


Building Standards Verification Annual Verification Performance Report

01 April 2024 – 31 March 2025

Version 8.1

 Building
Standards.scot



Document Controls

Change History

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Approvals

This document requires the following approvals:

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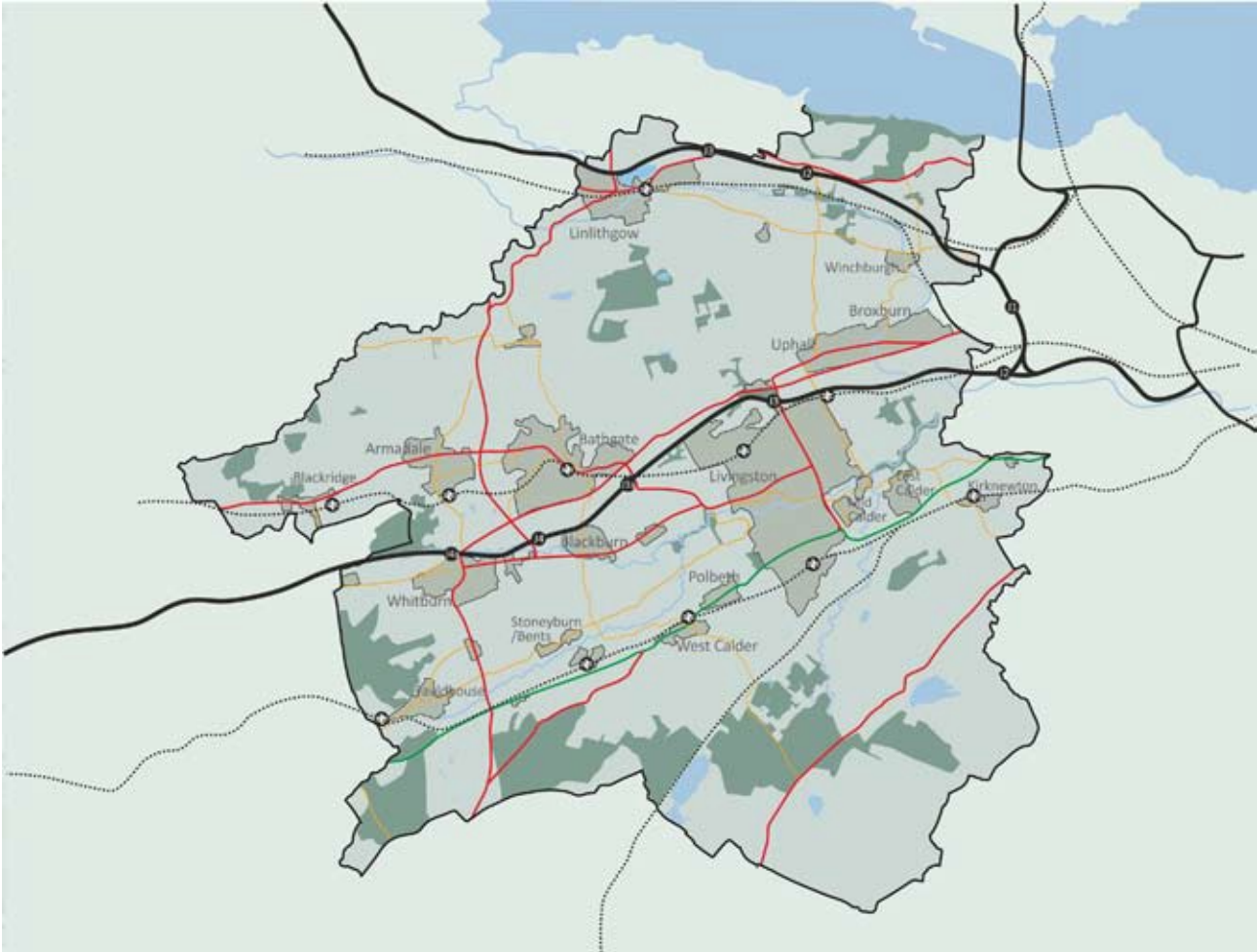
Introduction to the verifier

1.1 Introduction

The verification performance report is a strategic planning and management tool that provides information about the local authority building standards service, communicates the vision and strategy, and sets out performance against strategic goals and targets.

Building standards verifiers in Scotland are required to utilise the performance report to manage, monitor, review and develop strategies for their business, and should focus on the performance framework's core perspectives and cross-cutting themes.





1.2 West Lothian

West Lothian has one of the fastest growing populations in Scotland and the council is committed to managing this growth in an environmentally sustainable way, by managing resources such as water and land efficiently.

The most recent population estimate is 185,580. This is an increase of 1.0% from 2020. West Lothian had the 9th highest population in 2021 out of all 32 local authorities. [West Lothian Council Area Profile \(nrscotland.gov.uk\)](https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/publications/west-lothian-council-area-profile)

The 2021 estimate of the number of dwellings in West Lothian was 82,591 [West Lothian Council Area Profile \(nrscotland.gov.uk\)](https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/publications/west-lothian-council-area-profile). West Lothian has a mixture of rural and urban areas covering a total of 425km² stretching from Linlithgow in the North, to Breich in the South and from Entryfoot in the West, to Linburn in the East. The main towns being Livingston, Bathgate Linlithgow, Whitburn, Armadale and Broxburn. These towns account for approximately 73% of the population. Core development areas

have been created in Calderwood, Gavieside and Winchburgh. Winchburgh is one of the largest development areas in the country with over 3,400 houses planned and has recently had a completed school campus, housing 2 secondary schools a primary school and a state of the art of leisure facility, with plans to create a new town centre with retail, commercial and leisure facilities. The Calderwood & Gavieside Core Development areas around Livingston and East Calder will see a further 5000 houses delivered and has recently had a new East Calder primary school and an extension to the existing Calderwood Primary school completed. Also, in the West of the county is Heartlands which will increase the size of the town of Whitburn. This development is transforming the former Polkemmet colliery site into a whole new community. This includes plans for 2000 houses that are already underway and 100 acres of employment land.

