



# The Planning Inspectorate Yr Arolygiaeth Gynllunio

## Official Statistics 24 June 2021

### Introduction

This statistical release provides summary information on appeals, which represent the highest volume (in terms of number of cases) of the work of the Planning Inspectorate.

These statistics are produced each month and the focus is on timeliness, as that is an area in which stakeholders have an interest. Information on the decisions that we have made is also included; and on the number of Inspectors available to make those decisions.

We are seeking feedback! If you have any thoughts on how we can develop these statistics – including on the additional quarterly and annual figures - please let us know at [statistics@planninginspectorate.gov.uk](mailto:statistics@planninginspectorate.gov.uk)

These statistics have been published to ensure everyone has equal access to the information and to support the Planning Inspectorate's commitment to release information where possible.

This statistical bulletin provides<sup>1</sup>:

- Appeals decisions and events held from June 2020 to May 2021
- The time taken to reach those decisions
- Number of open cases
- Number of Inspectors
- Number of virtual events

The data in this release is only applicable to England.

### The Planning Inspectorate

The Planning Inspectorate makes decision and provides recommendations and advice on a range of land use planning-related issues across England and Wales. We do this in a fair, open and timely way.

The Planning Inspectorate deals with planning appeals, national infrastructure planning applications, examinations of local plans and other planning-related and specialist casework in England and Wales. The Planning Inspectorate is an executive agency, sponsored by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government and the Welsh Government.

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<sup>1</sup> See Annex A for breakdown of what has been included in recent releases.

## Summary

### Impact of Covid-19 pandemic

This statistical release reflects that, as with everyone else, the Inspectorate has now been operating for over 12 months with the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Previous statistical releases have outlined the impact of the pandemic on the Inspectorate in three ways; events were suspended during the first national lockdown in Spring 2020, timeliness measures increased, and the number of open cases also increased.

### Performance

The mean average time to make a decision, across all cases in the last 12 months (Jun 20 to May 21), was 27 weeks. The median time is 23 weeks.

The median timeliness for May 21 was 22.1 weeks – this was a marginal increase of 0.2 weeks from April 21.

Median timeliness by procedure type is shown in the summary table below.

Procedure type	Last 12 months	May 21
Written Representations	23 weeks	21 weeks
Hearings	47 weeks	40 weeks
Inquiries	58 weeks	66 weeks

The median time to decision for planning cases (there are many more of these decisions than in the other categories) is lower than for other casework categories, apart from in March 21 and May 21. Across the whole year, the median time to decision is 22 weeks. Enforcement decisions made in the last 12 months had a median decision time of 34 weeks. Looking at the annual totals, the median and mean time to decision for specialist decisions have been broadly the same as for enforcement decisions, and longer than the median for planning decisions. Since February 21 there has been a change in this trend, with Specialist cases being quicker than Enforcement.

The median time for inquiries under the Rosewell Process over the 12 months to May 21 is 39 weeks.

### Decisions

The Planning Inspectorate has made 17,892 appeal decisions<sup>2</sup> in the last 12 months, an average of just over 1,500 per month. The monthly breakdown shows fewer decisions from June to August 2020, and for the months of January and April 2021, than would have been expected. This is thought to be due to the impact of national lockdowns, and of staff taking more annual leave in 2021 than in 2020.

Written representations decisions had recovered to pre-pandemic levels between September and December 20 (pre-pandemic being between approximately 1,600 and 2,000 decisions per month). Written representation decisions during 2021 have ranged between a low of 994 (April 21) and a high of 1,526 (March 21).

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<sup>2</sup> The appeal types include planning & related appeals, Enforcement and Specialist casework (covering a range of casework types). Please note that some previous releases covered only Rights of Way orders within Specialist casework. Annex A details the scope of previous releases, Annex D the scope of this release and Background Notes has further information.

The number of hearings decided in May 21 (65) was the highest in the last 12 months. Decisions for hearings since December 20 have ranged between approximately 40 and 65 per month. The number of inquiries decided in May 21 (53) was the highest in the last 12 months.

### **Open Cases**

At the end of May 21, the Planning Inspectorate had over eleven thousand seven hundred cases open<sup>3</sup> (11,725). This is almost the same as the previous month.

### **Planning Inspectors**

There were 353 Planning Inspectors employed by the Inspectorate in May 21 – with a full-time equivalent of 314.4.

### **Virtual Events**

The Inspectorate are continuing to carry out events 'virtually'. There were 86 cases involving Virtual Events during May 21. There continue to be concerns about the quality of the data on virtual events: there appears to be under-recording despite the introduction of system changes aimed at improving the quality of data.

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<sup>3</sup> Open cases are any that have been received but on which a decision has not yet been made/ issued. Cases included comprise Planning, Enforcement, and the following Specialist cases: Common Land, Environment, Purchase Notice and Rights of Way, Tree Preservation Orders, Hedgerows and High Hedges cases.

Note that previous publications excluded Tree Preservation Order, Hedgerow and High Hedge cases from open cases totals. See Background Quality report for more information.

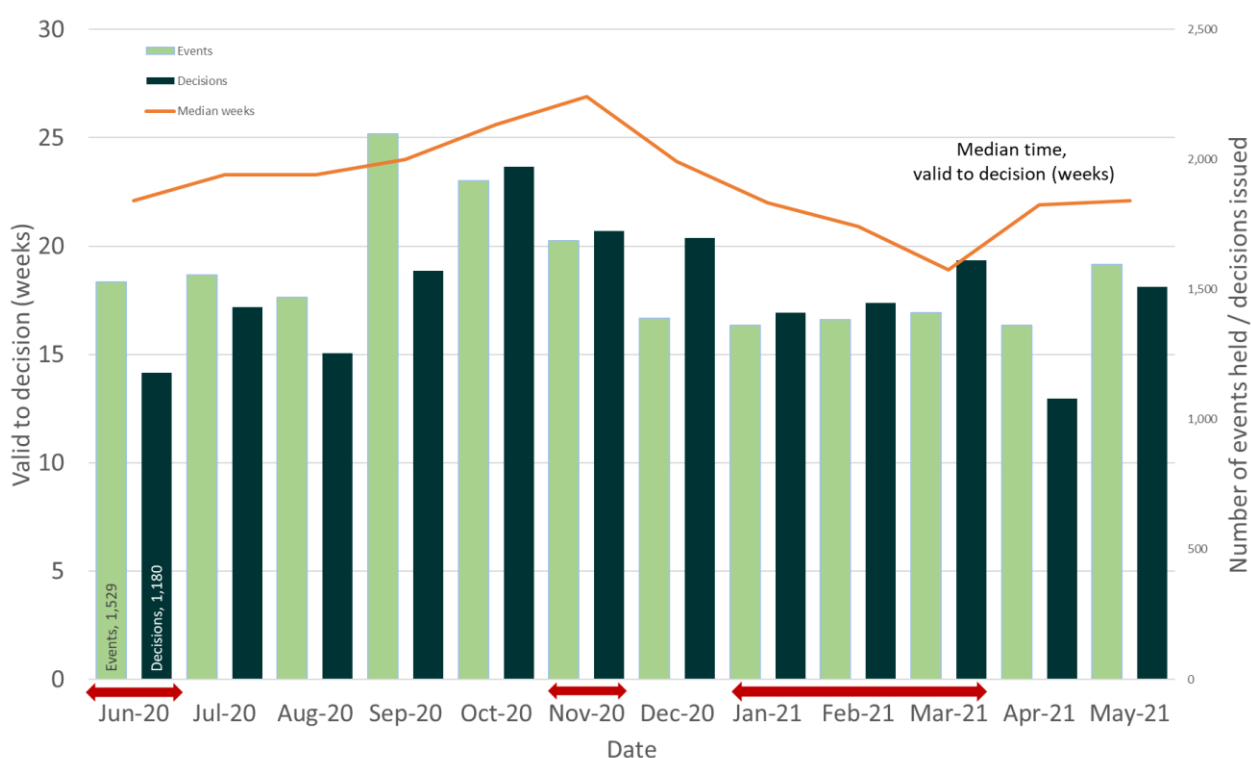
## Decisions, Events & Open Cases

The number of decisions issued in May 21 was 1,511. This was 40% higher than the number of decisions issued in April 21, and broadly in line with previous months of 2021. The clear exception in the last 12 months was April 21. Decisions were low for June 20, but this was associated with the effects of the first national lockdown.

The number of events held in May 21 was the highest since November 20. For the months of December 20 to May 21 events average at around 1,400 per month. In the last 12 months the highest number of events held was September 20, when almost 2,100 events were held.

