

BUILDING STANDARDS CUSTOMER ANALYSIS

1st April 2022 – 31st March 2023



Introduction

The Building Standards Service has a wide range of customers using the Building Warrant process. These customers extend from members of the public using the service for the first time, undertaking work to their house, to the developer constructing a new domestic or non-domestic building. Irrespective of the type of customer using the system, the common theme from all parties is to secure an approved Building Warrant and Acceptance of Completion Certificate as soon as possible to ensure that the proposed works can be implemented and the building occupied.

In projects requiring planning permission, the application for Building Warrant is often submitted by the applicant's appointed agent after the planning decision has been finalised. This process is common in most projects, irrespective of size and complexity, or whether the application is for domestic or non-domestic applications. Consequently, the time from commissioning the original design to the granting of the planning approval and then finally the Building Warrant approval can be several months. In larger projects this time can be considerably longer, all of which can be frustrating to the applicant irrespective of the size or complexity of the project if not suitably planned.

Often the delay in determining a Building Warrant application is attributed to the quality of the submission, including architectural and engineering information and the intermittent submission of revised information to allow Building Standards to determine the application. The process can also impact on the local building industry and will affect the local economy. It is therefore important that the service delivery targets are detailed within the customer charter, reviewed with stakeholders, and service improvements introduced to enhance the overall service delivery.

Application Process

On receipt of a valid application both the applicant and agent will receive an acknowledgement letter detailing the expected deadline for assessing the application. During periods of high volume of work this deadline will be amended to reflect the high workloads received. Similarly, target deadlines will be reduced as necessary, taking cognisance of the resources applicable at the time of the submission. During each stage of the verification process both the applicant and agent will receive correspondence on the progress of the application.

Consequently, it is important that the Building Warrant process has been streamlined to deliver an efficient and effective service delivery which is quality assured and that utilises customer feedback to progress the service response to all types of projects. Continuous feedback from customers provides invaluable information on areas where the system is either achieving or not achieving its aim, and establishes specific customer needs, therefore enabling improvements to be introduced to improve overall service delivery.

As part of Building Standards commitment to continuous improvement in the overall Building Warrant process, customers are actively encouraged to provide feedback to the Building Standards and Development Management Operations Manager following the issue of a Building Warrant and acceptance or issue of a Completion Certificate or online at any time. All customers can provide feedback via an online form relating to the service provided at each decision stage along with the ability to provide comments where the service did or did not meet their expectations. In addition, feedback is also integrated into the service review process directly from customers' comments and observations; via the stakeholders' focus group meetings and through the Council's complaints procedure. The Building Standards customer charter details the prescribed standards to be delivered and performance targets for assessing and determining Building Warrants and Completion Certificates. During the financial year 2022/23 there has been a 19% decrease in new building warrant applications with the income generated from these applications decreasing by 12%.

The table below details the performance target response and actual figures for the period 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023 along with the comparison of performance from previous years.

Customer Charter Target	2022/2023	2021/2022	2020/2021	2019/2020	Comments
No of Building Warrant Applications received	825	998	952	1028	The number of applications submitted has decreased by 173 compared with the previous year's figures.
No of Building Warrants responded to within 20 WD's	100%	100%	100%	97%	The service continues to perform well at a national level which was acknowledged as part of the re-appointment process. In conclusion the Service overall has maintained a strong performance over the last year.
No of Decisions reached	737	933	877	965	737 building warrants were determined during the period which is decrease of 21% when compared to the previous year.
% of Decisions reached within 6 Days	93%	91.9%	83.6%	59.8%	There has been an increase in performance compared to last year. The service has continues to perform efficiently.
No of Completion Certificates applied for	1174	1522	1054	1708	348 less completion certificates were applied for during this period compared with the period during 1 st April 2020 to 31 st March 2021
Average time taken to respond to a request for a Completion Certificates	1.5 days	1.6 days	1.7 days	2.1 days	The service has maintained a strong performance over the last year in relation to average time taken to respond to a request for a completion inspection.
No of Completion Certificates	92.1%	89%	71.3%	39.9%	Performance increased by 3.1% compared with the period during 1 st April 2020 to 31 st March 2021.

Determined within 3 days					In conclusion the Service overall has performed to a high standard during an uncertain economic times.
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Summary of Customer Feedback Results

The customer feedback questionnaires returned during 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022 provided 5 Building Warrant questionnaires and 11 Completion Certificate questionnaires which equated to a 0.6% and 0.9% return. It is noted that since the move to an electronic customer feedback process and the introduction of the Scottish Government's National Satisfaction Survey that response number have reduced from previous years figures. The specific results noted are as follows:-

Feedback on Building Warrants

Customers were asked to identify their involvement in process:-
 80% of responses from Agents
 0% of responses from Contractors
 20% of responses from Applicants

Customers were asked whether they had visited an office:-
 0% visited an office
 100% did not visit an office

Customers were asked whether there were adequate reception facilities encountered when attending the office:-
 Not applicable due to office closure.