West Lothians regional shopping Centre at the Centre Livingston is one of the largest in Scotland and there is also the nearby Livingston Designer Outlet

Table 1: West Lothian's large employers

West Lothian's large employers			
West Lothian Council	Local Government	8,000	1
NHS Lothian	Healthcare	3,300	2
Sky Television	Technology	3,250	3
Tesco	Distribution/ Retail	2,000	4
Mitsubishi	Manufacturing	1,700	5
Q2 Solutions	Life Sciences	1,150	6
Energy Assets	Engineering	630	7
Everwarm	Energy	470	8
SEH Europe	Manufacturing	460	9
West Lothian College	Education	360	10
West Lothian Leisure	Leisure	360	10

Source: West Lothian Economic Development June 2024

1.3 Employment within West Lothian

West Lothian is a modern, high performance knowledge-based economy, with world-wide links, creating jobs and a rising quality of life for those living and working in the region. This is the vision shared by local economic development agencies, which is well grounded in past success.

West Lothian is a vibrant, dynamic and attractive place to live and work, and has made significant progress in improving the quality of life of its communities. It has a young, thriving population which is a result of sustained population growth a trend that is set to continue.

West Lothian's economy has reacted positively to constant change over the last 30 years. The diversity of the economy is reflected by the fact that it is not reliant on one single sector, indeed there is an estimated 5,300 firms currently trading in West Lothian. ([Key Figures & Stats for West Lothian \(investinwestlothian.com\)](#))

West Lothian's key economic strengths are located in seven key sectors. Around 70% of West Lothian's young dynamic workforce is employed in these fast growing sectors and that percentage looks set to grow as more and more companies relocate to West Lothian. We have strengths in a number of diverse sectors.

There are an estimated 76,000 jobs in West Lothian, with 74,500 residents in work. ([Key Figures & Stats for West Lothian \(investinwestlothian.com\)](#))

West Lothian's main industry sectors by employment are shown in table 1. West Lothian has a lower proportion of public sector employment than Scotland (and slightly lower than Great Britain) as a whole; therefore, it might be less vulnerable to planned public sector cuts.

Despite a recent slowdown in the national house building and construction industries, activity has remained high within West Lothian and employment is still extremely significant to the local economy. The Council, in partnership with local house builders, have worked to re-energise the house building sector, resulting in the number of house completions significantly increasing since 2016. The net increase in construction sector jobs is not unexpected given the increase in housebuilding and other similar developments.

A variety of multi-national companies operate within West Lothian employing many people from the local workforce.



May 2022

Employment Sector	No. of companies in West Lothian (estimate)	No. of employees in West Lothian (estimate)
Life Sciences	20	2,200
Logistics and Distribution	385	6,000
Food and Drink	270	3,000
Electronics and Software	80	1,700
Retail	355	8,000
Engineering, Design & manufacturing	435	9,500
Construction	645	6,000
Creative Industries	310	1,500

West Lothian Economic Development June 2024

1.4 West Lothian Building Standards

The purpose, vision and mission of Building Standards are simple and straightforward.

Purpose - the purpose of the Building Standards service is to secure the health, safety, welfare and convenience of persons in or about buildings and of others who may be affected by buildings or matters connected with buildings. It also strives to further the conservation of fuel and energy and achieve sustainable development.

The system sets out the essential standards that are required to be met when building work or conversion of a building is undertaken in order to satisfy building regulations.

Vision - to be the best local authority service provider in relation to the health, safety, welfare and convenience of the people of the area in relation to the built environment.

Mission - to retain the status of verifier for the geographical area of West Lothian.

This principal purpose, to secure the health safety, welfare and *convenience* of the citizens and visitors to West Lothian in relation to the built environment is achieved by the following five distinct roles provided by the Building Standards service;

- Verification role;
- Enforcement role;
- Advisory role (both by statute and voluntarily);
- Statutory services; and
- Non-statutory services.

The verification role covers:

- the verification of compliance of applications for Building warrants;
- the verification of compliance of Completion Submissions With No Warrant; and
- the verification of completed works on site.

The enforcement role covers:

- action under section 25 – 30 of the Building (Scotland) Act 2003.

The advisory role covers:

- The Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005;
- The Gaming Act;
- The Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982;
- The Cinema Act 1985;
- The Theatres Act 1968;
- The Safety at Sports Ground Act 1976;
- Equality Act 2010
 - *West Lothian Access Committee*;
- The Fire (Scotland) Act 2005;
- The Building (Scotland) Act 1959
 - *Letters of comfort*; and
- The Building (Scotland) Act 2003
 - *Pre-application discussions*
 - *Letters of comfort - exempt works*.

