

PEOPLE, COMMUNITIES AND PLACES

Annual Planning Performance Statistics, 2020/21

This report presents annual statistics on planning decision-making and timescales for 2012/13 to 2020/21. It is based on quarterly data collected by the Scottish Government from Local and Planning Authorities as part of the Planning Performance Framework (introduced in 2012).

In 2020/21 the number of applications determined and average decision times were impacted on by restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Further information about the impacts is available in [Section 1.2](#).

Key Findings



In 2020/21 Planning Authorities decided 24,448 local planning applications and 272 major planning applications. This includes applications with processing agreements where the developer and local authority agree on timescales for decisions.

Classification between local and major depends on the development type. Further information about categories is available in [Section 1.6](#).

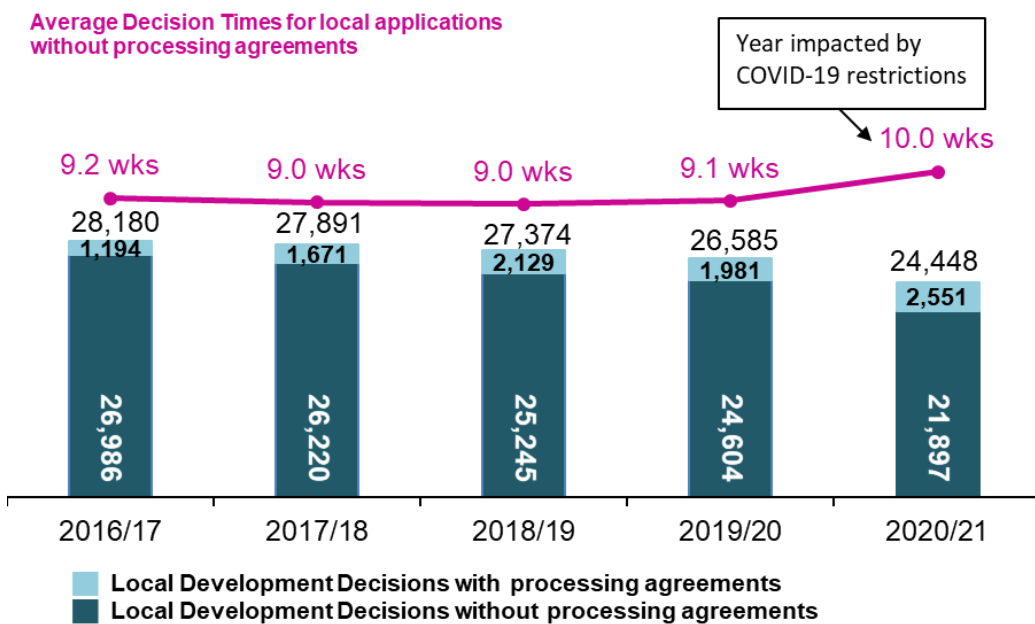
Most applications were approved.

Annual Trends for Local and Major Developments

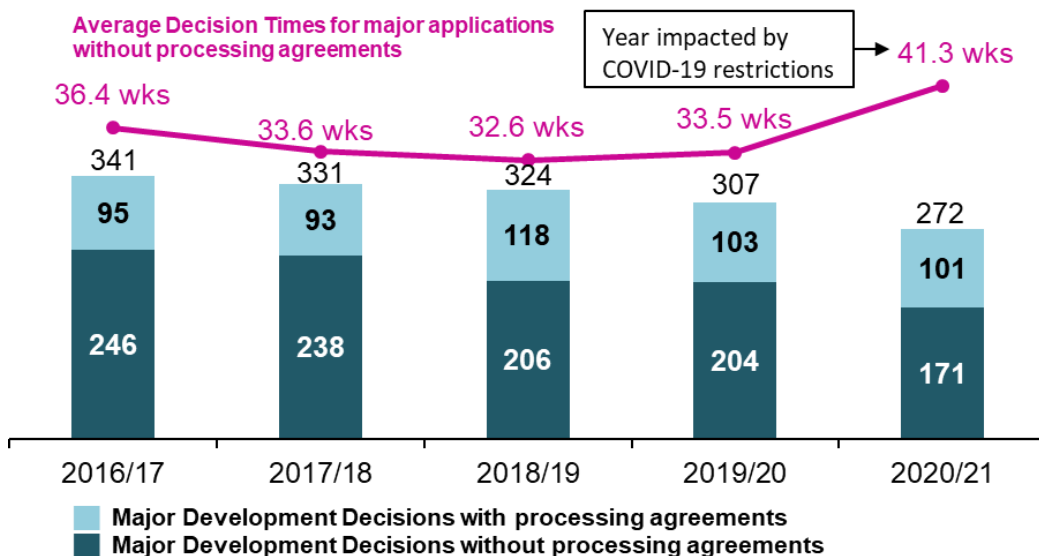
The number of applications determined and the decision times were impacted on by restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Further information about the impacts is available in [Section 1.2](#).

Increase in average decision time for local and major developments.

The average decision time for local developments was 10.0 weeks in 2020/21, slower by almost a week compared to last year.



In 2020/21 the average decision time for major development applications was 41.3 weeks, almost 8 weeks slower than the 32.6 weeks for the previous year.



Applications with processing agreements are not included in decision time calculations. The use of processing agreements for local applications has increased from 4.2% of local applications in 2016/17 to 10.4% in 2020/21. The use of processing agreements for major applications has increased from 27.9% of all major applications in 2016/17 to 37.1% in 2020/21.

A number of local authorities reported an increased use of processing agreements in response to managing COVID-19 pandemic restrictions and delays.

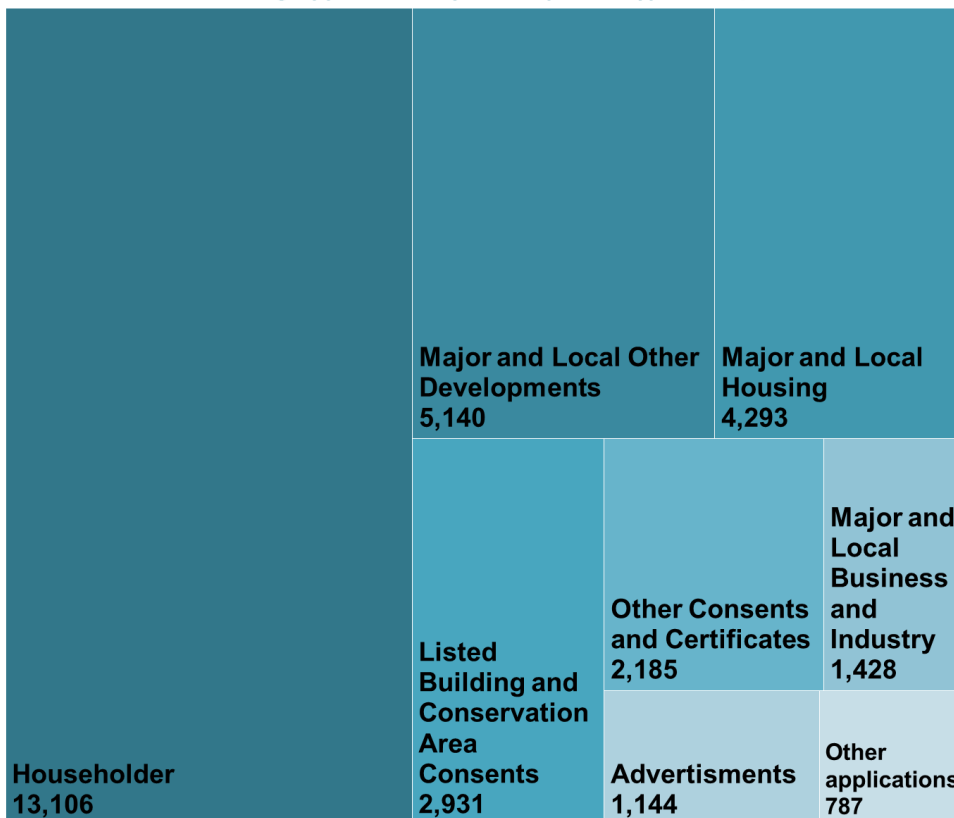
Number of planning applications continues to fall.

- The number of local and major planning applications with decisions has decreased each year since 2013/14.
- There were 2,137 fewer local development applications than in 2019/20.
- There were 35 fewer major development applications than in 2019/20.

Planning Applications by Development Type

In 2020/21, householders making changes to their properties accounted for 42% of planning applications (13,106 of 31,014).

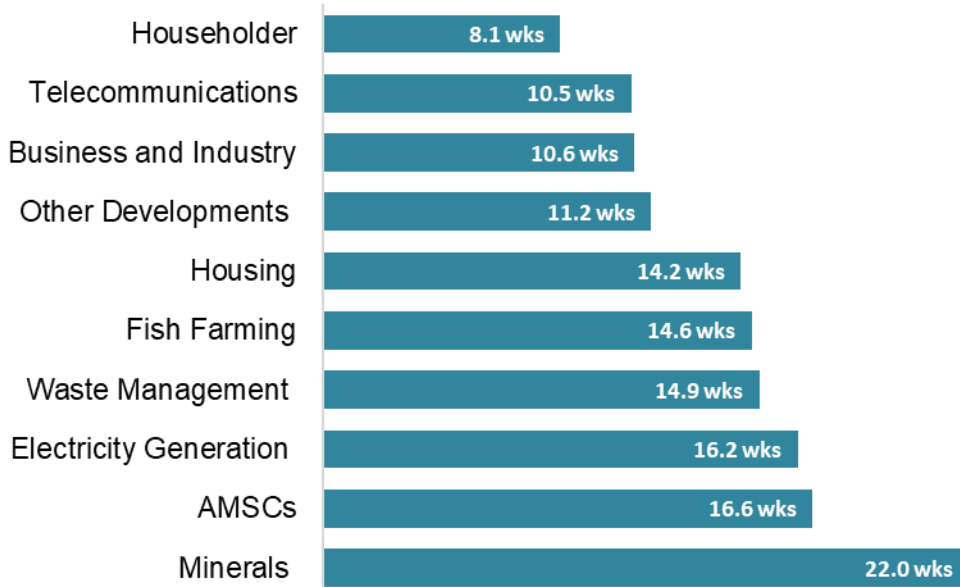
Planning Applications by Development Type, 2020/21



Local and major housing developments was the third largest group with 4,937 applications (4,293, 14% of all applications).

Local development average decision times were quickest for householder applications.

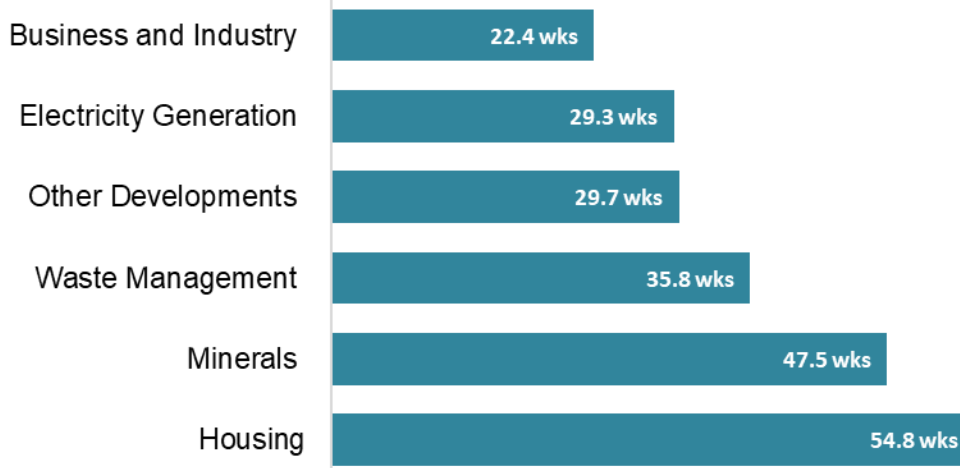
Local Planning Applications



In 2020/21 the average decision time for householders making changes to their properties was 8.1 weeks. The longest average decision times were for applications for mineral developments, 22.0 weeks.

Major development average decision times were quickest for business and industry applications.

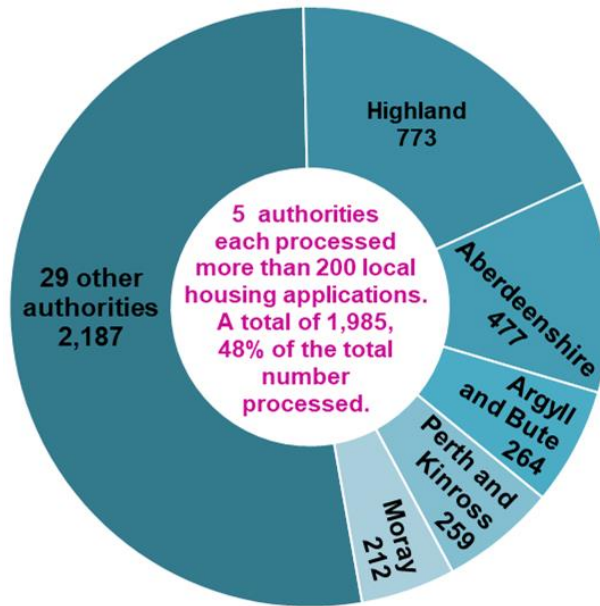
Major Planning Applications



The quickest average decision time, business and industry applications, was 22.3 weeks. The longest average decision time was for applications for housing developments, 54.8 weeks.

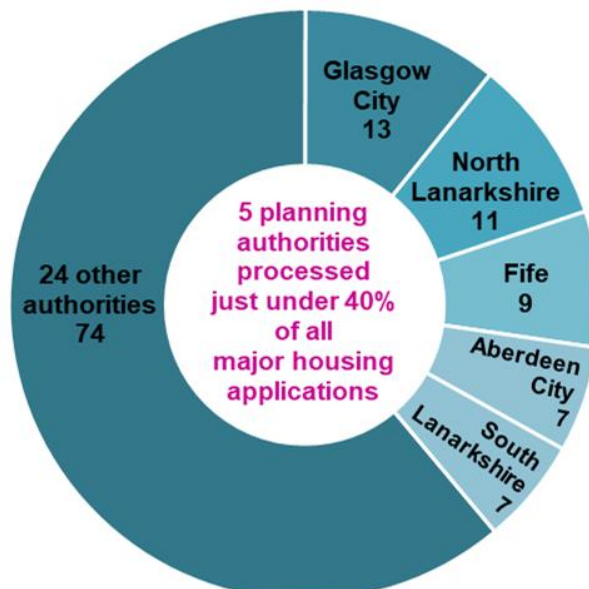
Planning Applications for Housing Developments

Almost half of local housing applications were processed by five local authorities.



In 2020/21 just under half (47.6%) of decisions on local housing applications were made by five local authorities. Highland made the most, 773 (19% of the Scotland total). This was followed by Aberdeenshire (477), Argyll and Bute (264), Perth and Kinross (259), and Moray (212).

Almost 40% of all major housing applications were processed by five local authorities.



In 2020/21 five local authorities made 38.8% of decisions on major housing applications. Glasgow City made the most (13), 11% of the Scotland total. This was followed by North Lanarkshire (11), Fife (9), Aberdeen City (7) and South Lanarkshire (7).

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background to data collection

Planning authority performance data is a statistical collection undertaken to establish the number of planning applications determined by Scottish planning authorities, and their performance in processing them. The Scottish Government Communities Analysis Division collects quarterly data from all 32 local authorities and the two planning authorities (Cairngorms National Park and Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park) on the detail of planning decisions and timescales.

1.2 Impact of COVID-19 pandemic

From mid-March 2020 planning application processing was impacted by the move to home working, restrictions on travel and site access, reduced availability of agents and consultees, and staffing and resourcing issues due to the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic. This resulted in a notable reduction in the number of applications processed and decided during the first two quarters of 2020/21. This impact has continued in the last two quarters of 2020/21.

Planning Performance Statistics report on decided applications therefore the number of applications received by an authority in a particular quarter does not form part of the data collection and so is not reported here. However, a number of authorities commented that there had been a notable reduction in the number of applications they received over the first two quarters of the year, particularly during quarter one. In quarters three and four authorities have noted a marked increase in the number of applications and enquiries received with some commenting that the number of applications, particularly from householders, was notably greater than would normally have been expected.

Some applications have longer decision times as a result of delays resulting from the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Clock stops were not used where there was a delay to authority processing as a result of the impact of COVID-19 restrictions.

For some applications where there was potential for COVID-19 related delays authorities used processing agreements to agree timescales for decisions with developers. This resulted in increased use of processing agreements throughout 2020/21.

There was also an initial impact on the ability of planning committees and review boards to meet as a result of the lockdown restrictions, the impact was greater in quarter one. Many authorities have set up options for remote meetings which allowed more committees and review boards to meet during later quarters.

This impact on the number and decision times of applications should be considered when making any comparisons with figures for previous years. Restrictions impacted authorities differently with varying degrees and duration of impact. This should be noted if making comparisons between figures for individual authorities in the accompanying excel tables.

1.3 Uses of the statistics

The key objective of the statistics is to allow Scottish Government and the planning authorities to monitor the performance of planning authorities in the timeliness of deciding planning applications. The statistics monitor the impact of the development management system, part of the modernising planning agenda, which was implemented on 3rd August 2009. Further details are available at:

www.gov.scot/publications/planning-performance-statistics-uses-of-the-data/.

1.4 Legacy cases

On 3rd August 2009 substantial changes to the statutory development management system, relating to the handling of planning applications, came into effect across the whole of Scotland. A few legacy cases that were validated pre 3rd August 2009 can badly skew results and therefore the analysis in Sections 2 to 5 covers applications validated in the current planning system post 3rd August 2009. Analysis of the limited number of decided legacy cases is provided separately in [Section 11](#).

Figures for all applications including legacy cases were reported up to and including 2016/17 and are available in [previous publications](#).

1.5 Detailed tables of results

Detailed excel tables of results as well as a copy of this summary, along with quarterly results and annual results for previous years are available from the Planning Authority Performance Statistics Section on the [Planning Publications](#) page of the Scottish Government's website.

