



The Planning Inspectorate Yr Arolygiaeth Gynllunio

Official Statistics 25 November 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 have been made is also included; and on the number of Inspectors available to make those decisions.

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 provides¹:

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

The Planning Inspectorate

The Planning Inspectorate makes decision and provides recommendations and advice on a range of land use planning-related issues across England. 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. The Planning Inspectorate is an executive agency, sponsored by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, previously known as the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

¹ 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; subsequent 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 (November 20 to October 21), was 28 weeks. The median time was 23 weeks.

The median time to decide a case increased by 2.1 weeks between September and October 2021, with the October median being 26.4 weeks.

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

Procedure type	Last 12 months	October 21
Written Representations	22 weeks	26 weeks
Hearings	48 weeks	54 weeks
Inquiries	60 weeks	50 weeks

Performance (timeliness) had been improving between November 20 and March 21 (the time to issue a decision had been decreasing). Since then the trend has been generally upward, with the median timeliness for October 2021 approaching the time seen in November 2020.

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.

Enforcement decisions made in the last 12 months had a median decision time of 35 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 planning appeals decided by inquiry under the Rosewell Process over the 12 months to October 21 is 34 weeks. This is quicker than other types of casework decided by inquiry.

Decisions

The Planning Inspectorate has made 17,306 appeal decisions² in the last 12 months, an average of 1,442 per month. The number of decisions in October was below average, 1,238 decisions were issued. There was an annual Inspector Training Event in October which reduced Inspectors' availability for casework.

² 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.

Written representations decisions had recovered to pre-pandemic levels between October and December 20 (pre-pandemic being between approximately 1,600 and 2,000 decisions per month). Decisions in October 21 (1,238) were lower than September 21 (1,543) but comparable with August 21 (1,212).

There were 632 decisions made on hearings during the last 12 months. Decisions for hearings since December 20 have ranged between approximately 40 and 80 per month. Pre-pandemic levels for hearing decisions were between 50 and 100 decisions per month.

There were 410 decisions made on inquiries during the last 12 months. Decisions for inquiries since December 20 have ranged between approximately 20 and 60. Pre-pandemic levels for inquiry decisions were between 15 and 90 decisions per month.

Open Cases

At the end of October 21, the Planning Inspectorate had over twelve thousand eight hundred cases open³ (12,887). This is higher than the previous month; the number of open cases has been rising through the year.

Planning Inspectors

There were 351 Planning Inspectors employed by the Inspectorate in October 2021 – with a full-time equivalent of 314.

³ 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.

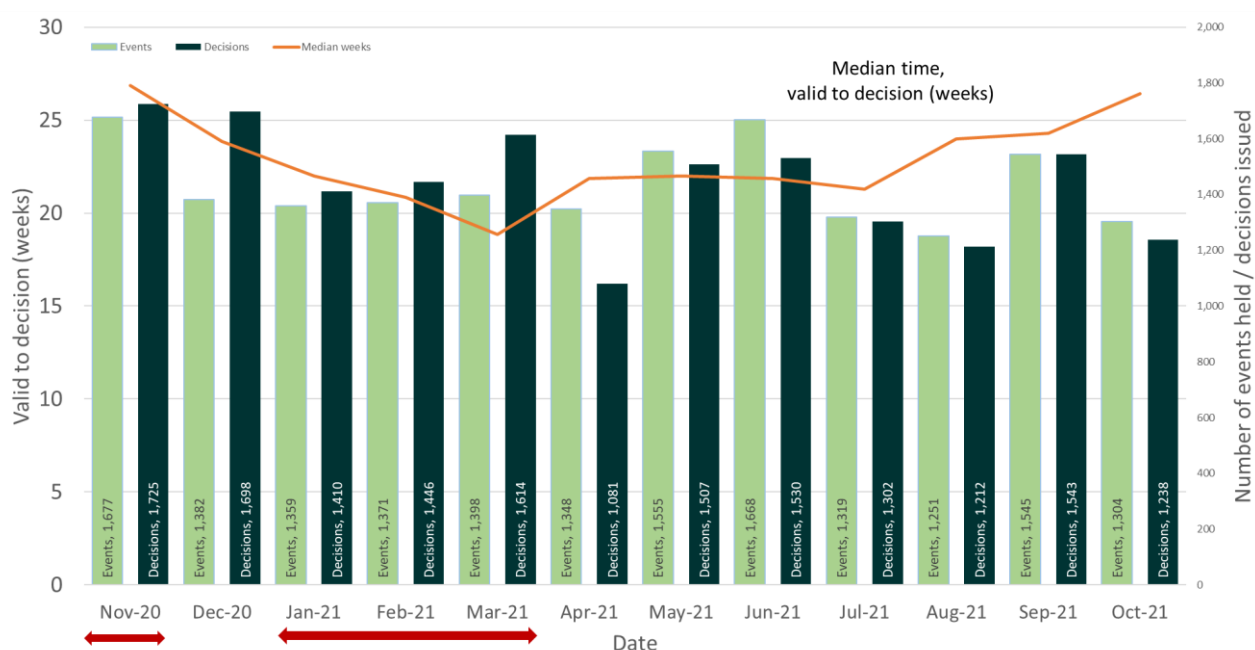
Decisions, Events & Open Cases

The number of decisions issued in October 2021 was 1,238; this is lower than the previous month, where the Inspectorate issued 1,543 decisions. There was an annual Inspector Training Event in October which reduced Inspectors' availability for casework.

The number of events held in October 21 was 1,304, this is lower than the previous month where there were 1,545 events but comparable to other months over the last year. In the last 12 months the highest number of events held was November 2020, when just over 1,725 events were held.

The median⁴ time to decide a case increased by 2.1 weeks between September and October 21, with the October median being 26.4 weeks. Performance had been improving between November 2020 and March 2021.