The statutory services role covers:

The provision of a two-part Building Standards Register:

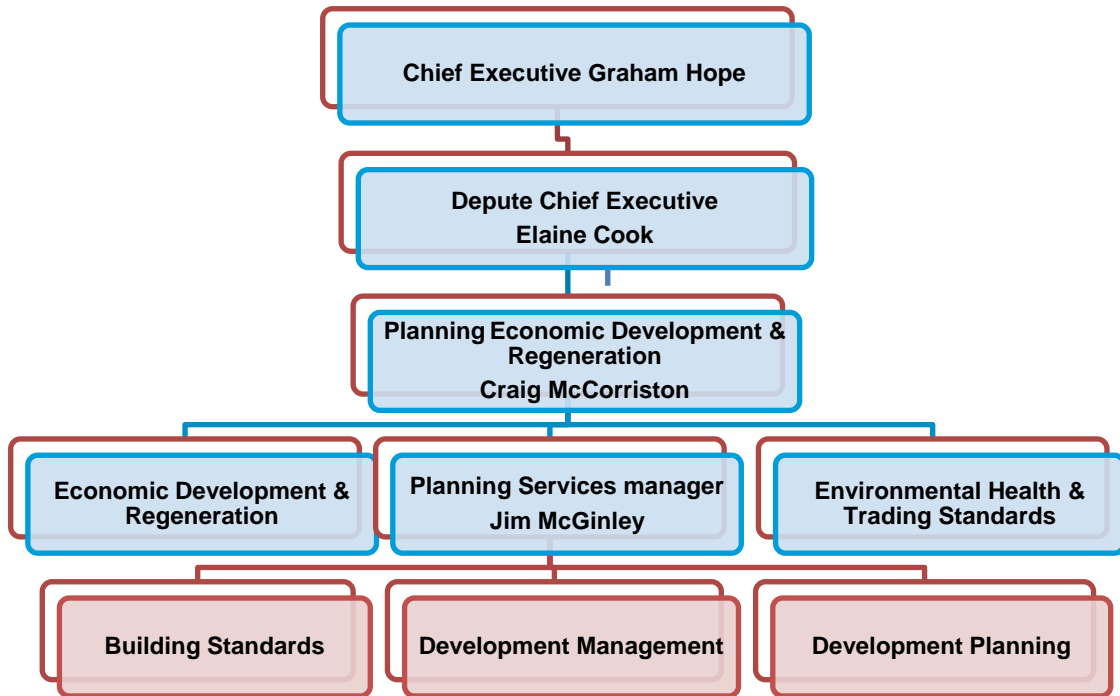
- Part 1 web based and to be maintained for all time;
- Part 2 to be in any format and to be maintained for a minimum of 25 years or until the building is demolished; and
- Energy Performance of Building (Scotland) Regulations 2008.

The non-statutory services role covers:

The provision of a *Letter of Comfort* regime to cover:

- *historic unauthorised works where minimal associated risk is identified*,
- *confirmation of exemption from regulations*,
- *confirmation work carried out as in line with expired building warrant*;
- Provision of copy documents;
- Provision of copy plans; and
- Pre-application discussions.

1.5 Organisational chart





2.0 Building Standards Verification Service Information

The purpose of the Building Standards system is to protect the public interest. The system sets out the essential 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 standards; inspections are limited to the minimum necessary 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.

Verifiers, appointed by Scottish Ministers are responsible for the independent checking of applications for building warrants to construct or demolish buildings, to provide services, fittings or equipment in buildings, or for conversions.

2.1 Location

West Lothian Council Building Standards service is located in Livingston, at Civic Centre Howden Road South, Livingston, EH54 6FF. The building standards team have embraced a hybrid working scheme. Hybrid working allows surveyors to work from home up to 3 days a week, this however should not impact on our ability to deliver an efficient service for our customers. Site visits are carried out using Council pool cars.

Building Standards in a corporate context

Building Standards along with Development Management and Development Planning & Environment make up Planning Services. Alongside Environmental Health, Economic Development and Regeneration, Planning Services form part of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration (PED&R).

The responsibility of the Building Standards service rests with the Building Standards manager who reports directly to the Planning Services manager who in turn reports to the Head of Service. Building Standards includes Support Services who provide clerical support to Building Standards.

2.2 Verification services

Verifiers, appointed by Scottish Ministers are responsible for the independent checking of applications for building warrants to construct or demolish buildings, to provide services, fittings or equipment in buildings, or for conversions.

West Lothian, for the purpose of building standards, is split in to two teams, East and West. This allows for better control of work and dealing with peaks and troughs of work flow. This system also allows greater flexibility for site visits. There is a principal building standards officer, 2 surveyors, a building standards officer and a building inspector in the East team and a principal building standards officer, 3 surveyors and a building inspector within the West team, this current set up allows us to have a minimum of 4 people on site most days, with the remaining surveyors / officers in the office / working from home. The team also consists of a building standards manager, building standards technician, a modern apprentice building standards technician, a building standards officer who works across both teams and a structural engineer (currently vacant) all assisted by 2.5FTE in the support team.