The median<sup>4</sup> time to decide a case marginally increased by 0.2 weeks between April and May 21, with the median in April 21 being just over 22 weeks. Performance had been improving from November 20 to March 21.

Figure 1: Number of events held, decisions issued and median time between valid date & decision date; Jun 20 to May 21



Source: Horizon, Picaso, Inspector Scheduling System

Note – Red arrows indicate periods when national lockdowns were in effect

Table 1: Number of events held, decisions issued and median time between valid date & decision date; Jun 20 to May 21

Month	Jun 20	Jul 20	Aug 20	Sep 20	Oct 20	Nov 20	Dec 20	Jan 21	Feb 21	Mar 21	Apr 21	May 21	Total
Events Held	1,529	1,555	1,469	2,098	1,919	1,688	1,388r	1,362	1,383r	1,410	1,361r	1,597	18,759
Decisions	1,180	1,431	1,254	1,571	1,971	1,725	1,698	1,411	1,447	1,612	1,081	1,511	17,892
Median	22.1	23.3	23.3	24.0	25.6	26.9	23.9	22.0	20.9	18.9	21.9	22.1	23.0

Source: Horizon, Picaso, Inspector Scheduling System. r denotes revision – a change of more than 5 cases since last month (see Background Quality Report for more information)

<sup>4</sup> See the section on Decision timeliness for more, including definitions of the average measures used in this release.

The pace of increase in the number of open cases has slowed, based on the number of open cases at the end of May 21. Increases since December 20 show the impact of the third national lockdown, and increased levels of staff leave. This contrasts with the period September to December 20, where once schools re-opened and full Inspectorate capacity had returned, the number of cases being closed noticeably exceeded the number received.

The number of open cases is influenced both by capacity to carry out casework (resulting in decisions issued / cases closed) and incoming demand (cases received). As mentioned above, decisions for April 21 were low. The number received in May 21 was 1,627, as low as it has been in the last 12 months. Over the last 12 months around 1,700 cases have been received each month.

Note – The number of cases closed is higher than the number of decisions, as it includes cases where an appeal is withdrawn, notice is withdrawn, or the appeal is turned away.

Figure 2: Number of cases received, closed and open; Jun 20 to May 21



Source: Horizon and Picaso

Note - the count of open cases from December 2020 onwards has been revised to include some specialist casework types that were previously excluded: High Hedge (HH), Hedgerow (HGW) and Tree Preservation Order (TPO). Please see the Background Quality Report for more details. Despite this change there is an anomaly in that the number of open cases has not reduced in the way it should where more cases are closed than received.

Note – Red arrows indicate periods when national lockdowns were in effect

Table 2: Number of cases received, closed and open; Jun 20 to May 21

Month	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21	Apr-21	May-21	Total
Received	1,620	1,686	1,498	1,643	1,806	1,696	1,775	1,632	1,759	1,922r	1,659r	1,627	20,178
Closed	1,337	1,604	1,371	1,713	2,149	1,886	1,869	1,578	1,631r	1,835	1,248r	1,676	19,897
Open (excl. HH, HGW, TPO)	10,987	11,023	11,050	10,951	10,541	10,350	10,217	10,298	10,439	10,712	11,178r	11,233	N/A
Open(All)	10,987	11,023	11,050	10,951	10,541	10,350	10,822	10,827	10,952	11,245	11,729	11,725	N/A

Source: Horizon and Picaso. r denotes revision – a change of more than 5 cases since last month (see Background Quality Report for more information)

## Number of Decisions

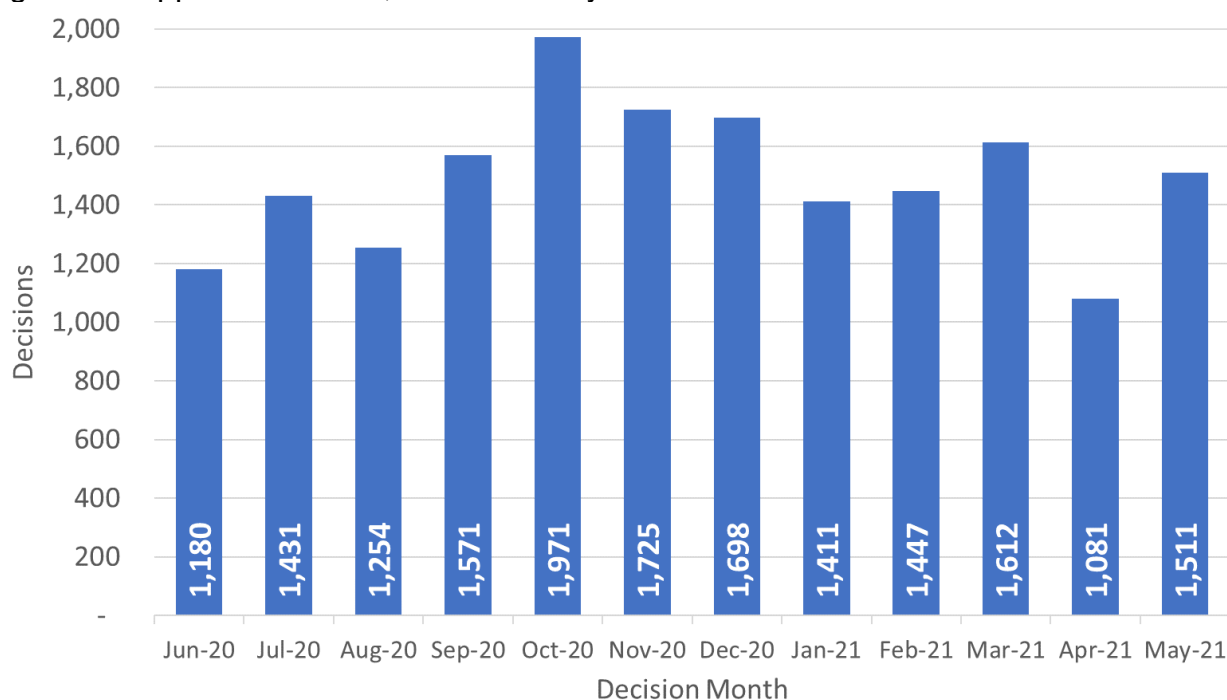
The Planning Inspectorate has made 17,892 appeal decisions<sup>5</sup> in the last 12 months, an average of just over 1,500 per month. Table 3 below shows the monthly breakdown with fewer decisions from June to August 2020, and for the months of January and April 2021, than would have been expected. This is thought to be due to the impact of national lockdowns, and of staff taking more annual leave in 2021 than in 2020.

Table 3: Appeal Decisions; Jun 20 to May 21

Month	Jun 20	Jul 20	Aug 20	Sep 20	Oct 20	Nov 20	Dec 20	Jan 21	Feb 21	Mar 21	Apr 21	May 21	Total
Decisions	1,180	1,431	1,254	1,571	1,971	1,725	1,698	1,411	1,447	1,612	1,081	1,511	17,892

Source: Horizon and Picaso.

Figure 3 – Appeal Decisions; Jun 20 to May 21



Source: Horizon and Picaso

### Decisions by procedure and case type

Planning Inspectors work on a broader range of work than the appeals featured in this Release. For example, they also work on examining Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project applications, Local Plans<sup>6</sup>, Compulsory Purchase Order applications and many other specialist licencing/application types.

Table 4 below gives the numbers of appeal decisions made broken down by whether the case was dealt with by written representations, hearings, or inquiries.

<sup>5</sup> The appeal types include planning & related appeals, Enforcement and Specialist casework (covering a range of casework types). Please note that some previous releases covered only Rights of Way orders within Specialist casework. Annex A details the scope of previous releases, Annex D the scope of this release and Background Notes has further information.

<sup>6</sup> Data on volumes for Nationally Significant Infrastructure projects and Local Plans can be seen here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-inspectorate-statistics> (Tables 1.1 and 1.2)

The large majority of decisions (17,168) were made on written representations. This is about ninety six percent of all appeal decisions made. Table 4 shows that written representations decisions had recovered to pre-pandemic levels between September and December 20 (pre-pandemic being between approximately 1,600 and 2,000 decisions per month). Decisions have ranged between a low of 994 (April 21) and a high of 1,526 (March 21) in 2021.

There were 469 decisions made on hearings. The number of hearings decided in May 21 (65) was the highest in the last 12 months. Decisions for hearings since December 20 have ranged between approximately 40 and 65 per month.

There were 255 decisions made on inquiries. The number of inquiries decided in May 21 (53) was the highest in the last 12 months.