1.6 Categories of planning applications

For planning applications, developments are put into one of three categories: local, major or national. The different types allow councils to treat developments in a way which is suited to their size, complexity and the issues they are likely to raise.

Local developments include applications for changes to individual houses and smaller developments for new housing as well as applications covering areas of development such as minerals, business & industry, waste management, electricity generation, freshwater fish farming, marine finfish farming, marine shellfish farming, telecommunications, Approval of Matters Specified in Conditions (AMSCs¹) and other developments. Most applications will be for local developments.

Major developments include applications for 50 or more homes, as well as certain waste, water, transport and energy-related developments, larger retail developments, and other types of major developments.

Classification between local and major developments depends on the particular development type. For example, housing developments are classed as major when

¹ Applications for Approval of Matters Specified in Conditions (AMSCs) relate to conditions attached to planning permission in principle requiring the further approval, consent or agreement of the planning authority for any detailed aspect of the development.

the application is for 50 or more dwellings or for a site that exceeds two hectares, whereas electricity generation is classed as major when the capacity of the generating station is or exceeds 20 megawatts. Typically there are only a small number of decisions made for major developments each quarter and therefore average decision times are likely to be volatile.

The sub-category “other developments”, used for both major and local developments, includes any developments not falling wholly within any of the specific categories of development for minerals, housing, business & industry, waste management, electricity generation, fish farming and AMSCs. It includes, but is not limited to, retail, leisure and entertainment, education, healthcare, community facilities, transport interchanges, water and drainage developments and projects. It can also include mixed use projects.

National developments are mainly large public works (for example, the regeneration of the former Ravenscraig steelworks and the redevelopment of the Dundee Waterfront) and are identified in the [National Planning Framework](#). These are not included in the planning performance statistics analysed in this publication.

Details for the classification of all development types can be found in the [Hierarchy of Developments](#) planning series circular.

1.7 Calculation of decision times

The average decision time in weeks is calculated in days from the date of validation² to the date the decision is issued. The average weeks are then calculated by dividing the number of days by seven.

When calculating cut-off dates for local applications meeting two month targets months are measured from a specific day in one month until the day with the preceding date in the following or subsequent months.

Some local authorities use processing agreements where the developer and the local authority agree on timescales for decisions. Applications subject to processing agreements are not included in average decision time calculations.

For further explanation of planning performance methodology please refer to [Planning Performance Technical Notes](#).

1.8 Stopping the clock

In some cases it is appropriate to remove a length of time from the total decision time. “Stopping the clock” is used where there has been a lengthy delay caused by the applicant or external consultees, outwith the planning authority’s control that has halted progress with an application. It is for individual authorities to decide what they consider ‘lengthy’ on a case by case basis. This should not be used for every application; it is about recording the data in a way which produces more accurate

² The validation date, from which the time period for determination runs, is the date when the final piece of information for an application is received from the applicant.

performance statistics that would otherwise have been skewed by extreme cases of delay outwith the planning authority's control.

Details for applications that have had the clock stopped can be found in [Section 12](#). Clock stops were not used where there was a delay to authority processing as a result of the impact of COVID-19 restrictions.

[Stop the clock guidance](#) has been issued to planning authorities to help with decisions for stopping the clock.

1.9 Revisions

The [revisions policy](#) for planning performance statistics has been developed in accordance with the UK Statistics Authority Code of practice for Official Statistics.

Revisions to previously published figures made in this bulletin/supporting tables:

- Correction to the number of local review body decisions and corresponding average decision time in 2019/20 for Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park (Table 30).
- Correction to the number of applications subject to planning/legal agreements and corresponding average decision time in 2019/20 for Argyll and Bute (Table 29).

2. Annual Trends – Local Developments (excludes legacy cases)

Local developments include applications for changes to individual houses and smaller developments for new housing as well as applications covering areas of development such as minerals, business & industry, waste management, electricity generation, freshwater fish farming, marine finfish farming, marine shellfish farming, telecommunications, Approval of Matters Specified in Conditions (AMSCs) and other developments.

Some local developments are subject to Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs). Detailed results for these developments are not included here and instead are reported separately in the [detailed tables](#). In 2020/21 20 local development applications subject to EIAs were decided including one legacy case.

Some local authorities use processing agreements where the developer and the local authority agree on timescales for decisions. When an application is subject to a processing agreement it is not included in average decision time calculations.

Legacy cases validated before 3rd August 2009 are not included in the figures but are reported separately in [Section 11](#). Figures including legacy cases were reported up to and including 2016/17 and are available in [previous publications](#).

This section presents annual information on numbers of applications and average timescales across all local developments along with separate figures for key categories. Details for all categories of development are available in detailed excel

tables which can be found in the supporting files for this publication on the Planning Authority Performance Statistics Section on the [Planning Publications](#) web page.

During the year 2020/21 there was a total of 1,542 local development decisions not subject to processing agreements where the clock had been stopped at some point within the application process (7.0% of all local development decisions not subject to processing agreements). On average 13.0 weeks has been removed from the decision times for these applications, and this will have had an effect on overall average decision times. See [Section 12](#) for further details on the use of clock stops.

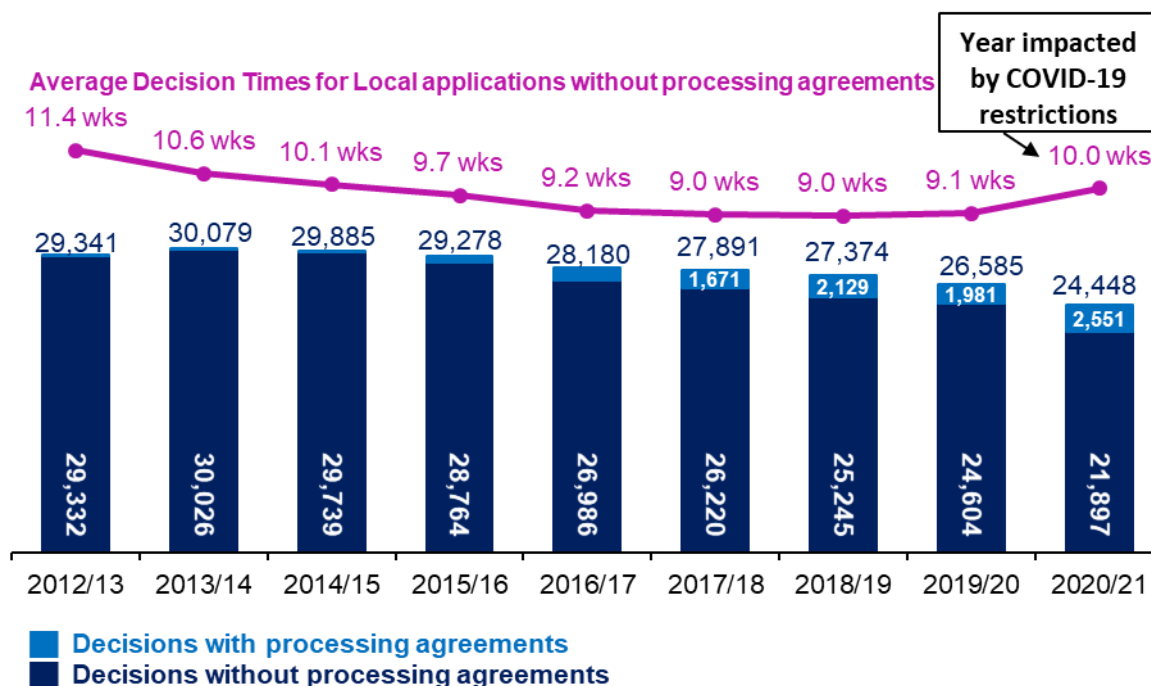
The number of applications determined and the decision times were impacted on by restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Further information about the impacts is available in [Section 1.2](#).

2.1. All Local Developments

There were 24,448 local development applications decided in 2020/21, 2,137 fewer than the previous year. The 21,897 not subject to processing agreements had an average decision time of 10.0 weeks, almost a week slower than the 9.1 weeks for the previous year. Prior to this year the average decision time for local developments had varied by less than two days over the previous four years and has remained between nine and ten weeks since 2015/16.

67.8% of local applications not subject to processing agreements were determined within two months, a drop of just over six percentage points since 2019/20.

Chart 1: All Local Developments

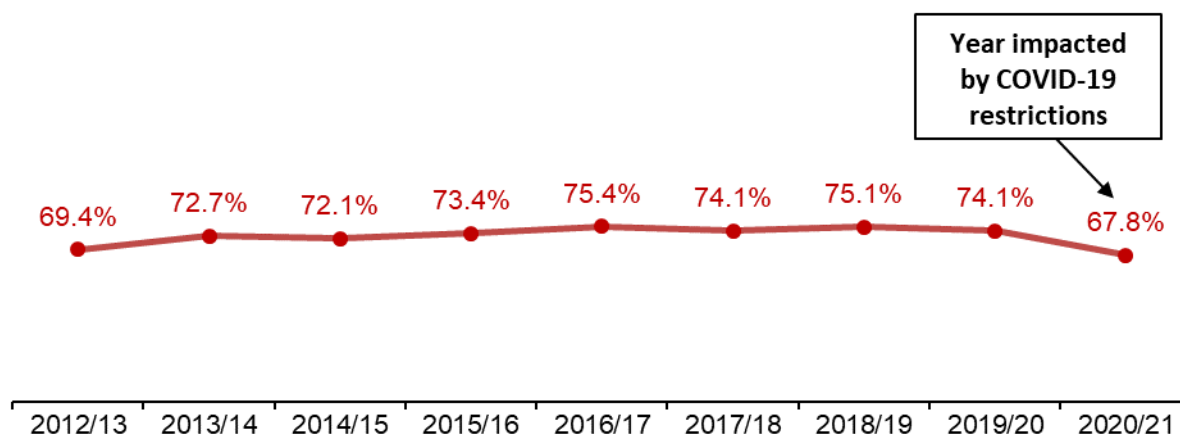


A number of applications were concluded that were subject to processing agreements, these are not included in average time calculations. In 2020/21 there

were 2,551 local development applications with processing agreements, 74.4% (1,897) met agreed timescales that had been set between developers and local authorities. Applications with processing agreements accounted for 10.4% of all Local Developments decisions made in 2020/21, a marked increase from 7.5% in 2019/20. A number of authorities reported increased use of processing agreements as part of measures to manage the impact of COVID-19 restrictions and delays.

There were also two local pre 3rd August 2009 legacy cases concluded. Further details about legacy cases are in [Section 11](#).

Chart 2: All Local Developments: Percentage under two months



2.2. Local Non-Householder Developments

This can include applications for smaller developments for new housing as well as applications covering areas of development such as minerals, business and industry, waste management, electricity generation, freshwater fish farming, marine finfish farming, marine shellfish farming, telecommunications, Approval of Matters Specified in Conditions (AMSCs) and other developments.

There were 11,342 local non-householder applications in 2020/21, 2,285 fewer than the previous year. The 9,738 not subject to processing agreements had an average decision time of 12.4 weeks, a week and a half slower than the previous year.

The percentage of local non-householder applications not subject to processing agreements determined within two months was 56.1%, a drop from 63.3% in the previous year.

A number of applications were concluded that were subject to processing agreements. In 2020/21 there were 1,604 local non-householder development applications with processing agreements, 70.9% (1,137) of these met agreed timescales that had been set between developers and local authorities.

There were also two local pre 3rd August 2009 legacy cases concluded. Further details about legacy cases are in [Section 11](#).

Chart 3: Local Non-Householder Developments

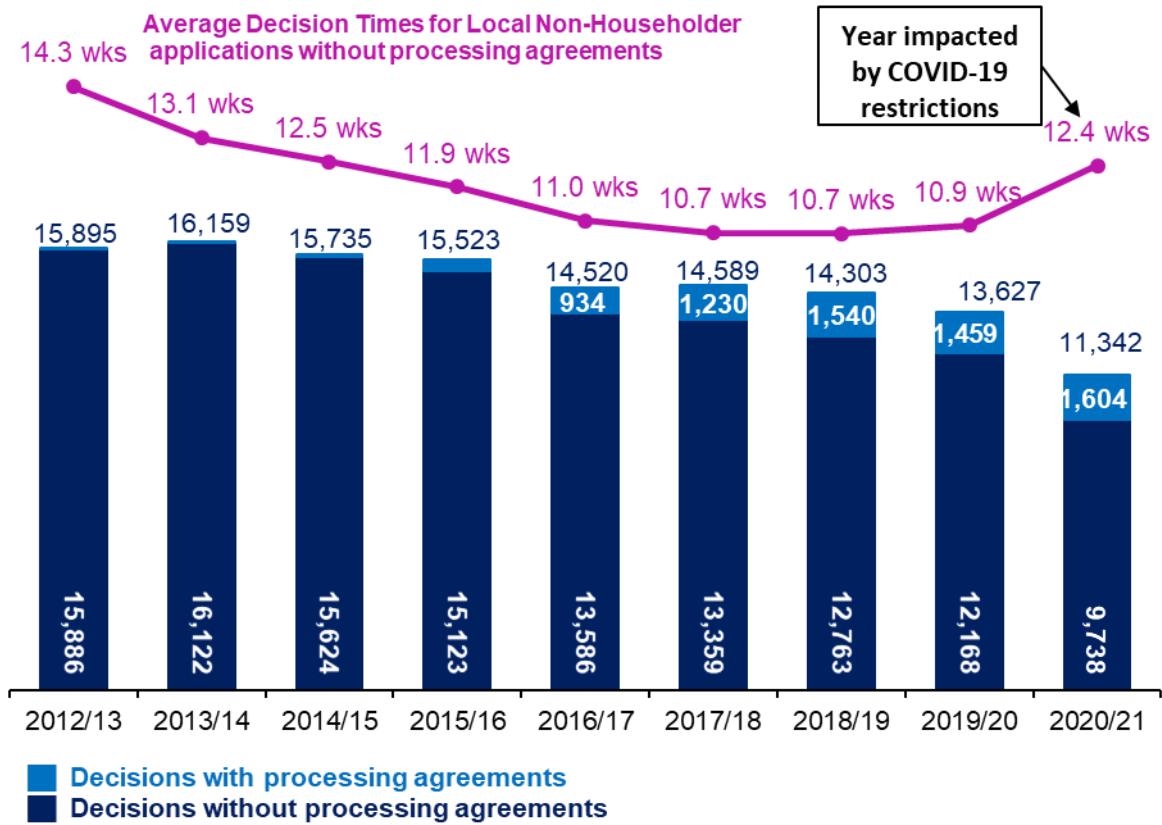
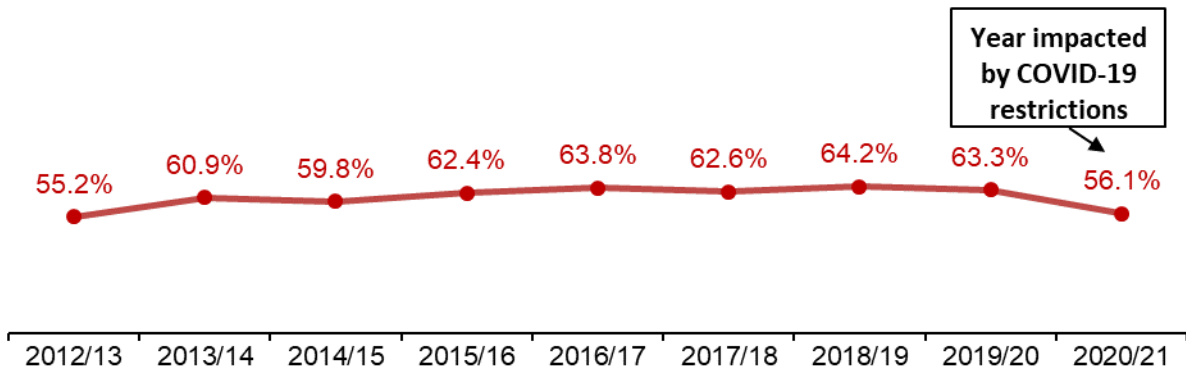


Chart 4: Local Non-Householder Developments: Percentage under two months



2.3. Householder Developments

These include all applications for development in the curtilage of a residential property which are not change of use, for example: extensions, alterations to garages, swimming pools, walls, fences, driveways or porches.

There were 13,106 householder applications in 2020/21, 148 more than the previous year. This is the first annual increase in the number of householder applications determined since 2014/15.

The 12,159 not subject to processing agreements had an average decision time of 8.1 weeks, slower than the 7.3 weeks for the previous year and the slowest since the start of this data collection in 2012/13.

947 householder applications with processing agreements were determined, 80.3% (760) of these met agreed timescales that had been set between developers and local authorities.

The percentage of householder applications not subject to processing agreements determined within two months was 77.1%, a drop from 84.7% in the previous year.