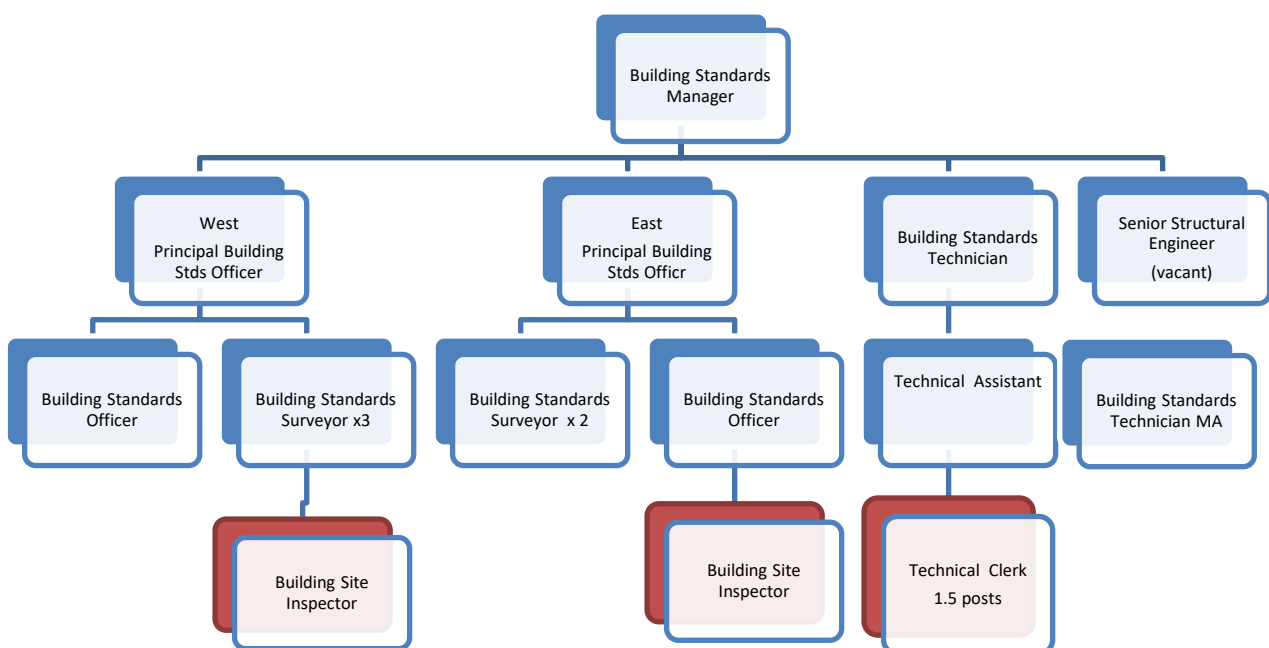
This team structure also builds in a quality assurance aspect for both inspection and assessment of building warrant applications.

Within this system one of four officers can in effect be checking a colleague's work. The Building Standards service no longer provides a 'duty service' where someone can come along and speak to a surveyor without an appointment. To offset this, we have updated the Building Standards website to help guide our customers. It should be noted that customers can still see a surveyor, however a prior appointment must be made.

This structure enables a theoretical five-day cover to be provided for all site visits within West Lothian combined with the most efficient use of the pool car resource in that two surveyors share a vehicle.

This practice is workable within West Lothian as all staff have a wide range of building standards experience and qualifications, ranging from MRICS, C.Build E, and from BSC (Hons) to HND/ HNC level. This current practice may have to be addressed if the staff resource changes.

2.3 Building Standards structure



Snapshot of the staffing position on 04 July 2024 (posts are full time equivalents).

	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4
Head of Building Standards Verification Service				1

Note: Tier 1 = Chief Executive; Tier 2 = Directors; Tier 3 = Heads of Service; Tier 4 = Managers

		Building Standards Verification Service	Other
Managers	No. posts	1	
	Vacant	0	
Team Leaders	No. posts	2	
	Vacant	0	
Surveyor	No. posts	7	
	Vacant	0	
Assistant Surveyor	No. posts	0	
	Vacant	0	
Inspector	No. posts	2	
	Vacant	0	
Technician	No. posts	2 (1 Modern Apprentice)	
	Vacant	0	
Administrator (dedicated)	No. posts	2.5	
	Vacant		
Other Specialist (Structure)	No. posts	0	
	Vacant	1 (Structural Engineer)	
TOTAL		17.5	

Note: Managers are those staff responsible for the operational management of a team/division. They are not necessarily line managers.

Staff age profile	Number
61 and over	1
56-60	4
50-55	6
40 - 49	2
30 - 39	2
25 - 29	1
16 - 24	1



3.0 Strategic Objectives

Building Standards Vision

West Lothian Council's *Corporate Plan*, sets the strategic priorities for West Lothian Council from 2023/24 – 2027/28 and includes the Council's purpose, vision and values:

Purpose: *'Improving lives and making West Lothian a great place to live, work, learn and do business'*

Vision: *'A thriving West Lothian'* Putting people at the heart of everything we do. A thriving West Lothian means vibrant, strong and inclusive communities where people have access to the services that they need

Values: *'Caring & Compassionate, Open, Honest & Accountable, Collaborative, Inclusive & Adaptive'*

West Lothian Council's Building Standards service fully supports and adopts Council's purpose, vision and values. The Building Standards service also adopts as its vision, the aim to be the best local authority service provider in relation to the health, safety, welfare and convenience of the citizens of the area in relation to the built environment.

The corporate plan has 5 clear priorities. The priorities with the biggest impact directly on the Building Standards service and from which we prioritise our service are:

- **Helping to create strong and sustainable communities** (The council aims to support the development of a strong, inclusive and sustainable West Lothian. We want to support empowered communities through services that are well designed and protect the built and natural environment for current citizens and future generations);
- **Tackling homelessness, poverty and inequality** (Increasing the supply of affordable homes for rent across West Lothian through our council house new build); and
- **Investing in skills and jobs** (to support the growth of a vibrant business sector, built around a highly motivated and skilled workforce)

Building Standards as part of the PED&R directorate has a role in each of these priorities either directly or indirectly.

