



The Planning
Inspectorate

Business Plan

2023/24



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Introduction

Paul Morrison, Chief Executive

This Business Plan sets out the roadmap of collective effort required to achieve our ambitions over the next twelve months. It centres around the Inspectorate's five priorities for the new financial year and provides detail on how we will take action to progress these priorities and how we will measure the impact of our work.

At the heart of this plan is the core purpose of the Inspectorate: to make fair, open, and impartial decisions, reports, and recommendations. Without compromising this purpose or the quality of our decisions, we need to do more to process our casework more quickly, to more consistent

timeframes, with no backlogs and reducing unit costs of decisions. As step one on this journey, we have in this plan committed to driving down appeal decision times, with a particular focus in this 12-month period on reducing the time taken to process our written representation appeals (by far the largest component of our casework). Going forwards, we plan by the end of the summer to finalise a new Strategic Plan for the Inspectorate which will set out in detail how we will achieve our goal of a quicker, more certain, backlog-free and cheaper operation over the three-year period to 2024-27.

The improvements we drive into our services must be achieved in the face of significant external change, both within the planning sector and more widely. We must be prepared for this, maintaining an outward-facing perspective that enables us to adapt to the fluid policy environment and to implement effectively the Government's key policy priorities, including the reforms coming through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill. In the coming 12-months we will need to support UK infrastructure investment by implementing key parts of the recently launched Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project reform action plan. And we must ensure that our examinations of Local Plans - the foundation of the planning system, providing certainty and clarity to local communities - are progressed proportionately and swiftly. Across all of our work we will continue improving and integrating our processes and systems, particularly, but not only, through data and digital improvements.

Finally, and most importantly, we need to invest in our people. This plan commits us to ensuring we are a diverse and highly regarded employer, modernising our culture and ways of working to maximise the potential and well-being of our workforce.

Our Business Plan aligns to the priorities of our sponsoring department, the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), and we have agreed the priorities, activities and measures which underpin this plan with DLUHC. We will report our progress against this plan frequently throughout the year and at the end of the financial year in our 2023/24 Annual Report and Accounts.



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By reading this plan it is our hope that you will understand the Inspectorate's priorities for 2023/24 and how they will be realised. Achieving these priorities is dependent on a whole organisation commitment and this plan is, therefore, a tool for every member of the Inspectorate to understand how their individual goals align with our wider strategic intentions. It is also a guide for our customers and stakeholders to understand our commitment to improving the services we deliver.

How to use this plan

This Business Plan was developed by the Inspectorate's Executive Team with input from the Planning Inspectorate Board and with regard to the ambitions of our sponsoring department (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) and wider government agenda.

The plan is underpinned by five priorities which align to our vision, values and purpose.

- A high-level summary of the plan is set out in our plan on a page, page four.
- The drivers for each priority, and the high-level outcomes that each priority will deliver, are set out on page five.
- We will take action to progress the priorities through 28 strategic workstreams, these are laid out from page six. Whilst these workstreams do not capture the totality of the Inspectorate's work, they do capture those which we judge to be integral to delivering our five priorities in the coming year.
- We will measure the overall strategic impact of the plan and make judgments on how effectively we are delivering the five priorities through the monitoring of 13 strategic measures, set out from page nine.
- How we will enact this plan, through financial allocations, governance and risk management, is set out on page 12.

Our approach to monitoring and reporting progress

We have developed a strategic reporting framework based around two self-assessment schematics. The first schematic (Taking Action) assesses our progress in delivering the key workstreams which address the five priorities. The second schematic (Measuring Impact) assesses our progress against the strategic measures which monitor our progress across the five priorities.

These schematics will form the basis of our strategic reporting framework for the financial year and will be presented at all levels of the organisation and externally.