Figure 1: Number of events held⁵, decisions issued and median time between valid date & decision date; Nov-20 to Oct-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; Nov-20 to Oct-21

Month	Nov 20	Dec 20	Jan 21	Feb 21	Mar 21	Apr 21	May 21	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	Sep 21	Oct 21	Total
Events Held	1,677	1,382	1,359	1,371	1,398	1,348	1,555	1,668	1,319r	1,251r	1,545r	1,304	17,177
Decisions	1,725	1,698	1,410	1,446	1,614	1,081	1,507	1,530	1,302	1,212	1,543	1,238	17,306
Median	26.9	23.9	22.0	20.9	18.9	21.9	22.0	21.9	21.3	24.0	24.3	26.4	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)

The number of open cases stands at its highest point in the last 12 months, at 12,887 cases; and has been rising through the year. This is because most months, more appeals are received than are closed. The numbers of appeals received averages at 1,744 per month,

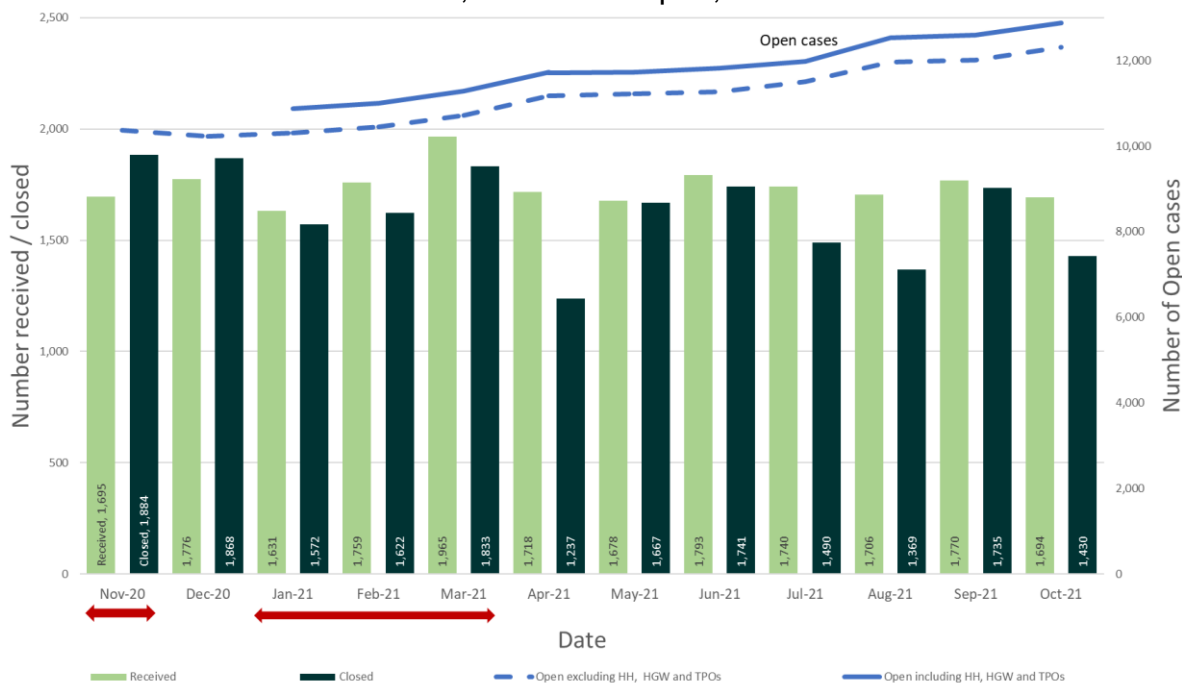
⁴ See the section on Decision timeliness for more, including definitions of the average measures used in this release.

⁵ A site visit, hearing, or inquiry. From April 2020 onwards all hearings and inquiries have been held virtually.

over the last 12 months. The number closed averages just above 1,620 per month, over the last 12 months.

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; Nov-20 to Oct-21



Source: Horizon and Picaso

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

Data note 1 - 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).

Data note 2 – there is a known anomaly that means that the number of open cases does not exactly follow the volumes of cases closed or received (for example the number of open cases can increase between months even though the number closed exceeded the number received). The main reasons for this have been identified and are detailed in the Background Quality Report.

Table 2: Number of cases received, closed and open; Nov-20 to Oct-21

Month	Nov 20	Dec 20	Jan 21	Feb 21	Mar 21	Apr 21	May 21	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	Sep 21	Oct 21	Total
Received	1,695	1,776	1,631	1,759	1,965	1,718	1,678	1,793	1,740	1,706r	1,770	1,694	20,925
Closed	1,884	1,868	1,572	1,622	1,833	1,237	1,667	1,741	1,490	1,369	1,735	1,430	19,448
Open (excl. HH, HGW, TPO)	10,367	10,233	10,314	10,447	10,719	11,183	11,223	11,266	11,509	11,961	12,015	12,314	
Open(All)			10,880	11,001	11,293	11,725	11,733	11,823	11,987	12,525	12,592	12,887	

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

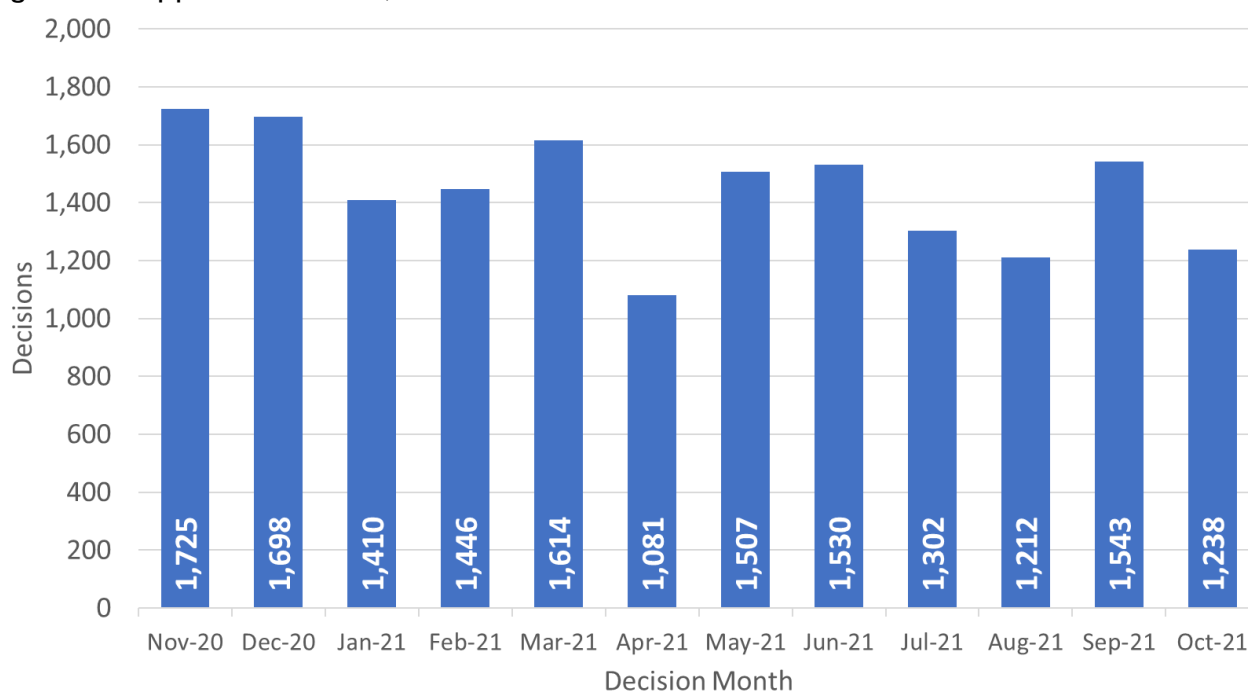
The Planning Inspectorate has made 17,306 appeal decisions⁶ in the last 12 months, an average of over 1,400 per month. Table 3 below shows the monthly breakdown with fewer decisions for the months of April, July, August, and October 2021. This is thought to be due, in part, to the impact of staff taking more leave in 2021 than in 2020.