As mentioned previously, the principal aim of Building Standards is to maintain the health, safety, welfare and convenience of the citizens of West Lothian in relation to the built environment. This is principally achieved through the application of the Building Standards (Scotland) Regulations in considering applications for building warrants. The speed and efficiency of this service can have significant impacts on the three themes of the *Corporate Plan* which most directly impact on Building Standards, namely:

Helping to create strong and sustainable communities (to maintain the health safety, welfare and convenience of the citizens of West Lothian in relation to the built environment):

- The verification of compliance with the building regulations ensures that the impact on the environment is minimized and a sustainable built environment is provided for the citizens of and visitors to west Lothian so far as is permitted in current legislation.
- Compliance with the building regulations ensures that a safe built environment is provided for the citizens of and visitors to west Lothian so far as is permitted in current legislation;
- The verification of compliance with the building regulations ensures that a safe built environment is provided for the citizens of and visitors to west Lothian so far as is permitted in current legislation;
- The Building Standards service consults frequently with the local Disability West Lothian organization to ensure the views of this section of the community are noted in relation to applications for building warrant.

Tackling homelessness, poverty and Inequality (to strive to provide the best facilities for all sections of the community in line with legislative requirements)

- Compliance with the building regulations ensures that a safe built environment is provided for the citizens of and visitors to west Lothian so far as is permitted in current legislation;
- As the building regulations are given as functional standards the technical guidance is no longer the only means of demonstrating compliance. In these situations, the Building Standards section has to ensure that whatever is proposed meets the broad functional standard and does not exclude any section of the community; and
- The building regulations are taken as the benchmark by which Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's) are granted a license to operate within West Lothian;

Investing in skills & jobs (to provide help and information to assist in the development of new and existing businesses within West Lothian):

- Building Standards positively encourages early discussion on proposals to ensure that businesses understand the legislative requirements that have to be met;
- Building Standards strives to identify areas of concern and explain why certain requirements are legally required in such a manner that business does not feel bureaucracy is stifling it; and
- Building Standards provides a fast track service for small businesses applying for a building warrant, thus, allowing start up times for businesses to be reduced with the hope of encouraging investment within West Lothian.

All of the above serve as the driving force behind the overriding vision of the Building Standards service, which is to maintain the health, safety, welfare and convenience of the citizens of, and visitors to, West Lothian in relation to the built environment and provide the best service using the resources available.



Overarching goals

- The overarching goal of West Lothian Council Building Standards is to be among the top performing authorities in Scotland, whilst maintaining the health, safety, welfare and convenience of people in and around buildings;
- To provide staff with the training that will ensure their *personal development*. This is essential for staff to maintain their existing levels of skill within Building Standards particularly now when the service has to keep pace with change. Through personal development staff can be more productive, they feel more valued, raises morale and empowers staff to take ownership. In effect allowing staff to feel valued;
- At West Lothian Council we will strive to meet the targets set by the *Key Performance Outcome*, whilst, if appropriate, setting new internal performance targets which may be more stringent than the *Key Performance Outcomes*;
- To provide an excellent customer service throughout the customer journey; and
- To further promote the profile of Building Standards at both local and national level, in conjunction with the South East Scotland Building Standards Consortia and Local Authority Building Standards Scotland.
- To enhance e-Building Standards and ensure its use is as smooth as we can possibly make it.

These goals are consistent with the overall corporate goals, and are more than a mere re statement of our services purpose. These goals are suited to our specific purpose and competencies.

Including staff in setting these goals helps ensure that the Building Standards service works collectively in order to achieve them.

Departmental issues to be addressed in the coming year

- Monitoring fee income to Building Standards;
- Review the content of the *Building Standards Verification Performance Framework* and publish on the council website;
- Improve customer satisfaction through analysis of customer comments received;
- Ensuring Support Services continue to provide the support required by Building Standards to consistently achieve the aims of the performance framework established by the Scottish Government;
- Ensure best use of resources in order to meet all requested site visits requested via the Construction Compliance Notification Plan for both Domestic and Non-domestic projects;
- Achieving performance levels whilst large new developments are being constructed and applying for building warrants;
- Ensuring best value in training courses available for all staff within Building Standards;
- Supporting staff through ongoing training and creating flexible work patterns when required;
- Training staff in all aspects of the Building Standards service from performance to updating the new Building Standards web portal; and
- Ensure training requirements highlighted via the CAS by individuals are addressed through ongoing external and internal training

Strategic Objectives

West Lothian Council Building Standards objectives for the coming year are mainly based around the *Key Performance Outcomes*, with particular emphasis on KPO's 1A, B, C & 2. Maintaining and reducing the time taken to grant a building warrant on receipt of all satisfactory information. A report has been created and this will be used to identify any recurring issues to try and improve the warrant process.

Whilst the easiest option to improve this figure is to focus mainly on this target, we as a customer focused service will ensure this is balanced against all other KPO's.

It is our objective to fully develop, implement and meet these key performance outcomes whilst running the service in a manner that will prove that the verification role should be retained by West Lothian Council.

Whilst working towards these objectives West Lothian Council Building Standards will keep one eye on the future to ensure we are well placed to deal with any upcoming issues or demands should they arise.

With these issues in mind we continually have to ask ourselves:

- What needs changing within West Lothian Council Building Standards?
- Are we continuing to manage customer expectations?
- How can we do better?



