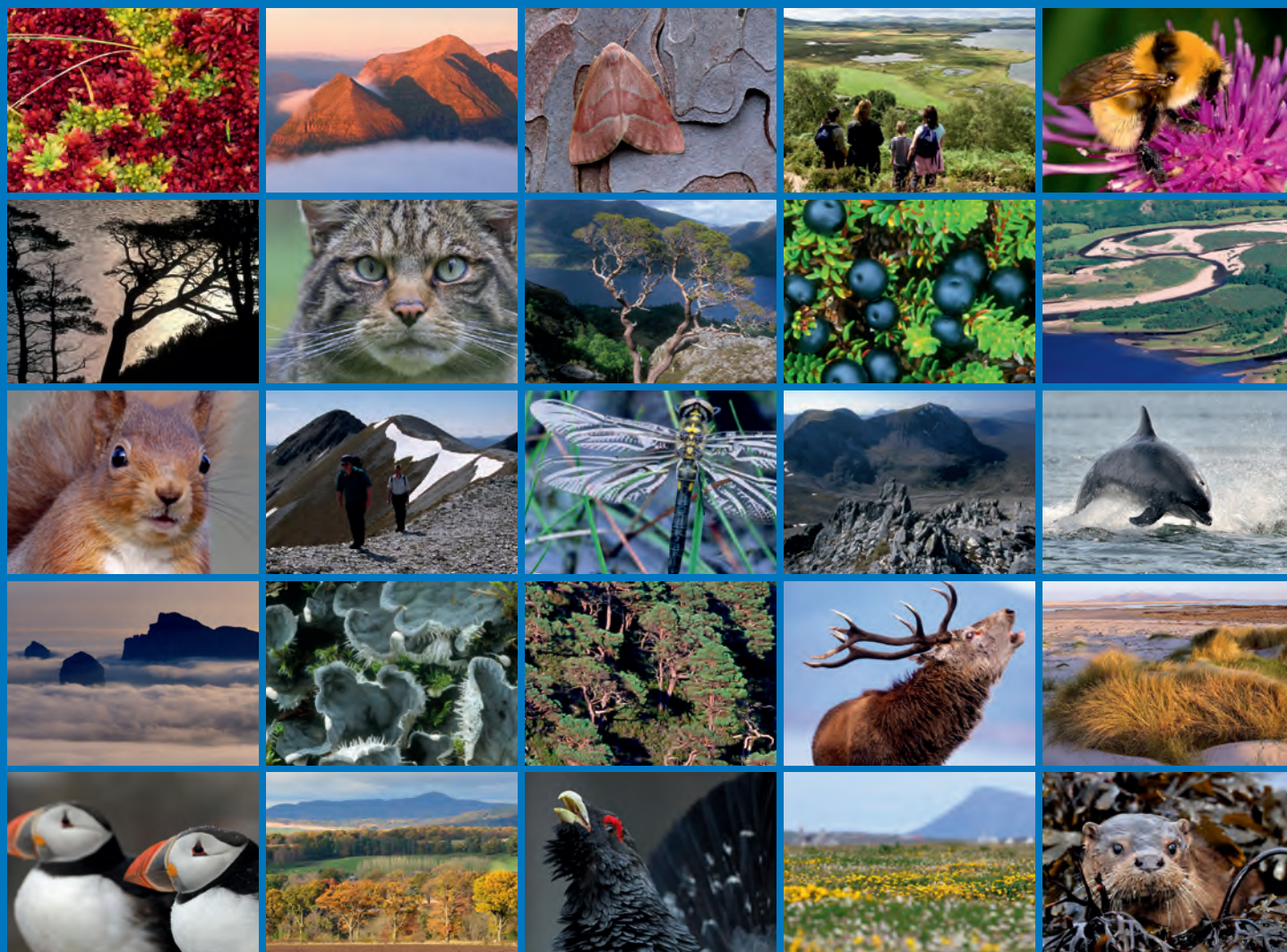


Planning for development - customer survey 2015





Scottish Natural Heritage
Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba

All of nature for all of Scotland
Nàdar air fad airson Alba air fad

COMMISSIONED REPORT

Commissioned Report No. 921

Planning for development - customer survey 2015

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COMMISSIONED REPORT

Summary

Planning for development - customer survey 2015

Commissioned Report No. 921

Project No: 16097

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Keywords

Customer satisfaction; planning for development; service statement; planning system; customer focussed; service improvement.