Table 4: Appeal Decisions by procedure and casework category; Jun 20 to May 21

Month	Jun 20	Jul 20	Aug 20	Sep 20	Oct 20	Nov 20	Dec 20	Jan 21	Feb 21	Mar 21	Apr 21	May 21	Total
Written Representations	1,157	1,410	1,230	1,543	1,918	1,672	1,612	1,329	1,384	1,526	994	1,393	17,168
Hearings	13	16	14	21	40	33	60	58	44	53	52	65	469
Inquiries	10	5	10	7	13	20	26	24	19	33	35	53	255
Total	1,180	1,431	1,254	1,571	1,971	1,725	1,698	1,411	1,447	1,612	1,081	1,511	17,892

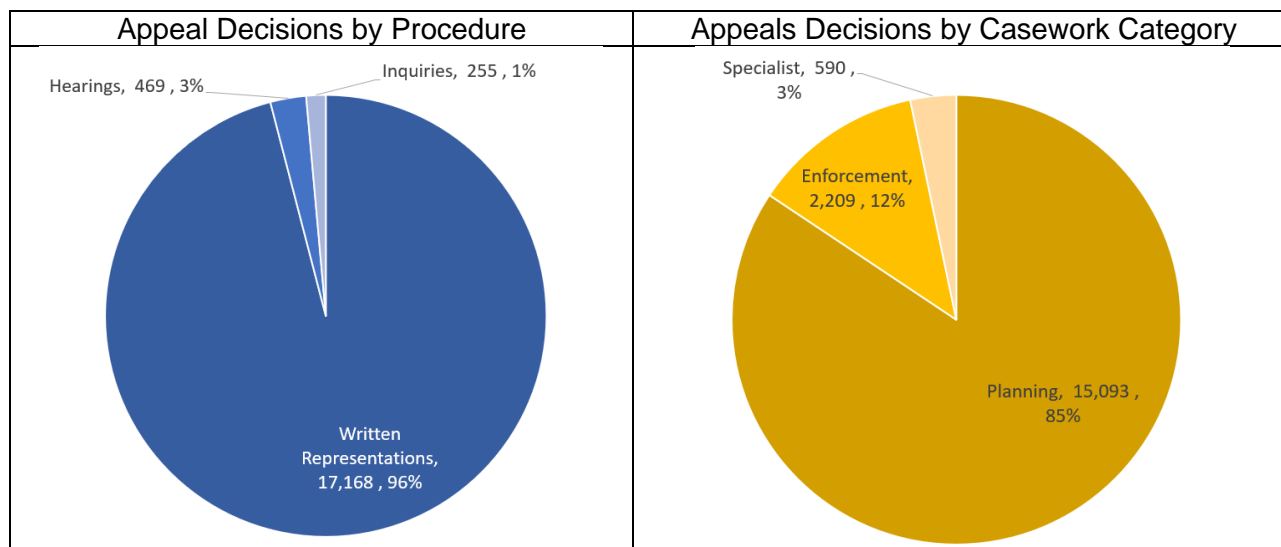
Month	Jun 20	Jul 20	Aug 20	Sep 20	Oct 20	Nov 20	Dec 20	Jan 21	Feb 21	Mar 21	Apr 21	May 21	Total
Planning	970	1,149	991	1,323	1,638	1,484	1,463	1,185	1,244	1,416	938	1,292	15,093
Enforcement	178	239	227	215	281	195	186	165	112	150	100	161	2,209
Specialist	32	43	36	33	52	46	49	61	91	46	43	58	590
Total	1,180	1,431	1,254	1,571	1,971	1,725	1,698	1,411	1,447	1,612	1,081	1,511	17,892

Source: Horizon and Picaso

The large majority of cases were planning (15,093). This is about eighty five per cent of all appeal decisions made. There were 2,209 enforcement decisions and 590 specialist decisions. These totals are also shown in Table 4 and Figure 4 below.

Trends for planning decisions show similar patterns to written representations. The number of enforcement decisions had been decreasing month on month between October 20 and February 21 and has been variable for the latest two months; April 21 (100 decisions) and May 21 (161 decisions). Specialist casework figures continue to vary each month, from a low of 32 (June 20) to a high of 91 (February 21).

Figure 4 – Appeal Decisions by Procedure and Casework Category; Jun 20 to May 21



Source: Horizon and Picaso

## Decision timeliness

It is important for people to know how long an appeal is going to take, so that they can make plans and decisions based on this information. This section covers the timeliness of decisions (i.e. how long it takes to make a decision) across our appeal casework. In addition to an overall measure, timeliness is analysed by procedure type and casework category, as timeliness varies a great deal depending on these characteristics.

Table 5 below shows that the mean average time to make a decision<sup>7</sup>, across all cases in the last 12 months (June 20 to May 21), was 27 weeks.<sup>8</sup> Figure 5 shows the mean has been above 25 weeks, with the exception of March 21, for the last 12 months.

Table 5 also shows the median time is 23 weeks. Each month the median is less than the mean; this is due to the larger impact on the mean of very long cases.

The median timeliness increased between June 20 to Nov 20, peaking at almost 27 weeks. Between December 20 to March 21 there was a reduction in the median time to decision, down to a low in March 21 of 18.9 weeks. The median for May 21 was 22.1 weeks.

Also included in the table is the *standard deviation* of decision timeliness. A lower standard deviation would demonstrate greater consistency in the Planning Inspectorate's decision timeliness. The data shows that the variability was getting less towards the end of 2020 – the standard deviation values are 15.6 or lower for June to December. Data for the months in 2021 show greater variability, with a low of 16 weeks and a high of 18.7 weeks.

<sup>7</sup> The time to make a decision is measured from the time we judge we have enough information for the case to proceed (i.e. it is deemed 'valid') to the time a decision letter is issued. We estimate that most cases are 'validated' (the difference between receipt date and the validation process being completed) in a week or less.

<sup>8</sup> The decisions made in a given month will include those that started many months before, and thus do not give an accurate indication of how decisions submitted, or deemed 'valid' in that month, will take.



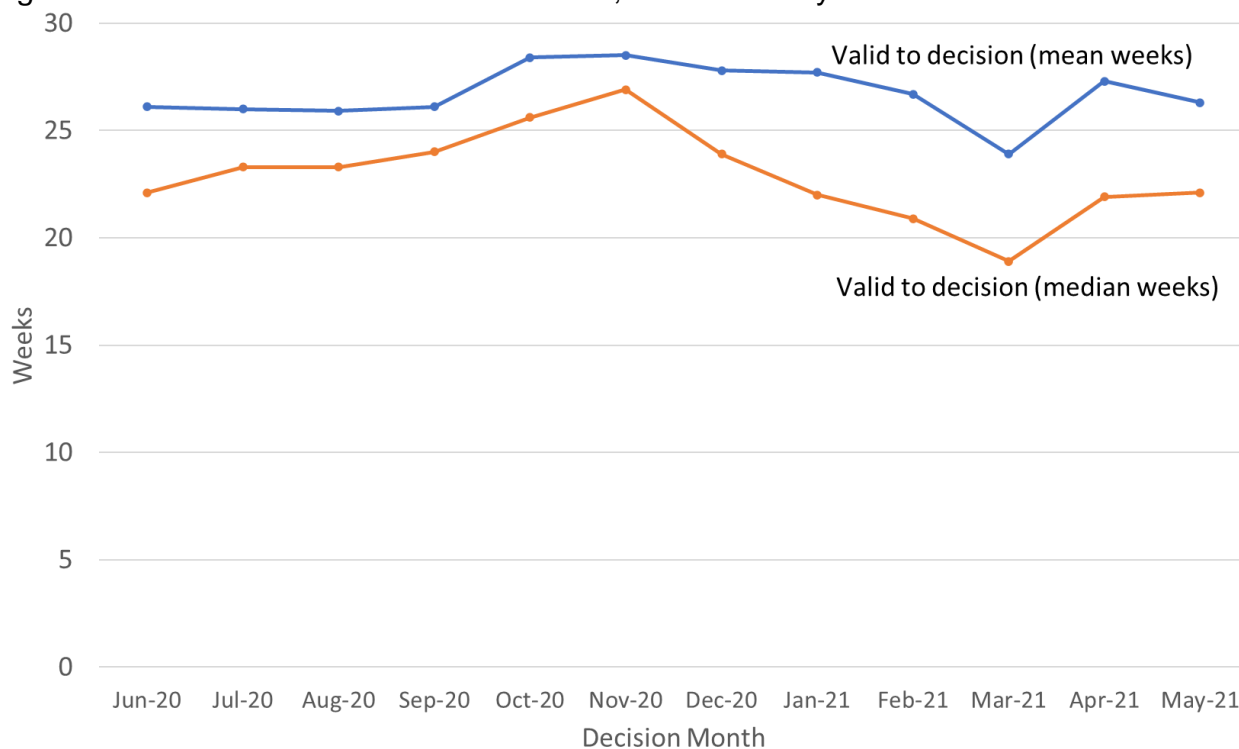
What are mean, median, and standard deviation?	
Measure	Definition
Mean	The total time taken divided by the number of cases. Also referred to as the 'average'. A measure of how long each case would take, if the total time taken was spread evenly across all cases.
Median	This is the time taken by the 'middle' case if all cases were sorted from quickest to longest
Standard deviation	This is a measure of variability or spread. It is calculated by examining how much each value differs from the mean. A higher standard deviation means the individual decision times vary more widely around the mean.