4.0 Key Performance Outcomes and Targets

The national verification performance framework is based on three core perspectives:

- Professional Expertise and Technical Processes;
- Quality Customer Experience; and
- Operational and Financial Efficiency.

There are also three cross-cutting themes, comprising:

- Public Interest;
- Continuous Improvement; and
- Partnership Working.

Summary of Key Performance Outcomes (KPOs)

Professional Expertise and Technical Processes	
KPO1	Minimise time taken to issue a first report or issue a building warrant or amendment to building warrant.
KPO2	Increase quality of compliance assessment during the construction processes
Quality Customer Experience	
KPO3	Commit to the building standards customer charter
KPO4	Understand and respond to the customer experience
Operational and Financial Efficiency	
KPO5	Maintain financial governance
KPO6	Commit to digital services
KPO7	Commit to objectives outlined in the annual performance report

5.0 Performance Data Summary of Key Performance Targets

KPO1 Targets	
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).
KOP2 Targets	
	Targets to be developed as part of future review of KPO2.
KPO3 Targets	
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 Targets	
4.1	Minimum overall average satisfaction rating of 7.5 out of 10.
KPO5 Targets	
5.1	Building standards verification fee income to cover indicative verification service costs (staff costs plus 30%).
KPO6 Targets	
6.1	Details of e-Building 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"> Plan checking Building warrant or amendments (and plans) being issued Verification during construction Completion certificates being accepted
KPO7 Targets	
7.1	Annual performance report published prominently on website with version control (reviewed at least annually).
7.2	Annual performance report to include performance data in line with KPOs and associated targets. (annually covering previous year e.g. 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024)

TARGETS	1.1	1.2	3.1	3.2	4.1	5.1	6.1	6.2	7.1	7.2
	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).	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).	National customer charter is published prominently on the website and incorporates version control detailing reviews (reviewed at least quarterly).	95% of BSD requests for information on a BSD 'Verifier Performance Reporting Service for Customers' case responded to by verifier within 5 days.	Minimum overall average satisfaction rating of 7.5 out of 10	Building standards verification fee income to cover indicative verification service costs (staff costs plus 30%).	Details of eBuilding Standards are published prominently on the verifier's website.	75% of each key building warrant related processes being done electronically (Plan checking; BWs and amendments (and plans) issue; Verification during construction; CC acceptance)	Annual performance report published prominently on website with version control (reviewed at least quarterly).	Annual performance report to include performance data in line with KPOs and associated targets (annually covering previous year e.g. April 2019 – March 2020).
2023/24 Q1	100%	100%	Published prominently (with review)	No cases referred to BSD 'Reporting Service'	8.5	131.49%	Published prominently	4 of 4 done	Published prominently (with review)	Includes all performance data
2023/24 Q2	100%	100%	Published prominently (with review)	No cases referred to BSD 'Reporting Service'	8.5	106.94%	Published prominently	4 of 4 done	Published prominently (with review)	Includes all performance data
2023/24 Q3	100%	100%	Published prominently (with review)	No cases referred to BSD 'Reporting Service'	8.5	111.8%	Published prominently	4 of 4 done	Published prominently (with review)	Includes all performance data
2023/24 Q4	100%	100%	Published prominently (with review)	No cases referred to BSD 'Reporting Service'	8.5	360.76%	Published prominently	4 of 4 done	Published prominently (with review)	Includes all performance data
2024/25 Q1	100%	100%	Published prominently (with review)	No cases referred to BSD 'Reporting Service'	8.5	105.74%	Published prominently	4 of 4 done	Published prominently (with review)	Includes all performance data

Protocols for dealing with work

To ensure that all warrant applications within West Lothian are assigned to a surveyor with the appropriate professional expertise the work is allocated using the *Protocol for Warrant Distribution & Assessment to Ensure Quality of Regulation*. The purpose of this protocol is to demonstrate that, within the bounds of the enforcing legislation and guidance, that a satisfactory quality of regulation is being applied to:

- the distribution of workload between current staff, and
- the consideration of applications for building warrant
- It is from this *quality of regulation* that the Public Interest is totally served.
- To ensure that all reasonable inquiry inspections within West Lothian are assigned to a surveyor with the appropriate professional expertise the work is allocated
- using the Protocol for Completion Submission Distribution and Satisfying Reasonable Enquiry (Construction Compliance Notification Plan)

The purpose of this protocol is to demonstrate that, within the bounds of the enforcing legislation and guidance, that a satisfactory quality of regulation is being applied to:

- the distribution of workload between current staff,
- and the consideration of reasonable inquiry
- It is from this *quality of regulation* that the Public Interest is totally served.

Performance management systems

To ensure that all verification work is subject to scrutiny with regards to overall performance of both quality, value, timeliness and time recording the following procedures/meetings are used to ensure adequate performance management.

Officers have access to performance reports which they can run daily, or as required on:

- Applications for building warrant which have not been responded to;
- Completion Certificate submissions which have not been responded to;
- Time accounted for in the office on a daily basis;
- Time accounted for on site on a daily basis;
- Time accounted for in the office on a weekly basis;
- Time accounted for on site on a weekly basis;
- List of warrant applications with no response from applicant which could be put forward for possible refusal;
- Number of assigned applications per officer; and
- Fee income per day/month/year.

