



**Dumfries and Galloway Council**

**Building Standards**

**Customer Charter - April 2023 – March 2024**

Version	Date	Auditor	Notes
1.0	14/07/17	Max McCall	Revised Customer Charter Based on Annex A Key performance outcome 3 – Building Standards Customer Charter Template
1.1	06/11/17	Max McCall	Reviewed Customer Charter - minor corrections/updates
1.2	22/01/18	Max McCall	Reviewed Customer Charter - minor corrections/updates
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1.9	08/01/20	Max McCall	Reviewed Customer Charter – Refreshed/improved appearance of charter document Including additional photographs. Revised paragraph layout, improved indexing, and chapter titles.
2.0	14/04/20	Max McCall	Major review – sections/paragraphs updated, amended customer contact information and response times to mirror corporate council policy. Incorporated revised customer “drop-in” days/times. Minor changes to complaints, process.
2.1	12/07/20	Max McCall	Reviewed Customer Charter - minor corrections/updates
2.2	02/10/20	Max McCall	Reviewed Customer Charter – added new section relating to Covid 19. Minor corrections/updates
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2.11	31/01/23	Max McCall	Reviewed Customer Charter - minor corrections/updates. Included information on virtual meetings via MS Teams to complement current customer contact arrangements.
2.12	04/03/23	Max McCall	Reviewed Customer Charter - minor corrections/updates
2.13	03/07/23	Max McCall	Reviewed Customer Charter - minor corrections/updates Revised National Customer Survey target rating to reflect revised data gathering approach. Checked weblinks are functioning and up to date.
2.14	14/10/23	Max McCall	Reviewed Customer Charter - minor corrections/updates Removed references to Covid 19



## Contents

Section	Title	Page
1	Purpose of national building standards charter (Our Aims, Our Vision/Values, Our Commitments, Our Targets)	4

2	<b>Introduction</b>	7
3	<b>Who we are</b>	8
4	<b>Pre-application discussions</b>	8
5	<b>Asking for information or advice</b>	9
6	<b>Submitting a building warrant application</b>	9
7	<b>Once an application has been approved</b>	10
8	<b>To keep everyone informed, we will</b>	12
9	<b>Works required without permission</b>	12
10	<b>Dangerous buildings</b>	13
11	<b>Our service standards</b>	13
12	<b>Complaints procedure</b>	14
13	<b>Performance</b>	15

## **Part 1: National Charter**

### **1.1 Our aims**

- To grant building warrants and accept completion certificates.
- To secure the health, safety, welfare, and convenience of persons in and about buildings, and others who may be affected by buildings, or matters connected with buildings.
- Furthering the conservation of fuel and power.
- Furthering the achievement of sustainable development.

### **1.2 Our vision/values**

To provide a professional and informative service to all our customers.

### **1.3 Our commitments**

Nationally, all local authority verifiers will:

- seek to minimise the time it takes for customers to obtain a building warrant or amendment to a building warrant.
- ensure continuous improvement around the robustness of our verification assessments to ensure compliance.
- meet and seek to exceed customer expectations.
- carry out local customer satisfaction research, such as surveys, focus groups etc.

- address feedback obtained through local and national customer satisfaction research (including a National Customer Satisfaction Survey) to improve the customer experience.
- provide information on local formal complaints procedures, the LABSS Dispute resolution Process, and the BSD Customer Performance Reporting Service, and refer customers as appropriate.
- provide accurate financial data that is evidence-based.
- engage and participate in partnership working at local and national level to identify and embed service improvements at a national level.
- Adhere to a [national annual verification performance report](#) outlining our objectives, targets, and performance.
- Fully adhere to the commitments outlined in this Charter (including information on customer dissatisfaction in relation to building warrant processing timescales, processes, and technical interpretation.
- Use a consistent format for continuous improvement plans.

#### 1.4 Our targets

KPO 1 - Minimise time taken to issue a first report or to issue a building warrant or amendment to building warrant.

- 95% of first reports (for building warrants and amendments) issued within 20 days.
  - all first reports (including BWs and amendments issued without a first report).
- 90% of building warrants and amendments issued within 10 days from receipt of all satisfactory information – all building warrants and amendments (not including BWs and amendments issued without a first report).

KPO 2 - Increase quality of compliance assessment during the construction processes.

- Targets to be developed as part of future review of KPO2.

KPO 3 - Commit to the building standards customer charter.

- National customer charter is published prominently on the website and incorporates version control detailing reviews.
- 95% of BSD requests for information on a BSD 'Verifier Performance Reporting service for Customers' case responded to by verifier within 5 days.

KPO 4 - Understand and respond to the customer experience.

- Minimum overall average satisfaction rating of 7.5 out of 10

KPO 5 - Maintain financial governance.