Chart 5: Householder Developments

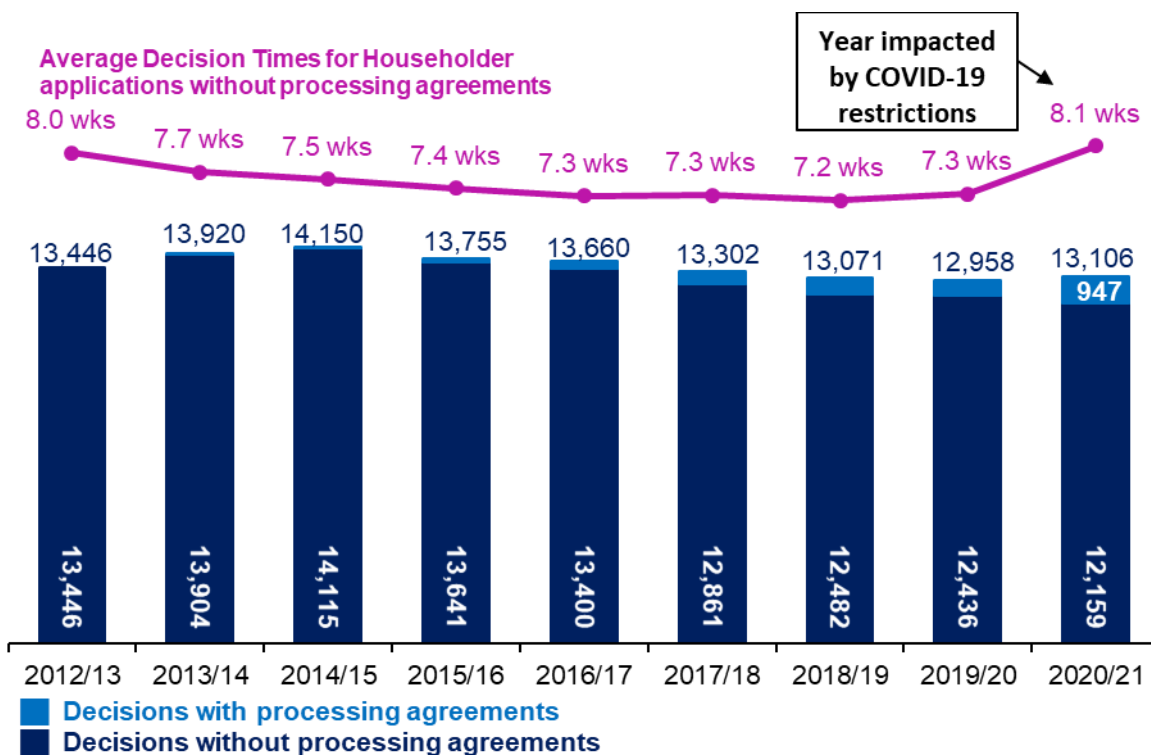
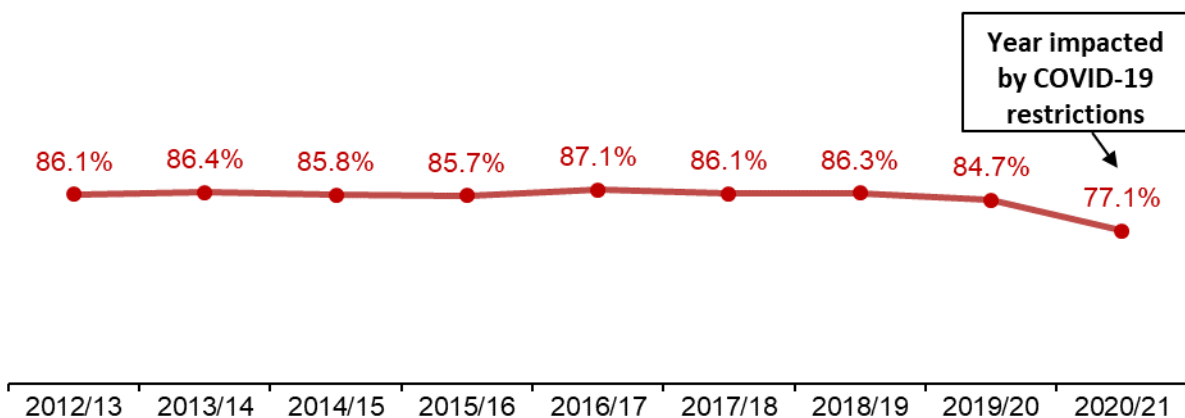


Chart 6: Householder Developments: Percentage under two months



2.4. Local Housing Developments

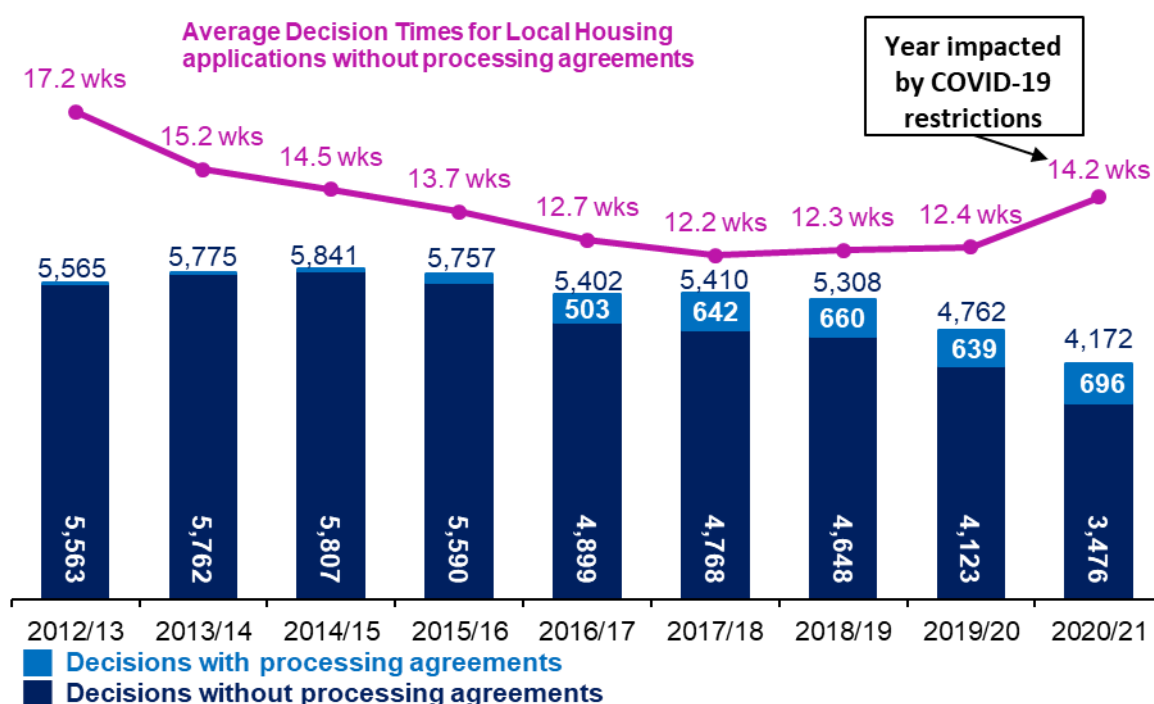
Local Housing developments are those that have less than 50 dwellings and a site area that is less than 2 hectares.

There were 4,172 local housing applications in 2020/21, 590 fewer than the previous year. The 3,476 not subject to processing agreements had an average decision time of 14.2 weeks almost two weeks slower than the previous year.

The average decision time was influenced by a number of applications with long decision times including 99 taking more than a year. Two of these took more than five years with decision times of 6.6 and 9.6 years.

696 local housing applications with processing agreements were determined, 70.0% (487) of these met agreed timescales that had been set between developers and local authorities.

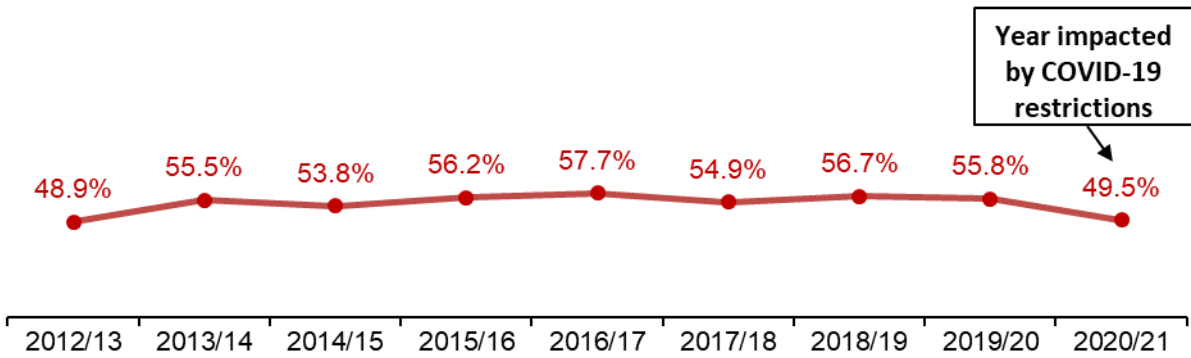
Chart 7: Local Housing Developments



The percentage of local housing applications not subject to processing agreements determined within two months was 49.5%, a drop from 55.8% in the previous year.

There were also two Local Housing pre 3rd August 2009 legacy cases concluded. Further details about legacy cases are in [Section 11](#).

Chart 8: Local Housing Developments: Percentage under two months



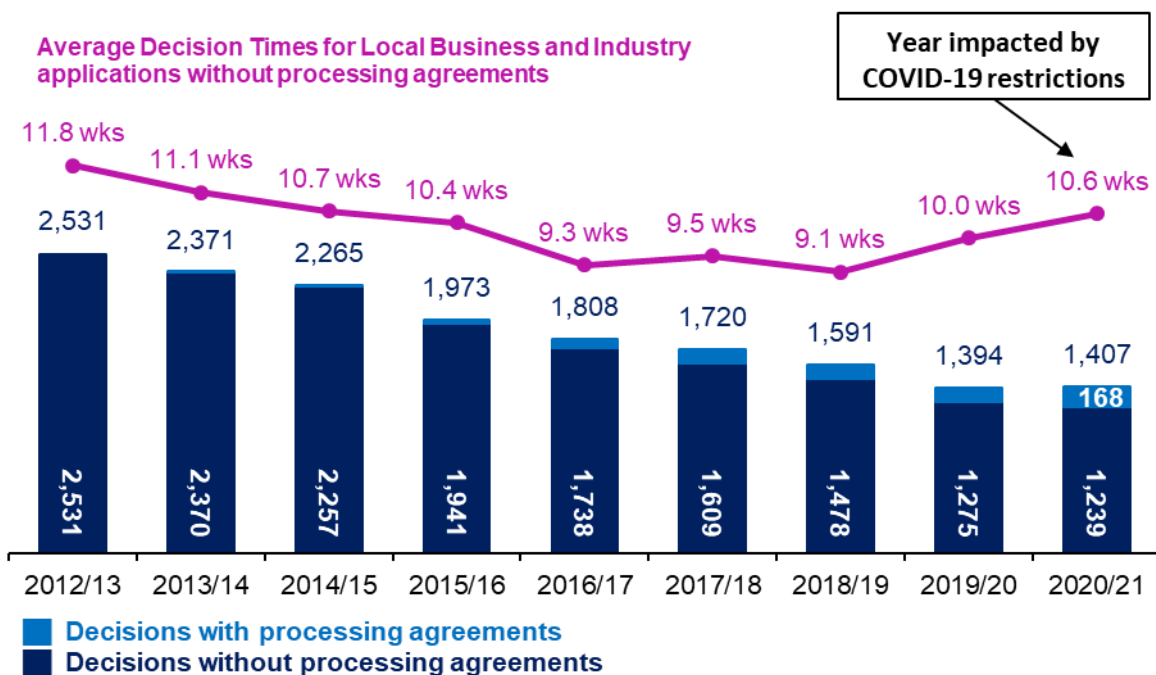
2.5. Local Business and Industry Developments

Business and Industry developments include construction of a building or structure for any of the following: use as an office, for research and development of products or processes, for any industrial process or for use for storage or as a distribution centre.

To be classed as local the gross floor space as a result of the development must not exceed 10,000 square metres and the site area less than 2 hectares.

There were 1,407 local business and industry applications in 2020/21, 13 more than the previous year. This was the first annual increase in the number of local business and industry applications since the start of this data collection in 2012/13. The 1,239 not subject to processing agreements had an average decision time of 10.6 weeks, four days slower than the previous year.

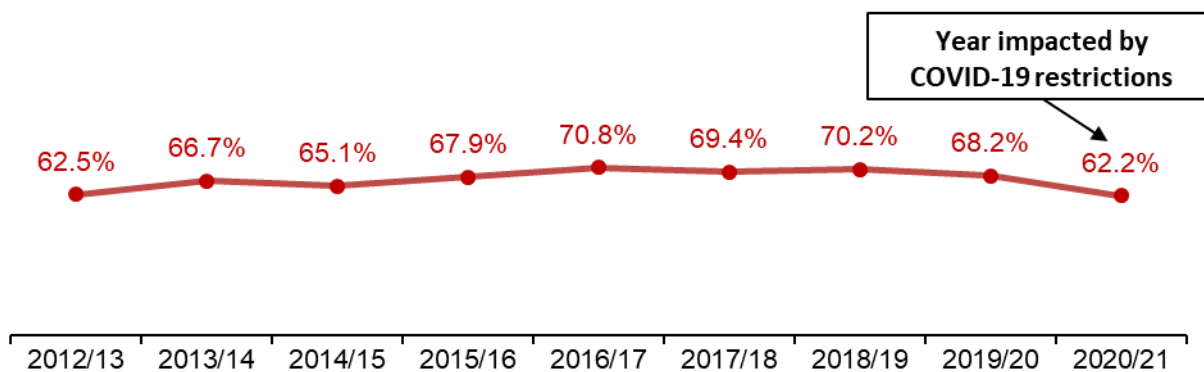
Chart 9: Local Business and Industry Developments: Number of decisions



168 local business and industry applications with processing agreements were determined, 71.4% (120) of these met agreed timescales that had been set between developers and local authorities.

The percentage of local business and industry applications not subject to processing agreements determined within two months was 62.2% a drop from 68.2% in the previous year.

Chart 10: Local Business and Industry Developments: Percentage under two months



2.6. Local Electricity Generation Developments

This includes all types of electricity generating stations. Local developments are those where the capacity is less than 20 megawatts.

There were 123 local electricity generation applications in 2020/21, 15 more than the previous year. The 108 not subject to processing agreements had an average decision time of 16.2 weeks, more than six weeks slower than the previous year.

The average decision time for local electricity developments has varied substantially over the last seven years but prior to 2020/21 the overall trend showed a decrease in average decision time. The number of electricity generation applications is relatively small so the decision times will be volatile and can be significantly influenced by the decision times for individual applications.

The percentage of local electricity generation applications not subject to processing agreements determined within two months was 52.8%, a drop from 64.9% in the previous year.

15 local electricity generation applications with processing agreements were determined, 80.0% (12) of these met agreed timescales that had been set between developers and local authorities.

Chat 11: Local Electricity Generation Developments: Number of decisions

Average Decision Times for Local Electricity Generation applications without processing agreements

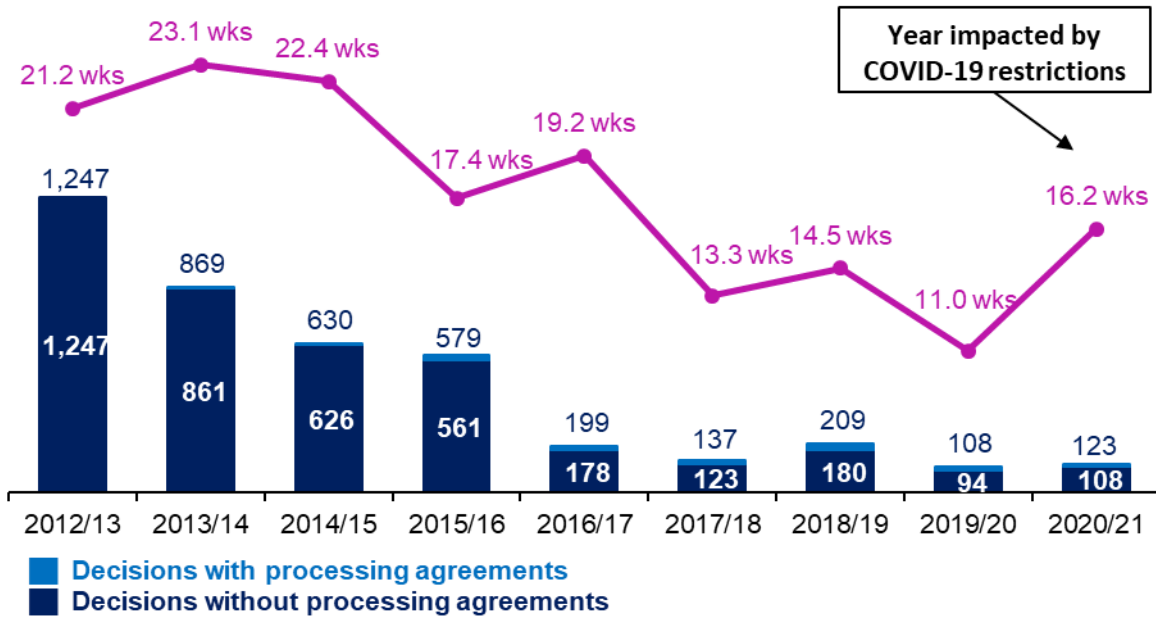
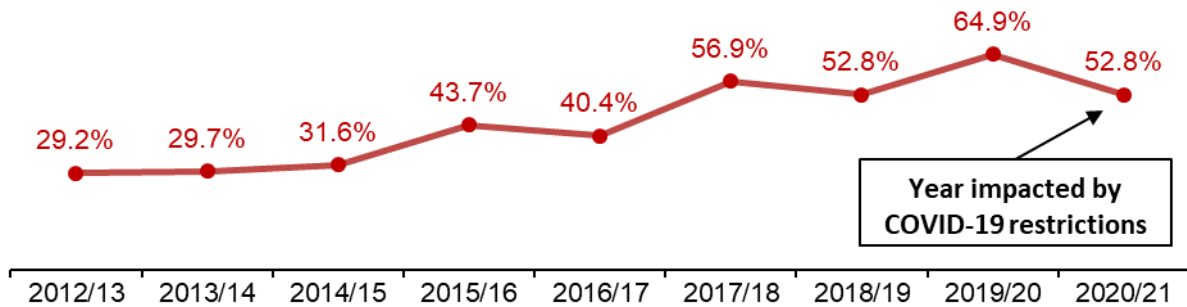


Chart 12: Local Electricity Generation Developments: Percentage under two months



2.7. Local Other Developments

Other Developments are developments not falling wholly within any other single class. They include but are not limited to retail, leisure and entertainment, education, healthcare, community facilities, transport interchanges, water and drainage developments and projects. This class also covers mixed use projects.

