

Performance update – May 2021

The [latest official statistics](#) detail our performance from May 2020 to April 2021 for cases in England.

In summary:

- we made 16,980 appeal decisions in the last 12 months, an average of just over 1,400 per month
- at the end of April 2021, we had 11,184 open cases. This is an increase of 470 (4%), from the previous month, and the highest number of open cases in the last 12 months
- one in four S78 appeals decided (25%) were allowed in 2020/21, the same proportion as in 2019/20

A year has passed since the Planning Inspectorate held its first virtual hearing in May 2020. By April 2021, we had delivered over 700 cases via virtual hearings and inquiries. Whilst virtual events have allowed us to keep casework progressing as much as possible during the Covid-19 pandemic, the lockdown restrictions have had an impact on our overall productivity.

We are continuing to follow Government advice in line with the [roadmap out of lockdown](#). We are not currently holding physical-only hearings and inquiries. Instead, we are running hearings and inquiries virtually with some blended events (including physical elements) being arranged.

Now that the easing of restrictions has been confirmed in line with Step 3 of the government's roadmap, inspectors are now able to undertake some accompanied site visits. However, our top priority is to ensure that the safety of our staff and customers is not compromised.

See the [latest guidance on our current casework arrangements](#).

How long appeals take

Our [latest average timescales](#) for planning, enforcement and householder appeals have recently been updated.

In summary:

- a householder appeal proceeding by written representations will take 18 weeks to decide on (mean) average
- planning appeals progressing by hearing have increased from the previous month to a (mean) average decision time of 56 weeks. For inquiries, the (mean) average is 54 weeks
- for enforcement appeals, (mean) average decision times are 34 weeks for written representations, 78 for hearings and 74 for inquiries

We realise that some appellants have had to wait longer than usual for a decision. We are working hard to meet the demand on our services during an

unprecedented period, whilst providing the same quality and rigor in our determination of cases.

The continuing Covid-19 restrictions in place over the past months has meant our ability to visit sites and capacity to run hearings and inquiries has been reduced. This has resulted in an increased number of cases that are waiting to start, and consequently longer decision times.

The run [up to local elections](#) also had a short-term impact on our ability to issue decisions. And, like other organisations, many of our staff took leave over Easter resulting in reduced capacity during this time.

We continue to explore how we can further increase the number of appeal hearings without having an adverse impact on our work in other areas.

Local plan examinations

The past 12 months has seen a slowdown in the number of plans submitted for examination. In the financial year 2020/21, we issued a total of 32 reports for plans of all types compared to 59 in 2019/20. Strategic plans represented the largest number of reports issued at 21.

See the [blog post from Professional Lead for Local Plans, Jerry Youle](#), where he explains the role of local plans and celebrates a key milestone – the 1000th local plan submitted to the Planning Inspectorate.

National Infrastructure examinations

Nine applications were submitted in 2020/21, compared to 14 in 2019/20. Ten reports were issued to the relevant Secretary of State in 2020/21, compared to 20 in 2019/20

See the [register of applications](#) on the National Infrastructure Planning website for a list of live and decided applications.

Medium to longer term arrangements

Looking further ahead to Step 4 (not before 21 June) when it is hoped that all social contact restrictions will be lifted, we will carefully consider, when and how in-person events can take place. Much of our work has significant lead times where councils need to arrange these events and notify parties of the arrangements several weeks or in some cases months in advance.

So that events can proceed under all possible scenarios, and we are able to keep casework moving, we need to plan events with certainty. This means planning ahead of when there are likely to be announcements confirming changes in restrictions.

We rely mainly on councils to provide accommodation for our events and any transition to include face-to-face events needs careful planning when the availability of accommodation becomes clearer. For this reason, we expect

that the majority of cases will be heard through virtual events for now, with some blended events (including physical elements) being arranged.

For the longer term we will be engaging and consulting with staff, stakeholders and customers about how we should work in the future. We expect both blended (which include in-person elements) and virtual events to be part of our future operating model. One of the key questions we will need to decide on, following research and engagement, is what the balance should be between physical and virtual within and across different case types.