Table 5: Mean, Median and Standard Deviation of Time to Decision; Jun 20 to May 21

Month	Jun 20	Jul 20	Aug 20	Sep 20	Oct 20	Nov 20	Dec 20	Jan 21	Feb 21	Mar 21	Apr 21	May 21	Total
Valid to Decision (mean weeks)	26.1	26.0	25.9	26.1	28.4	28.5	27.8	27.7	26.7	23.9	27.3	26.3	26.9
Valid to Decision (median weeks)	22.1	23.3	23.3	24.0	25.6	26.9	23.9	22.0	20.9	18.9	21.9	22.1	23.0
Standard Deviation (weeks)	13.9	14.4	14.1	12.5	14.9	12.9	15.6	18.1	16.9	16.0	18.7	16.7	15.5

Source: Horizon and Picaso

Figure 5: Mean and Median time to decision; Jun 20 to May 21



Source: Horizon and Picaso

## Procedure Type

Table 6 below shows decision timeliness broken down by the procedure type. Hearings and inquiries take longer than written representations – with inquiries taking more than twice as long as written representations. Because 19 of every 20 cases are by written representation, the timeliness measures for written representations is similar to the measure across all cases.

Where a small number of cases has been decided, the average timeliness (whether mean or median) is less meaningful as a measure than where there are many cases. Those areas shaded in the table below should be treated with caution as there are fewer than 20 cases decided.

The median time for written representations over the 12 months to May 21 is 23 weeks. The median time for inquiries over the 12 months to May 21 is over a year - 58 weeks. The median time for hearings is slightly less at 47 weeks. For each of these procedure types, the mean is higher as it is more affected by the longest cases.

Table 6: Mean and Median Time to Decision, with standard deviation, by procedure; Jun 20 to May 21

Measure	Procedure	Jun 20	Jul 20	Aug 20	Sep 20	Oct 20	Nov 20	Dec 20	Jan 21	Feb 21	Mar 21	Apr 21	May 21	Total
Valid to Decision (mean weeks)	Written Representations	25.3	25.6	25.4	25.6	27.9	28	26.6	25.8	25.3	22.1	24.1	24.2	25.7
	Hearings	63.8	56	44.5r	50.5	49.8	37.3	49.6	59.8	47.5	56.7	63.8r	42.8	51.7
	Inquiries	71.4	42.3	55.1	63.2	43.8	58.5	52.8	57	76.3	57.6	64.4r	61.4	60
	All Cases	26.1	26	25.9	26.1	28.4	28.5	27.8	27.7	26.7	23.9	27.3	26.3	26.9
Valid to Decision (median weeks)	Written Representations	22.0	23.1	23.0	23.9	25.1	26.6	23.1	21.3	20.4	18.4	20.9	21.1	22.6
	Hearings	52.6	39.6	47.6r	40.3	40.1	37.3	43.9	51.5	49.0	52.4	62.0r	39.6	46.6
	Inquiries	67.7	24.0	44.4	65.0	37.3	55.0	40.1	52.0	68.1	41.3	62.4	66.0	58.0
	All Cases	22.1	23.3	23.3	24.0	25.6	26.9	23.9	22.0	20.9	18.9	21.9	22.1	23.0
Standard Deviation (weeks)	Written Representations	12.3	13.7	13.4	11.7	14.2	12.3	14.0	15.2	14.8	12.6	13.6	14.1	13.7
	Hearings	30.7	31.8	11.4r	20.4	25.5	14.7	20.0	29.1	20.9	26.3	26.9	18.3	24.7
	Inquiries	13.2	24.0	34.0	18.5	17.4	14.0	31.0	29.8	36.9	31.3	27.8	25.9	28.5
	All Cases	13.9	14.4	14.1	12.5	14.9	12.9	15.6	18.1	16.9	16.0	18.7	16.7	15.5

Source: Horizon and Picaso. Cells shaded grey had fewer than 20 decisions. r denotes revision – a change of more than 0.5 weeks since last month

The standard deviation information indicates that for all three procedures, there is considerable variation, meaning times are widely spread about the mean. For each type, the amount of variation does not appear to be either increasing or decreasing through the year.

## Casework Category

The nature of the cases the Planning Inspectorate deal with varies widely and several factors play a part in determining how long it takes to make a decision. One such factor is the casework type. Table 7 below shows the time taken to decide, in planning cases, in enforcement cases, and in specialist<sup>9</sup> cases, as does Figure 6.

<sup>9</sup> Specialist cases comprise Common Land, Rights of Way orders, Tree Preservation Orders, High Hedges appeals and Hedgerow appeals

The median time to decision for planning cases (there are many more of these decisions than in the other categories) is lower than for other casework categories, apart from in March 21 and May 21. Table 7 and Figure 6 shows the median time for planning cases was, apart from February and March 21, above 20 weeks for the last 12 months. Across the whole year, the median time to decision is 22 weeks.

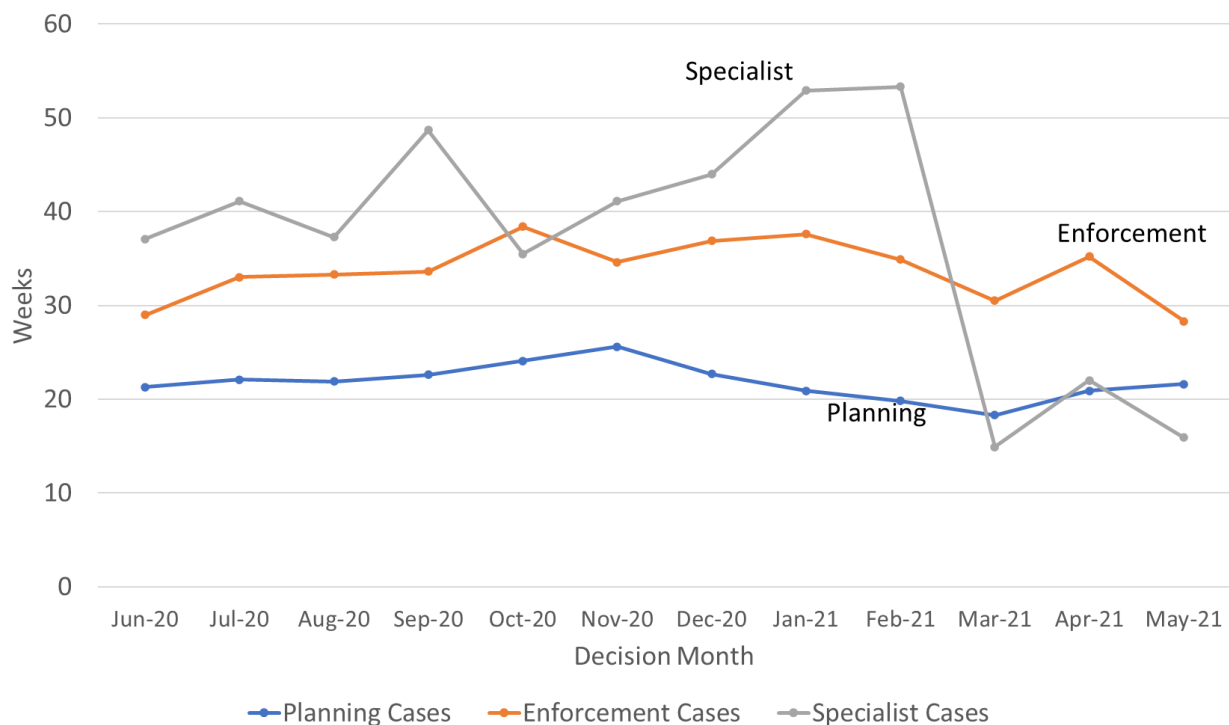
Annex B gives information on mean and median time to decision, with standard deviation, for these procedure types, split by planning, enforcement and specialist casework categories.