Local Other Developments are those where the gross floor space of any building, structure or erection as a result of such development is less than 5,000 square metres and the area of the site is less than 2 hectares.

There were 5,056 local other developments applications in 2020/21, 1,545 (23%) fewer than the previous year. The 4,454 not subject to processing agreements had an average decision time of 11.2 weeks, just over a week slower than the 9.8 weeks for the previous year.

602 local other developments applications with processing agreements were determined, 71.9% (433) of these met agreed timescales that had been set between developers and local authorities.

The percentage of local other developments applications not subject to processing agreements determined within two months was 59.9%, down from 68.5% in the previous year.

Chart 13: Local Other Developments: Number of decisions

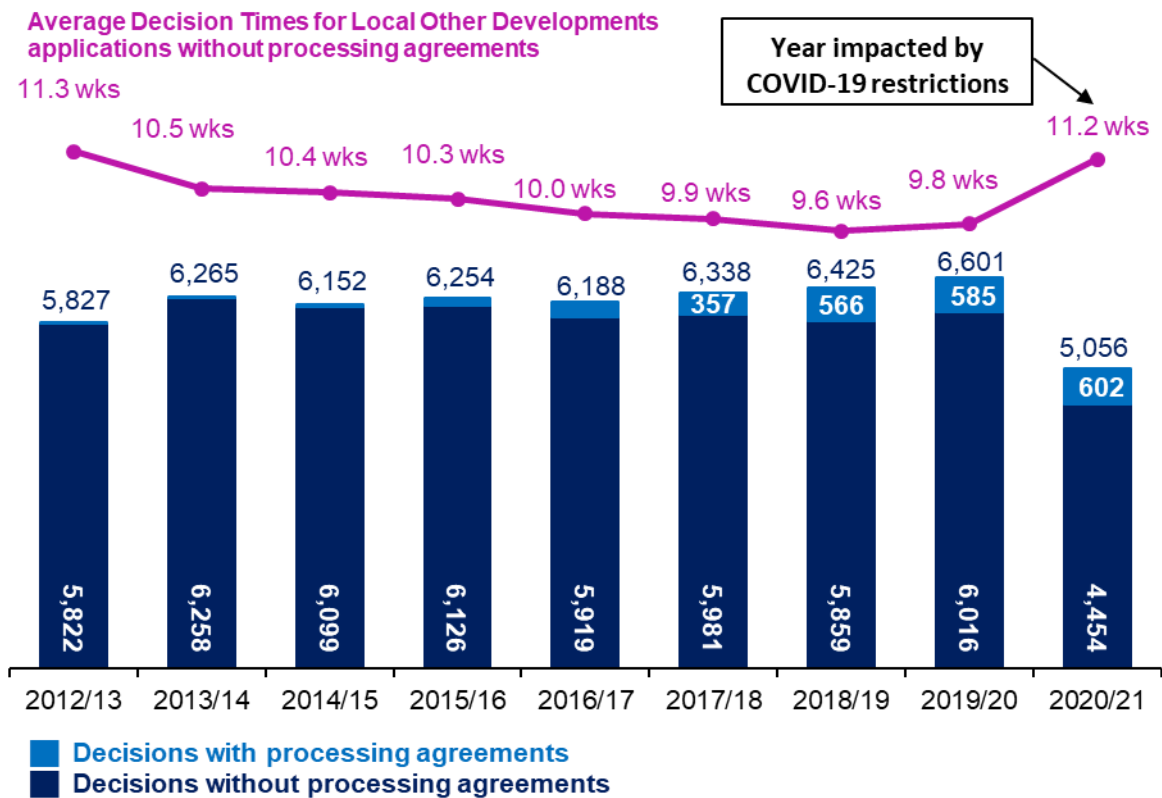
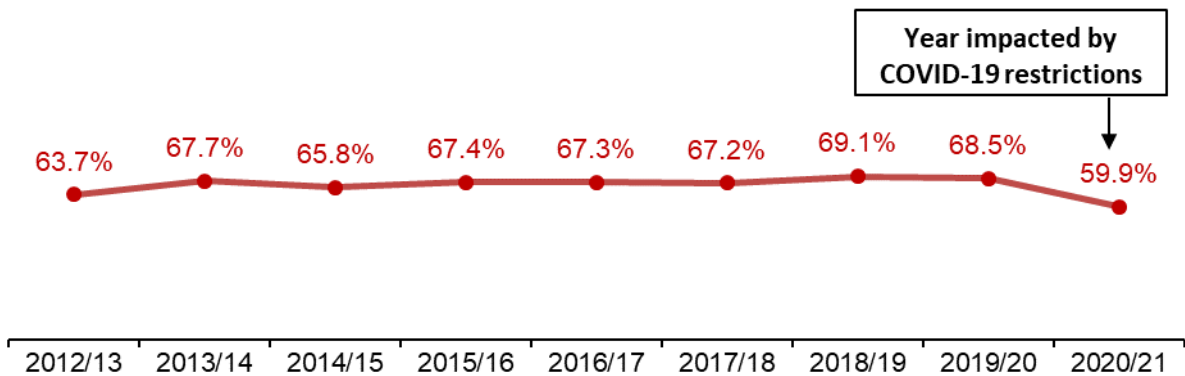


Chart 14: Local Other Developments: Percentage under two months



3. Annual Trends – Major Developments (excludes legacy cases)

Major developments include applications for developments of 50 or more homes, as well as other applications covering areas of development such as minerals, housing, business & industry, waste management, electricity generation, freshwater fish farming, marine finfish farming, marine shellfish farming and other developments.

Classification between local and major developments depends on the particular development type. For example, housing developments are classed as major when the application is for 50 or more dwellings or for a site that exceeds two hectares, whereas electricity generation is classed as major when the capacity of the generating station is or exceeds 20 megawatts.

This section presents annual information on numbers of applications and average timescales across all major developments along with separate figures for key categories. Figures for all categories of development are available in detailed excel tables which can be found in the supporting files for this publication on the Planning Authority Performance Statistics Section on the [Planning Publications](#) web page.

Decision times for major applications may vary greatly between applications so average figures based on a small number of applications can be volatile.

Some local authorities use processing agreements where the developer and the local authority agree on timescales for decisions. When an application is subject to a processing agreement it is not included in average decision time calculations.

Legacy cases validated before 3rd August 2009 are not included in the figures but are reported separately in [Section 11](#). Figures for all applications including legacy cases were reported up to and including 2016/17 and are available in [previous publications](#).

During 2020/21 56 applications, just under a third of all major development decisions not subject to a processing agreement, involved a clock stop at some point within the application process. The average time stopped was 43.7 weeks for these applications. This will have had an effect on overall average decision times. See [Section 12](#) for further details on clock stops.

3.1. All Major Developments

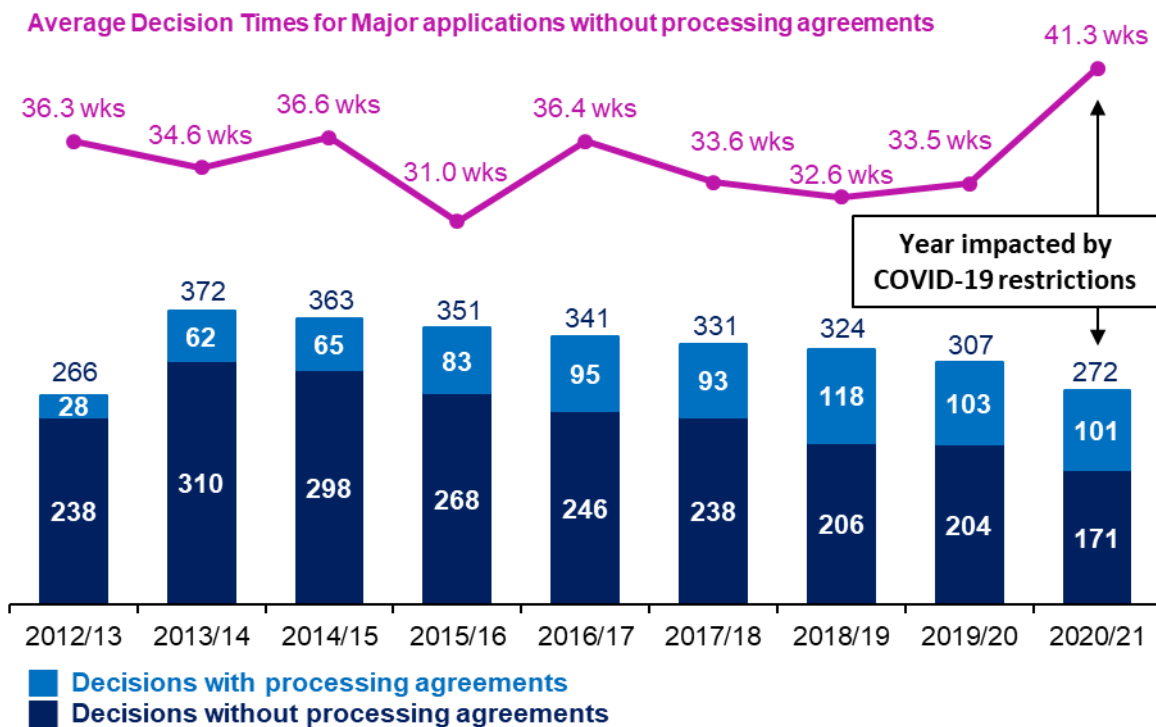
There were 272 major development applications determined in 2020/21, 35 fewer than in the previous year. The 171 not subject to processing agreements had an average decision time of 41.3 weeks, just under eight weeks week slower than the 33.5 weeks for the previous year.

The average decision time of 41.3 weeks was influenced by a number of applications with long decision times including five taking over three years, two of these taking more than five years (5.7 years and 9.9 years). If the two applications taking over five years are excluded the average decision time for the remaining 169 applications is 37.0 weeks, more than four weeks quicker. If the five taking more than three years are excluded the time for the remaining 166 applications is 33.9 weeks more than seven weeks quicker.

A number of applications were concluded that were subject to processing agreements, these are not included in average time calculations. In 2020/21 there were 101 major development applications with processing agreements, 57.4% (58) of these met agreed timescales that had been set between developers and local authorities.

There was also one Major pre 3rd August 2009 legacy case concluded. Further details about legacy cases are in [Section 11](#).

Chart 15: All Major Developments



3.2. Major Housing Developments

Major Housing developments are those with 50 or more dwellings or with a site area that is or exceeds 2 hectares where the predominant use is for housing.

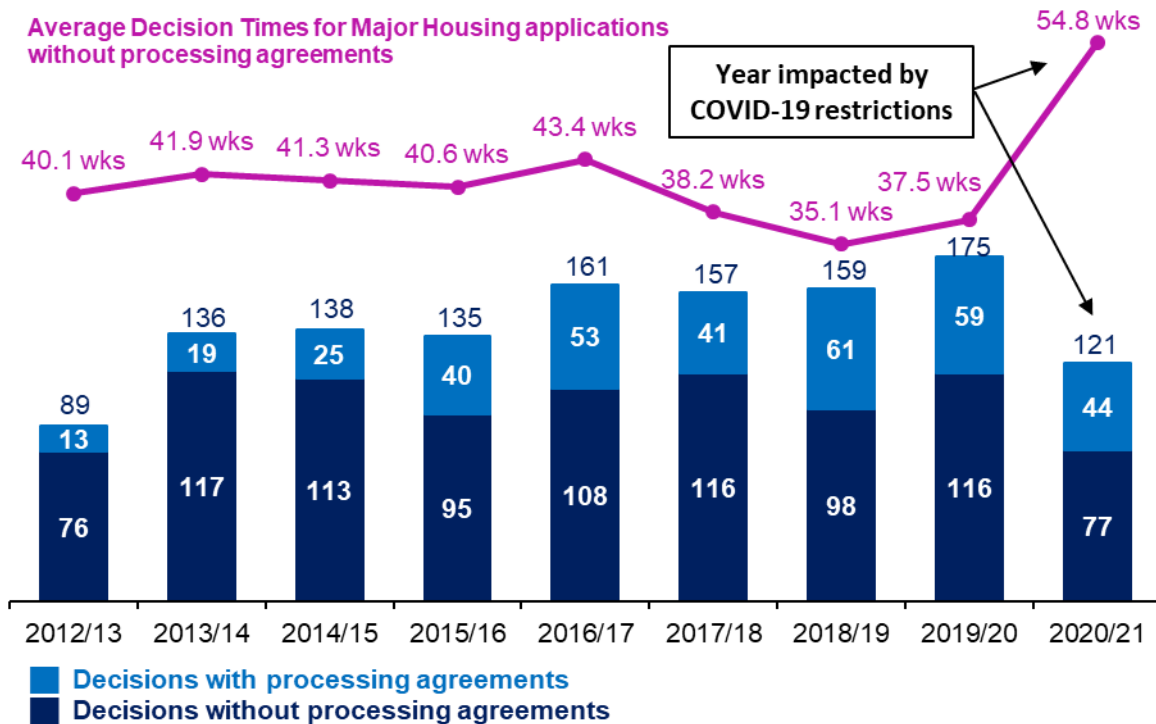
There were 121 major housing development applications determined in 2020/21, 54 fewer than in the previous year. The 77 not subject to processing agreements had an average decision time of 54.8 weeks, more than 17 weeks slower than the previous year.

The average decision time of 54.8 weeks was influenced by a number of applications with long decision times including five taking over three years, two of these taking more than five years (5.7 years and 9.9 years). If the two applications taking over five years are excluded the average decision time for the remaining 75 applications is 45.4 weeks, more than nine weeks quicker. If the five taking more than three years are excluded the time for the remaining 72 applications is 38.7 weeks more than 16 weeks quicker.

There were 44 Major Housing development applications with processing agreements, 54.5% (24) of these met agreed timescales that had been set between developers and local authorities.

There was also one Major Housing pre 3rd August 2009 legacy case concluded. Further details about legacy cases are in [Section 11](#).

Chart 16: Major Housing Developments



3.3. Major Business and Industry Developments

These include construction of a building or structure for any of the following: use as an office, for research and development of products or processes, for any industrial process or for use for storage or as a distribution centre.

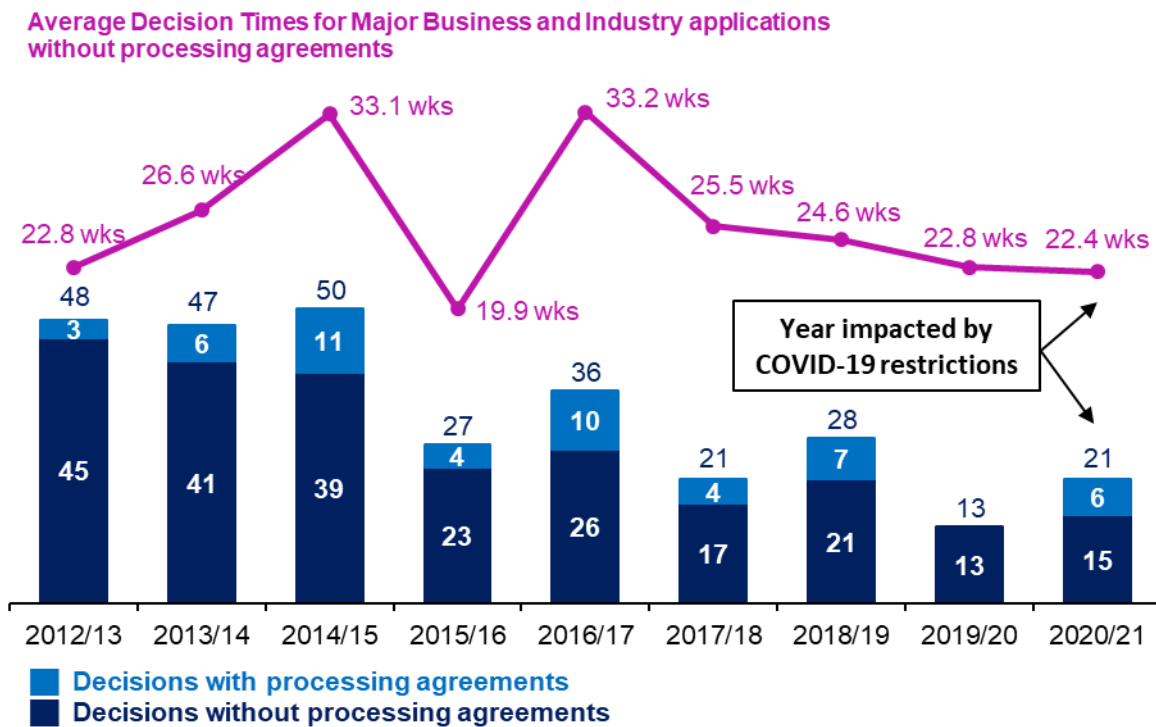
To be classed as major the gross floor space as a result of the development must exceed 10,000 square metres or the site must exceed 2 hectares.

There were 21 Major Business and Industry development applications determined in 2020/21, eight more than in the previous year. The 15 not subject to processing agreements had an average decision time of 22.4 weeks, three days quicker than the previous year.

There were six Major business and industry development applications with processing agreements, 83.3% (5) of these met agreed timescales that had been set between developers and local authorities.

The number of major business and industry applications is very small and so average decision times may be significantly influenced by the decision time for a single application.

Chart 17: Major Business and Industry Developments



3.4. Major Electricity Generation Developments

This includes all types of electricity generating stations.