Plan on a Page

Organisational Priorities



Improving our performance



Progressing as an employer



Delivering through change

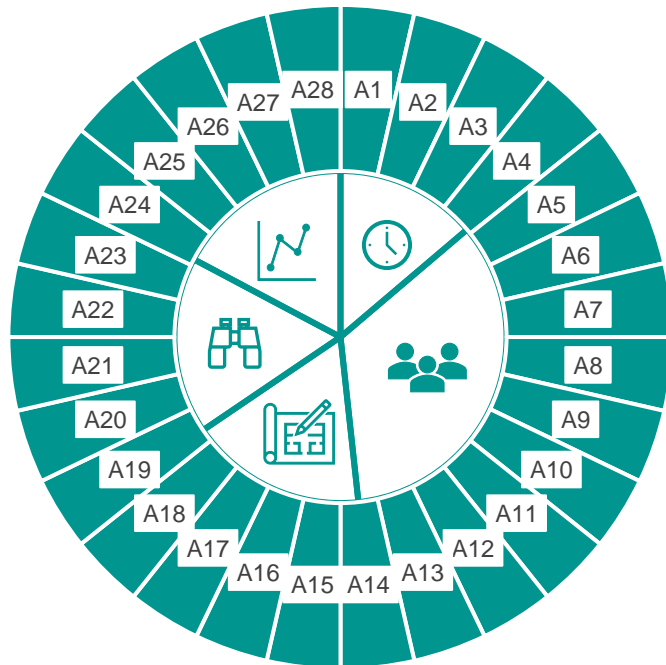


Looking outwards



Driving digitalisation

Taking Action

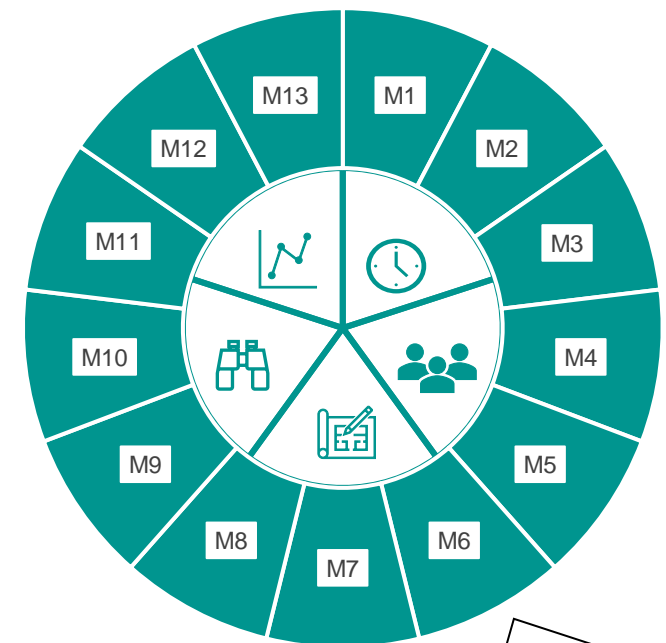


The outer circle shows 28 workstreams that are integral to achieving our priorities and which need to be reported against frequently, and at all levels of the organisation.

Strategic Reporting

Our judgements about how effectively we are achieving our priorities will be informed by both of these reporting frameworks. Whilst our 'Measuring Impact' strategic measures are designed to monitor progress in key areas, not all of our work can be reduced to measures, and we will therefore also carefully consider the outputs and milestones achieved in the 'Taking Action' workstreams, before reporting a view on our progress.

Measuring Impact



The outer circle shows our 13 strategic measures we will use to monitor our overall performance against our priorities.

Our Organisational Priorities 2023/24

Priority

Why

What

Drivers

Outcomes



Accelerating appeal decision times, and making these times more consistent

- Government priority
- Boosting the economy
- Customer satisfaction
- Long standing blocker

We will handle appeals more quickly, improve customer satisfaction levels and release capacity for new challenges.



Developing as a modern, inclusive employer that values and supports its people

- Competitive labour market
- Currently high vacancy levels
- Our diversity not reflecting the communities we serve
- Responsive to employee voice

We will be a more diverse and highly regarded employer with happy and high-performing staff; the organisation will carry fewer vacancies and be more resilient to change.