Table 3: Appeal Decisions; Nov-20 to Oct-21

Month	Nov 20	Dec 20	Jan 21	Feb 21	Mar 21	Apr 21	May 21	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	Sep 21	Oct 21	Total
Decisions	1,725	1,698	1,410	1,446	1,614	1,081	1,507	1,530	1,302	1,212	1,543	1,238	17,306

Source: Horizon and Picaso.

Figure 3 – Appeal Decisions; Nov-20 to Oct-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 Plans⁷, 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.

The large majority of decisions (16,264) were made on written representations. This is about ninety four percent of all appeal decisions made. Table 4 shows that written representations decisions had recovered to pre-pandemic levels between November and December 2020

⁶ 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.

⁷ 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)

(pre-pandemic being between approximately 1,600 and 2,000 decisions per month). Decisions in July 2021 (1,199), August 2021 (1,103) and October 2021 (1,189) were low, with only April 2021 (994) having fewer written representation decisions issued.

There were 632 decisions made on hearings during the last 12 months and October 21 saw the fewest decisions (31). Decisions for hearings since December 2020 and September 2021 have ranged between approximately 40 and 80 per month. Pre-pandemic levels for hearing decisions were between 50 and 100 decisions per month.

There were 410 decisions made on inquiries during the last 12 months and October saw the fewest decisions (18). Decisions for inquiries since December 2020 have ranged between approximately 20 and 60. Pre-pandemic levels for inquiry decisions were between 15 and 90 decisions per month.

Table 4: Appeal Decisions by Procedure and Casework Category; Nov-20 to Oct-21

Month	Nov 20	Dec 20	Jan 21	Feb 21	Mar 21	Apr 21	May 21	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	Sep 21	Oct 21	Total
Written Representations	1,672	1,612	1,326	1,383	1,528	994	1,391	1,394	1,199	1,103	1,473	1,189	16,264
Hearings	33	60	58	44	53	52	64	80	66	51	40	31	632
Inquiries	20	26	26	19	33	35	52	56	37	58	30	18	410
Total	1,725	1,698	1,410	1,446	1,614	1,081	1,507	1,530	1,302	1,212	1,543	1,238	17,306

Month	Nov 20	Dec 20	Jan 20	Feb 21	Mar 21	Apr 21	May 21	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	Sep 21	Oct 21	Total
Planning	1,484	1,463	1,185	1,242	1,414	938	1,286	1,269	1,078	972	1,365	1,035	14,731
Enforcement	195	186	164	112	150	100	161	200	179	187	148	153	1,935
Specialist	46	49	61	92	50	43	60	61	45	53	30	50	640
Total	1,725	1,698	1,410	1,446	1,614	1,081	1,507	1,530	1,302	1,212	1,543	1,238	17,306

Source: Horizon and Picaso.

What are Planning cases? The Planning category includes s78 planning appeals, householder appeals, commercial appeals, listed building consent appeals, advertisement appeals, s106 planning obligation appeals and Called In Planning Applications.

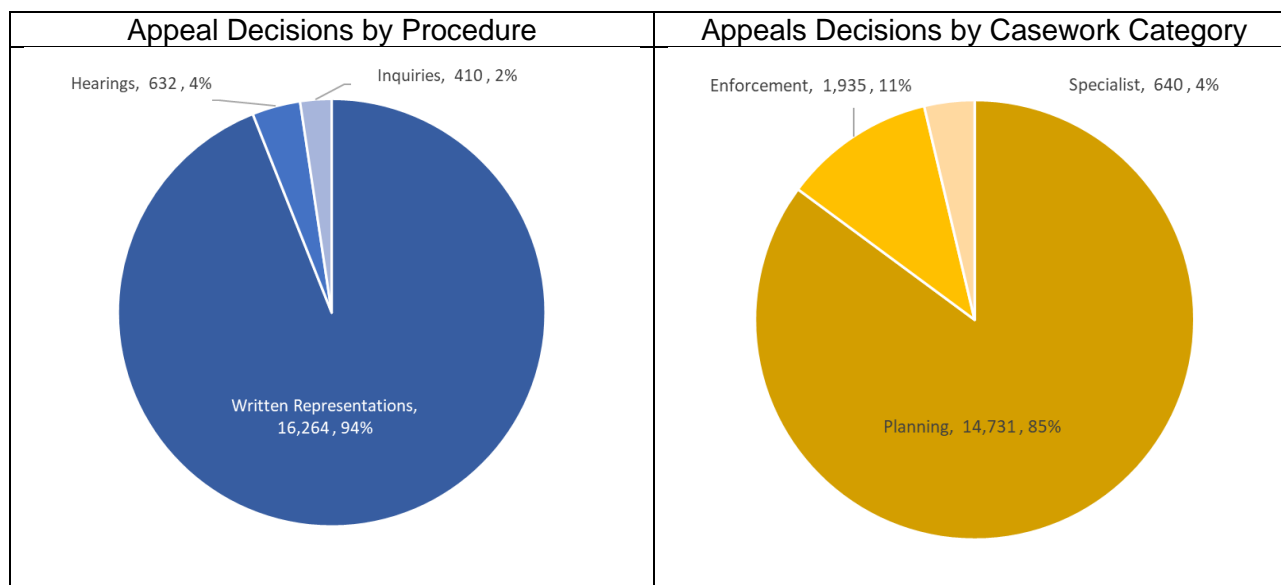
What are Enforcement cases? Enforcement covers enforcement appeals (i.e., appeals against the issue of an enforcement notice by a local planning authority), enforcement listed building notice appeals and lawful development certificate appeals.