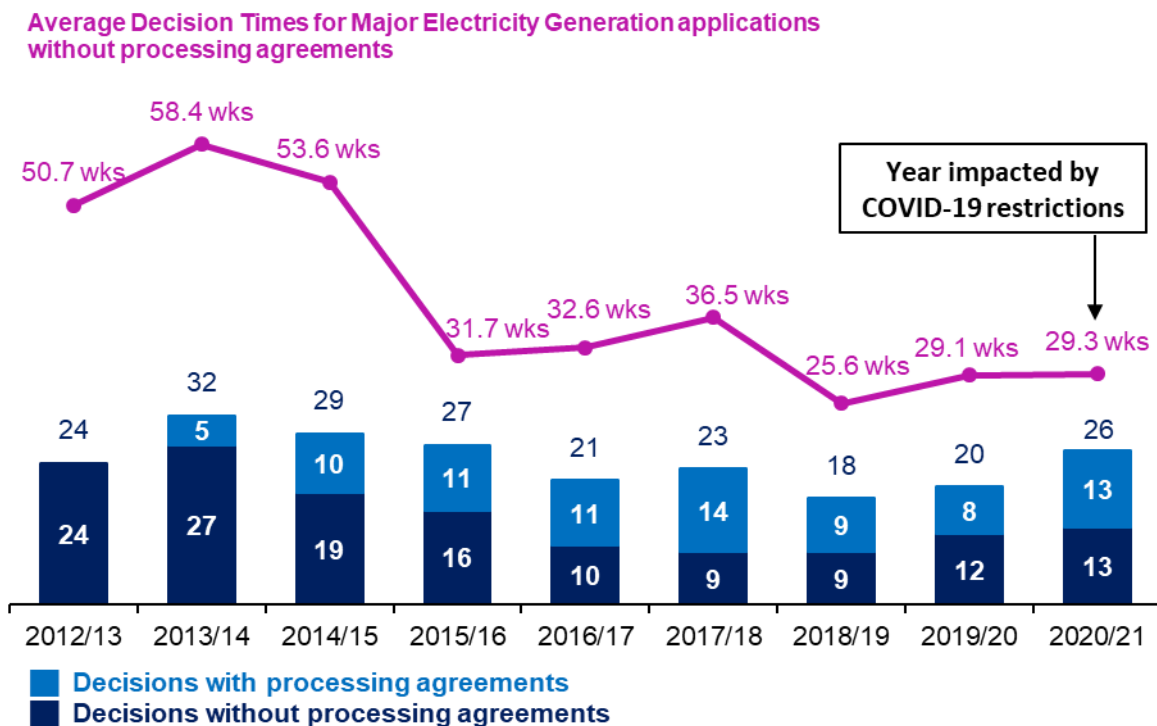
Major Electricity Generation developments are those where the capacity is or exceeds 20 megawatts.

There were 26 Major Electricity Generation development applications determined in 2020/21, six more than in the previous year. The 13 not subject to processing agreements had an average decision time of 29.3 weeks, just over a day slower than the previous year.

There were 13 Major Electricity Generation development applications with processing agreements, 53.8% (7) of these met agreed timescales that had been set between developers and local authorities.

The number of Major Electricity Generation applications is very small and so average decision times may be significantly influenced by the decision time for a single application.

Chart 18: Major Electricity Generation Developments



3.5. Major Other Developments

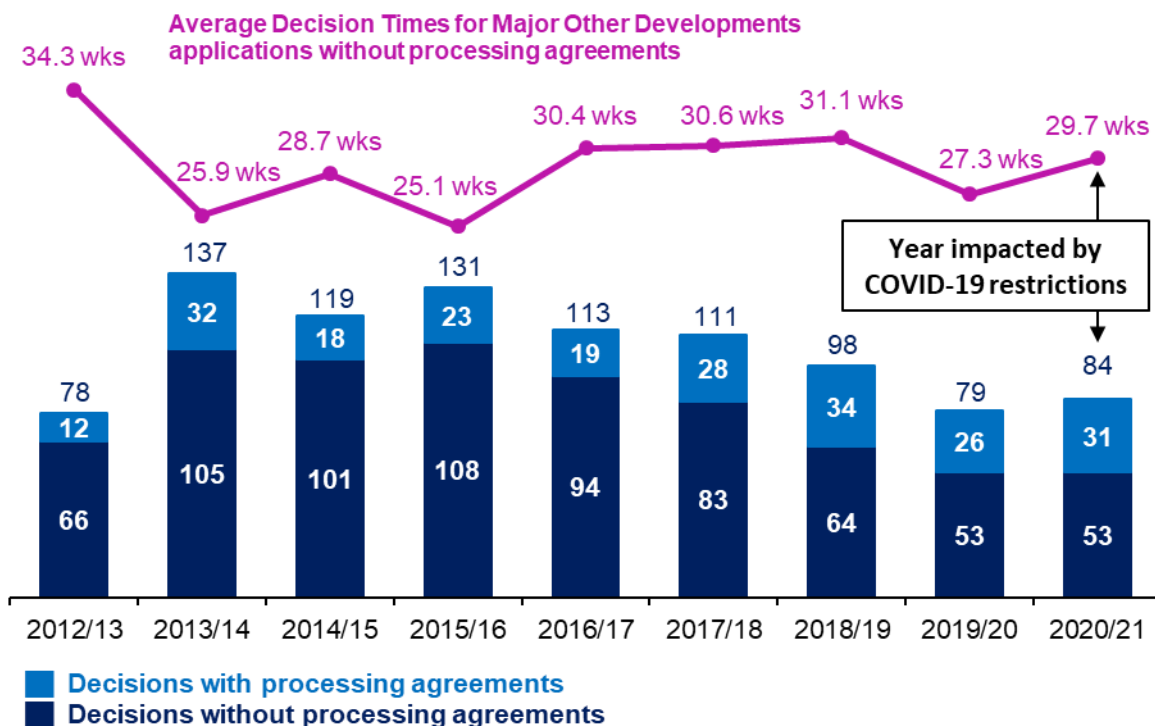
Other developments are developments not falling wholly within any other single class. They include but are not limited to retail, leisure and entertainment, education, healthcare, community facilities, transport interchanges, water and drainage developments and projects. This class also covers mixed use projects.

Major Other Developments are where the gross floor space of any building, structure or erection as a result of such development is or exceeds 5,000 square metres or the area of the site is or exceeds 2 hectares.

There were 84 Major Other Developments applications determined in 2020/21, five more than in the previous year. The 53 not subject to processing agreements had an average decision time of 29.7 weeks, over two weeks slower than the previous year.

There were 31 Major Other Developments applications with processing agreements, 51.6% (16) of these met agreed timescales that had been set between developers and local authorities.

Chart 19: Major Other Developments



4. Processing Agreements

Some local authorities use processing agreements where the developer and the local authority agree on timescales for decisions. Some agreements are made at the outset of an application whereas others have been activated at a later stage.

Applications subject to a processing agreement are not included in average decision time calculations.

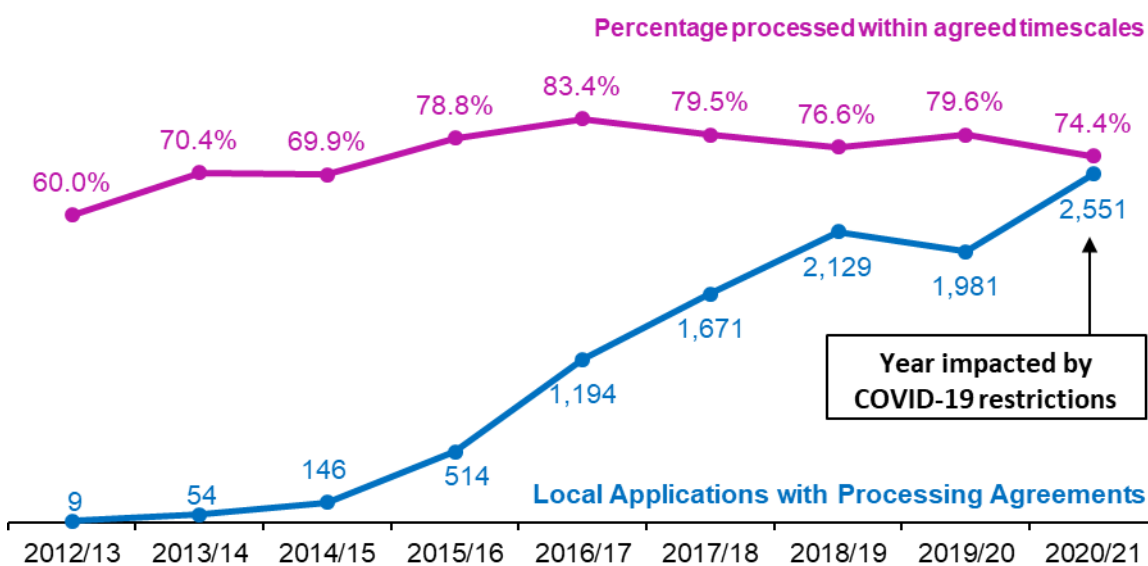
There has been a marked increase in the percentage of applications subject to processing agreements since last year. A number of authorities reported increased use of processing agreements as part of measures to manage the impact of COVID-19 restrictions and delays.

For 2020/21 there were 3,102 applications subject to a processing agreement, 10.0% of all applications. 74.0% of these were processed within agreed timescales. In 2019/20 7.1% of applications were subject to processing agreements.

25 out of 34 planning authorities used processing agreements in 2020/21. Three authorities had just over half of the total number of applications subject to processing agreements - Aberdeenshire, City of Edinburgh and Fife with 604, 494, and 474 processing agreements respectively.

2,551 applications subject to a processing agreement were for local developments with 74.4% processed within agreed timescales. This represents 10.4% of all local development applications concluded in 2020/21. 7.5% of local applications were subject to a processing agreement in 2019/20.

Chart 20: Applications for Local Developments with processing agreements



The 101 major applications concluded by the use of a processing agreement, 57.4% of which were processed within agreed timescales, represents 37.1% of all major development applications determined in 2020/21. This compares to 33.6% of major applications subject to a processing agreement in the previous year.

Chart 21: Applications for Major Developments with processing agreements

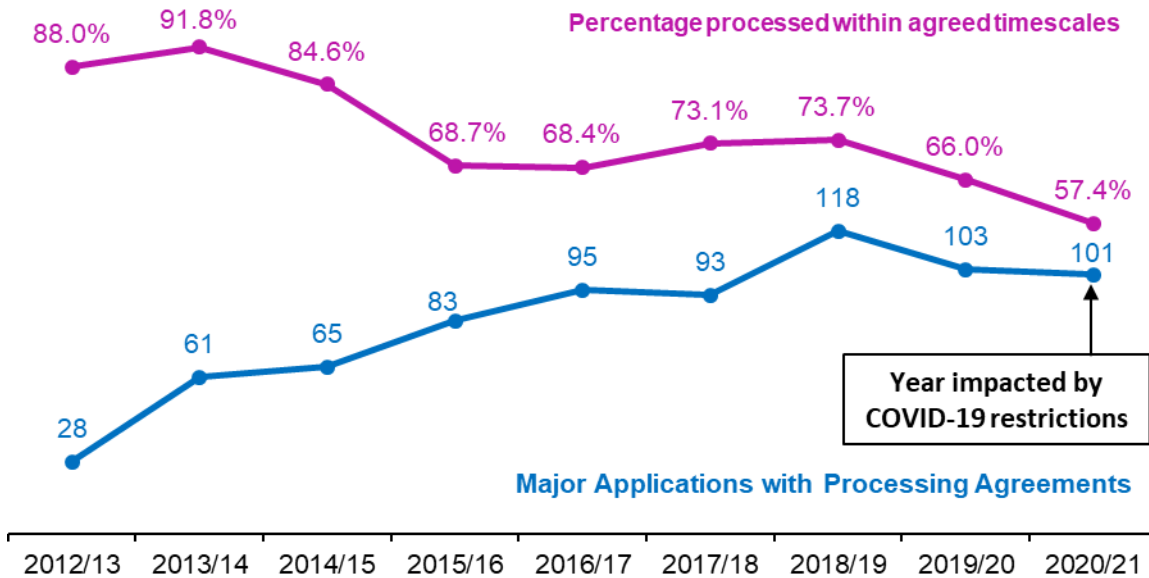
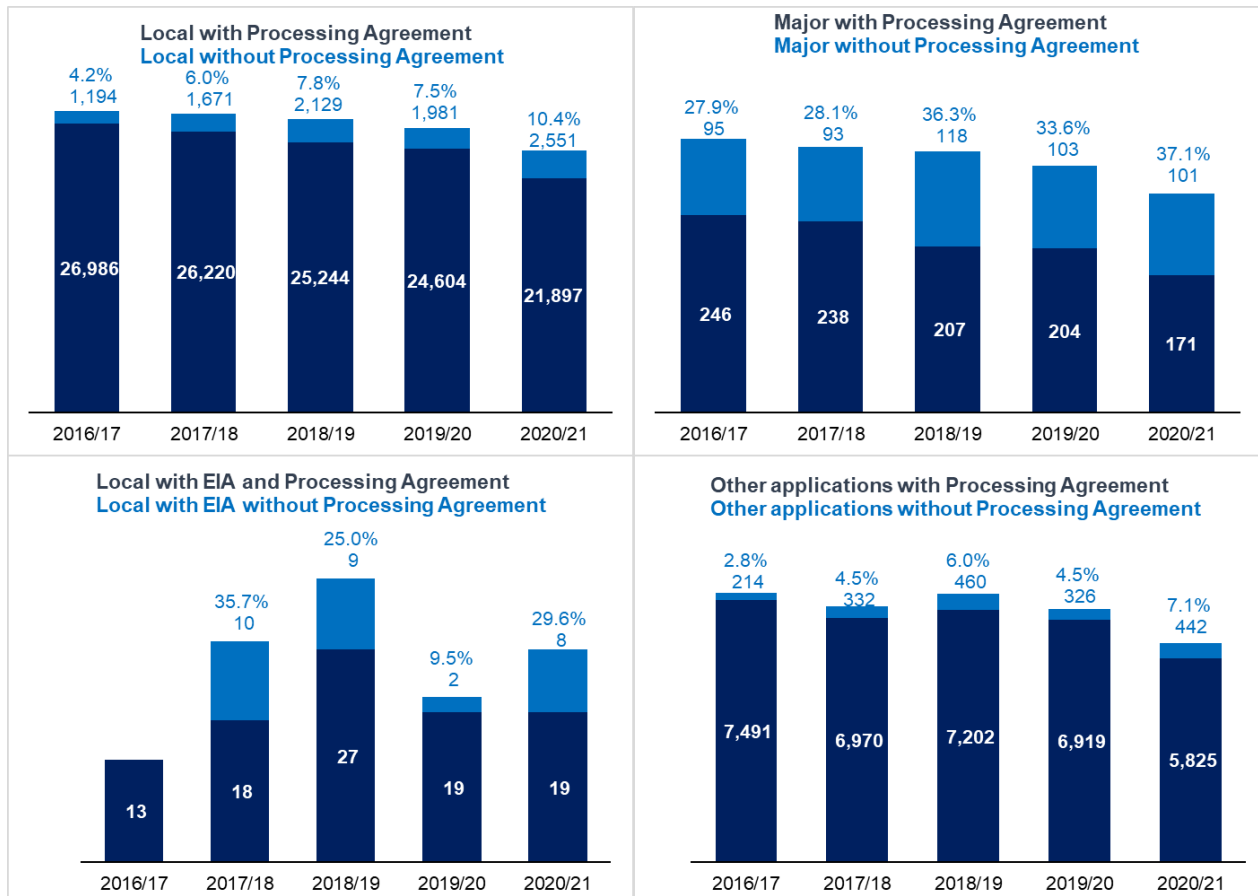


Chart 22: Proportion of applications with processing agreements



5. Applications by Development Type

5.1. Local Developments

In 2020/21 a total of 21,897 local applications not subject to processing agreements had an average decision time of 10.0 weeks. An additional 2,551 applications were subject to processing agreements. The number of decisions and average decision times vary between types of development (Table 1).

More than half (55.5%) of all local applications were from householders, and these had the shortest average decision time (8.1 weeks). Mineral applications (0.1% of all local decisions) had the longest average decision time (22.0 weeks).

Chart 23: Local Developments: Number of decisions

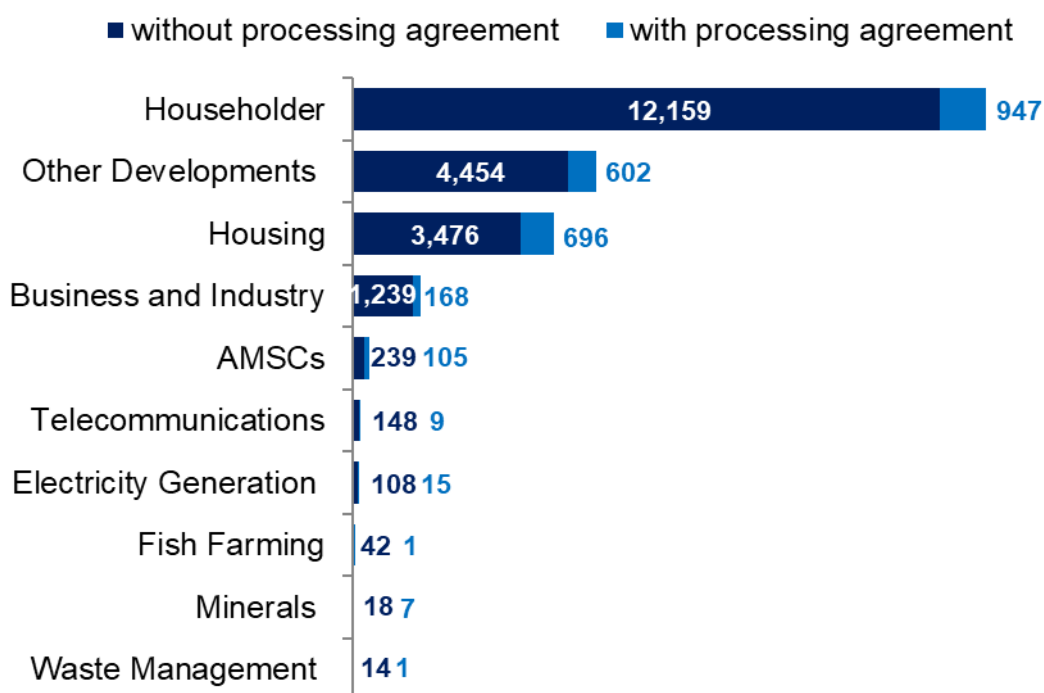
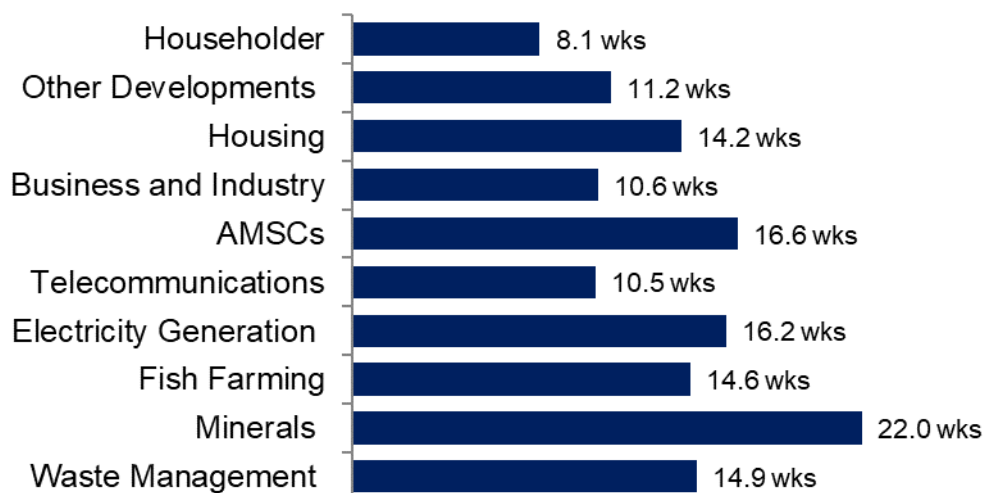


Chart 24: Local Developments: Average decision time (weeks)



5.2. Major Developments

The average decision time for 171 major applications not subject to processing agreements in 2020/21 was 41.3 weeks. In addition, there were 101 major developments decided that had processing agreements in place. The number of decisions and average decision times vary between types of development (Table 2).