Supporting infrastructure investment, including implementing Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project reform

- Government priority
- Boosting the economy
- Driving efficiency in the planning system
- Greening the economy

We will continue to deliver against statutory targets and Service Level Agreements, introduce an enhanced pre-application service and support DLUHC in streamlining secondary legislation and guidance, driving interoperability and efficiency within the sector.



Looking forwards and outwards to improve the Inspectorate and the wider system

- New technological opportunities
- Evolving user expectations
- Period of complex system change
- Building resilience

We will renew our Strategic Plan and strengthen its standing with stakeholders, develop long-term efficiencies, plan for future demands on services and enhance the Inspectorate's adaptability and resilience.





Enhancing our digital and data function

- Competitive labour market
- Digitalisation expectations of planning reform
- Pace and scale of technological change
- Evolving user expectations

We will mitigate current vacancy risks, fully realise the benefits of reforming the Inspectorate's Core Digital Services, better integrate with the wider sector and capitalise on technological and digital change.

Taking Action



We will take action to progress the priorities through 28 key, strategic workstreams.

| Workstream | Summary of the workstream and its outputs | |
|---|---|---|
|  | Improving our performance | |
| A1 | Implementing the action plan for written appeals | Achieving a reduction in the number and percentage of planning appeals open for longer than 27 weeks, and a greater consistency in the timeliness of our performance across the range of our appeal categories. |
| A2 | Keeping decisions local to reduce the number of appeals that reach us | Using updated guidance and DLUHC's Planning Practice Guidance, and a new approach to managing deadlines, review approach to scheme amendments and to close down some appeals. In addition, conducting research on the drivers that lead appellants to appeal. |
| A3 | Improving customer satisfaction with our services | Gathering feedback from more points on our customer journey than currently and using this feedback to drive improvements. |
| A4 | Streamlining our casework to drive efficiencies | Using our new digital tools and other continuous improvement projects to make changes to the services, reducing pain points for internal and external users and increasing effectiveness of service. |
|  | Progressing as an employer | |
| A5 | Standing up an enhanced learning and development function | Progressing the four key workstreams of our enhanced Learning and Development function: creating a learning culture, developing core skills and behaviours, developing our professions, and talent management. |
| A6 | Reviewing our pay and reward offer | Undertaking the necessary evidence base requirements with the aim of modernising our approach to reward, with a pay flexibilities business case to support if required and approved. |
| A7 | Modernising our corporate systems | Designing, building, testing and deploying: Employee Central, SAP Success Factors, the suppliers' ordering tool, the E-tendering procurement tool and the Fieldglass contingent labour tool. |
| A8 | Prioritising employee health and safety | Delivering the actions from the 'Stress' project group and rolling out policies, procedures and audit systems relating to driving for work, working at height, PPE, accidents, incidents and near miss reporting. |
| A9 | Improving our environmental performance | Implementing an Environmental Action Plan underpinned by a monitoring cycle. |
| A10 | Prioritising our outreach and bolstering our apprenticeship programme | Progressing towards the Cabinet Office's 5% apprenticeship target and improving our existing apprenticeships, with outreach activity a significant strand of our ED&I approach. |
| A11 | Delivering on our five-year ED&I strategy | Aligning our induction, line-manager and leadership training with best practice, including incorporating feedback from the Employers' Network for Equality and Inclusivity. |