Table 7: Decisions, Mean, Median and Standard Deviation of Time to Decision – Planning, Enforcement, Specialist Cases; Jun 20 to May 21

Casework Category	Measure	Jun 20	Jul 20	Aug 20	Sep 20	Oct 20	Nov 20	Dec 20	Jan 21	Feb 21	Mar 21	Apr 21	May 21	Total
Planning Cases	Valid to Decision (mean wks)	23.5	22.9	23.0	23.7	25.6	27.0	25.4	24.6	23.2	21.9	24.7	24.5	24.4
	Valid to Decision (median wks)	21.3	22.1	21.9	22.6	24.1	25.6	22.7	20.9	19.8	18.3	20.9	21.6	21.9
	St. dev. of decision (weeks)	10.0	9.6	11.4	9.8	11.3	11.3	12.3	12.3	11.6	12.3	14.6	13.2	11.9
Enforcement Cases	Valid to Decision (mean wks)	37.5	38.0	36.8	37.5	42.8	37.7	42.1	43.7	42.7	41.6	47.6	40.6	39.9
	Valid to Decision (median wks)	29.0	33.0	33.3	33.6	38.4	34.6	36.9	37.6	34.9	30.5	35.2	28.3	33.4
	St. dev. of decision (weeks)	21.3	22.6	17.3	15.5	20.5	16.8	23.1	28.9	26.7	26.2	29.4	28.9	22.6
Specialist Cases	Valid to Decision (mean wks)	40.6	42.8r	37.6r	47.0	38.8	39.4	44.3	46.1	53.7	28.6r	36.7r	24.8	40.6
	Valid to Decision (median wks)	37.1	41.1	37.3r	48.7	35.5	41.1	44.0	52.9	53.3	14.9	22.0r	15.9	38.0
	St. dev. of decision (weeks)	23.1	17.1	17.7	24.3	26.4	18.3	25.4	33.7	24.8	29.2r	30.4	22.0	26.5

Source: Horizon and Picaso. r denotes revision – a change of more than 0.5 weeks since last month. P means the data is provisional.

Figure 6 – Median time to decision by casework area; Jun 20 to May 21



Source: Horizon and Picaso

Enforcement decisions made in the last 12 months had a median decision time of 34 weeks. For the last 12 months the mean is 40 weeks. The median time for enforcement decisions is longer than the median decision time for planning cases.

There are considerably fewer specialist cases which means results are more liable to be distorted by extreme values. Looking at the annual totals, the median and mean time to decision for specialist decisions have been broadly the same as for enforcement decisions, and longer than the median for planning decisions. Since February 21 there has been a change in this trend, with Specialist cases being quicker than Enforcement. The mix of casework being decided under the Specialist group has changed, and there was a concentrated effort to decide a high number of older Tree Preservation Order (TPO) cases that has influenced performance figures.

Note that the Inspectorate publishes each month, information on the mean and median times from valid to decision, for selected appeal types. The information published also breaks down the time for each stage of the process. See Annex C<sup>10</sup> for further details.

### Planning Inquiry Decisions

For planning appeals decided by the inquiry process, The Planning Inspectorate has been implementing recommendations from the Rosewell review.

The median time for inquiries over the 12 months to May 21 is 39 weeks, with the mean being marginally higher at 40 weeks. With the exception of February 21, decision volumes have been above ten per month since Dec 20.

Table 8: Decisions, Mean and Median Time to Decision, Planning Inquiry cases under Rosewell process; Jun 20 to May 21

Measure	Jun 20	Jul 20	Aug 20	Sep 20	Oct 20	Nov 20	Dec 20	Jan 21	Feb 21	Mar 21	Apr 21	May 21	Total
Decisions	-	3	5	2	7	7	18	13	8	15	17	17	112
Mean (weeks)	-	22.7	42.5	41.1	45.7	45.7	35.3	36.5	40.7	36.7	53.5	34.8	40.2
Median (weeks)	-	23.4	45.6	41.1	32.6	50.9	39.4	40.3	40.7	33.7	51.9	30.3	38.6
St. Dev. (weeks)	-	1.4	16.0	1.1	22.1	9.1	10.2	12.2	7.9	12.0	31.1	9.9	17.7

Source: Horizon

Most inquiry decisions now being issued are under the revised 'Rosewell'<sup>11</sup> process, but we are still deciding those under the previous process.

Table 9: Decisions, Planning Inquiry cases under non-Rosewell process; Jun 20 to May 21

Month	Jun 20	Jul 20	Aug 20	Sep 20	Oct 20	Nov 20	Dec 20	Jan 21	Feb 21	Mar 21	Apr 21	May 21	Total
Decisions	2	0	1	0	1	5	0	1	1	1	1	4	17

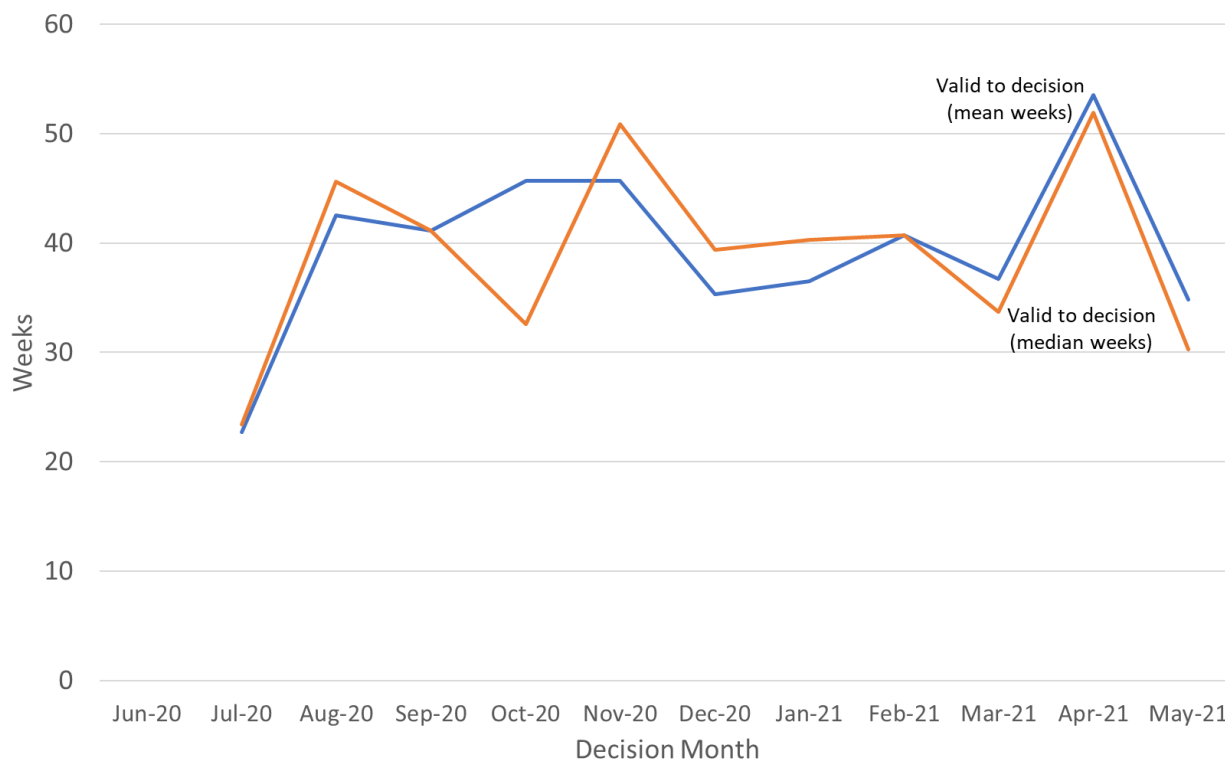
Source: Horizon

Figure 7 below shows the mean and median time to decision for planning inquiry cases under the Rosewell process.

<sup>10</sup> Data also published on gov.uk at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/appeals-average-timescales-for-arranging-inquiries-and-hearings>

<sup>11</sup> The 'Rosewell' process introduced changes to how the inquiry event date was agreed and a firm timetable for submission of documentation. Further information on what the Rosewell Review concluded is at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-review-of-planning-appeal-inquiries-report>

Figure 7: Mean, Median Time to Decision, Rosewell Inquiry Process; Jun 20 to May 21



Source: Horizon

Note – No decisions were made during June 2020.