The shortest average decision time of 22.4 weeks was for business and industry developments (9% of all major developments), the longest average decision time was for housing applications (54.8 weeks, 45% of all major developments).

Chart 25: Major Developments by Development Type: Number of decisions

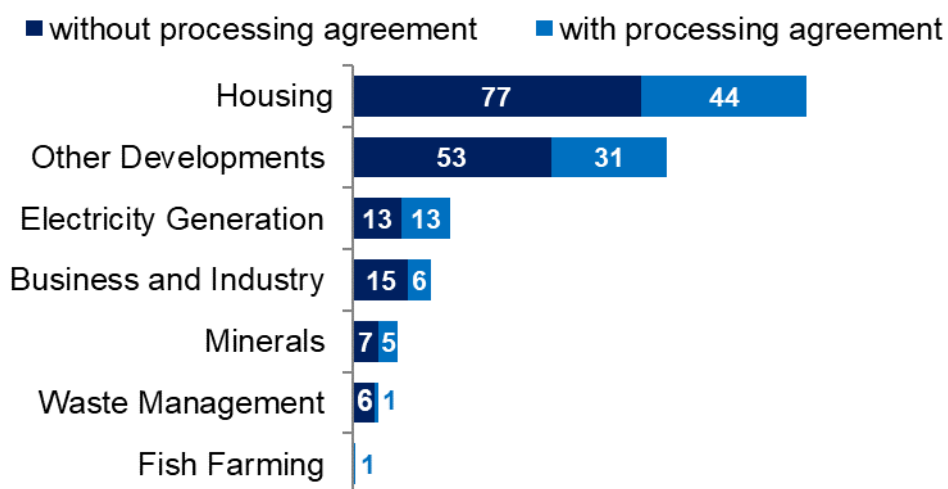


Chart 26: Major Developments by Development Type: Average decision time (weeks)

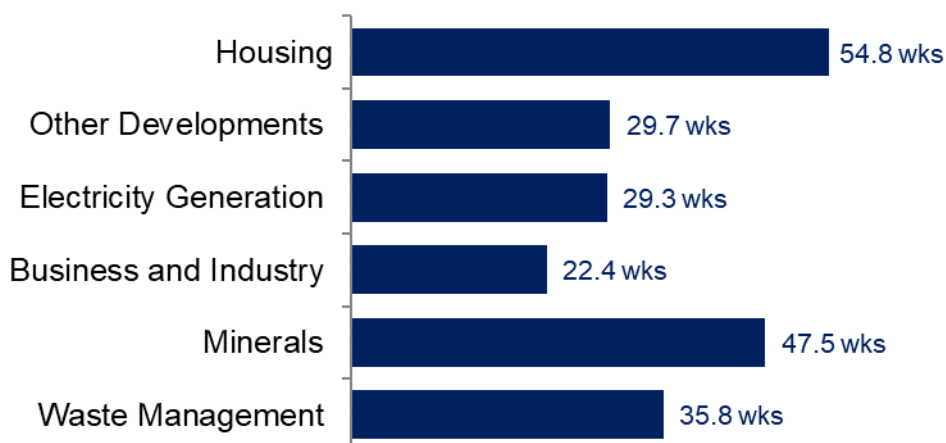


Table 1: Local Developments: annual average decision times by Development Type^{1,2,3}

Post-3rd August Local Developments	2020/21		2019/20		2018/19		2017/18		2016/17	
	Number of decisions	Average decision time (weeks)	Number of decisions	Average decision time (weeks)	Number of decisions	Average decision time (weeks)	Number of decisions	Average decision time (weeks)	Number of decisions	Average decision time (weeks)
Householder	12,159	8.1	12,436	7.3	12,482	7.2	12,861	7.3	13,400	7.3
Other Developments	4,454	11.2	6,016	9.8	5,859	9.6	5,981	9.9	5,919	10.0
Housing	3,476	14.2	4,123	12.4	4,648	12.3	4,768	12.2	4,899	12.7
Business & Industry	1,239	10.6	1,275	10.0	1,478	9.1	1,609	9.5	1,738	9.3
Telecommunications	148	10.5	261	10.2	230	8.8	504	8.7	457	8.1
AMSCs	239	16.6	310	16.1	289	13.8	284	13.9	294	14.5
Electricity Generation	108	16.2	94	11.0	180	14.5	123	13.3	178	19.2
Fish Farming	42	14.6	37	16.0	33	15.2	56	9.3	44	8.5
Minerals	18	22.0	36	20.5	26	17.4	17	27.1	28	19.9
Waste Management	14	14.9	16	14.4	20	9.4	17	16.6	29	11.6
TOTAL	21,897	10.0	24,604	9.1	25,245	9.0	26,220	9.0	26,986	9.2

1. Figures do not include applications subject to processing agreements.
2. The analysis in Sections 2 to 5 covers applications validated in the current planning system, post 3rd August 2009. Legacy cases validated before 3rd August 2009 are not included in the figures but are reported separately in [Section 11](#). Figures for all applications including legacy cases were reported up to and including 2016/17 and are available in [previous publications](#).
3. Figures for 2012/13 to 2015/16 are available in [previous publications](#).

Table 2: Major Developments: annual average decision times by Development Type^{1,2,3}

Post-3rd August Major Developments	2020/21		2019/20		2018/19		2017/18		2016/17	
	Number of decisions	Average decision time (weeks)	Number of decisions	Average decision time (weeks)	Number of decisions	Average decision time (weeks)	Number of decisions	Average decision time (weeks)	Number of decisions	Average decision time (weeks)
Housing	77	54.8	116	37.5	98	35.1	116	38.2	108	43.4
Other Developments	53	29.7	53	27.3	64	31.1	83	30.6	94	30.4
Business & Industry	15	22.4	13	22.8	21	24.6	17	25.5	26	33.2
Electricity Generation	13	29.3	12	29.1	9	25.6	9	36.5	10	32.6
Minerals	7	47.5	8	44.0	10	41.9	8	23.9	5	30.0
Waste Management	6	35.8	1	16.6	3	27.4	5	14.0	3	18.6
Fish Farming	0	-	1	25.9	1	36.9	0	-	0	-
TOTAL	171	41.3	204	33.5	206	32.6	238	33.6	246	36.4

1. Figures do not include applications subject to processing agreements.
2. The analysis in Sections 2 to 5 covers applications validated in the current planning system, post 3rd August 2009. Legacy cases validated before 3rd August 2009 are not included in the figures but are reported separately in [Section 11](#). Figures for all applications including legacy cases were reported up to and including 2016/17 and are available in [previous publications](#).
3. Figures for 2012/13 to 2015/16 are available in [previous publications](#).

6. Delegation Rates

Schemes of Delegation identify who makes the decision on different types of planning application, whether it be an appointed officer or elected members. This also influences the route for any subsequent appeal. These schemes are required by legislation and are available on the websites of each planning authority.

The delegation rates shown below measure the proportion of planning decisions that are made by appointed officers. The delegation rate for 2020/21 was 96.3%, matching the previous year the highest delegation rate since 2012/13.

COVID-19 restrictions initially resulted in limited opportunities for committees to meet which may have impacted on the proportion of applications with delegated decisions.

Table 3: Percentage of all applications delegated in period

2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13
96.3%	96.3%	95.8%	95.7%	95.3%	94.9%	94.5%	92.6%	91.2%

7. Approval Rates

The overall rate of approvals³ was 94.5%, the highest approval rate since the start of this data collection in 2012/13.

Table 4: Percentage of all applications approved in period

2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13
94.5%	94.2%	93.7%	93.7%	94.2%	93.8%	93.9%	94.1%	92.8%

8. Appeals and Local Reviews

If an applicant does not agree with the decision of a planning authority then they can ask for a review or appeal of the decision. They can also ask for a review or appeal if the authority doesn't make a decision within the time period set by law. If the application was decided by a planning officer on behalf of the authority, then the decision is reviewed by the Local Review Body⁴. If the application was decided by councillors, then the appeal is made to Scottish Ministers.

COVID-19 restrictions initially resulted in limited opportunities for Local Review Bodies to meet which may have impacted on the number of appeals processed.

³ Decisions on applications classified as N17 Other consents and certificates are not included in the calculation of approval rates.

⁴ Local Review Bodies were introduced in 2009. They consist of three or more elected members from the planning authority and their purpose is to review decisions on planning applications for certain types of development taken by officers under delegated powers. Requests for review must be made within 3 months of the decision. Reviews can only be requested where planning permission has been refused or where conditions have been imposed on a consent.

Local Review Bodies dealt with 442 cases in 2020/21, of which 62.9% had the original decision upheld. In the previous year 65.4% (of 506 cases) had the original decision upheld.

In addition, 49.8% of 229 delegated appeals to Scottish Ministers in 2020/21 had the original decision upheld. This compares with 61.0% (of 267 cases) for 2019/20.

9. Enforcement Activity

Enforcement covers the actions that can be taken when developments happen without permission or when conditions have not been followed. There can be a variety of actions that are taken. Authorities have powers to serve notices asking for more information about a development. They can stop a development that does not have permission, or where the development does not follow the conditions attached to the permission which was granted. The Authority can also issue a fixed penalty or refer the matter to the Procurator Fiscal.

The total number of enforcement cases taken up in 2020/21 was 5,366. There were 297 notices served and two reports to the Procurator Fiscal. No cases resulted in prosecution.

10. Applications by Planning Authority

10.1. Local Developments

Chart 27 shows the mix of planning applications by development type across all planning authorities (excluding legacy cases and applications with processing agreements). The number in brackets gives the total number of local development decisions by planning authority.

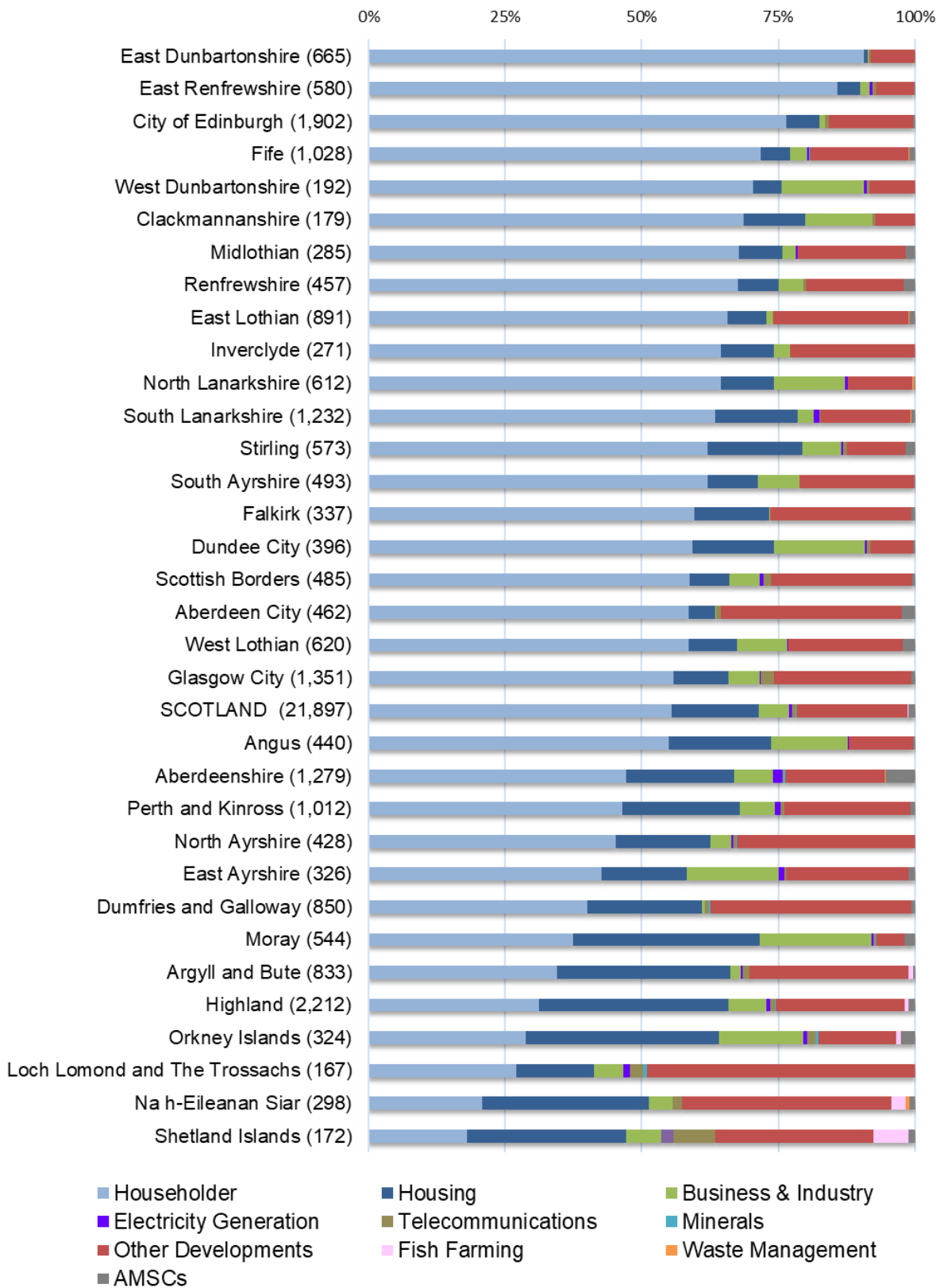
Across Scotland more than half (55.5%) of decisions made on local developments without processing agreements were for householder applications. For 22 planning authorities at least half of decisions made on local developments not subject to processing agreements were for householder applications.

The case mix may influence overall average decision times within a particular authority. For example, given that householder applications are on average decided more quickly than other types, it might be expected that overall average decision times will be lower for those planning authorities that have a higher proportion of householder applications in their case mix.

The number of applications and average decision time for the Cairngorms National Park (13.0 weeks for one Other Development Local application) have not been shown in Charts 27 to 29. It is expected that Cairngorms has a longer average decision time as they do not receive planning applications directly but are notified of applications which have been made to those planning authorities within the National Park boundaries. Cairngorms National Park may then decide to call applications in for their determination. Planning applications are likely to have

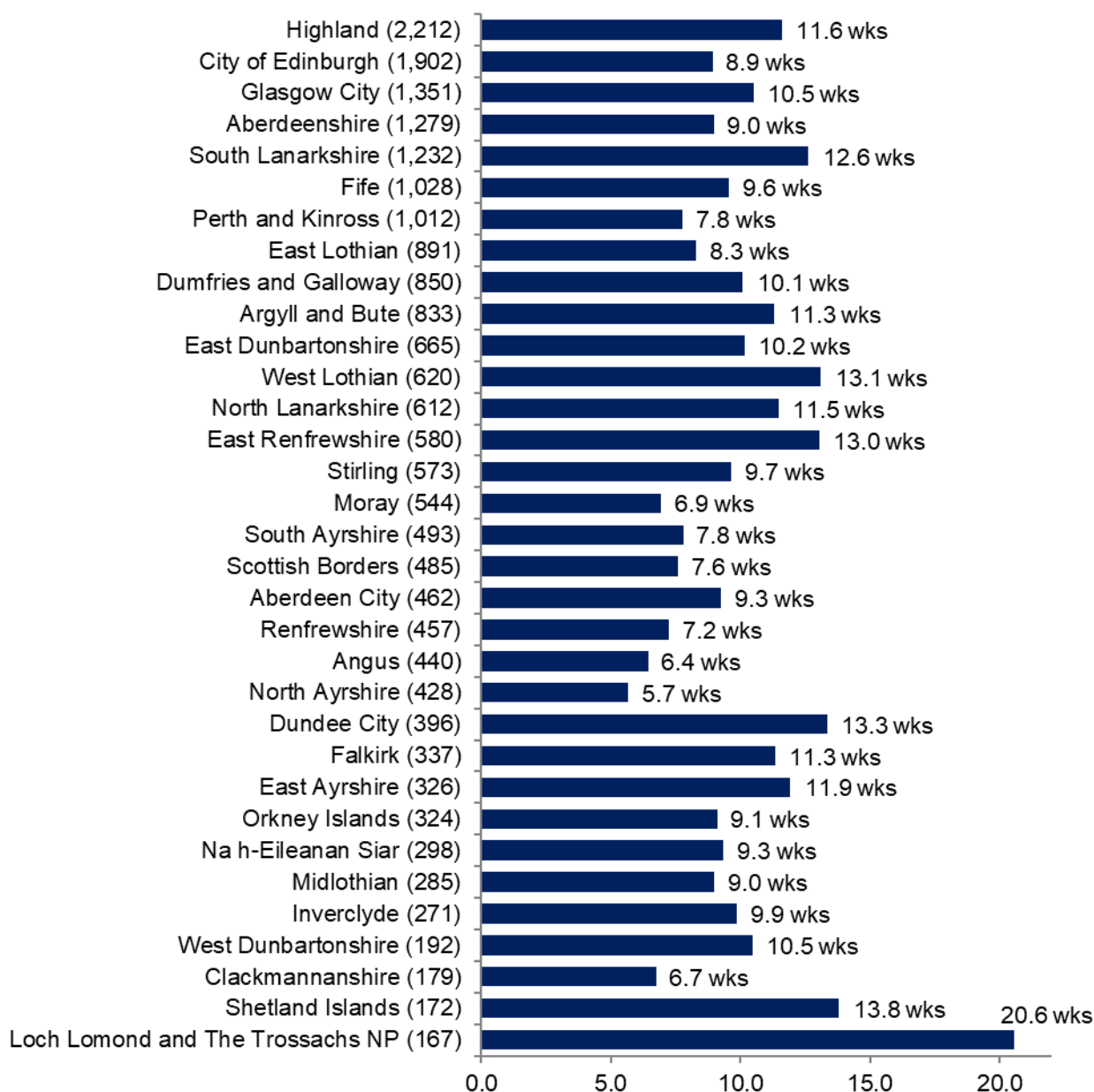
already been in the system for a number of weeks before being transferred to Cairngorms National Park.