Taking Action

| Progressing as an employer (contd.) | | |
|--|---|--|
| A12 | Refurbishing our office, Temple Quay House | Leading the Inspectorate through the office moves by liaising with the Government Property Agency and other suppliers, negotiating the lease, designing our new office and procuring furniture and equipment. |
| A13 | Implementing a new commercial strategy | Amending our procurement practice to deliver the Government social value model by procuring services from a more diverse and inclusive supply chain. |
| A14 | Better understanding the needs of customers from under-represented groups and supporting them to engage with the planning system | Conducting research with customers from under-represented groups and implementing an action plan to tailor our approach to their needs. |
| Delivering through change | | |
| A15 | Recruiting more inspectors and support staff and training this resource to meet, in particular, the growing demand from applications and to deliver on Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project reform | Progressing the recruitment and training of two more cohorts of inspectors in summer 2023, and promoting two more cohorts of B1-B2 and B2-B3 inspectors in Autumn 2023, as well as recruiting to vacant support posts across the organisation. |
| A16 | Agreeing and progressing future reforms to data architecture to support integration with the wider planning system | Progressing a conceptual and logical data architecture for the Inspectorate including: agreeing the architectural principles and 'patterns' pertinent to a digitised (reformed) planning system, and modelling the new data sources needed for digitalisation and how we will integrate with these sources. In addition, developing data standards, and data management principles for storing, managing, and processing data. |
| A17 | Advising DLUHC on Planning Reform policy implications to ensure the Reform delivers the intended outcomes | Understanding the implications of the LURB and other policy changes, allowing future operational changes to be planned and embedded. |
| A18 | Improving our quality assurance processes across all service areas (activity, data capture, insights and feedback) | Reforming our systems for capturing and quantifying the issues arising from quality assurance across service areas to make it easier to measure and monitor our quality assurance and feed insights back into our learning and development. |

Taking Action

| Workstream | Summary of the workstream and its outputs | |
|--|--|--|
| Looking outwards | | |
|  A19 | Developing and launching a new Strategic Plan | Launching a new three-year strategy, endorsed by DLUHC, worked up in collaboration with our external partners to resolve our areas of long-term operational underperformance. |
| A20 | Reviewing and reforming the organisation's governance structure | Organising ourselves better to meet our key challenges, clarifying our structure and lines of accountability to make us more responsive. |
| A21 | Delivering the next stages of our AI project, and incorporating these findings into our planning | Evidencing the benefits AI can bring through standardising Local Plan consultation and understanding further the benefits the technology could bring to NSIP representations. |
| A22 | Delivering the next stages of our horizon-scanning and futures programme, and incorporating these findings into our planning | Completing two additional cycles of the horizon-scanning programme to consider issues, events, trends and other signals of change in our external environment that may impact our work (or the way that we do our work) over the next ten years. |
| A23 | Delivering Phase 2 of the skills and flexible resources project, and incorporating these findings into our planning | Concluding phase two of the skills and flexible resourcing project and agreeing which actions will be implemented to improve the resilience of our workforce and our service delivery. |
| Driving digitalisation | | |
|  A24 | Withdrawing from the legacy back-office system so that all casework is handled through the new back office | Migrating casework to new back-office systems, including the replacement of the Appeals Casework and NSIPs portals. This new way of working is a crucial step in preparing the Inspectorate to respond to NSIP and Planning Reform. |
| A25 | Transitioning to the new Operational Data Warehouse (ODW) | Decommissioning the MiPINS data warehouse and replacing it with the new ODW, which will include the Inspectorate's Digital Core Services as a data source and bring in new data sources to reach ODW master data visibility. |
| A26 | Providing enhanced business intelligence | Bolstering the information and analysis provided to our Executive Team and the wider organisation, with a particular focus on developing more effective measures of the Inspectorate's productivity, whilst continuing to deliver official statistics, Parliamentary Questions and Freedom of Information requests to quality targets. |
| A27 | Ensuring data protection compliance including robust customer information redaction practices | Delivering training, advice and guidance to ensure data protection compliance and providing assurance that DPIAs, data sharing agreements, data breach reports and investigations are carried out and maintained. Agree data redaction approach, embed into new digital tools and provide any required training and advice to staff. |
| A28 | Transitioning to the new Office of the Chief Digital Information Officer (OCDIO) service model | Migrating the Data and Digital teams to a new 'service' governance model, which will enable the better management of demand on digital services, and greater control over the implementation of solutions and budgets. |

Measuring Impact

We will assess the overall strategic impact of the plan and make judgments on how effectively we are delivering the five priorities through the monitoring of the following thirteen measures.