We will of course keep customers informed as arrangements change. Follow us for updates:

Scotland's future 'Unicorns' thrive after decade of tech success

- Scotland has produced three unicorn companies: BrewDog, FanDuel, Skyscanner.
- The country is home to four futurecorns: Roslin Technologies and NuCana BioMed (Edinburgh), Interactive Investor (Glasgow) and Amphista Therapeutics (Motherwell)
- Scotland has been one of the leading centres of UK tech which has grown tenfold in 10 years
- UK unicorns have grown from eight unicorns in 2010 to 81 by 2020
- By comparison, France, Germany, Sweden and Israel has created a combined 85 unicorns by 2020 and only France and Germany raised over £4.3bn in VC funding last year

Scotland continues to build fast-growing tech companies

Scotland's track record for creating unicorn tech companies like BrewDog, FanDuel and Skyscanner is helping to create a new generation of fast-growing tech businesses.

These 'unicorns' – private companies valued at \$1bn (£718m) or more – have inspired growth in four more Scottish businesses, now identified as 'futurecorns', fast-growing firms set to achieve the all-important \$1bn valuation.

Four Scottish companies – Amphista Therapeutics in Motherwell; Roslin Technologies in Edinburgh; Interactive Investor in Glasgow; and NuCana BioMed in Edinburgh – are identified as Futurecorns, fast-growing companies set to achieve a \$1bn valuation, according to analysis by Dealroom.co and the Digital Economy Council.

Scotland's futurecorns are part of the huge expansion of the UK tech sector, which has grown 10 fold in the last 10 years, enabling the creation of hundreds of fast growing tech companies across the country, including in Scotland.

Since 2010, the UK has experienced a sustained increase in the venture capital flowing into the tech sector, which has resulted in a huge expansion in the number of startups that are scaling rapidly in sectors as diverse as fintech, food delivery, e-commerce and healthtech. Scottish startups last year attracted £345m in venture capital investment, despite the pandemic and a recent report recognised that 13,000 digital tech job opportunities were created every year in Scotland.

10 years of unicorns and futurecorns

Over the course of 10 years, the number of unicorns – private tech companies valued at \$1bn or more – has increased from eight in 2010 to 81 in 2020. Unicorns from 2010 including Betfair, Admiral Group and Ocado are now household names. Scotland has produced three unicorn companies: BrewDog, FanDuel and Skyscanner.

Meanwhile the number of futurecorns has accelerated from 10 to 126 in 2020. Over the same period, venture capital investment into the UK has increased from £1.2bn in 2010 to £11.3bn 10 years later.

These numbers demonstrate the extent to which the UK is catching up with the US and China in tech, with London now fourth behind the Bay Area, Beijing and New York, when it comes to the number of startups and unicorns created. No other European country has been able to grow at such a speed.

While France has invested millions of euros in its startup ecosystem, in 2020 it had only 17 unicorns, up from zero in 2010. Germany had 1 unicorn 10 years ago and 31 in 2020 – including companies such as insurtech platform Wefox, neobank N26 and travel e-commerce platform Omio.

UK Government Minister for Scotland Iain Stewart said:

Tech companies across the UK are improving our lives through creativity and innovation. With three unicorns and four fast-growing scaleups, Scotland is one of the UK's leading tech hubs.

The UK Government is dedicated to supporting investment in tech in Scotland. Our recent commitment to create five new innovation hubs in fields such as robotics and space technology will ensure the industry has a bright future.

UK Government Digital Secretary Oliver Dowden said:

These latest figures show the UK's tech scene is booming and I'm delighted to see so many of our stellar scale ups racing to becoming the next \$1 billion businesses.

This government is unashamedly pro-tech and we're investing heavily in world-class digital infrastructure and skills to back talent across the country and bring about a golden age of UK tech.

Growth continues in 2021

During 2021, the total number of unicorns and futurecorns has continued to grow. The UK has now created 91 unicorns – private companies valued at \$1bn (£718m) or more – which are transforming how we live and work, including Hopin valued at £4bn, Zego, which recently reached unicorn status and Wise, valued at £3.5bn. A further 132 companies are now regarded as 'futurecorns' – companies with a value of between \$250m (£179m) and \$1bn (£718m) – which are on a path to unicorn status.

In Scotland, there are four of these fast-growing futurecorns. These are Amphista Therapeutics in Motherwell, a biopharmaceutical company creating therapeutics that harness the body's natural processes to remove disease-causing proteins; Roslin Technologies in Edinburgh which is developing pioneering innovations to make the agriculture and animal health sectors more sustainable; Interactive Investor, the online investment platform based in Glasgow; and NuCana BioMed, the pharmaceutical company developing medicines that address significant unmet medical needs based in Edinburgh. Together, these businesses employ over 500 people.