Background

SNH commissioned Why Research to carry out a customer satisfaction survey covering its Planning for Development service. The purpose was to gather evidence to inform SNH's judgements about service improvement and support SNH's commitment to continuous improvement.

Main findings

- The findings from this 2015 customer satisfaction survey are broadly positive and there are improvements over findings from the 2014 survey in many areas.
- SNH's role in the planning system appears to be well regarded. While not all respondents have a clear understanding of SNH's role, data shows an increase in understanding and satisfaction since 2014.
- Awareness of the SNH Planning for Development Service Statement is relatively low.
- Views on the guidance produced by SNH are largely positive.
- Satisfaction with the services and advice provided by SNH are, in general, high.

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Key Overview

SNH commissioned Why Research to carry out a customer satisfaction survey amongst its planning and development customers. The purpose was to gather evidence to inform SNH's judgements about service improvement. The survey asked many similar questions to those used in the 2014 survey in order to gather information on any changes in customer views.

The findings from this 2015 Customer Survey are broadly positive, and satisfaction with the services provided by SNH is fairly high. There are some differences between different customer groupings in their understanding of SNH's role and the extent to which their views are positive about SNH's role in the planning system.

Throughout this data, the views of those more heavily involved in the planning system and who have more contact with SNH, show most understanding and satisfaction with the service provided.

Views on advice given by SNH are broadly positive, although responses to a series of statements show that there is still room for improvement, particularly in relation to consistency of advice between SNH and other organisations.

When we compare the results of this survey with those from the 2014 survey, there is positive movement in satisfaction scores across many aspects of SNH's service.

Awareness of the SNH Planning for Development Service Statement is relatively low with just under half of respondents aware of the Service Statement.

Not all respondents have a clear understanding of SNH's role in the planning system. Some were unable to comment on different areas of SNH's remit and others incorrectly identified different elements of SNH's remit. However, responses to the questions on understanding of SNH's role show a positive movement in relation to many aspects.

Views on the guidance produced by SNH are largely positive. Guidance is seen as useful, relevant, easy to find, well laid-out and lacking in jargon. A large majority of respondents consider that information and / or guidance accessed through the SNH website is useful.

Top level findings from the survey questions are outlined below.

1.2 Contact with SNH

Almost half of those responding to this survey contact SNH at least once a month.

Of those contacting SNH, specifically in relation to planning and development, just under a third have contact with SNH once a month or more frequently.

While respondents use a number of different channels to find the most relevant person at SNH, existing contacts are the most important across all respondents groups.

Over three-quarters say it is easy to contact SNH staff.

1.3 SNH's Planning for Development Services

The services accessed by the greatest proportions of respondents are guidance relating to awareness of natural heritage assets and guidance relating to planning and development matters.

Respondents are generally positive about services provided by SNH and views show a positive direction of movement in satisfaction over those seen in 2014.

While respondents were positive about the advice given by SNH, with mainly positive changes over 2014, there remains some concern in relation to consistency of advice both within SNH and between SNH and other organisations.

Over half of planning authority respondents say they always or sometimes feel able to ask for information on protected species and/or ecological survey while around a half say they always or sometimes feel able to ask for information on landscape and visual assessment.

1.4 SNH's Service Statement

There is relatively low awareness of the SNH Planning for Development service statement. However, awareness is highest among Planning Authorities.

1.5 SNH's Role in the Planning System

While some groups of respondents show a lack of awareness of SNH's role or remit in relation to the planning system, comparing the data in 2015 from results in 2014 shows a positive improvement.

Those involved in the planning system on a professional basis; developers, planning consultants / agents and planning authority respondents, have a clearer understanding of SNH's role in the planning system than other groups of respondents. This finding is similar to the results from the 2014 survey.