- Building standards verification fee income to cover indicative verification service costs (staff costs plus 30%)



#### KPO 6 - Commit to eBuilding Standards.

- Details of eBuilding Standards are published prominently on the verifier's website.
- 75% of each key building warrant related process being done electronically.
  - plan checking
  - Building warrant or amendments (and plans) being issued
  - Verification during construction
  - Completion certificates being accepted

#### KPO 7 - Commit to objectives outlined in the annual performance report.

- Annual performance report published prominently on website with version control (reviewed at least quarterly).
- Annual performance report to include performance data in line with KPOs and associated targets (annually covering previous year e.g., April 2020 – March 2021).
- The report is to include:
  - Adherence to the national customer charter (KPO3)
  - Appropriate actions to respond to customer feedback (KPO4)
  - Financial performance (KPO5)
  - Commitment to digital services (KPO6)

### 1.5 Information

National information on verification performance can be found at the Scottish Government website [www.gov.scot/bsd](http://www.gov.scot/bsd)



## Part 2: Local Charter

### Introduction

- 2.1** Every person can be said to come into contact with, and interact with, buildings throughout their lives. Be it their workplace, school, or their home.

Building Standards is the legal process that ensures that, when new buildings are constructed or existing buildings altered, the minimum requirements for the health safety and welfare of the people who come into contact with these buildings are met.

The Building Standards Division (BSD), on behalf of the Scottish Government, sets these standards and provides guidance as to how they may be complied with.

The majority of building work carried out within Dumfries and Galloway requires consent from Building Standards before this work may be carried out. There are of course exceptions, and these can be found in schedules 1 and 3 of the Building (Scotland) Regulations 2005.

It must be pointed out however that all works listed in schedule 3 must, when completed, comply fully with the Building (Scotland) Regulations 2005.

If at a later date it is found that these works do not comply, then Building Standards can take enforcement action against the owner and the person on whose behalf these works were carried out.

In addition to the above the enforcement action will entail making the building comply with the standards **currently in force at the time of enforcement action** and **NOT those in force when the work was actually carried out**.

When an application for building warrant is made it is the intention of this council that the application is assessed correctly and as quickly as possible.



## Who we are?

- 3.1** Dumfries and Galloway, for the purpose of building standards, is split in to two teams, East and West. The Smaller West Team located in Stranraer is composed of one principal building standards surveyor and a building standards inspector. The larger East team is based in



Dumfries, and is composed of a Team Leader, five building standards surveyors and three building standards inspectors. While the majority of applications are received within the area covered by the East team, due to geographic location, a West team is considered essential in order to provide a “local” point of contact to serve customers in this area, and also to provide logistical efficiencies for verification inspections.



## Pre-application discussions

- 4.1 Pre-application discussions are welcomed in cases where it is considered that a joint benefit to both the customer and also the Building Standards Service will be achieved. Normally, this is to ensure major compliance issues are raised early in the design process. Advice given will be free and accurate but will be without prejudice to the formal consideration of your proposals.
- 4.2 A “drop in” service is provided whereby a “Duty officer” is available between 09.00 and 12.30 (Tuesday and Thursday) to deal with general building standards enquiries. Telephone enquiries during this period will also be handled by the duty officer. Case specific enquiries are accommodated at any time during normal office hours. All applications have an assigned case officer and customers are encouraged to deal with their assigned case officer. The practice of virtual meetings via Microsoft Teams has continued following easing of Covid restrictions/home working. This is actively encouraged by the service as an alternative to traditional face to face meetings and appears to be welcomed by many of our customers.
- 4.3 Although all public council offices are fully accessible, If you are unable to call in to the office through disability, a site visit to discuss your proposal can be arranged.

## Information or advice

- 5.1 We aim to provide a 10-working day response to communications on current applications.
- 5.2 No acknowledgements will be given in respect of normal correspondence, the emphasis being placed on early replies within the above framework. However, complaints concerning any aspect of the building warrant process will be acknowledged and follow the Council's formal complaint's procedure. [Council's formal complaint's procedure](#).
- 5.3 Dumfries and Galloway Council Building Standard Service have adopted an agile working policy, and as such, will not always be available to deal with telephone enquiries. Customers are therefore encouraged to utilise email where possible. Virtual meetings via Microsoft Teams are encouraged as an alternative to traditional face to face meetings. These complement the advantages of agile working.
- 5.4 While general enquiries are welcomed, customers are encouraged to visit the [Dumfries and Galloway Council Building Standards](#) and [The Scottish Government Building Standards](#) websites where a wealth of useful information can be sourced.
- 5.5 If you leave a telephone message, you will be called back within 48 hours. Although sometimes it will be necessary, indeed in your interest to put the substance of your query in writing/plan format and email it to your assigned case officer. This will ensure the case officer is given an opportunity to research and prepare a more comprehensive response.
- 5.6 All correspondence includes details of your assigned case officer ie, email address and contact telephone numbers. Case specific enquiries should always be made to your assigned case officer who will be familiar with your application and therefore best placed to answer your query.

