



Planning Inspectorate

Quarterly and Annual tables | Background Quality Report | April 2026

Introduction

This background quality report assesses the quality of quarterly official statistics for the planning Inspectorate using the European Statistics System (ESS) Quality Assurance Framework (QAF). This is the method recommended by the Government Statistical Service (GSS) Quality Strategy. Statistics are of good quality when they are fit for their intended use.

The ESS QAF measures the quality of statistical outputs against the dimensions of

- relevance
- accuracy and reliability
- timeliness
- accessibility and clarity
- comparability and coherence

The GSS also recommends assessment against 3 other principles in the ESS QAF. These are:

- trade-offs between output quality components
- confidentiality and transparency
- balance between performance, cost and respondent burden

These dimensions and principles cross the three pillars of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics.

This quality assessment covers the quarterly and annual statistical release which provides summary information on different case types.

These statistics are produced each quarter and each year for annual sections to allow anyone to see how the Planning Inspectorate is performing. The focus is on information on the numbers of different kinds of decisions, as that is an area in which stakeholders have an interest.

Background and Context

The Planning Inspectorate's job is to make decisions and provide recommendations and advice on a range of land use planning-related issues across England and for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, Wales. This is done 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 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

Methodology and Production

The Planning Inspectorate has a policy of taking all data extracts for Official Statistics on or after the third working day of the following month.

The casework statistics provided in this publication have used data from:

- The casework management systems used for processing appeals casework, Horizon and Manage Appeals. This has been used to produce the statistics on our casework. Analysis is based on data extracted from these systems on 07/04/2026
- Spreadsheets – some of the casework data, for Tree Preservation Orders, High Hedges appeals and Hedgerow appeals, Community Infrastructure Levies, Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects and Local Plans are also extracted from source MS Excel spreadsheets. These data have been used in conjunction with Horizon data to calculate decisions data; extracted on 07/04/2026

Relevance

The Planning Inspectorate has proactively decided to produce these statistics quarterly rather than annually to better meet user needs. We welcome feedback and will continue to develop the statistics over time to ensure we continue to meet user needs.

The release can be used to answer press queries, parliamentary questions and Freedom of Information requests. The report is also useful for internal customers to support evidence-based decisions and to support discussions with external stakeholders.

Accuracy and Reliability

The Planning Inspectorate uses administrative data from operational delivery systems to compile these statistics. As these data come from live systems, there are occasions when these data change. Data used in the publication are based on data recorded in these systems at the time of extraction.

The possible changes that could occur in these statistics include:

- Data entry error — Some data may be entered in a form that is incomplete or in a format that cannot be processed. An example of this is that there are occasionally errors in date fields; these are highlighted in internal data quality reports and the Inspectorate is working to improve the quality of data that support this publication.
- On occasions the categorisation of cases may change, e.g., the procedure type can change, and this will be recorded differently in the latest statistic compared with previous versions.

- Delays in updating records on operational systems mean that changes may apply to data older than the latest time period released.

This information and associated data collection methods will be quality assured, to develop a longer-term solution to collecting these statistics.

There are instances where case records indicate that a case has been closed and a decision (such as whether the appeal has been dismissed or allowed) has been recorded, but no date has been entered. It is not clear whether the decision has been added in error, or the date omitted in error. Any such case record will be excluded from the counts of the number of decisions (which use the month of the decision), which may therefore give an underestimate. This applies to fewer than 100 cases received in a year, in the context of over 17,000 decisions a year. Further work is required to automatically identify these cases and get any errors amended.

We are investigating an issue with our processing of withdrawn and turned away cases that may mean some of these closed cases are being included in decision counts, contrary to our usual definition of 'decided'. This may result in decision counts being revised in future publications. We believe that this affects fewer than 1% of decisions reported for the last year.

Our data on decision outcomes for decided cases are incomplete. We are looking at ways to improve data quality in this area and assessing how our methodology accounts for missing data, which may result in revisions in the future. Initial investigations suggest that measures such as 'percentage of cases allowed' may change by around 1 percentage point for written representations planning appeals and up to 3 percentage points for other casework types where missing data are more common.

Issues affecting the statistics this release are as follows:

- We have identified quality issues with our data on decision maker. We have removed Table 5.2 while we work to correct the source data.