What are Specialist cases? This category covers a wide range of different types of casework including Common Land, Environment, Purchase Notice, Rights of Way orders (including Schedule 14 cases), Tree Preservation Orders, Hedgerows and High Hedges cases.

The large majority of cases were planning (14,731). This is about eighty-five per cent of all appeal decisions made. There were 1,935 enforcement decisions and 640 specialist decisions. These totals are also shown in Table 4 above and Figure 4 below.

Trends for planning decisions show similar patterns to written representations. The number of enforcement decisions varies around an average of 160 decisions per month. June's total (200) was double that of April (100). Specialist casework figures continue to vary each month, from a low of 30 (September 2021) to a high of 92 (February 2021).

Figure 4 – Appeal Decisions by Procedure and Casework Category; Nov-20 to Oct-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 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, across all cases in the last 12 months, was 28 weeks. Figure 5 shows the mean has been above 25 weeks for the last 12 months, except for March 21; and has generally been increasing since then, with the latest month showing 31 weeks. The standard deviation – a measure of variation – is comparable to performance seen over the last 12 months.

How is timeliness measured?

The time to make a decision is measured from the time the Inspectorate have enough information for the case to proceed (it is deemed 'valid') to the time a decision letter is issued. A large majority of cases are 'validated' (the difference between the date the appeal is received, and the validation process being completed) in a week or less.

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.

Table 5 also shows the median time for the last 12 months is 23 weeks. Each month the median is less than the mean, due to the larger impact on the mean of very long cases.

The median timeliness was highest at 27 weeks in November 20. Between December 2020 and March 2021 there was a reduction in the median time to decision, down to a low in March 2021 of 19 weeks. The median time has since been increasing, to 26.4 weeks in October 2021.

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 mostly lower at the end of 2020 and in the early months of 2021 but then increased.

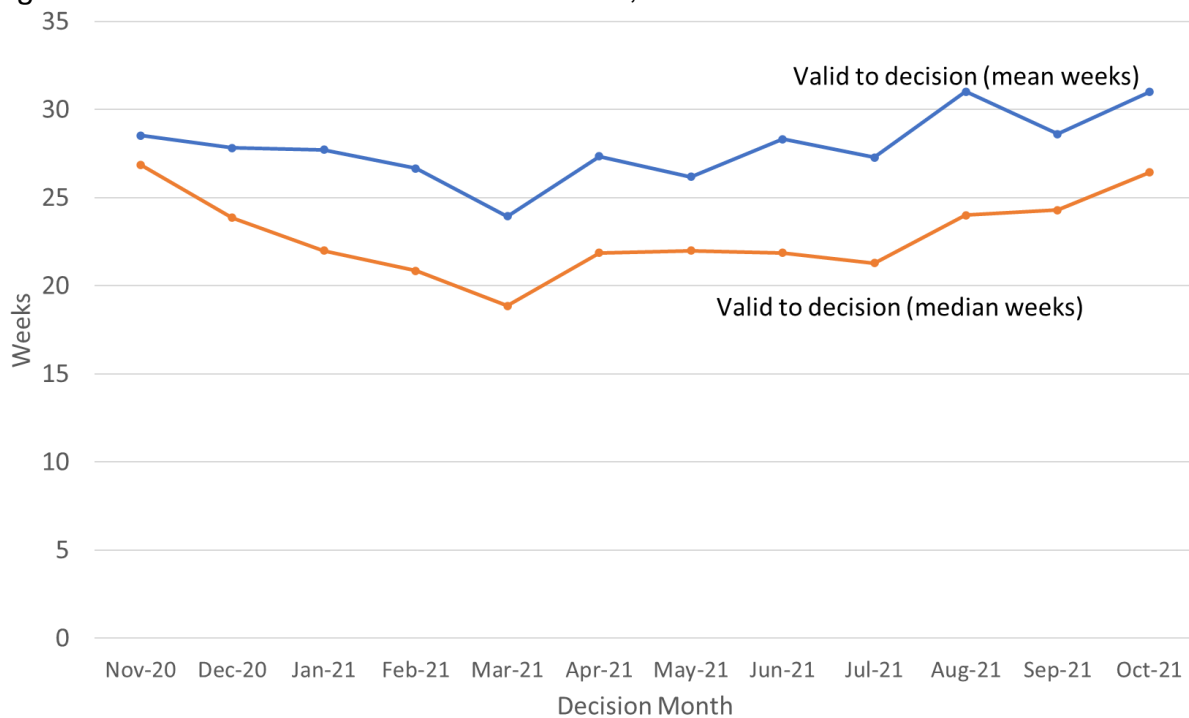
What are mean, median, and standard deviation?	
Measure	Definition
Mean	The total time taken divided by the number of cases. Also referred to as the 'average'. A measure of how long each case would take, if the total time taken was spread evenly across all cases.
Median	This is the time taken by the '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; Nov-20 to Oct-21

Month	Nov 20	Dec 20	Jan 21	Feb 21	Mar 21	Apr 21	May 21	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	Sep 21	Oct 21	Total
Valid to Decision (mean weeks)	28.5	27.8	27.7	26.7	23.9	27.3	26.2	28.3	27.3	31.0	28.6	31.0	27.8
Valid to Decision (median weeks)	26.9	23.9	22.0	20.9	18.9	21.9	22.0	21.9	21.3	24.0	24.3	26.4	23.0
Standard Deviation (weeks)	12.9	15.6	18.1	16.9	16.0	18.7	16.7	19.7	18.5	23.3	16.7	19.0	17.4

Source: Horizon and Picaso

Figure 5: Mean and Median Time to Decision; Nov 20 to Oct 21



Source: Horizon and Picaso

Procedure Type

Table 6 below shows decision timeliness broken down by the procedure type. Hearings and inquires 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 are 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.