## Submitting a building warrant application

- 6.1 Building warrant applications should be made via the [eBuildingStandards online submission portal](#)



Building warrant applications require a degree of expertise, accordingly, it is strongly recommended that a customer should engage a suitably qualified and experienced construction professional to submit the application and handle the associated follow up process.

It is the applicant's or agent's responsibility to make sure that the application is submitted correctly.

The application form must be completed correctly, signed and the appropriate fee must have been paid before a valid application can be registered.

Guidance notes on how to apply for a building warrant is available to assist you in applying for a Building Warrant. This is available online: [Looking for Building Standards advice?](#)

- 6.2 When you submit a building warrant application we will aim to:

- notify you by acknowledgment letter or email within five working days of receiving your valid application,
- notify you by letter or email within five working days if your application is **'invalid'** and explain what is required before it can be registered as **'valid'**,
- assess your application for compliance with the Building (Scotland) Regulations 2005 and notify you of the technical comments that require to be answered before a building warrant can be issued based on the following timescales as published by the Building Standards Division (BSD) in their ***Building Standards Verification - Key Performance Outcomes Handbook***.

Type of application	Initial Response	Backstop (if appropriate)
Application with no specific customer agreed response date	20 Working days from date application deemed to be "valid"	35 Working days

**If you have not received a response:**

- for an application within 35 working days from the date of the acknowledgement letter, contact the Building Standards Team Leader directly on 07919 300741 or by email at [max.mccall@dumgal.gov.uk](mailto:max.mccall@dumgal.gov.uk) to resolve this matter.
- to fully address customer concerns where response times are beyond the set target you will be able to report any dissatisfaction of a verifier failing to meet the appropriate level of service for their building warrant first report first response time.
- reporting will be through the Scottish Government Building Standards Division (BSD) at [buildingstandards@gov.scot](mailto:buildingstandards@gov.scot) or 0300 244 4000, who will contact both the local authority concerned and Local Authority Building Standards Scotland (LABSS)

6.3 We aim to grant 90% of building warrant applications within ten working days following receipt of all necessary information.

## Once an application has been approved

7.1 When an application has been approved, we will provide you with a Construction Compliance and Notification Plan (CCNP). This plan will be sent to both the applicant and the agent and both parties should make themselves, and the contractor, familiar with the contents of this document as it notifies you of specific stages of construction when building standards should be contacted to verify the works carried out on site.

Failure to notify building standards at the appropriate stages, and not allowing them sufficient time to respond, may lead to refusal of a completion certificate and works may need to be exposed for inspection.

The number of inspections required will vary, and will be determined by the complexity and value of the project. Note, these can be revised at any stage of a project should a verifier deem this to be necessary eg discovery of ground with poor bearing capacity.

It is a statutory requirement that you must inform us when works reach certain stages so that inspections may take place. These stages are:

- commencement of work
- completion inspection to accept your certificate of completion submission.

In addition to all of the above inspections we will discuss which further inspections (if any) may be required when we discuss the project on site after the commencement of works.

7.2 Your approval documentation including the Construction Compliance and Notification Plan (CCNP) will include the contact details of the officer assigned to conduct the necessary inspections. Requests for inspections should be made directly by SMS text message, or by email using the shared [BSInspectionTeam@dumgal.gov.uk](mailto:BSInspectionTeam@dumgal.gov.uk)

Note, The email or SMS text message should include the application address together with the building warrant reference number.

7.3 We aim to

- carry out routine site visits, where requested, within three working days.
- carry out drain inspections/tests within three working days.
- if site visits reveal departures from approved plans or there are areas of work which do not comply with the Building (Scotland) Regulations 2005 the applicant/ agent, if not notified on site, shall be notified of them in writing within five working days of the site visit.

It is the responsibility of the applicant or his agent to notify us when the works are ready for re-inspection.

7.4 We will keep full and accurate records of site visits and all drainage inspections or tests. The records shall indicate:

- the date the inspection/test was carried out,
- who carried out the inspection/test,
- what works were inspected and whether they were found to be in order,
- any departures from the approved plans,
- areas of work which do not comply with the Building (Scotland) Regulations 2005.