Timeliness and Punctuality

Figures are published quarterly within a month of the end of the reporting period. This is to allow time to produce the statistics while ensuring they are timely for users.

The release date for this publication was pre-announced on the Planning Inspectorate's Calendar of Upcoming Releases section of GOV.UK. There is also a 12-month release calendar with a specific release date given at least four weeks in advance where practicable provided on the GOV.UK website.

Accessibility and Clarity

The statistics are published on the GOV.UK website. The publication is available from 09:30 hours on the day of release.

Figures from the statistics are separately available in two MS Excel files for users to download. This allows for use in individual research and reports.

Coherence and Comparability

Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects

Data for nationally significant infrastructure projects is available on the <https://national-infrastructure-consenting.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/project-search>>. The statistics provided in Table 1.1 of the Official Statistics publication are inclusive of any subsequently withdrawn projects. Due to our data retention policy, details of projects whose applications have been accepted are removed from the website 1 year after the date of their withdrawal. Therefore, there will be minor discrepancies in some quarters between the number of projects reported in the Official Statistics and numbers totalled using the live table.

Linked cases

In some cases, the “lead” case has had a decision date added, but linked cases (which can be referred to as “child” cases), which have their decision issued at the same time, have not had the required fields updated. This makes the number of open cases appear higher than it should and distorts the timeliness figures. For the October 2023 publication onwards, we have changed the method for counting events. Previously, only a single event would be counted for a group of linked appeals. We now attribute an event to each appeal in the group. This has brought the methodology in line with that for counting decisions.

Redetermined cases

We do not count redetermined cases in our statistics due to the dates being overwritten in our system. We are investigating better ways to report on these in the future.

Trade-offs between Output Quality Components

Where possible, the cost to Government of producing these statistics has been minimised by using data already collated for operational delivery purposes. The main sources of data used for compiling these statistics are the casework management systems, Horizon, PICASO¹ and Manage Appeals; these systems are large administrative databases, and, as such, data quality across fields is of varying quality and completeness.

These statistics are produced each quarter, less than a month after the period on which they are reporting. This provides limited time for checking of the quality of the data. This decision is made to allow users timely information.

Quality Assurance

Data feeding the publications undergo quality checks to ensure the correct data have been extracted and the appropriate filters have been applied. Subsequently, the layout and presentation of the data in the statistical release is read by multiple members of the Analysis Service to ensure that the data are presented appropriately to ensure the correct interpretation by the user.

¹ Picaso is no longer a live operational casework system

Assessment of User Needs and Perceptions

Publication of this report has been in response to requests for information from the media and the general public about the Planning Inspectorate's performance. This report also contributes to the Planning Inspectorate's commitment to release information where possible.

The Planning Inspectorate invites users to provide feedback for any of their publications or reports using the contact information within the publication.

Performance, Cost and Respondent Burden

The production of the Quarterly and Annual tables requires less than one FTE per annum.

The report uses administrative data sources already collected by the Planning Inspectorate. As such, there is no respondent burden, and the main cost is the production of the statistics, including quality assurance and data interpretation.

Confidentiality, Transparency and Security

The Analysis Service team members involved in the production of this Official Statistic have completed the Government wide Security and Data Protection training and they understand their responsibilities under the Data Protection Act and the Official Statistics Code of Practice.

The Analysis Service team members adhere to the principles and protocols laid out in the Code of Practice for Statistics and comply with pre-release access arrangements. The Pre-Release Access list for our publications is available on the GOV.UK website.

Contact Details

The Planning Inspectorate welcomes 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

Official Statistics Designation

The Planning Inspectorate quarterly and annual Statistical bulletin is designated as Official Statistics. The bulletin, and this associated Background Quality Report, are produced according to the principles of Trust, Quality and Value. We are reviewing our complete Official Statistics offering to assess how it is meeting user needs. If you would like to provide feedback to contribute to this, please contact: statistics@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

Our statistical practice is regulated by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). OSR sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the [Code of Practice](#) for Statistics that

all producers of official statistics should adhere to. You are welcome to contact us directly with any comments about how we meet these standards. Alternatively, you can contact OSR by emailing regulation@statistics.gov.uk or via the OSR website.