Median times are less affected by large values, than mean times, so are the focus of this commentary. The median time for written representations over the 12 months to October 2021 is 22 weeks. The median time for inquiries over the 12 months to October 2021 is over a year - 60 weeks. The median time for hearings is less at 48 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; Nov-20 to Oct-21

Measure	Procedure	Nov 20	Dec 20	Jan 21	Feb 21	Mar 21	Apr 21	May 21	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	Sep 21	Oct 21	Total
Valid to Decision (mean weeks)	Written Representations	28.0	26.6	25.8	25.3	22.1	24.1	24.1	25.0	24.5	27.3	27.3	29.6	26.0
	Hearings	37.3	49.6	59.8	47.5	56.7	63.8	42.9	57.0	50.1	49.8	57.1	57.8	52.5
	Inquiries	58.5	52.8	53.9	76.3	57.6	64.4	61.7	70.9	77.5	86.0	56.5	77.6	66.8
	All Cases	28.5	27.8	27.7	26.7	23.9	27.3	26.2	28.3	27.3	31.0	28.6	31.0	27.8
Valid to Decision (median weeks)	Written Representations	26.6	23.1	21.3	20.4	18.4	20.9	21.1	20.7	20.4	23.0	23.6	25.9	22.3
	Hearings	37.3	43.9	51.5	49.0	52.4	62.0	39.6	61.3	44.1	43.9	50.4	54.3	47.8
	Inquiries	55.0	40.1	47.3	68.1	41.3	62.4	66.0	64.6	79.0	92.6	35.6	50.4	59.7
	All Cases	26.9	23.9	22.0	20.9	18.9	21.9	22.0	21.9	21.3	24.0	24.3	26.4	23.0
Standard Deviation (weeks)	Written Representations	12.3	14.0	15.2	14.8	12.6	13.6	14.0	13.9	13.3	16.0	14.1	16.4	14.3
	Hearings	14.7	20.0	29.1	20.9	26.3	26.9	18.4	21.7	19.6	27.5	27.5	23.0	24.4
	Inquiries	14.0	31.0	30.5	36.9	31.3	27.8	26.1	42.8	43.8	47.2	40.8	50.9	38.7
	All Cases	12.9	15.6	18.1	16.9	16.0	18.7	16.7	19.7	18.5	23.3	16.7	19.0	17.4

Source: Horizon and Picaso. Cells shaded grey had fewer than 20 decisions.

The standard deviation information indicates that for all three procedures, there is considerable variation, meaning times are widely spread about the mean. For written representations, the amount of variation does not appear to be either increasing or decreasing through the year. Hearings have experienced higher month to month changes. For inquiries the last five months have been higher (therefore more variable) than previous seven months (last five months over 40; previous seven months 38 or lower).

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 type of casework. Table 7 below shows the time taken to decide, in planning cases, in enforcement cases, and in specialist⁸ cases, as does Figure 6.

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

⁸ See the box in the section on Number of Decisions for what these categories of casework include.

from February and March 2021, above 20 weeks for the last 12 months. Across the whole year, the median time to decision is 22 weeks for these cases.

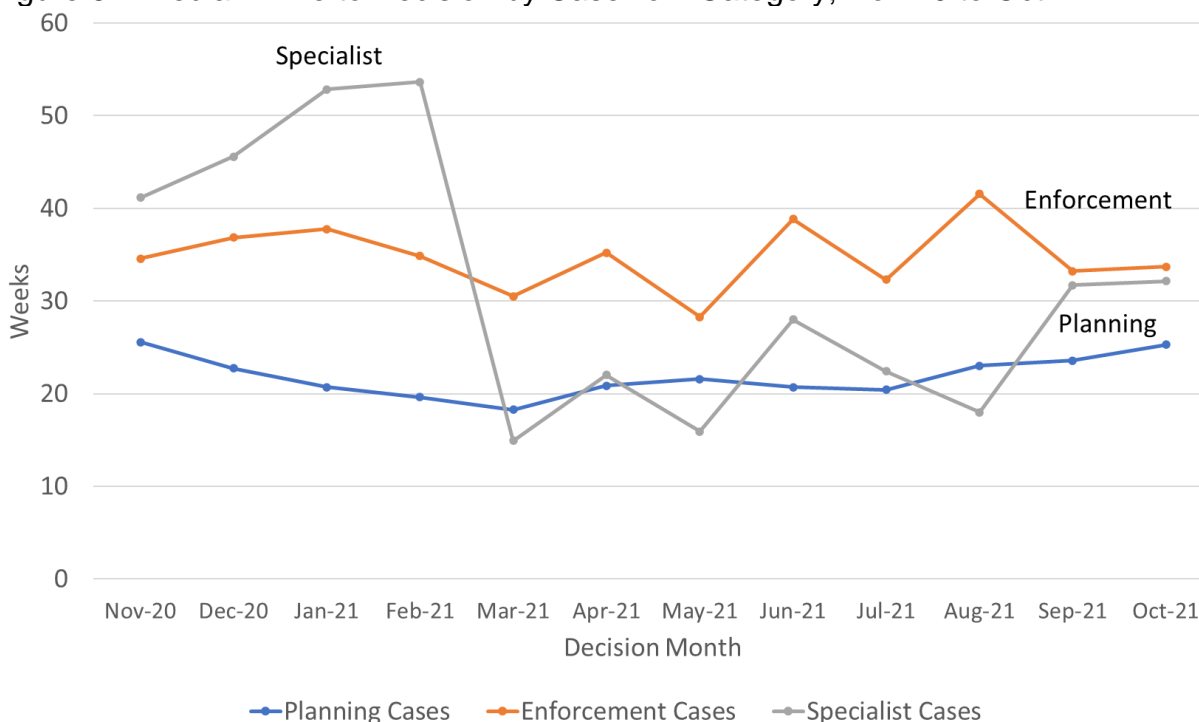
Annex B gives information on mean and median time to decision, with standard deviation, for the three procedure types, split by planning, enforcement, and specialist casework categories.

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

Casework Category	Measure	Nov 20	Dec 20	Jan 21	Feb 21	Mar 21	Apr 21	May 21	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	Sep 21	Oct 21	Total
Planning Cases	Valid to Decision (mean weeks)	27.0	25.4	24.6	23.2	21.9	24.7	24.4	25.2	24.4	26.3	26.9	28.3	25.2
	Valid to Decision (median weeks)	25.6	22.7	20.7	19.6	18.3	20.9	21.6	20.7	20.4	23.0	23.6	25.3	22.0
	St. dev. of decision (weeks)	11.3	12.3	12.3	11.6	12.4	14.6	13.0	15.2	13.8	14.8	13.5	13.6	13.1
Enforcement Cases	Valid to Decision (mean weeks)	37.7	42.1	43.8	42.7	41.6	47.6	40.6	45.7	42.7	54.5	40.7	43.6	43.5
	Valid to Decision (median weeks)	34.6	36.9	37.8	34.9	30.5	35.2	28.3	38.9	32.3	41.6	33.2	33.7	35.1
	St. dev. of decision (weeks)	16.8	23.1	29.0	26.7	26.2	29.4	28.9	29.7	29.4	38.3	26.3	30.3	27.7
Specialist Cases	Valid to Decision (mean weeks)	39.4	45.3	46.1	53.7	28.7	36.7	24.7	36.6	34.3	35.2	48.7	48.9	40.2
	Valid to Decision (median weeks)	41.1	45.6	52.9	53.6	14.9	22.0	15.9	28.0	22.4	18.0	31.7	32.1	32.6
	St. dev. of decision (weeks)	18.3	24.6	33.7	24.7	28.2	30.4	21.6	27.7	27.4	29.9	36.1	36.6	29.4

Source: Horizon and Picaso.