Sustained investment provides the environment for growth

Tech companies across the UK raised a collective £11.3bn in funding last year – with Scottish tech companies raising £345m – 10x the investment raised in 2010 at £1.2bn. That's more than every other country except China and the United States, and 250% more than the EU's largest economy, Germany. Since 2015, total UK venture capital investment has been higher in every year than that in France, Germany and Israel. Overseas investors from the US and Asia have been increasingly attracted to the UK's fastest-growing companies.

Whilst venture capital investment used to be concentrated at early stages, with 64% of funding going to companies at Seed, Series A and B rounds in 2016, for the past two years more than half of VC investment has been at later stages. This is helping to build the UK's next generation of tech stars, contributing significantly to the maturity of the UK tech sector and the increasing number of potential unicorns across the country.

Councils given funding boost to develop new local design guide for housing development

- 14 councils across England given £50,000 each to develop new design codes
- Codes will set out design principles for new development in local areas
- Local design codes will be expected to enhance the character of the local area – for example by using honey-coloured stone in the Cotswolds or red brick in the Midlands
- Selected areas will test how to give communities a real say in the layout, design and appearance of buildings in their area – helping the country Build Back Better

A new national design code meaning areas are beautiful, well-designed and locally-led is being tested across 14 areas in England, Housing Minister Rt Hon Christopher Pincher has announced today (21 May 2021).

The code will ensure future developments are beautiful and fit in with local character.

It gives local planning authorities a toolkit of design principles to consider for new developments, such as street character, building type and façade as well as environmental, heritage and wellbeing factors

The shortlisted councils will take part in a 6-month testing programme to apply the [National Model Design Code \(NMDC\)](#) in their area and help Britain Build Back Better, by making sure current and new residents alike will benefit from beautiful homes in well-designed neighbourhoods.

It is intended to provide councils with the guidance and parameters to shape new developments in a way which reflects what their communities truly want.

The measures mean the word “beauty” will be prioritised in planning rules for the first time since the system was created in 1947 – going back to a previous time when there was a greater emphasis on whether a building was considered attractive to local people. The government recently consulted on changes to the National Planning Policy Framework to take this forward, alongside the draft NMDC.

Following a consultation period, more than 70 Expression of Interest

submissions were received to test the NMDC, with representation from every region of England.

The final 14 applicants were then shortlisted to ensure a geographical spread and a range of development types, including an urban conservation area with industrial heritage, town centres, new neighbourhoods, rural settlements and urban regeneration sites. Each pilot receives a £50,000 grant to carry out the project.

Housing Minister Rt Hon Christopher Pincher MP said:

We should aspire to enhance the beauty of our local areas and pass our cultural heritage onto our successors, enriched not diminished.

In order to do that, we need to bring about a profound and lasting change in the buildings that we build, which is one of the reasons we are placing a greater emphasis on locally popular design, quality and access to nature, through our national planning policies and introducing the National Model Design Code.

These will enable local people to set the rules for what developments in their area should look like, ensuring that they reflect and enhance their surroundings and preserve our local character and identity.

Instead of developers forcing plans on locals, they will need to adapt to proposals from local people, ensuring that current and new residents alike will benefit from beautiful homes in well-designed neighbourhoods.

Anna Rose, Head of the Planning Advisory Service said:

It is really exciting to see the National Model Design Code being tested by local councils across the country. The outcomes from this first set of pilots will help to build the capacity and collective learning that we need across the sector. I am looking forward to seeing what councils can achieve with their communities by using this new code.

The testing programme is a step towards this aim and the findings will help inform potential further developments to the NMDC and the use of design coding in the planning system.

Cabinet member for Neighbourhoods and Transport, Cllr Ged Bell, said:

Newcastle City Council is delighted to have been chosen by MHCLG to take part in the pilot programme for proposed new design codes.

They are all about ensuring that developments are designed to the

highest quality which is fundamentally important for communities who live and work in them. The Ouseburn is recognised nationally for successful city centre regeneration in a historical setting, and we are determined to maintain those high standards.