Chart 27: Local Developments by Planning Authority and Development



Charts 28 and 29 show average decision times for local developments without processing agreements and the percentage of decisions made in less than two months ordered by the number of decisions in each planning authority.

Chart 28: Local Developments by Planning Authority: Average decision time (weeks)

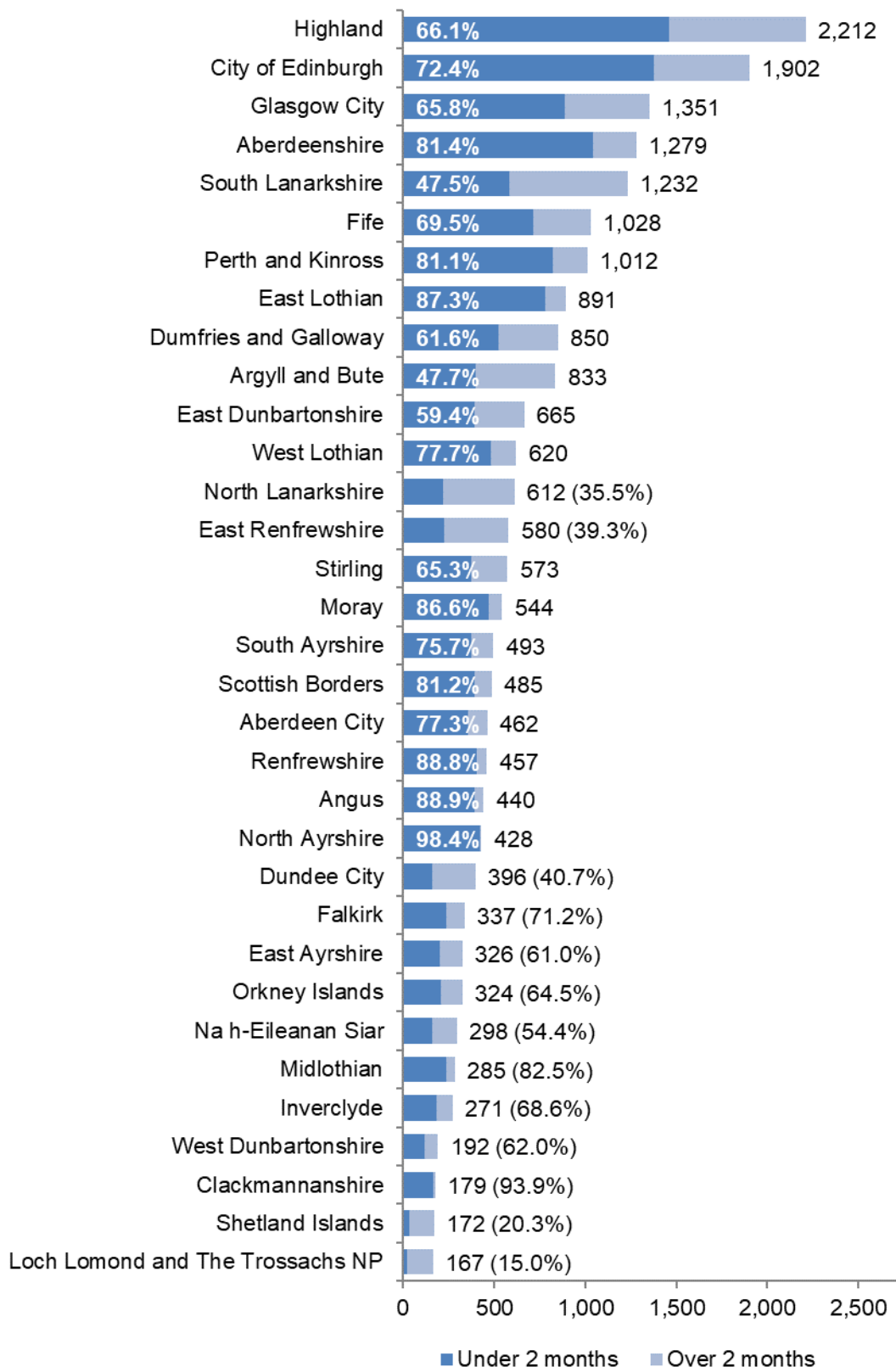


The number in brackets gives the total number of local development decisions not subject to processing agreements by planning authority.

Information on decision times for previous years is available in detailed excel tables from the Planning Authority Performance Statistics Section on the [Planning Publications](#) page of the Scottish Government's website.

At Scotland level 67.8% of decisions on local developments without processing agreements were made in less than two months. Highland made the most decisions (2,212) and 66.1% of these were made in less than 2 months.

Chart 29: Local Developments by Planning Authority: Percentage under 2 months

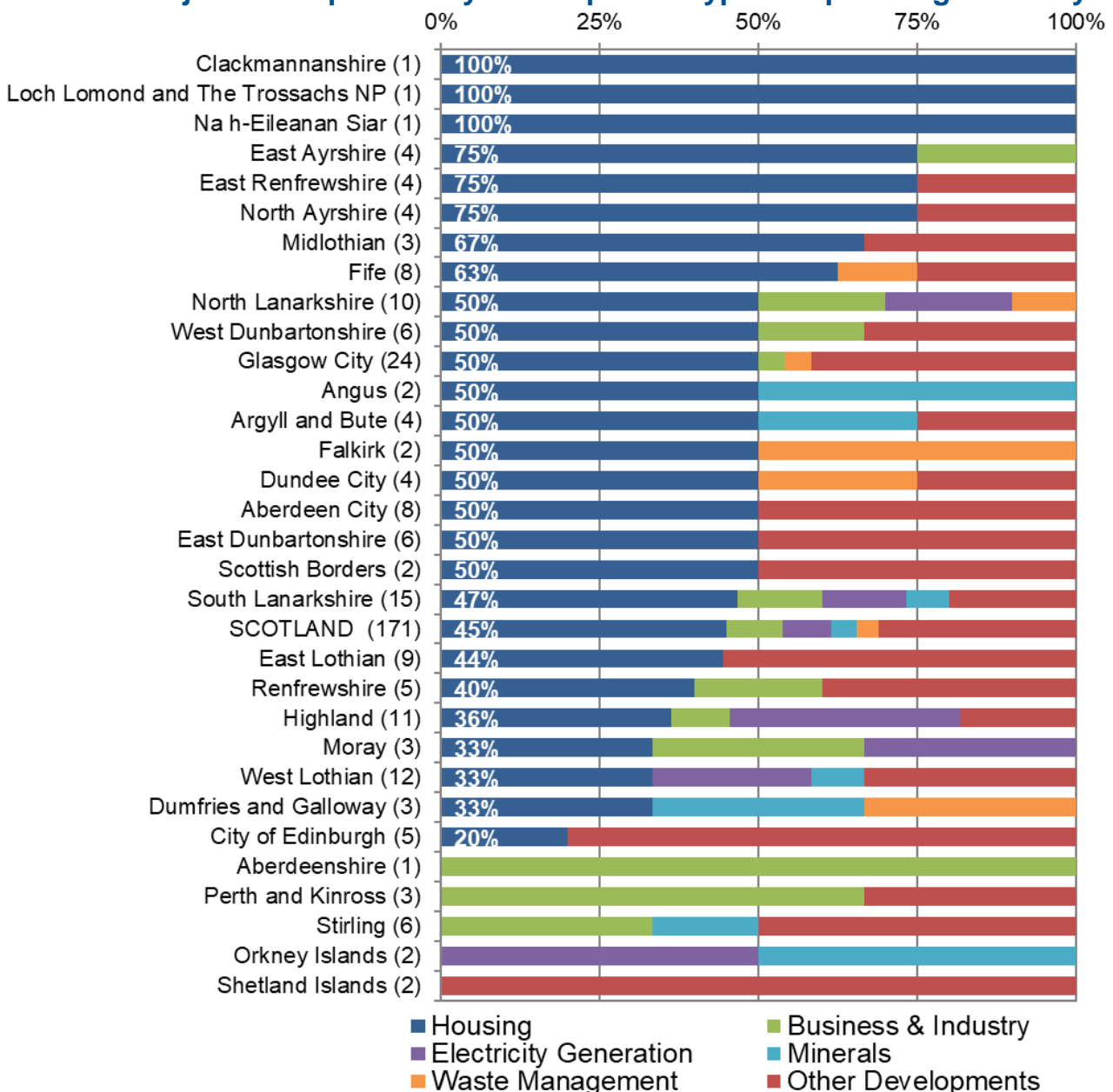


10.2. Major Developments

Cairngorms National Park, Inverclyde and South Ayrshire did not make decisions for any major developments without processing agreements in 2020/21 and are therefore not included in the charts in this section.

Chart 30 shows the case mix of major developments not subject to processing agreements for each planning authority.

Chart 30: Major Developments by Development Type and planning authority



The number in brackets gives the total number of major development decisions by planning authority (excluding applications with processing agreements). Where appropriate the percentage of applications for Major Housing is shown.

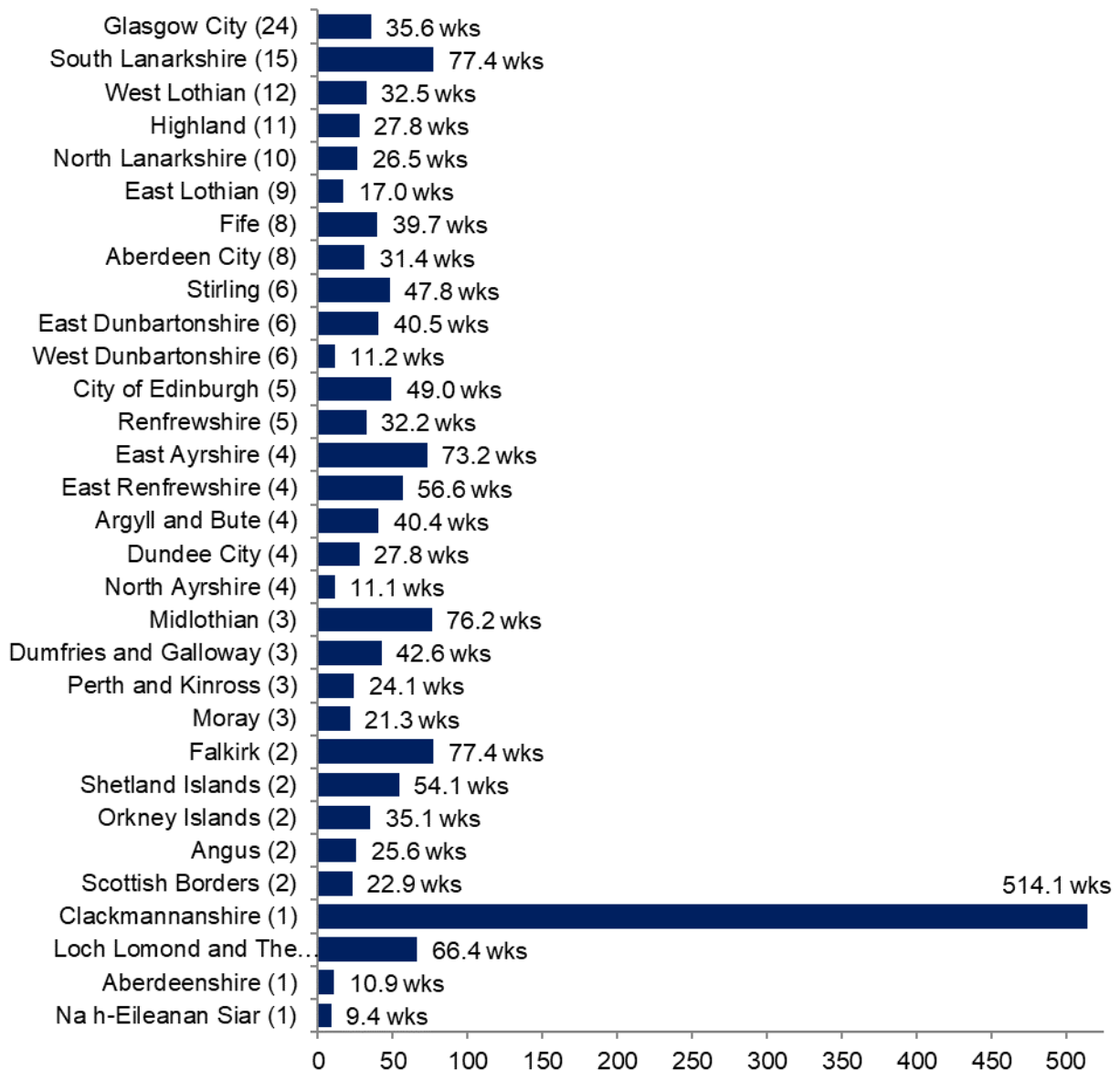
Glasgow City made the most decisions with 14% of the Scotland total (24 of 171) for major planning applications without processing agreements.

10.2.1. Major developments – average decision times

In total there were 171 decisions made on major developments without processing agreements in 2020/21 with an overall average decision time of 41.3 weeks.

Numbers of decisions made for major developments are very small compared to those for local developments and average decision times at local authority level are likely to be volatile. Average decision times can be significantly influenced by the decision time for a single application.

Chart 31: Major Developments by planning authority: Average decision time (weeks)



The number in brackets gives the total number of major development decisions not subject to processing agreements by planning authority.

Due to the small numbers of major applications, especially at local authority level, average times are more variable. Eleven authorities have reduced their overall average decision time for major applications compared to 2019/20, while 22 have

reported increases in decision times. The remaining two did not have major applications in both years.

Information on decision times for previous years is available in detailed excel tables from the Planning Authority Performance Statistics Section on the [Planning Publications](#) page of the Scottish Government’s website.

11. Legacy Cases

In 2020/21 five legacy cases were decided; two applications without a processing agreement and three with a processing agreement.

Tables 5 to 8 show the legacy cases decided in 2020/21 by planning authority and development type.

Tables 5 and 6: Decided legacy applications without processing agreements

Table 5

Local Authority	Number of Legacy Cases	Average Time (Weeks)
West Dunbartonshire	1	939.0
West Lothian ¹	1	298.9
Total	2	618.9

Table 6

Development Type	Number of Legacy Cases	Average Time (Weeks)
Minerals - Local with EIA	1	939.0
Housing - Local ¹	1	298.9
Total	2	618.9

1. Time has been removed from decision times when delays were outwith the control of the local authority.

Tables 7 and 8: Decided legacy applications with processing agreements

Table 7

Local Authority	Number of Legacy Cases	Percentage meeting agreed timescales
East Ayrshire	1	0%
East Lothian	2	100%
Total	3	67%

Table 8

Development Type	Number of Legacy Cases	Percentage meeting agreed timescales
Housing - Local	1	0%
Housing - Major	1	100%
Listed Building Consent	1	100%
Total	3	67%

12. Stopping the Clock

Stopping the clock is used where there has been a lengthy delay caused by the applicant or external consultees, outwith the planning authority's control. This helps produce more accurate performance statistics that would otherwise have been skewed by extreme cases of delay outwith the planning authority's control. Clock stops were not used where there was a delay to authority processing as a result of the impact of COVID-19 restrictions.

Table 9: Clock stops by planning authority^{1,2}

Planning Authority	Applications without processing agreements decided in 2020/21 ¹	Number of applications with clock stopped	Percentage of applications with clock stopped	Average time clock stopped (weeks)
Aberdeen City	616	44	7.1%	21.5
Aberdeenshire	1,434	18	1.3%	13.4
Angus	514	0	0.0%	-
Argyll and Bute	1,041	122	11.7%	18.0
Cairngorms National Park	1	0	0.0%	-
Clackmannanshire	213	22	10.3%	8.5
Dumfries and Galloway	1,026	15	1.5%	5.4
Dundee City	536	23	4.3%	23.8
East Ayrshire	382	28	7.3%	13.7
East Dunbartonshire	762	203	26.6%	5.1
East Lothian	1,142	84	7.4%	23.0
East Renfrewshire	651	0	0.0%	-
City of Edinburgh	2,926	27	0.9%	40.0
Falkirk	393	10	2.5%	9.5
Fife	1,516	2	0.1%	47.8
Glasgow City	2,010	391	19.5%	11.5
Highland	2,530	41	1.6%	24.9
Inverclyde	334	29	8.7%	22.3
Loch Lomond and The Trossachs NP	204	41	20.1%	20.0
Midlothian	364	26	7.1%	14.1
Moray	623	222	35.6%	8.9
Na h-Eileanan Siar	398	23	5.8%	19.1
North Ayrshire	525	28	5.3%	9.6
North Lanarkshire	710	26	3.7%	15.9
Orkney Islands	391	81	20.7%	18.6
Perth and Kinross	1,297	41	3.2%	17.8
Renfrewshire	578	115	19.9%	11.0
Scottish Borders	631	6	1.0%	28.6
Shetland Islands	238	22	9.2%	11.2
South Ayrshire	672	1	0.1%	10.0
South Lanarkshire	1,412	26	1.8%	30.8
Stirling	758	30	4.0%	7.9
West Dunbartonshire ²	230	84	36.5%	10.1
West Lothian ²	854	45	5.3%	15.9
SCOTLAND¹	27,912	1,876	6.7%	13.8

1. Applications with Processing Agreements and Legacy Applications (applications validated prior to 3/8/2009) are not included in this analysis.