Key

Measures

Measure 1 Reducing Appeal Decision Times



The number of old planning appeals submitted through written representation to be reduced so that a 'backstop' of 36 weeks can be put in place for 2024/25. This measure would be compared against our performance in the 2022/23 financial year, when 24% of written representation planning appeals took longer than 36 weeks to process. In addition, this improvement in the speed of our written representation performance to be achieved without the timeliness of our decisions, or the consistency of our decision-times, markedly reducing across the six other categories of appeal that we handle.

Measure 2 Customer Satisfaction



Our customer satisfaction (CSAT) score to increase, calculated through our annual Institute of Customer Service (ICS) Survey, measured against the benchmark of our 2021 CSAT scores of 57.6 (UK Customer Satisfaction Index), -29.7 (Net Promoter Score) and 6.0 (Customer Effort). In addition, in recognition of our currently limited number of customer feedback loops, by the end of the year we will have identified additional, regular customer feedback points, underscored by detailed customer mapping, and taken steps to establish regular feedback in some of these areas from 2024 onwards.

Measure 3 Right First Time



Our proportion of appeals received 'right first time' – whereby all of the evidence required to allow the appeal to be fully considered by the Inspectorate without further submission by the appellant – to increase. This will be measured against a baseline of the proportion of appeals received 'right first time' during the 2022/2023 financial year; and the measure will quantify the cost benefit of this improvement to the Inspectorate. This measure will be a reflection of our success in implementing new user-focused digital services which support appellants with the submission of information.

Measure 4 Diversity



Our staff diversity to more closely match the diversity of the population we serve, particularly in relation to the numbers of colleagues employed by the Inspectorate with minority protected characteristics (noting that we employ fewer women, fewer ethnic minority colleagues, and fewer disabled colleagues, than the UK average). We will judge our performance against the baseline staffing profile from March 2023.

Measure 5
Inclusivity



Our recruitment to be tailored more effectively towards potential employees from disadvantaged backgrounds. By April 2025 we are aiming to at least meet the Civil Service expectation of 5% of the organisation entering as apprentices, with positive progress towards this figure recorded throughout 2023/24 year, against the baseline of 1.9% of our workforce entering as apprentices in the 2022/23 year. As part of this, we are aiming for a quarter of our apprenticeship intake to be recruited through specialist routes, such as the Civil Service care leavers internship programme, or the Civil Service former prisoners' internship programme. In addition, we will consider the results to questions about inclusivity from quarterly small-sample Pulse Survey data and exit interview data, as well as the relative size, activity and effectiveness of our various staff networks, when making judgements against this measure.

Measure 6
L&D



Our Learning and Development offer to be enhanced, measured against the 2022 People Survey responses, based on colleagues' responses to small-sample quarterly Pulse Surveys (which track answers to the same People Survey questions) and, when available, the 2023 People Survey. In addition, the numbers of colleagues registered to a Civil Service profession or other profession will be increasing, based on the 2022/23 F/Y baseline for the organisation.

Measure 7
Social Value



Our contracts to score highly against the government 'social value' metric. This will demonstrate the economic, social and environmental value delivered through our procurements, reflecting our status as a modern and inclusive organisation. Our ambition is that all in-scope procurements will include a minimum overall weighting of 10% for social value. Contract Managers will manage social value deliverables in the contract through agreed performance measures and reporting metrics.

Measure 8
Recruitment



Our vacancy rates across the organisation to reduce, and average application numbers per vacancy to rise, measured against a benchmark of average vacancy rates and average application numbers per vacancy across the 2020-2023 period. Whilst recognising that both of these indicators are significantly influenced by external contexts, taken together we believe they offer a reasonable insight into our value as an employer in a competitive labour market. In addition, we will consider closely these measures in our hard-to-recruit areas – such as Digital Services – and benchmark these against progress in the wider organisation. Finally, where possible we will benchmark these metrics against data from other Government agencies.