Nicholas Boys Smith, founding director of social enterprise Create Streets and co-chair for the Building Better Building Beautiful Commission, said:

The pilots are a very important first step as councils start to grapple again with how they can define visions for development in their areas which are popularly-beautiful, profoundly locally based and will support lives which are happy, healthy and sustainable.

The 14 successful applicants are:

Local authority	Region
Colchester Borough Council, Tendring District Council and Essex County Council	East
Guildford Borough Council	South East
Herefordshire Council	West Midlands
Leeds City Council	Yorkshire & Humber
Mid Devon Council	South West
Newcastle City Council	North East
Dacorum Borough Council	East
Portsmouth City Council	South East
Sefton Council	North West
Southwark Council	London
Hyndburn Borough Council	North West
North West Leicestershire District Council	East Midlands
Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council	West Midlands
Buckinghamshire Council	South East

The purpose of the NMDC is to provide detailed guidance on the production of local design codes, guides and policies that lead to successful design. It provides advice to local planning authorities on the process for producing codes, the design parameters and issues that need to be considered and tailored to their own context when producing local design codes and guides. It includes methods to capture and reflect the views of the local community through the process.

The objective of the pilot is to test the application of aspects of the NMDC in different types of development, location and regions across England, with the output being a local design code.

A total of 71 applications were received with representation from every region of England. The applications demonstrated a wide variety of types of development, including rural infill, village expansion, garden villages,

suburban and urban intensification, town centre, central urban development and areas where low land values are an issue.

The 14 recommended bids were selected ensuring that there was a good geographical spread (at least one per English region) and a range of development types and conditions (urban to rural) and market conditions (higher to lower growth areas) to demonstrate how the code can be effectively applied in different locations and contexts.

The NMDC is part of a wider strategy as outlined in the 190-page '[Living with Beauty](#)' report published in January 2020 which proposed a new development and planning framework, with 3 principle goals – to ask for beauty, refuse ugliness and promote stewardship.

The government has launched a consultation to seek views on our proposed improvements to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – the template guiding local planning decisions – so local authorities and communities can shape and deliver beautiful places to live and work, with a greater emphasis on quality, design and the environment than ever before.

The consultation closed on 27 March and we're in the process of analysing responses. The government will publish its response to the consultation in due course.

Our proposed policy changes will ensure the system helps to create more attractive buildings and places, while maintaining the Framework's existing strong focus on delivering the homes and other development which communities need. The changes will:

- Make beauty and place-making a strategic theme in the NPPF
- Set out the expectation that local authorities produce their own design codes and guides setting out design principles which new development in their areas should reflect
- Ask for new streets to be tree-lined
- Improve biodiversity and access to nature through design
- Put an emphasis on approving good design as well as refusing poor quality schemes

[Tin Lid Protection Ltd achieve third party certification](#)

TLP Ltd have become the first commercial drone company specialising solely in security to be awarded with the Commissioner's third party certification mark for their use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) surveillance cameras, after successfully completing the audit process with IQ Verify, one of the scheme's approved and UKAS accredited certification bodies.

TLP Ltd are a commercial drone company specialising in security and public safety solutions, delivering 3 core services, 'Drone Security Support', 'Drone Security Threat Assessments', and 'Counter Drone Defence Mapping'. Working with security companies, enforcement agencies, and end-user clients, these 3 core services are delivered across the UK from their base in Wiltshire.

Third party certification

Third party certification is a scheme that enables any organisation that operates a surveillance camera system, including CCTV, Body Worn Video, Drones, Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) and Automatic Facial Recognition (AFR) within a public space, to show that they do so in compliance with the [Surveillance Camera Code of Practice](#).

The importance of applying for certification for TLP Ltd

Chris Flannagan, CEO of TLP Ltd, said:

We applied for certification because we wanted to demonstrate to our clients and the public, that our internal policies and procedures for the collection, management, and retention of visual and audio data, has been independently audited against a set of regulated standards.

SCC Certification is a voluntary process, and this was an important factor for TLP Ltd as we can demonstrate to our clients and members of the public, that our commitment to their privacy and trepidation about the commercial drone industry, is taken very seriously. TLP Ltd already took these concerns seriously and had robust internal policies to manage these concerns. Voluntary SCC Certification elevates these robust internal policies to a level where people can have confidence in TLP Ltd drone operations.