Figure 6 – Median Time to Decision by Casework Category; Nov-20 to Oct-21



Source: Horizon and Picaso

Enforcement decisions made in the last 12 months had a median decision time of 35 weeks. For the last 12 months the mean is 44 weeks. The median time for enforcement decisions is longer than the median decision time for planning cases; this has been consistently so each month through the year.

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 had been broadly the same as for enforcement decisions, and longer than the median for planning decisions. Since February 2021 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 C⁹ 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 October 21 is 34 weeks, with the mean being marginally higher at 39 weeks. For the first time in four months the median weeks for hearings exceeded 30 weeks, performance was 40.2 weeks; however in each of the last four months there have been fewer than 20 decisions which means these measures are less reliable.

Table 8: Decisions, Mean and Median Time to Decision, Planning Inquiry Cases under Rosewell Process; Nov-20 to Oct-21

Measure	Nov 20	Dec 20	Jan 21	Feb 21	Mar 21	Apr 21	May 21	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	Sep 21	Oct 21	Total
Decisions	7	18	13	8	15	17	16	30	11	15	19	8	177
Mean (weeks)	45.7	35.3	36.5	40.7	36.7	53.5	34.3	40.7	32.0	39.6	30.5	40.0	38.9
Median (weeks)	50.9	39.4	40.3	40.7	33.7	51.9	30.1	33.9	29.1	25.1	26.9	43.2	33.6
St. Dev. (weeks)	9.1	10.2	12.2	7.9	12.0	31.1	9.9	22.1	12.0	41.9	10.7	13.5	21.1

Source: Horizon. Cells shaded grey had fewer than 20 decisions.

Most inquiry decisions now being issued are under the revised 'Rosewell'¹⁰ process but some inquiries, for example those that are linked together with associated enforcement cases, do not follow the Rosewell process.

Table 9: Decisions, Planning Inquiry Cases under non-Rosewell Process; Nov-20 to Oct-21

Month	Nov 20	Dec 20	Jan 21	Feb 21	Mar 21	Apr 21	May 21	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	Sep 21	Oct 21	Total
Decisions	5	0	1	1	1	1	4	7	2	3	1	0	26

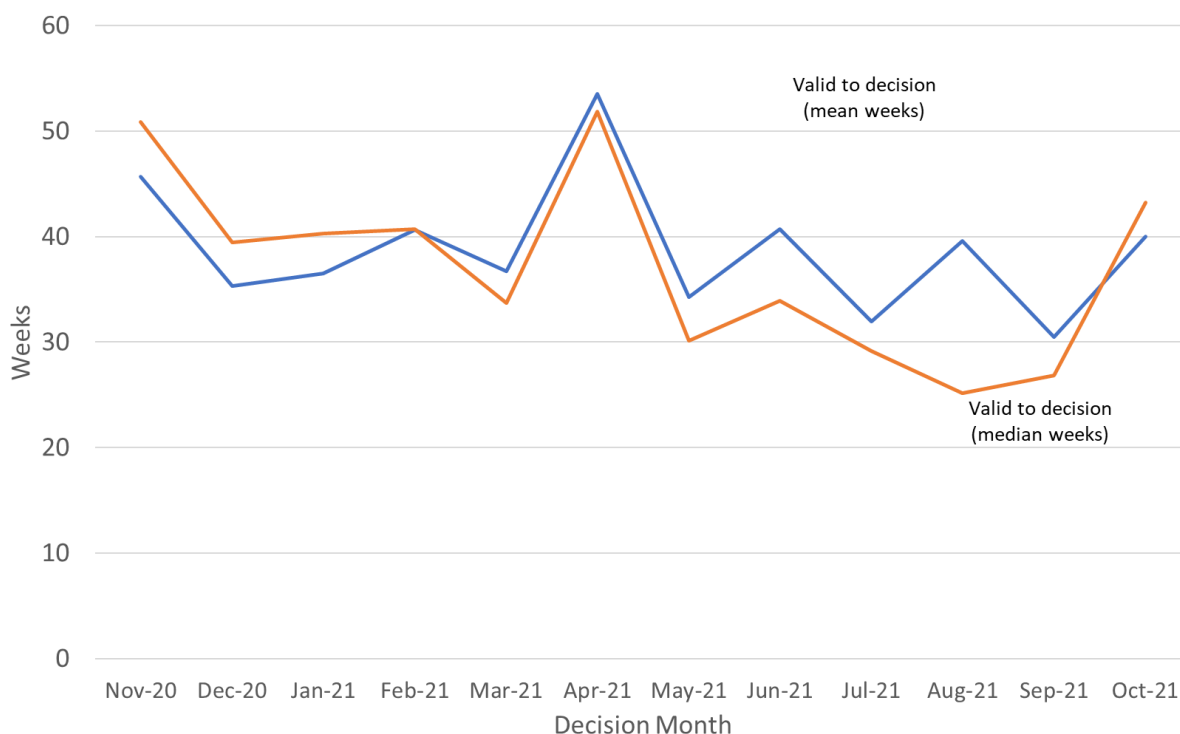
Source: Horizon

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

⁹ Data also published on gov.uk at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/appeals-average-timescales-for-arranging-inquiries-and-hearings>

¹⁰ 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; Nov-20 to Oct-21



Source: Horizon

Open Cases

At the end of October 2021, the Planning Inspectorate had over twelve thousand eight hundred cases open¹¹ (12,887). This is higher than the previous month; the number of open cases has been rising through the year.

The open cases comprised almost 10,900 cases being handled through written representations; just over 1,100 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.

¹¹ 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 October 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	1,199	8,002	1,674	10,875
Hearings	107	883	155	1,145
Inquiries	7	575	142	724
Total	1,313	9,594	1,980	12,887

Source: Horizon

Note there are 143 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.

Data note 1 - 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).

