH PLANNING SYSTEM

---

The Rt Hon. Michael Forsyth MP, Secretary of State for Scotland today announced initiatives to improve quality throughout the planning system, including new targets for dealing with applications, an Audit Unit to improve performance and the development of local planning Charters to highlight best practice.

Mr Forsyth said:

"I am delighted to be able to announce this new package of measures. This builds on the announcement made in December on the Government's response to the Review of the Town and Country Planning System in Scotland and will address the key issue of quality in the Scottish planning system.

"The measures aim to improve performance and encourage higher standards in the delivery of planning services. I am confident that this will result in real improvements for all those who come into contact with the planning system in Scotland."

The main measures include:

- new targets for processing development proposals. Local authorities should aim to process at least 90 per cent of householder applications and 85 per cent of minor business and industry and other minor development applications within two months. They should also continue to strive to meet the current target of processing at least 80 per cent of all planning applications within two months;
- information currently collected by The Scottish Office will be published covering local authority performance in a way that is easily understood by those concerned with the planning process;
- a new planning award scheme will be launched focusing on quality in the planning system;
- The Scottish Office, in consultation with COSLA, will establish an Audit Unit to work with local authorities to improve performance;

- an independent research project has been commissioned to examine the issue of quality assurance in the planning system;
- The Scottish Office will work with local authorities to develop local planning charters with a view to producing best practice guidance in the light of the lessons learned;
- guidance encouraging local authorities to inform applicants of the expected date of decision where a planning application has not been decided within two months will be strengthened.

#### NOTES TO NEWS EDITORS

1. George Kynoch MP, Scottish Office Minister for Planning announced on December 28, 1995 the Government's response to the Review of the Town and Country Planning System in Scotland, which included a package of measures to improve performance in decision making, reduce red tape and increase opportunities for participation in the planning system. Full details of the Government's response to the review are set out in the "Review of the Town and Country Planning System in Scotland: The Way Ahead". Copies are available from The Scottish Office.

2. The response recognised that consultees had considered the issue of quality in the planning process to be important. The Government welcomed this and expressed its intention of examining ways to take this forward. Today's announcement follows up that commitment.

Robin Miller: 0131 244 2596

September 11, 1996