**Measure 9
Nationally
Significant
Infrastructure
Projects**



Our components of the NSIP action plan to be delivered. This includes piloting elements of the new ‘fast-track’ and enhanced pre-app offer to begin from September 2023 (or earlier), providing timely input to secondary legislation changes (to be ready and prepared by spring 2024) and undertaking design, analysis and modelling to support fees regulation changes. In addition, progressing the new applications service, including achieving a successful service assessment and working in collaboration with DLUHC to identify and agree data standards and an iterative approach to moving more and more of the NSIP process into a data as opposed to PDF-based process. Whilst we cannot baseline this measure against previous performance, we will use our detailed monitoring of the cross-Department NSIP Action Plan to inform our judgments on how successfully we are delivering this measure.

**Measure 10
Operational
Effectiveness**



Our operational efficiency to be assessed more thoroughly and robustly than currently, through the establishment of a new metric(s) providing a dynamic assessment of this performance. Options for the new metrics(s) will be produced by May 2023, and we intend to start reporting and publishing our outputs against the metric(s) before the end of the calendar year. In this way, where possible, we will share with the public more accurately than previously the Inspectorate's productivity across the totality of its functions. In some sections of the Inspectorate's work, however, given the changing and uncertain external contexts, and the variability of our casework, we envisage that it will not be suitable to assess our outputs against productivity metrics.

**Measure 11
Internal
Digital
Systems**



Our key internal digital tools to be 'up and operational' for the same or a greater period of time than achieved previously, measured against a baseline of the amount of 'uptime' for each tool during the 2022/2023 period.

**Measure 12
New Back
Office
Systems**



Our new back office to be stood up such that we achieve 95% reduction in usage of the existing systems, with almost all new cases using the new back-office systems, and the decommissioning of the Appeals Casework and NSIP portals before the end of the year. In addition, this measure will consider our inspectors and other employees' preparedness for the new systems and will track the roll out and uptake of the relevant training programmes.

**Measure 13
Operational
Data
Warehouse**



Our transition into the Operational Data Warehouse to progress at speed, measured by the numbers of new data sources operationalised within the system, including the Inspectorate's Digital Core Services data sources. We will track these increases in relation to absolute and proportional operationalisation. In addition, this measure will track the success of the decommissioning of MiPINS.

Making it happen

Resources

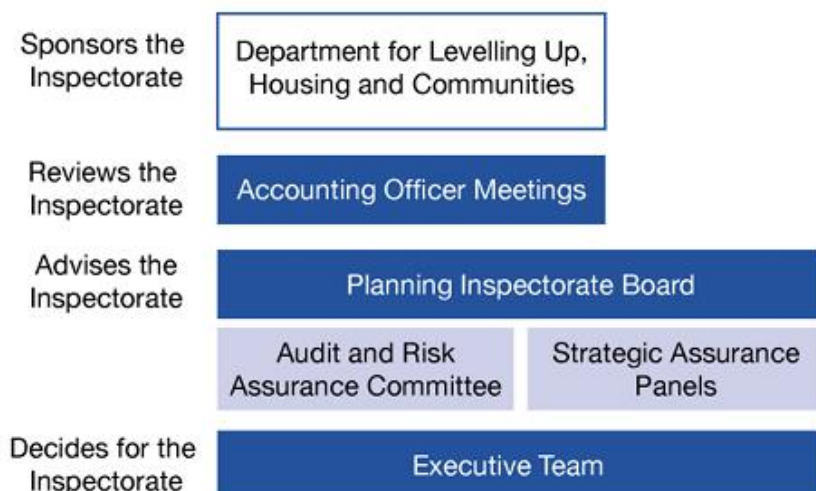
Below is a breakdown of our planned expenditure in 2023/24:

| | |
|-----------------------|----------|
| | 23/24 |
| Income | (£12.4m) |
| Staff Costs | 56.4m |
| Non-Staff Costs | 14.3m |
| Provision utilisation | £0.1m |
| Net Resource RDEL | £58.4m |

Our Governance

Accountability for delivery of this Business Plan sits with the Chief Executive and the Inspectorate's Executive Team, though the Executive Team may delegate delivery of some of the key strategic workstreams and measures within this plan to other colleagues in the organisation. The details of who holds responsibility and accountability for the individual components of this plan will be set out in our 2023/24 Delivery Plan, which will be published internally.