Weekly team performance / technical meetings are held to:

- Highlight applications for building warrant which have not been responded to and ensure that these are therefore assessed within expected timescales;
- Highlight completion certificate submissions which have not been responded to and ensure that these are therefore assessed within expected timescales;
- Highlight where officers time is unaccounted for thereby ensuring that time recording is kept up to date and accurate; and
- To further consistency both local and consortia issues are discussed and common interpretations agreed on.

Monthly performance meetings are held to:

- Discuss the previous months overall and individual performance within the Building Standards service between the Planning Services manager, Building Standards manager and the Building Standards service;
- Discuss the previous months overall performance between the Depute Chief Executive and the Head of PED&R; and
- Discuss the budget streams between the finance accountant for Planning Services and the Head of PED&R.

Reporting of performance:

- Returns are produced on key performance outcomes 1-3 and published quarterly on the Covalent management system which is accessible by all of West Lothian Council;
- Returns are produced on key performance outcomes 1-3 and published quarterly on the Covalent management system some of which are made accessible to the public via the internet; and
- Returns are produced quarterly on key performance outcomes 1-9 for the Building Standards Division of the Scottish Government

Training and development / CPD:

- Bi annual performance review and personal development meetings are held with all staff to identify training requirements for individuals and the overall service;
- The Competency Assessment system allied to the ADR process will identify any training needs for all members of the team and training arrangements made to fill any knowledge gaps identified;
- Staff are responsible for identifying their own CPD and bringing these to management's attention;
- A list of training is identified from the Appraisal and Development Review (ADR) and section meetings; and
- In house training sessions will continue to be provided by external bodies.
- Support staff through the Competency Assessment System (CAS)

Benchmarking / shared services / partnership work:

- Benchmarking of back office systems is carried out between the Scottish users of the Uniform computer system;
- Benchmarking of procedures is carried out through the consortia where working practices are discussed; and
- Partnership working is carried out both internally and externally with:
 - South East Scotland Building Standards Consortia
 - Structural engineer,
 - Fire Engineer
 - Contaminated land colleagues,
 - Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
 - Disability West Lothian and
 - West Lothian Council Building Services
 - Police Scotland
 - Glasgow Caledonian University

Commitment to work together on technical issues:

- West Lothian Council is a member of the Scottish Type Approval Scheme (STAS) promoted and run by Local Authority Building Standards Scotland (LABSS);
- West Lothian Council is a member Local Authority Building Standards Scotland (LABSS) and fully subscribe to their national policy notes to improve national consistency on technical issues and interpretation of guidance;

- West Lothian Council are a member of the South East Scotland Building Standards Consortia and fully subscribe to their policy notes to improve consistency on technical issues and interpretation of guidance; and
- West Lothian Council hold weekly performance and technical meetings where technical and procedural matters are discussed and local policy formulated and adopted to improve consistency on technical issues and interpretation of guidance.

Succession planning:

- The Building Standards service acknowledges the necessity of having a satisfactory succession planning approach and this is considered when any vacancies occur and through appropriate staff training as required.

Quality Customer Experience

Customer communication strategies:

It is West Lothian Building Standards belief that good customer service is not an add on to our job, it is our job. This is achieved by engaging with our customers in many different ways. Building Standards follow the West Lothian council produced communication guidelines document for customer communications *“The West Lothian Way”*.

Building Standards have their own service standards for communicating with customers within set timescales for:

- acknowledging building warrant applications within five days of receipt;
- respond to all applications within 20 working days unless a customer agreement has been reached;
- issue 80% of applications within eight days of receiving all necessary information;
- respond to completion certificate submissions within an average of three working days; and
- respond to all completion certificate submissions within 10 working days.

Customer Charter (local / national)

West Lothian Council Building Standards has its own local customer charter which covers the following topics:

- tells you who we are;
- tells you what we do;
- tells you the standard we aim to meet;
- tells you what to do in the event we do not meet these standards; and
- gives you the opportunity to raise issues that you think need addressing.

This local charter is augmented with the requirements that the Scottish Governments Building Standards Division consider necessary for a national charter. Our customer charter is regularly reviewed, including an annual review, to ensure that it is up to date, relevant and meets with national requirements.

Customer feedback (local / national) / analysing and changes system

- All responses from the national customer survey is collated, analysed and areas for improvement are identified which feed into our action plans for future improvements to the service;
- All areas of improvement identified for all aspects of the service through any means are consolidated into a continuous improvement plan for the service; and
- All changes are reviewed to ensure their effectiveness.

Accessibility of service

Surveyors are available for pre-arranged meetings during working hours which are:

Monday – Thursday	8.30am – 5.00pm
Friday	8.30am – 4.00pm

Meetings can be held remotely using video technology. There are disabled parking bays both adjacent to and nearby the building. It is recommended that an appointment be made with the Building Standards surveyor dealing with the area in which an application will be made.

If you do decide to visit Civic Centre without an appointment you may not be seen by a Building Standards officer. This is because they are most probably on site or dealing with other applications.

West Lothian Council Building Standards will always try and answer your question; however, this is not always possible. If we can't give you an immediate answer, we will give you a date when we will get back to you.

Our website is regularly reviewed and updated to ensure relevant information and guidance is available for customers.

Building Standards can be contacted:

by telephone on 01506 280000;

by text phone on 01506 651115;

by email at

buildingstandards@westlothian.gov.uk

Pre-application advice

Pre-application advice is offered to any inward investment into West Lothian.

Customer agreements

Customer agreements are offered to all applicants at the outset of the building warrant process. However, we strive to assess all building warrant applications within 20 days and since October 2012 we have managed to achieve this target.