The benefits of certification

TLP Ltd is the first commercial drone company specialising solely in security and public safety solutions to achieve SCC Certification. Chris Flannagan says the benefits of this to their company are:

Being able to demonstrate accountability and transparency in our drone operations to our clients and members of the public, against a set of independently assessed standards which they can view, and if needed raise concerns about privacy both directly to the company and the Surveillance Camera Commissioner.

The third party certification process

Regarding how easy they found the process of becoming certified with the scheme, Chris said:

Being independently audited against the SCC standards is a rigorous process, assessing not only TLP Ltd policies and procedures but also previous drone deployments (flights).

We chose IQ Verify to assist the company in achieving SCC Certification, as TLP Ltd identified that SCC Certification was more than just the final audit day. The IQ Verify team assisted us in completing the SCC self-assessment tool kit, and provided constructive feedback on our policies, procedures, and governance, including areas of strength within that framework but also areas for improvement. This support over a four-week period from IQ Verify was key to achieving SCC Certification, as whilst the process was not easy due to the requirements of the SCC, it was a developmental process that ensured a successful outcome from the auditor.

What the Commissioner has to say

Fraser Sampson, appointed as the Biometrics and Surveillance Camera Commissioner on 1 March, said:

I am delighted to announce that TLP Ltd have been awarded with my third party certification mark as it means they can visibly demonstrate to others that they are using their drones in line with the Surveillance Camera Code of Practice – in other words they are being used proportionately, effectively, transparently and in pursuit of a legitimate aim. I hope this will pave the way for other drone companies to achieve the same high standards.

You can [find out more about the third party certification scheme on the Commissioner's website](#) or contact his office at scc@sccommissioner.gov.uk.

[Multimillion-pound investment to inspire children to walk to school](#)

A green initiative aimed at encouraging hundreds of thousands of children to walk to school has received £2.1 million in government support, Transport

Minister Chris Heaton-Harris announced today (21 May 2021).

The funding will help walking charity Living Streets extend its [Walk to School Outreach programme](#) to more than 1,000 primary schools across the country.

The initiative, which has been running with Department for Transport (DfT) support since 2017, aims to promote the health and environmental benefits of walking to school for children aged 5 to 11 and their families. It plays an integral role in the government's ambition to ensure more than half of children aged 5 to 10 are walking to school by 2025.

The funding announced today comes during Walk to School Week and is part of the DfT's drive to enable more forms of active travel as the government builds back greener from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

It builds on the £1 million funding DfT provided to Living Streets in 2020 to 2021 to deliver a Walk Back to School programme for the academic year, extending the charity's reach to support children returning to school last autumn.

Cycling and Walking Minister Chris Heaton-Harris said:

Walking can improve our health, ease traffic and help clean up our environment, so we're proud to be investing in Living Streets' vital campaign to get more children walking to school.

This initiative has already inspired thousands of youngsters and their families to adopt greener active travel habits that will last a lifetime and I'm delighted that this funding will help enable thousands more.

Mary Creagh, Chief Executive of Living Streets, said:

It's vital that we scale up for walking to build back better for children and families after a difficult year.

Living Streets' walk to school programme is increasing the number of children walking to school and reducing cars, congestion and air pollution around school gates. This funding will help more pupils enjoy the fresh air, freedom and fun that walking to school brings.

The Walk to School Outreach programme has been very successful in recent years and in 2019 to 2020, it saw walking to school rates increase by 40% for new schools that took part – with increased walking rates sustained for existing project schools.

The funding announced today has helped Living Streets celebrate Walk to School week by supporting the distribution of challenge packs to schools

across the country to get involved.

It comes as the latest of a raft of measures announced by the government to enable more people to help the environment by making more use of active travel options.

In summer 2020, the Prime Minister launched ambitious plans to boost walking and cycling, with a vision that half of all journeys in towns and cities are walked or cycled by 2030.

This includes a £2 billion package of funding for active travel over 5 years – the largest amount of funding ever committed to increasing walking and cycling in this country.

The first £250 million of the £2 billion was allocated in 2020 to 2021 on programmes including the [Fix Your Bike voucher scheme](#) and the [Active Travel Fund scheme](#), as the government has strongly encouraged local authorities to prioritise support for active travel during the pandemic.

A further £257 million of walking and cycling funding for 2021 to 2022 was announced at the Spending Review in November last year.