The Chief Executive reports the Inspectorate's organisational performance to a number of parties. First, the Department holds quarterly Accounting Officer meetings to monitor the Inspectorate's delivery against the jointly agreed priorities for the financial year. Second, the Planning Inspectorate Board reviews strategic delivery progress at Board meetings held throughout the year. The Board's sub-committee, Audit and Risk Assurance, monitors the performance of our organisational controls and compliance with them.










The Inspectorate's governance structure

Risk Management







The Inspectorate faces strategic risks which could impact on our ambition to achieve our organisational priorities. Our strategic risks are owned by the Executive Team, with colleagues across the Inspectorate involved in their identification and mitigation. Each risk has been assessed with consideration of our organisational risk appetite, after which a treatment plan has been created to reduce the risk impact or the likelihood of the risk occurring.

The table below summarises the strategic risk profile for the Inspectorate at the outset of the 2023/24 year and how this profile aligns to the organisational priorities set out in this plan. Risk prioritisations and mitigations are reviewed systematically throughout the year.

Further details of the Inspectorate's risk appetite can be found in our Annual Report and Accounts.

| Risk Title | Description What is the risk? | Alignment to organisational priorities |
|--|---|---|
| Data Protection | Lack of robust controls and data governance could lead to a data breach. |  Driving digitalisation |
| Failure to embed changes | The Inspectorate's digital public services may not be fully operational or provide enough value to customers and taxpayers. |  Driving digitalisation |
| Failure to manage stakeholder relationships | Failure to manage stakeholder and customer relationships and communications, or a badly handled error, could impact our reputation. |  Improving our performance |
| Impact of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Applications | The submission of a single, large, complex, high profile and controversial application, or overlapping of several smaller cases, could surpass our capacity to deliver. |  Delivering through change |
| Health, Safety and Wellbeing | Failure to address health, safety and wellbeing could result in a major accident, incident, near miss or ill health. |  Progressing as an employer |
| Ability to react and be prepared for external change | Lack of intelligence analysis leading to failed identification of externalities and misinformed strategic direction which could negatively impact our customer service. |  Looking outwards |
| Not meeting operational performance expectations | Mismatches between demand and operational resource could lead to customer expectations not being met and increased uncertainty and cost for the planning system. |  Improving our performance |

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| | | |
|---|---|--|
| Long-term operational model not sustainable | Failure to update our systems and operational models could lead to a failure to meet customer expectations and increased uncertainty and cost for the planning system. |  Looking outwards |
| Future Skills | Failure to identify future capability requirements could result in our workforce lacking the capability to deliver. |  Progressing as an employer |
| Value and quality of data | Failure to identify, integrate and quality assure data could result in delays and increased costs when responding to planning system-wide reform. |  Driving digitalisation |
| Current skills gap | Holding high numbers of vacancies could lead to business plan objectives being delayed or not delivered, a decline in staff wellbeing and underspends. |  Progressing as an employer |
| Operational Readiness for Planning Reform (LURB) changes | LURB reforms make it difficult to plan timings and resource demands which could result in the Inspectorate being unable to adequately plan for operational delivery. |  Delivering through change |
| Operational Readiness of NSIP reform (formerly Project Speed) | Scale and complexity of the NSIP Reform package started under Project Speed, alongside delays experienced in progressing strategic enablers, could mean that there is insufficient capacity to deliver the extent of change to the expected timescales whilst also maintaining timely and robust examinations and recommendations on submitted NSIP applications. |  Delivering through change |

Conclusion

By reading this plan it is our hope that you will understand the Inspectorate's roadmap for 2023/24, the priorities we have set and how they will be realised. We will be reporting on the progress of this Business Plan throughout the year both internally and externally. The Inspectorate provides a comprehensive report looking back on the performance of the previous financial year in our [Annual Report and Accounts \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/100000/Annual_Report_and_Accounts_2022-23.pdf).

To learn more about the work of the Inspectorate please visit [About us - Planning Inspectorate - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/about)

To read further about the Inspectorate's governance please visit [Our governance - Planning Inspectorate - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/about)

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