Respondents were also asked about their awareness of SNH's Planning for Development service and results show a difference in awareness depending on the type of service. For example, while a large majority were aware that SNH is a statutory consultee for developments which affect nationally or internationally designated areas, or developments subject to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and/or Appropriate Assessment, less than half correctly identified that SNH will focus its input on issues that are of national significance and cannot enter into extensive dialogue on natural heritage issues of local importance.

1.6 Guidance

Results show greatest awareness of most wind farm guidance but, perhaps not surprisingly, less awareness of more specialised areas. For example, around two-thirds were aware of SNH general advice, sources of guidance and information for onshore wind farms (April 2015) while around a quarter were familiar with Guyed meteorological masts: avian collision risk and the use of line markers (2014).

Views on the guidance produced by SNH are largely positive, with the majority of respondents considering the information provided by SNH useful, relevant, easy to find, well laid out and lacking in jargon. However, more than half feel that guidance could be more concise or less ambiguous than at present. While these were also the areas of concern in 2014, results do show some improvement in views in 2015.

A large majority of respondents consider that information and / or guidance accessed through the SNH website is useful.

When asked to make suggestions for improvements to guidance, the one key suggestion was to make guidance less wordy, more concise or streamlined. However a similar proportion said that guidance is generally good or that no changes are needed.

When asked to say what else SNH could do in support of their guidance to better help other organisations consider natural heritage assets, the provision of Sharing Good Practice events proved the most popular suggestion across all respondents groups.

1.7 Approach

Respondents identified Strategic and Local Development Plans as the area most would like to see SNH focus their efforts. Capacity building attracted least support.

A large majority agreed that SNH's approach to guidance and advice is enabling (i.e. constructive and customer-focussed). Planning authority respondents were most likely to agree while developers were least likely to agree.

1.8 Satisfaction

When asked about their overall satisfaction with the service received from SNH, respondents gave an average score of 7.39 out of a possible 10. Amongst the main respondents groups, planning authority respondents gave the highest scores while developers gave the lowest scores.

The need for consistency within SNH emerged as the area respondents felt could be improved.

2. INTRODUCTION

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) is the government's adviser on all aspects of nature and landscape across Scotland. Its role is to help people understand, value and enjoy Scotland's nature now and in the future. Its aspiration is for the natural heritage to be used and managed sustainably. The organisation promotes good practice widely and helps to care for local nature and landscapes of national and international significance. Its success depends on working with others.

2.1 Service Statement

In April 2015, SNH produced a revised Planning for Development Service Statement, outlining its involvement in Scotland's planning system and providing a summary of what planning authorities and other stakeholders can expect from SNH in relation to planning and development proposals. This Service Statement notes that by engaging more effectively in the plan-making process, SNH can help to guide good development in the right places in a sustainable way.

SNH's approach is to be involved at early stages of the planning system, to provide clear, proportionate and focused advice on issues presenting the greatest opportunities and threats to the natural heritage, to be collaborative and flexible in its approach and to be committed to supporting Scotland's development plans.

2.2 A need to gather feedback and update information on customer satisfaction

Customer feedback plays an essential role in helping SNH provide an effective Planning for Development service. To gather this feedback, SNH has conducted several pieces of research among customers it works with via the Planning System and other development-related processes. These have included a customer survey in July 2014,¹ research on SNH's influence on natural heritage outcomes² and research on the effectiveness of its guidance.

In line with its commitment to continuous improvement, SNH has now appointed Why Research Ltd, an independent market research company based in Edinburgh, to undertake annual customer surveys over the next three years. In October 2015 the first of these online surveys was conducted, using many of the questions from the 2014 survey, along with some new questions.

The key objective of the 2015 survey was to provide SNH with a customer satisfaction survey that covered the full range of Planning for Development customers. This survey aims to provide evidence to inform judgements about service improvements and support SNH's commitment to continuous improvement - using customer feedback to inform development of its services.

¹ Why Research. 2015. Planning for development – customer survey 2014. *Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report No. 691*.

² LUC. 2015. Measuring SNH's influence on the outcome of development proposals. *Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report No. 699*.

3. RESPONDENT PROFILE INFORMATION

Invitations to participate in this survey were sent to 2,710 individuals and organisations who have had contact with SNH. A total of 476 responded to this survey, a response rate of around 18%.