Data note 2 – there is a known anomaly that means that the number of open cases does not exactly follow the volumes of cases closed or received (for example the number of open cases can increase between months even though the number closed exceeded the number received). The main reasons for this have been identified and are detailed in the Background Quality Report.

Inspectors

Table 11 below shows the number of inspectors in the Planning Inspectorate in each month from November 2020 to October 2021¹². 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 351 Planning Inspectors employed by the Inspectorate in October 2021 – with a full-time equivalent of 314.

By both measures (headcount and FTE) the highest Inspector resource in the last 12 months was in April 21; and by both, the number at the end of January 2021 was the lowest.

Table 11: Planning Inspectors – Headcount and FTE; Nov-20 to Oct-21 (at end of month)

Month	Nov 20	Dec 20	Jan 21	Feb 21	Mar 21	Apr 21	May 21	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	Sep 21	Oct 21
Headcount	345	345	343	345	352	355	353	349	347	346	345	351
FTE	308.1	308.1	305.4	308.1	314.4	317.0	314.4	310.8	308.4	307.8	306.6	314.0

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).

¹² Data as at the last day of the month.

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 17th March 2020 and 22nd April 2020</p> <p>Live appeals in the system as at 23rd April 2020</p> <p>Number of appeals involving housing within the system as at 23rd April 2020</p> <p>Virtual site visits</p>	<p>Appeals decisions between 17th March 2020 and 22nd 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 12th June 2020</p>	<p>Appeals decisions between 17th March 2020 and 21st 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

Procedure	Measure	Nov 20	Dec 20	Jan 21	Feb 21	Mar 21	Apr 21	May 21	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	Sep 21	Oct 21	Total
Written Representations	Decisions	1443	1397	1134	1200	1360	886	1215	1193	1021	917	1323	1002	14091
	Mean Average Weeks	26.6	24.6	23.7	22.5	21.0	22.9	23.4	23.5	23.3	25.2	26.2	27.5	24.3
	Median Average Weeks	25.4	22.0	20.4	19.4	18.0	20.1	21.0	20.0	19.7	22.4	23.1	25.0	21.4
	Standard Deviation	10.9	11.4	10.8	10.5	10.9	11.2	11.7	11.9	11.3	12.0	12.3	12.7	11.5
Hearings	Decisions	29	48	37	33	38	34	51	39	44	37	22	25	437
	Mean Average Weeks	35.0	45.9	46.2	41.2	48.0	56.1	40.7	49.2	43.1	41.3	54.7	54.7	45.4
	Median Average Weeks	36.1	43.0	46.6	46.4	44.8	56.9	37.4	45.4	42.0	37.4	50.4	54.3	42.0
	Standard Deviation	13.3	17.4	23.0	16.7	24.6	23.6	18.9	20.7	16.5	18.6	24.0	20.6	20.6
Inquires	Decisions	12	18	14	9	16	18	20	37	13	18	20	8	203
	Mean Average Weeks	54.9	35.3	40.4	50.6	35.8	54.9	44.8	53.5	53.5	49.2	36.6	40.0	46.2
	Median Average Weeks	53.9	39.4	40.7	42.9	33.6	52.4	32.9	36.9	30.9	30.0	27.9	43.2	36.7
	Standard Deviation	13.1	10.2	18.4	29.0	12.1	30.7	23.5	37.3	51.6	51.2	28.8	13.5	31.8
All Planning Cases	Decisions	1484	1463	1185	1242	1414	938	1286	1269	1078	972	1365	1035	14731
	Mean Average Weeks	27.0	25.4	24.6	23.2	21.9	24.7	24.4	25.2	24.4	26.3	26.9	28.3	25.2
	Median Average Weeks	25.6	22.7	20.7	19.6	18.3	20.9	21.6	20.7	20.4	23.0	23.6	25.3	22.0
	Standard Deviation	11.3	12.3	12.3	11.6	12.4	14.6	13.0	15.2	13.8	14.8	13.5	13.6	13.1

Cells shaded grey had fewer than 20 decisions

- For all three measures (mean, median and standard deviation) the trend for Planning Written Representations has been consistent over the last 12 months.
- The median for Planning hearings has been increasing over the last 12 months. There are months with reductions in the median compared to the previous month but the median for October 20 was 34 weeks and it is 50 weeks in September 21. This increasing median reflects a backlog of cases built up by the impact of the pandemic and setting up the processes for holding events virtually.
- Both the mean and median for Planning inquiries has been generally reducing over the last 12 months, not always from month to month.
- The standard deviation for Planning inquiries has been higher in the latest months of the past year, showing the impact of deciding long running cases in July and August 21, compared to previous months.

Enforcement

Procedure	Measure	Nov 20	Dec 20	Jan 21	Feb 21	Mar 21	Apr 21	May 21	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	Sep 21	Oct 21	Total
Written Representations	Decisions	186	168	138	95	121	68	118	142	137	139	122	140	1574
	Mean Average Weeks	36.7	38.3	36.9	35.4	32.3	34.4	31.5	33.1	32.2	40.0	33.8	38.7	36.4
	Median Average Weeks	33.9	35.2	31.1	28.1	27.6	29.6	24.9	29.1	26.0	35.4	28.1	32.7	31.3
	Standard Deviation	16.3	18.9	23.2	17.8	16.9	20.9	25.6	17.8	19.6	25.8	16.8	22.4	20.5
Hearings	Decisions	4	12	18	10	13	16	12	39	22	11	18	6	181
	Mean Average Weeks	54.4	64.3	82.7	66.3	78.5	77.9	50.9	62.6	64.1	70.7	60.0	70.7	68.0
	Median Average Weeks	56.0	68.5	78.8	68.8	84.4	71.3	45.2	61.6	67.3	56.0	50.8	59.8	65.2
	Standard Deviation	12.3	22.6	23.2	22.2	15.6	28.0	13.6	18.5	17.9	34.2	31.1	27.6	24.3
Inquires	Decisions	5	6	8	7	16	16	31	19	20	37	8	7	180
	Mean Average Weeks	62.5	102.9	75.4	108.7	81.8	73.8	71.3	104.9	90.6	104.1	101.6	117.6	89.5
	Median Average Weeks	56.1	99.0	86.1	125.3	86.7	62.4	66.0	108.0	92.9	122.3	94.5	147.4	87.7
	Standard Deviation	10.1	19.2	38.1	23.2	26.8	20.3	21.4	30.7	35.0	34.9	32.0	52.2	34.4
All Enforcement Cases	Decisions	195	186	164	112	150	100	161	200	179	187	148	153	1935
	Mean Average Weeks	37.7	42.1	43.8	42.7	41.6	47.6	40.6	45.7	42.7	54.5	40.7	43.6	43.5
	Median Average Weeks	34.6	36.9	37.8	34.9	30.5	35.2	28.3	38.9	32.3	41.6	33.2	33.7	35.1
	Standard Deviation	16.8	23.1	29.0	26.7	26.2	29.4	28.9	29.7	29.4	38.3	26.3	30.3	27.7