Customers were asked whether they had received a letter following their Building warrant submission:-
 25% did not receive a letter
 75% did receive a letter

From the correspondence received customers were asked whether they understood the letter contents:-
 100% Strongly agreed
 0% Agreed
 0% No opinion
 0% Disagreed
 0% Strongly disagreed

Customers were asked whether they had been dealt with by courteous staff:-
 100% Strongly agreed
 0% Agreed
 0% No opinion
 0% Disagreed
 0% Strongly disagreed

Customers were asked whether there was sufficient guidance and site advice:-
 100% Strongly agreed
 0% Agreed
 0% No opinion
 0% Disagreed
 0% Strongly disagreed

Customers were asked whether they had been dealt with by knowledgeable staff:-
100% Strongly agreed
0% Agreed
0% No opinion
0% Disagreed
0% Strongly disagreed

Customers were asked if they had received mail within 2-3 working days.
100% Said they did.
0% said they did not.

Feedback on Completion Certificates

Customers were asked to identify their involvement in process:-
82% of responses from Applicant
9% of responses from Agents
9% of responses from Contractors

Customers were asked whether they had been dealt with by courteous staff:-
80% Strongly agreed
10% Agreed
0% No opinion
0% Disagreed
10% Strongly disagreed

Customers were asked whether there was sufficient guidance and site advice:-
70% Strongly agreed
10% agreed
0% No opinion
10% Disagreed
10% Strongly disagreed

Customers were asked whether they had been dealt with by knowledgeable staff:-
70% Strongly agreed
10% Agreed
10% No opinion
0% Disagreed
10% Strongly disagreed

Customers were asked whether they had considered that there had been sufficient site visits.
67% Strongly agreed
11% Agreed
11% No opinion
11% Disagreed
0% Strongly disagreed

Customers were asked whether there had been appropriate responses to site visit requests.
62% Strongly agreed
13% Agreed
25% No opinion
0% Disagreed
0% Strongly disagreed

Customers were asked how they rated Building Standards during the entire Building Standard Process	63% Excellent 28% Very Good 7% Good 2% Adequate 0% Poor
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Customers were asked if they had received mail within 2-3 working days.	100% Said they did. 0% said they did not.
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Comparison of the 2022/23 figures against 2021/22 results demonstrated a strong performance during a highly disruptive period, and continued delivery of a high standard of service. In 2009 the service was subject to independent audit by the Building Standards Division of Scottish Government and achieved a rating of Excellent for the following 4 criteria, comprising Public Interest, Internal Business, Continuous Improvement and Finance with an overall rating of Good for the Private Customer.

Since 2009 BM TRADA have carried out an annual surveillance audit of the Building Standards Service. The 2022 audit established the continued conformity with the departments ISO 9001:2015 management system which was found to be satisfactory with no non-conformities raised. As a result, of the Audit, BM TRADA continued the accreditation until the next proposed audit date in 8th December 2023.

The Building Standards service is subject to a re-appointment process and has to satisfy Scottish Ministers that they meet, and continue to meet, performance targets and are subject to regular monitoring, periodic inspection as part of the re-appointment process. The preliminary review of performance from 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2022 indicated that the overall performance of the East Ayrshire Building Standards service was above national performance targets. The Scottish Government's Building Standards Division were of the opinion that East Ayrshire Building Standards met the criteria for a strong performing local authority and that the overall performance levels meet the conditions of appointment. Subsequently, the Scottish Government re-appointed East Ayrshire Council Building Standards Service, under section 7(1) of the Building (Scotland) Act 2003 to undertake the verification function. The period of appointment commenced on 1st May 2023 for a period of six years until 30th April 2029.

Customer feedback provides a range of responses, focusing on where the customer considered the service could be improved, to feedback congratulating the service and case Surveyor(s) on the service delivered. On receipt of negative customer feedback the Operations Manager shall review the comments along with the relevant application, consult the Surveyor, then contact the customer to hear of the issues raised prior to identifying any service enhancements applicable. All service enhancements shall be considered in the decision making process by the Building Standards Management Team who

shall identify how and when to progress the improvements. In cases when positive feedback is provided relating to an area of service or to a member or members of staff the Operations Manager shall discuss the comments with the appropriate Surveyor(s) and acknowledge the good service delivered. Service improvements can relate to the strategy, internal processes and development of staff.

During the last year, in instances where feedback was provided by the applicant or agent on areas where they felt that the service could be improved the comments along with the relevant applications were reviewed and conclusions fed back, where applicable. In the instances where reviews were undertaken no service improvements were thought necessary.

A sample of the positive feedback received from customers over this period is noted below:-

- *'A huge thank you for dealing with the application so quickly'*
- *'Thank you for dealing with the application for my parents house in such a timely manner, it is much appreciated.'*

Conclusion

In the development of any service it is essential to understand the needs of the customer and to develop the service to meet those needs. Therefore, customer feedback is essential in the continuous improvement of the business processes and development of staff to deliver the service. As a result of customer feedback the balanced scorecard service plan has been developed to take cognisance of the issues raised and challenges Building Standards to meet these goals.

Should you wish to provide comment on this analysis or provide feedback on the Building Standards Service please contact david.wilson@east-ayrshire.gov.uk

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