2. Excludes one Legacy Case.

For 2020/21 there were 1,876 applications where the clock was stopped for an average of 13.8 weeks. This compares to 2,256 applications stopped for an average of 12.6 weeks in the previous year.

Table 10: Clock stops by development type

Development Type	Total applications decided in 2020/21	Number of applications with clock stopped	Percentage of applications with clock stopped	Average length of time clock stopped (weeks)
Local developments				
Householder	12,159	560	4.6%	6.5
Other developments	4,454	338	7.6%	15.5
Housing	3,476	426	12.3%	17.7
Business and industry	1,239	151	12.2%	14.3
AMSCs (under 2 months)	239	37	15.5%	23.0
Telecommunications	148	10	6.8%	9.8
Electricity generation	108	8	7.4%	31.6
Marine finfish farming	25	2	8.0%	14.6
Minerals	18	5	27.8%	28.4
Marine shellfish farming	14	2	14.3%	11.4
Waste management	14	3	21.4%	30.7
Freshwater fish farming	3	0	0.0%	-
TOTAL	21,897	1,542	7.0%	13.0
Major developments				
Housing	77	31	40.3%	52.9
Other developments	53	16	30.2%	38.1
Business and industry	15	5	33.3%	12.0
Electricity generation	13	1	7.7%	23.0
Minerals	7	2	28.6%	37.1
Waste management	6	1	16.7%	40.4
TOTAL	171	56	32.7%	43.7
Other Consents				
Listed building and conservation area consent	2,555	156	6.1%	14.3
Other consents and certificates	2,156	42	1.9%	6.4
Advertisements	1,109	75	6.8%	9.5
Hazardous substances	5	2	40.0%	45.4
TOTAL	5,825	275	4.7%	12.0
Applications with EIA				
Local applications with EIA	9	2	22.2%	15.1
AMSCs (under 4 months)	4	1	25.0%	44.7
TOTAL	13	3	23.1%	25.0

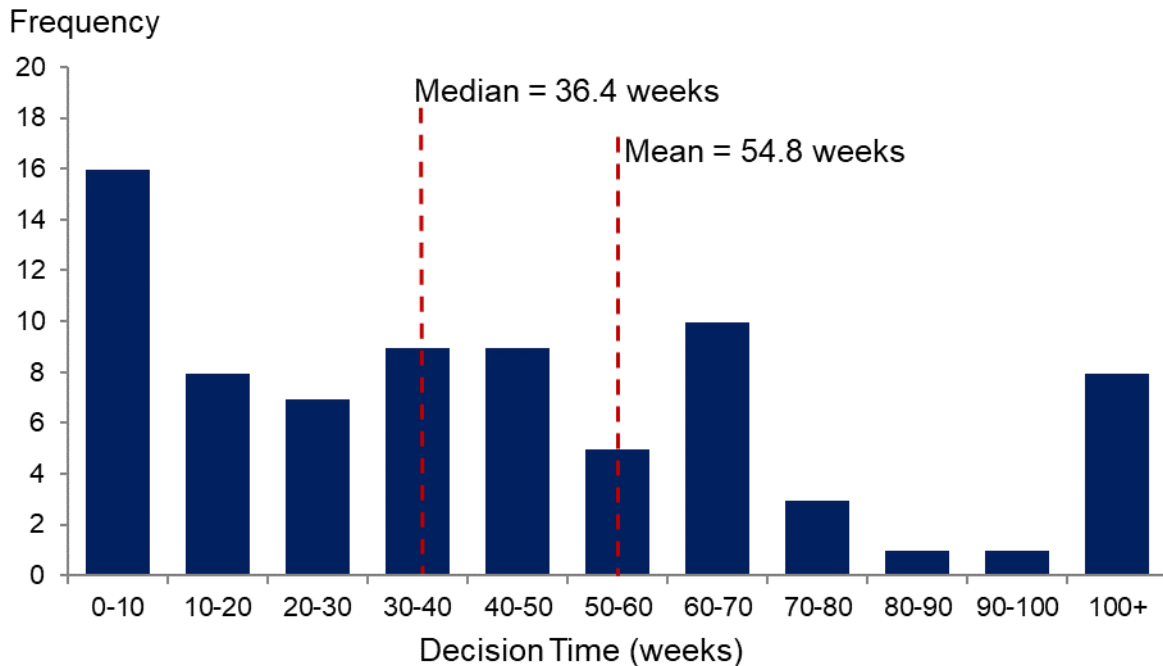
For 2020/21, householder applications had the most clock stops (560), with 6.5 weeks on average removed from decision times. Major housing applications had the highest percentage of applications with clock stops with 40.3% (31 of 77) stopping the clock for an average of 52.9 weeks.

There are a variety of reasons why the clock is stopped but stops are often due to delays in concluding legal agreements and waiting for the applicant to sign a planning obligation. Other reasons include site surveys required in relation to European protected species that must await a particular season, external consultants delay or awaiting advert fees to be paid.

13. Annex

13.1. Distribution of decision times for major applications

Chart 32: Distribution of decision times for Major Housing developments not subject to processing agreements (excludes one legacy case).



The vertical line at 54.8 weeks shows the mean (average) decision time for major housing developments. The second line at 36.4 weeks shows the median decision time. Decision times range from two weeks to just under 10 years. The mean decision time has been influenced by several lengthy decisions. 68% (52 of 77) of major housing applications were decided in a time quicker than the average of 54.8 weeks and 27% (21 of 77) were decided within four months.

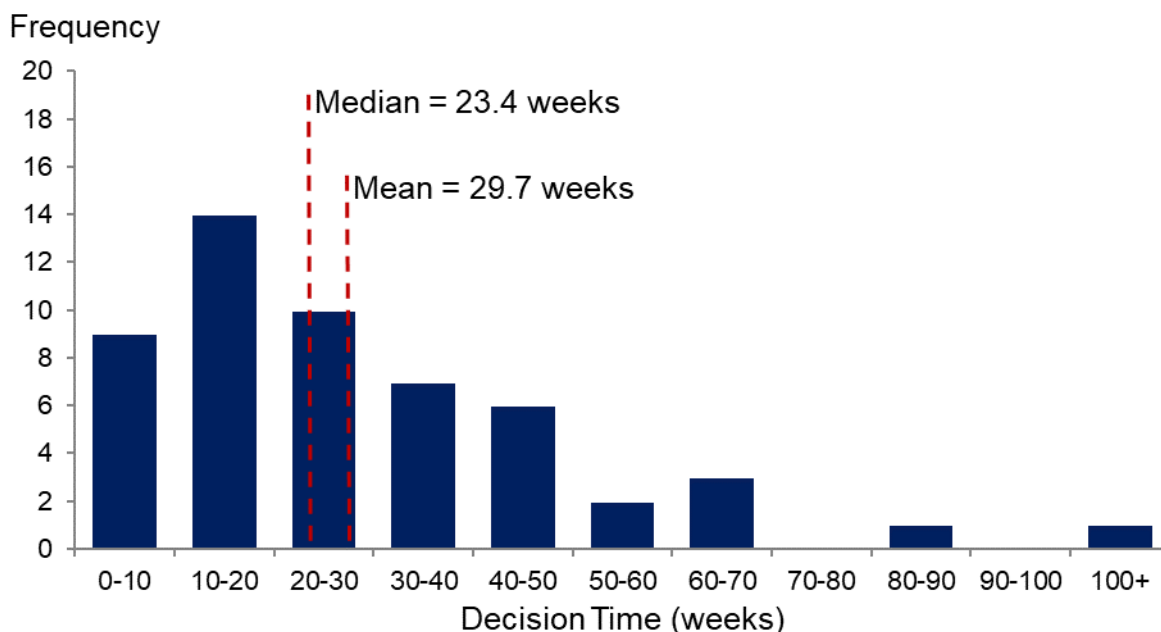
Eight decisions took more than two years, the longest taking 9.9 years. The average decision times for the eight lengthiest decisions were 514.1 weeks (9.9 years), 298.0 weeks (5.7 years), 220.9 weeks (4.2 years), 213.7 weeks (4.1 years), 190.6 weeks (3.7 years), 118.6 weeks (2.3 years), 116.4 weeks (2.2 years) and 104.9 (2.0 years). A further 19 applications took over a year.

If the two applications taking over five years are excluded the average decision time for the remaining 75 applications is 45.4 weeks, more than nine weeks quicker. If the five taking more than three years are excluded the time for the remaining 72 applications is 38.7 weeks more than 16 weeks quicker.

The lengthiest application was for planning permission in principle for development of land for houses, school and associated pitches, open space, play provision, landscaping, roads, paths and other infrastructure on a 53.7 hectare site in Clackmannanshire. The application was refused.

Chart 33 shows the distribution of the decision times for major other developments. The category “other developments” includes any developments not falling wholly within any of the specific categories of development for minerals, housing, business and industry, waste management, electricity generation, fish farming. It includes, but is not limited to, retail, leisure and entertainment, education, healthcare, community facilities, transport interchanges, water and drainage developments and projects. It can also include mixed use projects.

Chart 33: Distribution of decision times for major other developments



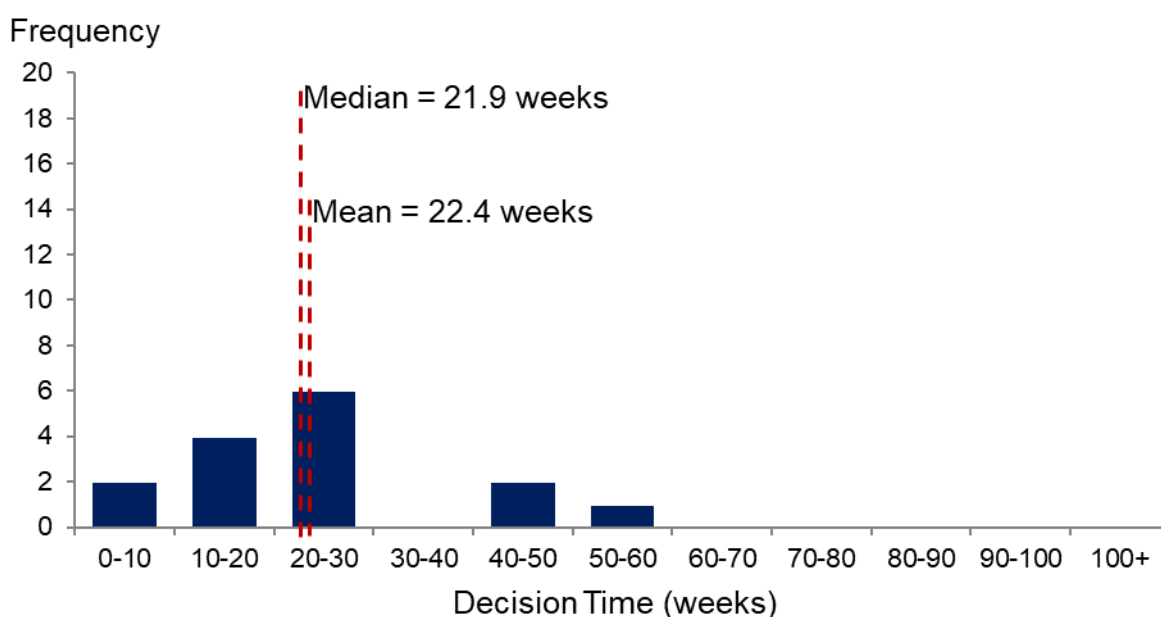
The vertical line at 29.7 weeks shows the mean (average) decision time for major other developments. The second line at 23.4 weeks shows the median decision time. Decision times range from 2.4 weeks to 138.7 weeks (2.7 years). The chart shows that the average decision time has been influenced by several lengthy decisions. Just over 60% of major other developments (32 of 53) were decided in a time quicker than the average of 29.7 weeks and 38% (20) were decided within four months.

One decision took more than two years, 138.7 weeks (2.7 years). A further six applications took over a year.

The lengthiest decision, which was in City of Edinburgh, was an application for planning permission in principle for a mixed use development including retail, financial, professional and other services, food and drink, business, hotels, residential and car parking. The application was approved.

Chart 34 shows the distribution of the decision times for major business and industry developments. The category “business and industry” developments includes construction of a building or structure for any of the following: use as an office, for research and development of products or processes, for any industrial process or for use for storage or as a distribution centre. To be classed as major the gross floor space as a result of the development must exceed 10,000 square metres or the site area must exceed 2 hectares. Due to the small numbers of applications for major business and industry developments, average decision times are very variable.

Chart 34: Distribution of decision times for major business and industry applications

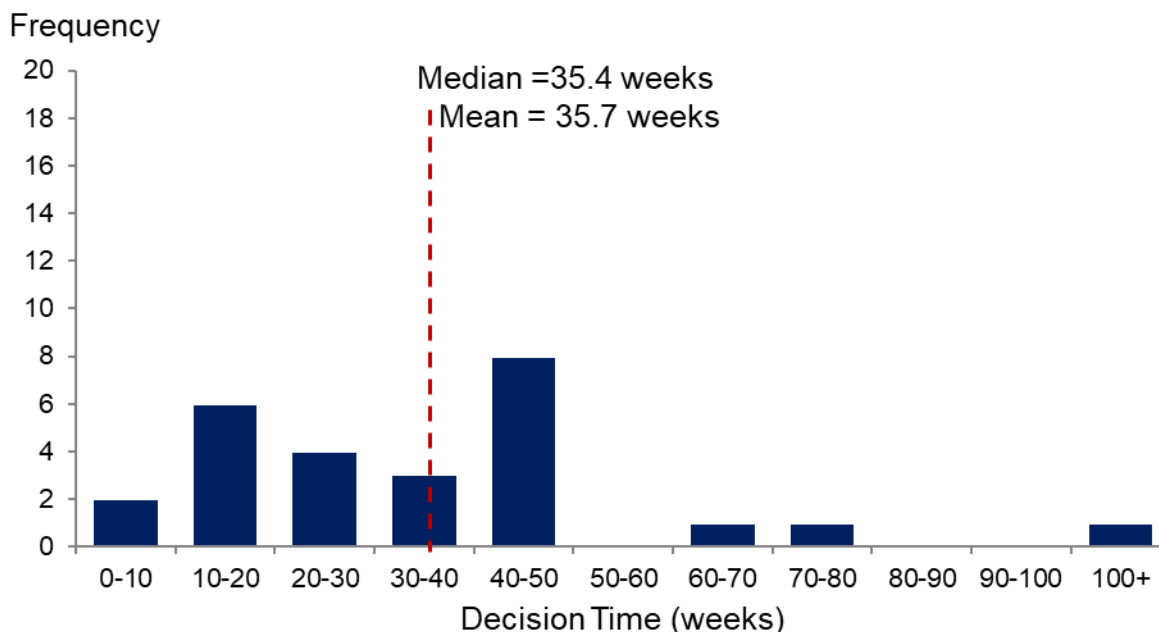


The vertical line at 22.4 weeks shows the mean (average) decision time for major business and industry developments. The second line at 21.9 weeks shows the median decision time. Decision times range from 8.6 weeks to 51.3 weeks. Nine of the 15 major business and industry applications (60%) were decided in a time quicker than the average with 40% (6) decided within four months. All applications were determined within a year.

The lengthiest decision, taking 51.3 weeks was in South Lanarkshire and was for planning permission in principle for a data centre and associated solar farm and gas turbine with light industrial area and associated infrastructure. The application was approved.

Chart 35 shows the distribution of the decision times for the remaining major applications that were concluded in 2020/21. These include applications for minerals, waste management, and electricity generation.

Chart 35: Distribution of decision times for remaining major applications



The vertical line shows the mean (average) decision time (35.4 weeks) and median decision time (35.7 weeks) for the remaining major developments. Decision times range from 8.4 weeks to 107.6 weeks (2.1 years). The average decision time has been skewed by a few lengthy decisions. Half (13 of 26) of the remaining major applications were decided in a time quicker than the average of 35.4 weeks, 31% (8) were decided within four months.

One decision took more than two years, 107.6 weeks (2.1 years). A further two applications took over a year.

The lengthiest decision taking more than two years was a minerals application to remove a condition from an existing planning permission to permit the importation and disposal of inert waste to enable the restoration of a quarry in Stirling. The application was approved.

13.2. Statistics for other UK countries

Information and statistics on planning applications for the other UK countries can be accessed at the following links:

England: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-applications-statistics>

Wales: <https://gov.wales/planning-services-performance>

Northern Ireland: <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/planning-activity-statistics>

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Office of the Chief Statistician, Telephone: 0131 244 0442,
E-mail: statistics.enquiries@gov.scot

How to access background or source data

The data collected for this statistical bulletin:

are available in more detail through statistics.gov.scot.

are available via excel spreadsheets on the Planning Statistics webpages at:
<https://www.gov.scot/collections/planning-statistics>

Details for individual planning applications are also available on planning authorities' eplanning websites.

may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact planstats@gov.scot for further information.

cannot be made available by Scottish Government for further analysis as Scottish Government is not the data controller.

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