Cells shaded grey had fewer than 20 decisions

- The mean and median measures for Enforcement Written Representations show a slight overall improvement (41.4 weeks in October 20 compared to 33.8 weeks in September 21), but a variable in-year trend.
- Enforcement hearings show variable trends for all three measures; mean, median and standard deviation. There are smaller numbers of decisions for this casework / procedure group that can influence these measures.
- Enforcement inquiries are now generally taking longer than they were a year ago. As with Planning hearings, the effect of the pandemic is evident in these measures. Also, this grouping can be disproportionately affected by cases that involve multiple linked appeals (for example multiple people served an enforcement notice by a local authority appeal to The Planning Inspectorate, each person appealing is treated as a separate appeal, but all appeals are decided in one decision letter by one Inspector).

Specialist

Procedure	Measure	Nov 20	Dec 20	Jan 20	Feb 21	Mar 21	Apr 21	May 21	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	Sep 21	Oct 21	Total
Written Representations	Decisions	43	47	54	88	47	40	58	59	41	47	28	47	599
	Mean Average Weeks	37.5	44.7	42.7	52.8	26.7	33.3	22.8	34.5	28.8	29.3	46.8	46.6	37.9
	Median Average Weeks	39.1	44.0	43.6	53.1	14.9	21.9	15.4	26.9	21.0	17.3	27.7	30.4	29.9
	Standard Deviation	16.7	24.8	33.3	24.5	26.7	28.4	18.9	25.4	21.9	25.0	36.6	35.5	28.2
Hearings	Decisions	0	0	3	1	2	2	1	2	0	3	0	0	14
	Mean Average Weeks	-	-	89.8	65.0	80.0	82.1	60.0	100.8	-	78.3	-	-	82.5
	Median Average Weeks	-	-	102.1	65.0	80.0	82.1	60.0	100.8	-	95.0	-	-	94.4
	Standard Deviation	-	-	18.1	0.0	16.3	12.9	0.0	7.1	-	31.5	-	-	21.8
Inquires	Decisions	3	2	4	3	1	1	1	0	4	3	2	3	27
	Mean Average Weeks	66.7	59.9	58.4	77.6	18.0	85.1	100.0	-	90.2	84.6	75.2	84.7	73.1
	Median Average Weeks	60.4	59.9	64.0	81.9	18.0	85.1	100.0	-	94.3	88.4	75.2	105.3	76.5
	Standard Deviation	17.3	13.1	19.5	19.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	-	9.6	11.5	8.2	33.7	24.5
All Specialist Cases	Decisions	46	49	61	92	50	43	60	61	45	53	30	50	640
	Mean Average Weeks	39.4	45.3	46.1	53.7	28.7	36.7	24.7	36.6	34.3	35.2	48.7	48.9	40.2
	Median Average Weeks	41.1	45.6	52.9	53.6	14.9	22.0	15.9	28.0	22.4	18.0	31.7	32.1	32.6
	Standard Deviation	18.3	24.6	33.7	24.7	28.2	30.4	21.6	27.7	27.4	29.9	36.1	36.6	29.4

Cells shaded grey had fewer than 20 decisions

- The number of decisions for Specialist cases is low (see Table 4), and this makes it less easy to see trends for Specialist cases decided by hearings and inquiries.
- The highest volume of decisions is against Written Representations, and over the last 12 months all three measures see variable trends. The mean for varies between 23 weeks (May 21) and 53 weeks (February 21). The median average has a low of 15 weeks (March 21) and a high of 53 weeks (February 21).

Annex C – Detailed Information on timeliness (October)

The information below is published today on the number and length of decisions made in October¹³:

Casework Type	Procedure Type	Mean (weeks)	Median (weeks)	Decisions
s78 planning appeals	Written Representations	30.6	29.0	650
	Hearings	54.7	54.3	25
	Inquiries	33.7	28.9	5
Householder appeals	Written Representations	20.8	19.1	308
Enforcement appeals	Written Representations	39.8	32.3	97
	Hearings	76.5	66.6	5
	Inquiries	117.7	154.1	6

Cells shaded grey had fewer than 20 decisions

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	
Weeks between valid date & start date				
Mean (average)	13.0	22.2	4.9	8.1
Median (average)	14.0	21.5	2.7	8.1
Cases that started in October 21	589	64	22	551
Weeks between start date & event date				
Mean (average)	12.6	55.9	21.0	7.3
Median (average)	9.7	34.4	18.0	5.7
Cases where an event occurred during October 21	611	32	21	359
Weeks between event date & decision date				
Mean (average)	5.7	8.0	16.7	3.1
Median (average)	4.0	6.9	10.9	2.3
Cases that have been decided in October 21	647	23	5	308

Cells shaded grey had fewer than 20 decisions

¹³ Also published on gov.uk here <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/appeals-average-timescales-for-arranging-inquiries-and-hearings>

Explanation of date terminology

Valid date	When a case is deemed to have been validly received. Note – this is not always the date the case was validated. If a case is validated after the date it was validly received, it is the date it was validly received that is the valid date.
Start date	When a timetable, on how the appeal will progress, is issued to both the appellant and local authority. This timetable tells the appellant when to submit the information the Inspectors need to determine the appeal. It also tells the local authority when to notify interested parties about the appeal.
Event date	When the site visit, hearing, or inquiry occurred.
Decision date	When the decision was issued by The Planning Inspectorate.

Find out more about the process here - <https://www.gov.uk/appeal-planning-decision/after-you-appeal>

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 (including Schedule 14 cases), 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.

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	<p>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.</p> <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>
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.

Term	Explanation
Examinations	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
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	<p>A hearing involves the submission of written evidence by the main parties and a hearing once all the written submissions have been received.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Source: Planning Portal</p>
Inquiries	<p>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.</p> <p>At some point during or on conclusion of the inquiry the inspector and the main parties will undertake a site visit.</p> <p>Source: Planning Portal</p>
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).
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
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.
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.

Term	Explanation
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

Public enquiries email 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

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>