In order to set the findings in context, respondents were asked to provide some information relating to themselves or their organisations and these are discussed in the paragraphs below.

3.1 Respondent groupings

At the start of the online survey all respondents were asked to indicate what type of organisation, if applicable, they were responding from.

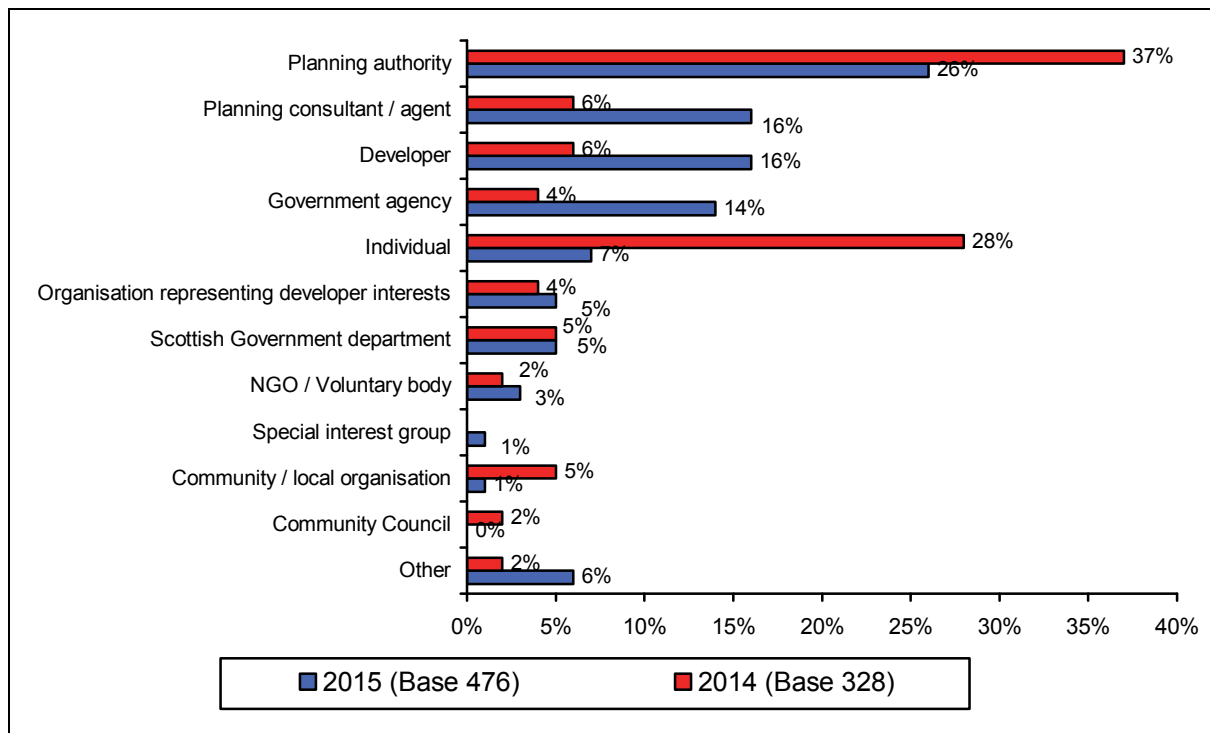


Figure 1. Respondent groupings 2014 and 2015

2015 Source: Q1

As shown in Figure 1, the four groups with the highest numbers of respondents were planning authorities (26%), planning consultants or agents (16%), developers (16%) and government agencies (14%).

As can also be seen, there were some marked differences in the respondent profile in 2015 when compared to 2014.

It is important to note, particularly when looking at comparisons between the results from this survey and results from the 2014 survey, far fewer individuals and community groups responded in 2015. In 2014, the survey was drawn to the attention of groups and individuals campaigning against the effects of wind power on Scotland's landscapes and these respondents gave, in general, more negative answers and ratings than professional respondents. Positive improvements in results from the 2015 survey may, therefore, be a result of the very different respondent groups.