7.5 When an appropriate Completion Certificate submission is received in the appropriate manner, we will within 10 working days, aim to:



- carry out an inspection,
- arrange a definite appointment to inspect the works, or, temporarily suspend the application and notify you that a mutually convenient time must be agreed to inspect the works,
- If faults are noted on site, the applicant/agent shall be notified of these in writing within 3 working days of the site visit in 80% of cases. **Note**, it is the responsibility of the applicant/agent to notify us when the works are ready for re-inspection.

7.6 When all works are found to have been completed in accordance with the approved plans and the Building (Scotland) Regulations, and a completion certificate submission is received we will:

- Issue the acceptance within six working days of the inspection.

## **To keep everyone informed we will.**

8.1 It is a requirement of the Building (Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations that we shall keep a register of all Building Warrant applications submitted to us.

This register shall be available for inspection by the public within office hours.

8.2 The register is available online using [the building standards online register](#) where records dating back to 1st January 1996 can be accessed.

## **Work carried out without permission.**

9.1 It is essential that all building work, unless it is specifically exempt, or work which does not require a building warrant, is the subject of a Building Warrant Application.

As well as being a legal requirement, the absence of such an approval and subsequent Completion Certificate will almost certainly affect the sale of property.

9.2 For details of building work relating to dwelling houses which are exempt see: [check work which requires a building warrant](#)

If it is brought to the council's attention or, it is suspected that works which require approval are being carried out without the necessary building warrant, the authority will:

- visit the site to ascertain the extent of the works.
- if works are being carried out without approval, they will request that all works cease until a Building Warrant has been applied for and granted.
- it may be the case that the work carried out does not comply with the building regulations. In this instance we will ask that the work carried out be altered to show compliance.

9.3 If the work does not cease, or the required building warrant is not obtained within the

timescale given, action to have the unauthorised work altered or removed will be taken under Section 27 of the Building (Scotland) Act 2003.

- This action will be taken against the person responsible for carrying out the unauthorised work or the building owner.
- All costs borne by the council will be recovered from the person concerned.

A person who fails to carry out the requirements of a notice is guilty of an offence under the Building (Scotland) Act and can, be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding £5,000, and in the case of a continuing offence to a further fine of £50 for every day the offence continues.

## Dangerous buildings

10.1 The Building (Scotland) Act 2003 places a responsibility on Building Standards for the safety of the public around buildings and persons frequenting buildings.

10.2 All buildings reported as being dangerous and considered to be a danger to the public will be inspected on the same day as the complaint is received, including, and if serious enough, at weekends.

10.3 All immediately dangerous buildings will be either made safe or adequately fenced off. In the first instance, it will be the responsibility of the building owner to carry out the works deemed necessary by us.

10.4 If the owner fails to carry out our instructions, or cannot be contacted readily, we will carry out the work necessary to make the building safe under Section 29 of the Building (Scotland) Act 2003 with costs being recovered from the owner.

10.5 Owners of buildings reported as being dangerous but on inspection found not to be of immediate danger, but still dangerous, shall be written to within two working days of the inspection outlining to them the works (if any) necessary to make their building safe.

10.6 The building owner will be given an appropriate time in which to carry out the necessary work.

## Service standards

11.1 The Building Standards Service will:

- Always be courteous, polite, and helpful.
- Deal with all our customers equally and fairly regardless of race, gender, age, ability, sexuality, or religion.
- Carry identification cards. The cards give the name and position of the cardholder and include a photograph. If our staff are calling at your home or place of business, you are entitled to see their identity card.

- Be open for business; we will undertake positive actions to support sustainable economic growth.
- Provide effective customer service; by communicating and engaging with customers for a positive customer experience.
- Create a culture of continuous improvement; by listening to customers.
- Answer all telephone calls as soon as possible.
- If you leave a telephone message, we aim to return your call within 48 hours.
- Achieve a customer satisfaction rating of 7.5%.
- Endeavour to see customers at reception within 20 minutes for general enquiries. The building Standards service offers a “drop-in” service for general enquiries, Tuesdays to Thursdays between 09.00 and 12.30pm.
- Respond to letters and emails within 20 days or, where the enquiry cannot be dealt with within that timescale; provide an acknowledgement within 5 days.

## Complaints procedure

12.1 Any complaint in respect of Building Standards should preferably be made in writing to the Team Leader.

**A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, which alleges failure on the part of the council to perform a function or provide a service in line with stated council practices and policies.**

12.2 When you have a complaint we will:

- we will forward the complaint to the appropriate section if it does not relate to the building standards service and notify the complainant accordingly.
- fully and promptly investigate all legitimate complaints in line with the council complaints procedure.

12.3 Further information

Fuller details and explanation of the complaint’s procedure are contained in the [making a complaint](#) area on the dumgal website, or from any Dumfries and Galloway Council office.

## Performance

13.1 Information on building standards performance will be updated quarterly and can be found at [service standards for building standards](#)