## Open Cases

At the end of May 21, the Planning Inspectorate had over eleven thousand seven hundred cases open<sup>12</sup> (11,725). This is almost the same as the previous month. The open cases comprised over 9,800 cases being handled through written representations; just over 1,000 through hearings; and over 700 through inquiries. This is not the number of ‘live’ hearings and inquiries since it includes cases where the event (hearing or inquiry) has yet to start, as well as those where the event has finished but the decision has yet to be issued.

For each procedure type, there are more cases with an event scheduled but not yet started, than at any other stage in the process. Event refers to either a site visit, hearing or inquiry.

Note that the count of open cases from December 2020 onwards has been revised to include some specialist casework types that were previously excluded. Please see the footnote below and the Background Quality Report for more details.

<sup>12</sup> Open cases are any that have been received but on which a decision has not yet been made/ issued. Cases included comprise Planning, Enforcement, and the following Specialist cases: Common Land, Environment, Purchase Notice and Rights of Way, Tree Preservation Orders, Hedgerows and High Hedges cases.

Note that previous publications excluded Tree Preservation Order, Hedgerow and High Hedge cases from open cases totals. See Background Quality report for more information.

Table 10: Open cases by procedure and stage, as of end of May 2021

Procedure	Case received but yet to be deemed valid	Case deemed valid, event date yet to be set / in the future	Event complete but decision not yet issued	Total
Written Representations	680	7,730	1,421	9,831
Hearings	50	850	144	1,044
Inquiries	4	601	129	734
Total	734	9,289	1,702	11,725

Source: Horizon

Note there are 116 cases that have no procedure type recorded (see Background Quality Report for more detail) These are included in the total row but excluded from the breakdown by procedure.

## Inspectors

Table 11 below shows the number of inspectors in the Planning Inspectorate in each month from June 20 and May 21<sup>13</sup>. This includes headcount (i.e. the number of different individuals) and full-time equivalents (FTE) where those working part time are counted in proportion with their contracted hours. There were 353 Planning Inspectors employed by the Inspectorate in May 21 – with a full-time equivalent of 314.4.

By both measures (headcount and FTE) the maximum Inspector resource in the last 12 months was in June 20; and by both, the number at the end of January 21 was the lowest.

Table 11: Planning Inspectors – Headcount and FTE; Jun 20 to May 21 (at end of month)

Month	Jun 20	Jul 20	Aug 20	Sep 20	Oct 20	Nov 20	Dec 20	Jan 21	Feb 21	Mar 21	Apr 21	May 21
Headcount	356	355	352	352	347	345	345	343	345	352	355	353
FTE	319.0	318.2	316.4	316.4	310.0	308.1	308.1	305.4	308.1	314.4	317.0	314.4

Source: SAP HR

As above, Planning Inspectors work on a broader range of work than the appeals featured in this Release. They also work on applications and examinations. Please note that data on Planning Inspectors is only applicable to salaried employees (it does not include fixed term contract Inspectors or non-salaried Inspectors).

<sup>13</sup> Data as at the last day of the month.

## Virtual Events<sup>14</sup>

The Planning Inspectorate has continued moving casework forward during the pandemic by adapting the ways of working so that examinations, hearings and inquiries (which would previously have been held face-to-face) could take place virtually.

The Inspectorate are continuing to increase the number of events carried out 'virtually'. There appears to be under-recording despite the introduction of system changes aimed at improving the quality of data.

The table and graph below give the number of virtual events that have occurred each month. There were 86 cases involving Virtual Events during May 21.

### Data quality and corrections

There are concerns about the quality and accuracy of the data collection methods for virtual events data. Changes to recording systems aimed at reducing under-recording have been implemented but do not appear yet to be providing reliable information. For now, the information is reported from the old system, and this will continue until the changes are deemed to have reduced or removed under-recording.

See the Background Quality Report for further information.

Table 12: Virtual Events, Jun-20 to May-21<sup>P</sup>

Case Type	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec 20	Jan 21	Feb 21	Mar 21	Apr 21	May 21
s78 Hearings	8	11	18	36	41	43	35	35	23	33	29	26
s78 Inquiries	4	6	4	11	11	17	17	14	15	21	15	24
Enforcement	0	1	3	9	15	18	26	34	36	30	31	20
Local Plans	1	2	3	7	14	12	12	5	7	9	5	6
National Infrastructure	3 (3)	1 (3)	1 (2)	2 (3)	10 (30)	3 (9)	6 (18)	3 (7)	4 (8)	2 (2)	3 (1)	2 (2)
Other	0	1	0	0	4	16	7	14	8	11	7	8
Total	16 (16)	22 (24)	29 (30)	65 (66)	95 (115)	109 (115)	103 (115)	105 (109)	93 (97)	106 (106)	90 (88)	86 (86)

Source: Virtual Events 'Triage' data and SharePoint list, data as at 15/06/21

Numbers in brackets show count of events but note concerns below over counting sessions on same day. Local Plans are counted as cases where at least one sitting day occurred in a month.

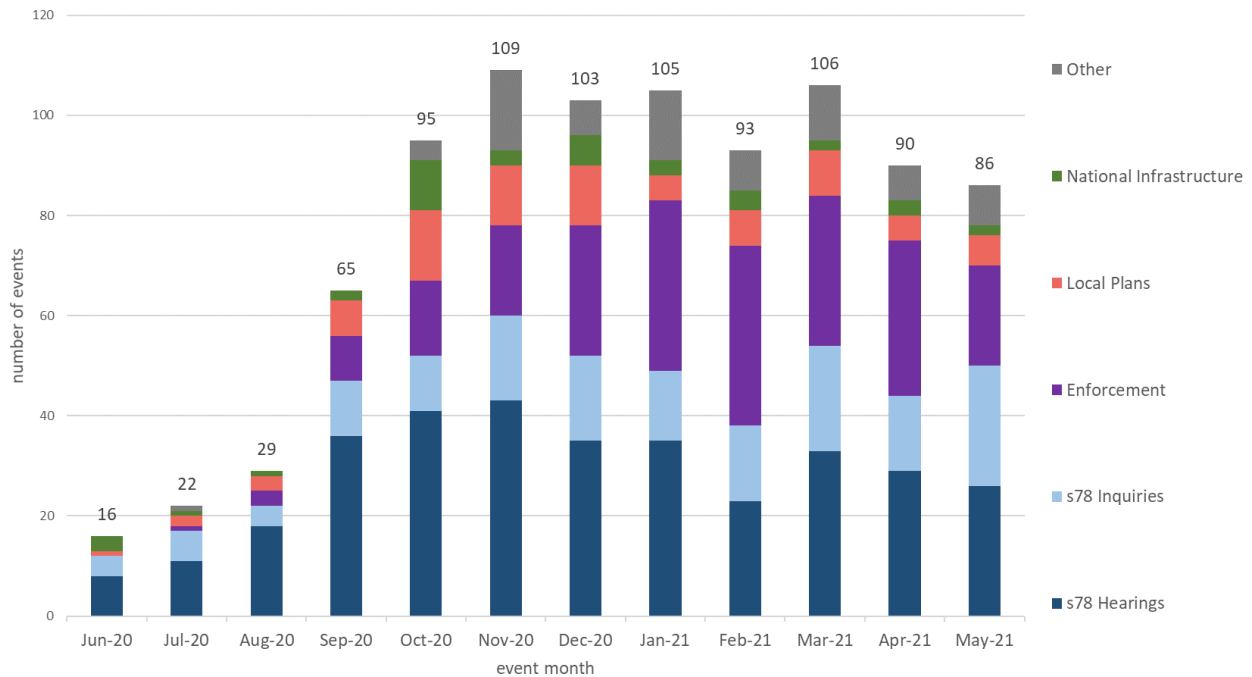
'Other' case type includes specialist casework like Environmental appeals, Transport examinations and Rights of Way cases

P – These numbers should be treated as provisional due to concerns about quality and accuracy.

Note – some cases can have multiple 'events' – for example an inquiry may sit over four to eight days but would only be counted as one 'event'. On the other hand, casework like National Infrastructure may have multiple events for the same project. For Local Plans, cases are counted as having held a virtual event, if at least one sitting day occurred that month.

<sup>14</sup> Virtual Events data includes casework types not covered elsewhere in this release, including Local Plans and Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects.

Figure 8: Virtual Events; Jun 19 to May 21<sup>P</sup>



Source: Virtual Events 'Triage' data and SharePoint list, data as at 15/06/21

P – These numbers should be treated as provisional.