Throughout this report we have looked at different types of respondents to ascertain whether or not there are differences in responses across different groups. Most differences reported will relate to those groups with large enough base sizes for sensible comparison (i.e. over 5% of the sample): planning authority; planning consultant / agent; developer; government agency; and individuals.

3.2 Primary area of business or involvement

Respondents outwith the public sector were then asked to indicate their primary area of business or the area that their involvement in the planning system relates to. Respondents from the public sector; planning authorities, Scottish Government departments and government agencies were not asked to provide this information as their involvement covers many or all of these areas; 45% of respondents fell into the public sector category.

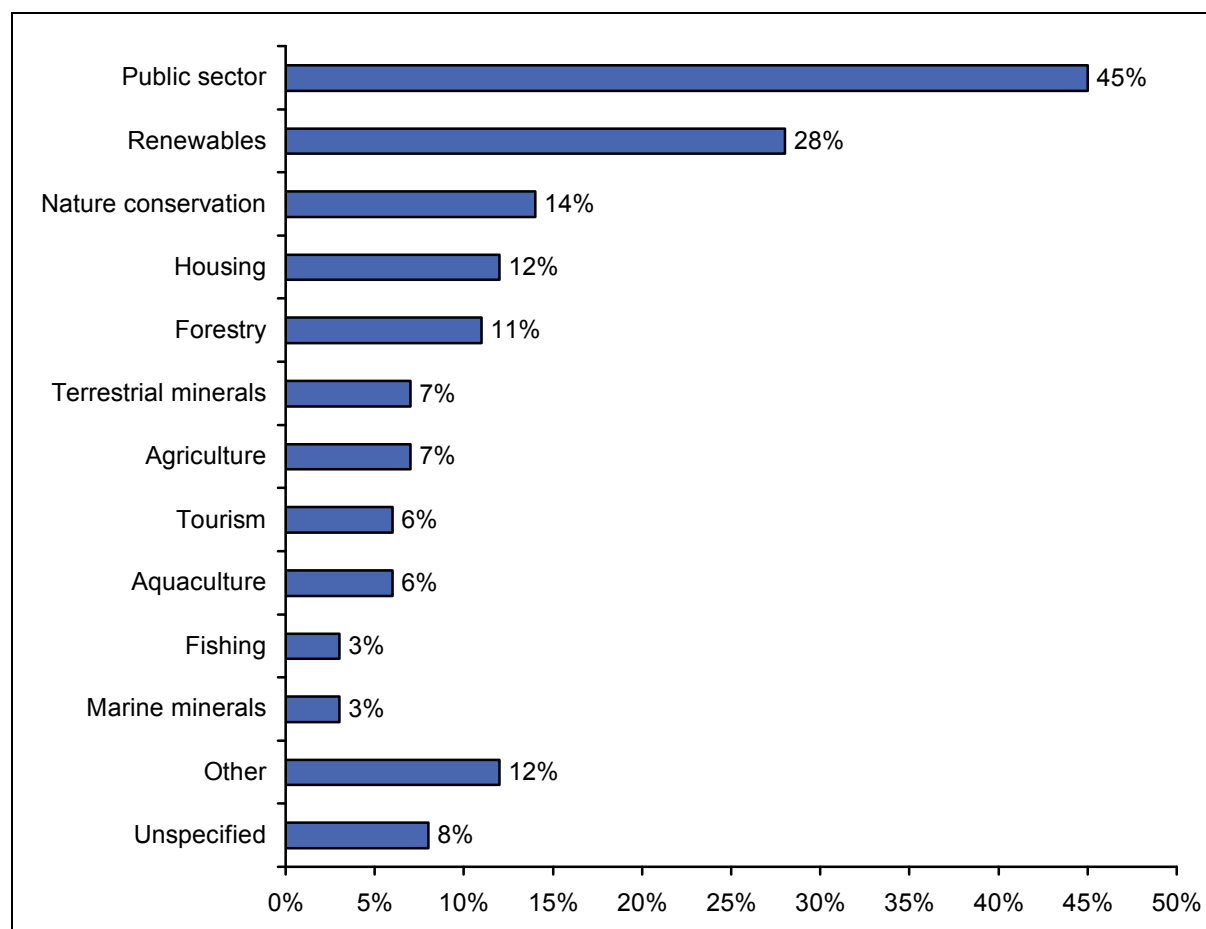


Figure 2. Primary area of business or involvement

Source: Q2a & Q2b (Base=476)

Over a quarter of respondents said that they are involved in renewables (28%), with smaller numbers involved in nature conservation (14%), housing (12%) or forestry (11%). Other sectors were noted in 7% or less of the sample.