Customer dissatisfaction (procedural or technical)

Customers are informed when required of their ability to use the LABSS dispute resolution.

Recognised external accreditations

- West Lothian Council corporately has successfully achieved the Customer Service Excellence award (CSE). This award includes ongoing annual assessment of appropriate criteria;

Operational and financial efficiency

Team structure

West Lothian, for the purpose of building standards, is split in to two teams, East and West. This allows for better control of work and dealing with peaks and troughs of work flow. This system also allows greater flexibility for site visits. There is a principal building standards officer, 2 surveyors, a building standards officer and a building inspector in the East team and a principal building standards officer, 3 surveyors and a building inspector within the West team, this current set up allows us to have a minimum of 4 people on site most days, with the remaining surveyors / officers in the office / working from home. The team also consists of a building standards manager, building standards technician, a modern apprentice building standards technician, a building standards officer who works across both teams and a structural engineer (currently vacant) all assisted by 2.5FTE in the support team.

This team structure also builds in a quality assurance aspect for both inspection and assessment of building warrant applications.

Time recording system

All staff record their time within the Uniform software system against either a specific application or a non-application specific generic application to catch all other times. These times are monitored weekly to ensure that all relevant times are recorded and can be attributed to either verification or non-verification work.

Financial monitoring / governance

Monthly reports on fee income produced;

Weekly reports on time recording produced which identify the amount of time spent on verification work;

Verification costs reported on a quarterly basis to the BSD; and

Verification income reported on a quarterly basis to the BSD.

IT systems

The Building Standards back office software system is provided by IDOX and utilises the Uniform system along with Enterprise.

The Uniform system is backed up with a suite of management reports developed within Crystal reports; and

The service use IP phone lines connected through PC's on the network.

All surveyors use a Microsoft Surface pro to enable remote working

Digital Services

We receive approximately 99% of all building warrant applications via the e-building standards portal. These are dealt with completely electronically. When a paper application for building warrant is received we scan the plans into our document management system. This allows us to carry out all site visits using hand held tablet devices to view plans and record our findings.

Finance

The Building Standards service adheres to the corporate financial policies of West Lothian Council. Budgets are monitored and reassessed on an ongoing basis relative to expenditure and anticipated revenue income.

Internal communication strategies

Weekly performance/technical meetings;

Monthly performance meetings;

Bi annual ADR meetings;

Monthly management meetings;

Annual *Bulletin* paper; and

Intranet.

6.0 Service Improvements and Partnership Working

In the previous 12 months (2023/24) we worked with:

- Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
- IDOX
- Local Authority Building Standards Scotland (LABSS)
- South East Scotland Building Standards Consortia
- Disability West Lothian
- Environmental Health
- WLC Building Services
- West Lothian College
- Fairhurst Engineering
- RSK
- Harley Haddow
- Aecom
- Glasgow Caledonian University

Service Improvements and Partnership Working

In the previous 12 months (2023/24) we achieved:

Number	Continuous improvement action	Status
1	Improved our customer satisfaction rating	Ongoing
2	Responded to SG information requests and consultations	As required
3	Submitted all quarterly KPO's and updated the annual performance report	Complete
4	Contribute to the work of LABSS	Ongoing
5	Supported a team member in achieving a BSC (Hons) Fire Risk Engineering	Complete
6	100% of building warrant applications assessed within 20 days	Complete
7	Became the lead authority for STAS applications for Cala Homes and Aldi	Complete
8	Employed a Modern Apprentice (MA)	Completed
9	Provided 4 guest lectures at Glasgow Caledonian University	Completed

In the next 12 months (2024/25) we will:

Number	Continuous improvement action	Timescale
1	Employ an Assistant Building Standards Officer and secure a place at a University for that person	12 Months
2	Scan all paper applications submitted on a weekly basis	ongoing
3	Strive to maintain and if possible improve our performance	12 Months
4	Support staff to achieve our goals	ongoing
5	Implement the new verification performance framework and operating framework	ongoing
6	Chair the management group for the South East Scotland Building Standards Consortia	12 Months
7	Support the Building Standards Hub	ongoing
9	Implement the learning and training identified from the CAS	12 Months
10	Work with LABSS as the lead partner for Cala Homes and Aldi Deposit Return scheme buildings	12 Months
11	Work with LABSS to support the ambassador's network	12 Months

7.0 Building Standards – additional data

Verifiers provide returns to Scottish Government on their verification performance and workload. The performance data relates to the building standards verification performance framework and the workload data relates to the numbers of building warrant applications; completion certificates; fees; costs; certificates (certification, energy performance; sustainability); enforcement cases.

Performance data: 01 April 2023 – 31 March 2024

Building warrants and amendments to building warrant	• Applications	1267
	• Decisions	1259
Completion certificates	• Submissions	2223
	• Decisions	1873
Certification	• Certificates of design submitted	618
	• Certificates of construction submitted	909
Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs)	• Copy certificates received (domestic)	1128
	• Copy certificates received (non-domestic)	16
Statements of Sustainability	• Copy certificates received (domestic)	1108
	• Copy certificates received (non-domestic)	12
Enforcement	• Notices served under sections 25 to 30	14
	• Cases referred to procurator fiscal	0
	• Cases where LA has undertaken work	0
Average time taken to grant a building warrant		63.76 days
Percentage of fully achieved Construction Compliance Plans		76.28%
Percentage of valid building warrants applications assessed within 20 working days		100%
Percentage of building warrants approved within 10 days of receiving all necessary information		99.9%