For National Infrastructure, the number given in the table is the number of projects that have held virtual events. The number in brackets is the number of individual events but this is potentially misleading as multiple sessions on the same day (e.g. morning and afternoon sessions) have been counted as separate events.



## Annex A – Content of ad-hoc Statistical Releases, 2020

Note: The Table below covers ad-hoc statistical releases. From November 2020 onwards, the content is fixed, so is the same as this publication.

Date	March 2020	April 2020	July 2020	September 2020	October 2020
Content	<p>Appeals receipts and decisions in the last 12 and 24 months (1st March 2018 – 29th February 2020)</p> <p>Number of section 78 Planning Appeals received / decided / within target that used the written representation method in the last 12 months (1st March 2019 – 29th February 2020)</p> <p>Number of dwellings decided and number of dwellings allowed by appeal decisions between 1st January 2017 and 31st December 2019.</p> <p>Number of Planning Inspectors employed by the Planning Inspectorate at the end of each quarter between 31st March 2017 and 31st December 2019.</p>	<p>Appeals receipts and decisions between 17<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2020</p> <p>Live appeals in the system as at 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2020</p> <p>Number of appeals involving housing within the system as at 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2020</p> <p>Virtual site visits</p>	<p>Appeals decisions between 17<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2020</p> <p>Number of open cases</p> <p>Number of virtual events</p> <p>Number of appeals involving housing within the system as at 12<sup>th</sup> June 2020</p>	<p>Appeals decisions between 17<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and 21<sup>st</sup> September 2020</p> <p>Number of open cases</p> <p>Number of virtual events</p>	<p>Appeals decisions from October 2019 to September 2020</p> <p>Number of open cases</p> <p>Number of virtual events</p>
Scope	<p>England only</p> <p>Planning cases, Enforcement cases and Rights of Way orders</p>	<p>England only</p> <p>Planning cases, Enforcement cases and Rights of Way orders</p>	<p>England only</p> <p>Planning cases, Enforcement cases and Rights of Way orders</p>	<p>England only</p> <p>Planning cases, Enforcement cases and Rights of Way orders</p>	<p>England only</p> <p>Planning cases, Enforcement cases, Specialist cases: Common Land, Rights of Way orders, Tree Preservation Orders, High Hedges appeals and Hedgerow appeals</p>

## Annex B – Mean and median time to decision, with standard deviation, for planning, enforcement and specialist casework

### Planning

Measure	Procedure	Jun 20	Jul 20	Aug 20	Sep 20	Oct 20	Nov 20	Dec 20	Jan 21	Feb 21	Mar 21	Apr 21	May 21	Total
Valid to decision (mean weeks)	Written Representations	23.2	22.6	22.5	23.3	25.2	26.6	24.6	23.7	22.5	21.0	22.9	23.5	23.7
	Hearings	50.0	46.7	42.2	51.3	39.7	35.0	45.9	46.2	41.2	48.0	56.1	40.6	44.8
	Inquiries	62.0	22.7	60.0	41.1	44.6	54.9	35.3	40.4	50.6	35.8	54.9	44.8	45.4
	All Cases	23.5	22.9	23.0	23.7	25.6	27.0	25.4	24.6	23.2	21.9	24.7	24.5	24.4
Valid to decision (median weeks)	Written Representations	21.3	22.0	21.7	22.3	23.9	25.4	22.0	20.4	19.4	18.0	20.1	21.0	21.4
	Hearings	42.4	34.4	45.1	43.1	34.0	36.1	43.0	46.6	46.4	44.8	56.9	37.3	41.9
	Inquiries	62.0	23.4	49.2	41.1	34.8	53.9	39.4	40.7	42.9	33.6	52.4	34.3	40.0
	All Cases	21.3	22.1	21.9	22.6	24.1	25.6	22.7	20.9	19.8	18.3	20.9	21.6	21.9
Standard Deviation (weeks)	Written Representations	9.2	8.8	10.4	8.8	10.7	10.9	11.4	10.8	10.5	10.9	11.2	11.8	10.8
	Hearings	24.9	27.9	9.7	20.5	18.5	13.3	17.4	23.0	16.7	24.6	23.6	18.7	20.7
	Inquiries	1.6	1.4	41.8	1.1	20.8	13.1	10.2	18.4	29.0	12.1	30.7	23.0	23.6
	All Cases	10.0	9.6	11.4	9.8	11.3	11.3	12.3	12.3	11.6	12.3	14.6	13.2	11.9

### Enforcement

Measure	Procedure	Jun 20	Jul 20	Aug 20	Sep 20	Oct 20	Nov 20	Dec 20	Jan 21	Feb 21	Mar 21	Apr 21	May 21	Total
Valid to decision (mean weeks)	Written Representations	35.0	37.2	36.8	37.1	41.4	36.7	38.3	36.5	35.4	32.3	34.4	31.5	36.5
	Hearings	94.8	96.5	34.4	34.3	84.4	54.4	64.3	82.7	66.3	78.5	77.9	50.9	73.0
	Inquiries	85.6	-	-	84.6	43.9	62.5	102.9	94.7	108.7	81.8	73.8	71.3	78.9
	All Cases	37.5	38.0	36.8	37.5	42.8	37.7	42.1	43.7	42.7	41.6	47.6	40.6	39.9
Valid to decision (median weeks)	Written Representations	28.9	32.6	33.3	33.6	36.9	33.9	35.2	31.1	28.1	27.6	29.6	24.9	32.0
	Hearings	93.4	100.1	34.4	34.3	89.0	56.0	68.5	78.8	68.8	84.4	71.3	45.2	73.4
	Inquiries	87.0	-	-	84.6	42.6	56.1	99.0	96.9	125.3	86.7	62.4	66.0	76.8
	All Cases	29.0	33.0	33.3	33.6	38.4	34.6	36.9	37.6	34.9	30.5	35.2	28.3	33.4
Standard Deviation (weeks)	Written Representations	18.2	21.8	17.3	14.9	19.3	16.3	18.9	23.1	17.8	16.9	20.9	25.6	19.2
	Hearings	16.6	5.2	0.0	0.0	12.8	12.3	22.6	23.2	22.2	15.6	28.0	13.6	24.0
	Inquiries	7.6	-	-	0.0	10.1	10.1	19.2	21.0	23.2	26.8	20.3	21.4	25.2
	All Cases	21.3	22.6	17.3	15.5	20.5	16.8	23.1	28.9	26.7	26.2	29.4	28.9	22.6

## Specialist

Measure	Procedure	Jun 20	Jul 20	Aug 20	Sep 20	Oct 20	Nov 20	Dec 20	Jan 21	Feb 21	Mar 21	Apr 21	May 21	Total
Valid to decision (mean weeks)	Written Representations	37.4	41.4 r	34.6	45.2	38.9	37.5	43.6	42.7	52.7	26.5r	33.3	22.8	38.8
	Hearings	-	-	62.1	-	-	-	-	89.8	65.0	80.0	82.1r	60.0	76.6
	Inquiries	62.0	71.6	47.9	63.7	37.3	66.7	59.9	58.4	77.6	18.0	85.1r	100.0	62.2
	All Cases	40.6	42.8r	37.6 r	47.0	38.8	39.4	44.3	46.1	53.7	28.6r	36.7r	24.8	40.6
Valid to decision (median weeks)	Written Representations	34.5	40.6r	35.9	48.1	33.7	39.1	42.4	43.6	53.0	14.6r	21.9	15.4	36.3
	Hearings	-	-	62.1	-	-	-	-	102.1	65.0	80.0	82.1r	60.0	65.0
	Inquiries	63.5	71.6	43.1	65.0	37.3	60.4	59.9	64.0	81.9	18.0	85.1r	100.0	65.0
	All Cases	37.1	41.1	37.3r	48.7	35.5	41.1	44.0	52.9	53.3	14.9	22.0r	15.9	38.0
Standard Deviation (weeks)	Written Representations	22.6	16.2	17.0	24.5	26.6	16.7	25.6	33.3	24.7	27.7r	28.4	19.4	25.9
	Hearings	-	-	0.0	-	-	-	-	18.1	0.0	16.3	12.9r	0.0	17.3
	Inquiries	6.5	0.6	13.4	12.7	0.0	17.3	13.1	19.5	19.9	0.0	0.0r	0.0	19.8
	All Cases	23.1	17.1	17.7	24.3	26.4	18.3	25.4	33.7	24.8	29.2r	30.4	22.0	26.5

r denotes revision – a change of more than 0.5 weeks since last month.

## Annex C – Detailed Information on timeliness (May)

The information below is published today on the number and length of decisions made in May 2021<sup>15</sup>:

Casework Type	Procedure Type	Mean (weeks)	Median (weeks)	Decisions
s78 planning appeals	Written Representations	25.5	22.9	804
	Hearings	41.4	37.5	50
	Inquiries	43.4	30.9	18
Householder appeals	Written Representations	19.1	16.4	344
Enforcement appeals	Written Representations	31.5	24.9	118
	Hearings	50.9	45.2	12
	Inquiries	71.3	66.0	31

The smaller the number of decisions, the less helpful the mean and median are as measures for summarising performance. Particular care should be taken when there are fewer than twenty decisions. These are shaded grey in the table but have been provided for completeness and transparency.

The information published below shows the time taken for different stages of the appeals process:

	s78 planning appeals			Householder appeals
	Written Representations	Hearings	Inquiries	
<b>Weeks between valid date &amp; start date</b>				
Mean (average)	8.1	24.7	4.7	7.8
Median (average)	6.4	19.7	2.6	8.1
Cases that started in May 21	552	17	20	377
<b>Weeks between start date &amp; event date</b>				
Mean (average)	13.7	17.7	18.0	9.9
Median (average)	9.9	13.0	14.7	8.1
Cases where an event occurred during May 21	854	43	19	357
<b>Weeks between event date &amp; decision date</b>				
Mean (average)	4.3	6.6	9.6	3.6
Median (average)	3.1	5.0	8.9	2.4
Cases that have been decided in May 21	796	49	18	343

- Valid date – the date a case is deemed to have been validly received
- Start date – date when a case has started its documentation phase (requesting statements and additional information) and an Inspector resource has usually been identified to carry out the case
- Event date – the date of either a site visit, hearing or inquiry

<sup>15</sup> Also published on gov.uk here <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/appeals-average-timescales-for-arranging-inquiries-and-hearings>

- Decision date – the date the decision was issued by The Planning Inspectorate

## Annex D – Casework types included in this release

Planning covers s78 planning appeals, Householder appeals, Commercial appeals, s20 Listed Building appeals, Advertisement appeals, s106 Planning Obligation appeals and Called In Planning Applications.

Enforcement covers s174 Enforcement appeals, s39 Enforcement Listed Building appeals and Lawful Development Certificate appeals.

Specialist casework includes Common Land, Rights of Way orders, Purchase orders, Tree Preservation Orders, High Hedges appeals and Hedgerow appeals.  
(Note that the data on Open Cases in previous publications excluded Tree Preservation Orders and High Hedges and Hedgerow appeals.)

## Background notes

### Data sources

Horizon / Picaso – The main casework management systems used for processing appeals casework (note that Picaso is no longer a live system).

SAP HR – The Human Resources system database used to store all information regarding members of staff.

Measure	Definition
Mean	The total time taken divided by the number of cases. Also referred to as the 'average'. A measure of how long each case would take, if the total time taken was spread evenly across all cases.
Median	This is the time taken by the 'middle' case if all cases were sorted from quickest to longest
Standard deviation	This is a measure of variability or spread. It is calculated by examining how much each value differs from the mean. A higher standard deviation means the individual decision times vary more widely around the mean.

### Compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics

These statistics have been published in accordance with the Code of Practice for Statistics, which cover trustworthiness, quality and value. They have been pre-announced, and publication is overseen by the Head of Profession.

### Technical Notes

A Background Quality Report is published alongside this Statistical Release. It provides more detail on the quality of statistics in this publication.

Data quality	Data on cases is taken from a live casework system, and details of cases can change for a number of reasons even after a decision has been made. We are seeking to get a better understanding of the nature and volume of these changes and will provide further information as it is available.
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	<p>We carry out regular checks on the quality of our data and may undertake ad hoc data cleansing exercises. Therefore, all the data for the last 12 rolling months is published in provisional form.</p> <p>We have indicated in this publication any data where a number of cases has changed by more than five cases in a month; or where a measure (mean, median or standard deviation) has changed by more than 0.5 weeks.</p>
Virtual Events	<p>Data is currently being sourced from an operational MS Excel workbook. It is therefore being constantly updated and refined and may result in data may changing between monthly publications. There are concerns about the quality and accuracy of the data collection methods. Definitions of what constitutes an event are being refined, as this differs according to the type of casework. Whilst this work is in progress these numbers should be treated as provisional.</p> <p>Data for Local Plans is now being sourced from information recorded by Inspectors on their timesheets.</p>
Measuring weeks	<p>Data are measured in days and then converted to weeks. Note that not all decimal values are possible where converting days to weeks. 1 day is 1/7 of a week, or 0.14 weeks (to two decimal places). 2 days = 0.29; 3 days = 0.43; 4 days = 0.57; 5 days = 0.71; 6 days = 0.86.</p> <p>When these are used to calculate averages, or displayed to one decimal place, the result will not equate to a full day which can be misleading: it may appear that we are measuring part days (e.g. 19.8 weeks) but we only measure in whole days.</p>

## Glossary

Term	Explanation
Appeals	The right to appeal a planning decision made by a local authority is a key feature of the planning system, as is appealing when an authority is taking too long.
Appeals decided	Number of appeals by the date the appeal was decided by The Planning Inspectorate.
Appeals received	Number of appeals by the date the appeal was received by The Planning Inspectorate.
Applications	Planning Inspectorate manage the application process for proposed Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) within England and Wales in line with the 2008 Planning Act.
Closed	The total number of appeals decided, withdrawn or turned away.
Decision	The outcome of the case e.g. appeal allowed or rejected. The date of the decision is taken as the date a decision letter is sent to the appellant.
Event	A site visit, hearing or inquiry (may be virtual)
Event Type	The different options of how an Inspector visits a site for a written representations appeal.
Examinations	The process of examining local plans is dealt with by the Planning Inspectorate. Every Local Planning Authority is required to have a local plan. This includes a vision for the future and plan to address housing needs in the area.

	When a Local Planning Authority has finished preparing and consulting on a local plan it must be submitted to the Secretary of State who appoints an Inspector to carry out an independent examination.
FTE	Full Time Equivalent – a count of employees where those working part time are counted in proportion with their contracted hours.
Headcount	Total number of staff employed regardless of how many hours they work (i.e. the number of different individuals).
Hearings	A hearing involves the submission of written evidence by the main parties and a hearing once all the written submissions have been received. This takes the form of a round-the-table discussion (in person or virtually) that will be led by the planning inspector. It allows for all parties to respond to any questions that the inspector might have, and to let everyone make their case known. Source: Planning Portal
Inquiries	An inquiry is usually used for complex cases where legal issues may need to be considered. The main parties will usually have legal representatives to present their case and to cross-examine any witnesses. Prior to the inquiry date, the Planning Inspectorate will expect to have received various documents from all parties that will be taking part in the appeal. These may include statements of case and proofs of evidence from expert witnesses. Third parties may also take part. The inquiry will be led by the inspector and will follow a formal procedure. At some point during or on conclusion of the inquiry the inspector and the main parties will undertake a site visit. Source: Planning Portal
Live appeals	Number of live appeals in that have an appeal valid date but no end date (either decision date or a closed date, e.g. for appeals that have been withdrawn).
Open Cases	Number of cases that have been received but on which a decision has not yet been made/ issued. Will differ from Live Appeals as it includes those received but not yet verified.
Procedure Type	The method by which The Planning Inspectorate processes and decides appeals.
Written Representations	Most planning appeals are decided by the written representations' procedure. With this procedure the Inspector considers written evidence from the appellant, the LPA and anyone else who has an interest in the appeal. The site is also likely to be visited.

## Contact Us

The Planning Inspectorate welcome feedback on our statistical products. If you have any comments or questions about this publication or about our statistics in general, you can contact us as follows:

**Media enquiries** 0303 444 5004  
email [press.office@planninginspectorate.gov.uk](mailto:press.office@planninginspectorate.gov.uk)

**Public enquiries** email [statistics@planninginspectorate.gov.uk](mailto:statistics@planninginspectorate.gov.uk)

**Please note** we are currently reviewing our statistics with a view to making them as clear and helpful as possible for users. We would be delighted if you could contact us via the address below with any views on this approach; particularly on what content would be most useful and why.

email [statistics@planninginspectorate.gov.uk](mailto:statistics@planninginspectorate.gov.uk)

If you require information which is not available within this or other available publications, you may wish to submit a Request for Information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to the Planning Inspectorate. For more information, see: <https://www.gov.uk/make-a-freedom-of-information-request/the-freedom-of-information-act>