Looking at renewables in particular shows fewer respondents reporting this as a primary area of business than in the previous survey; 28% in 2015 compared to 36% in 2014. This is due to the fact that many of the individuals, mentioned above, who responded in 2014 gave their area of involvement as renewables (NB this list was amended in 2015 so not all areas can be compared directly).

Those who mentioned renewables as their primary area of business in 2015 are mostly developers, organisations representing developer interests and planning consultants or agents.

3.3 Area of involvement in renewables

Respondents who selected renewables as their primary area of business or involvement were also asked to say in which area of renewables they were involved.

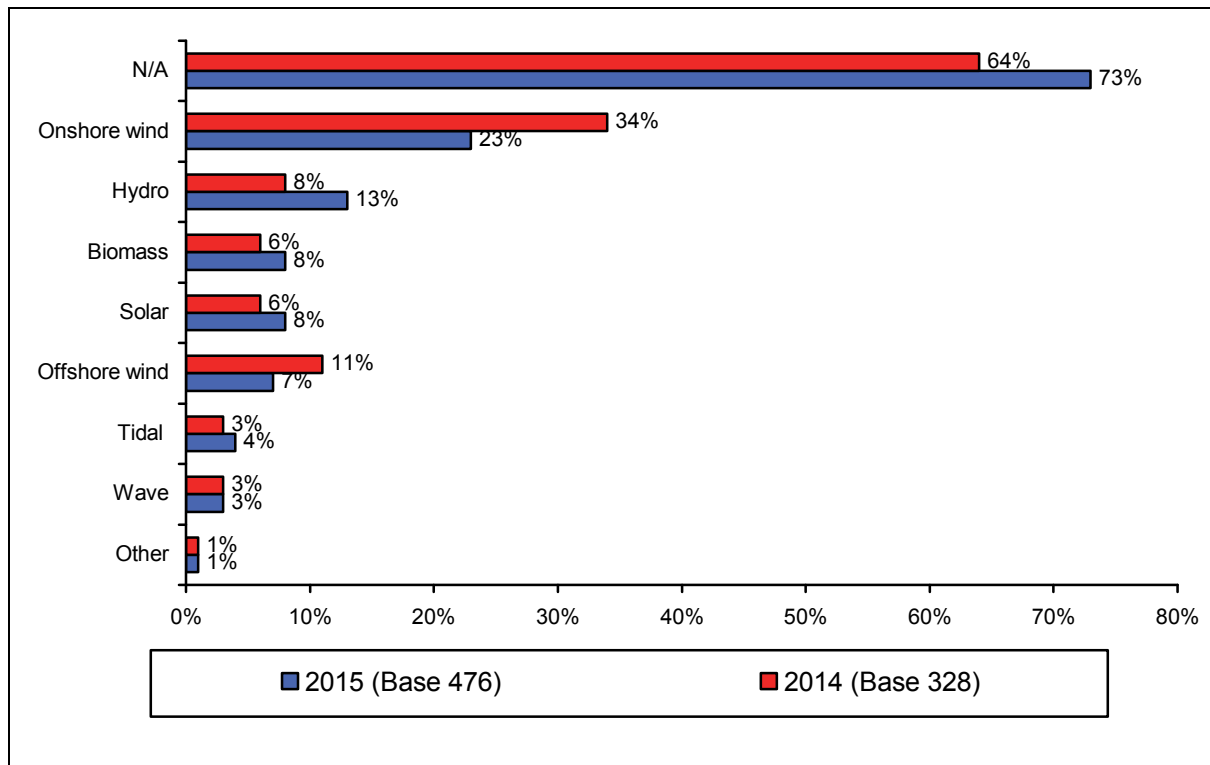


Figure 3. Area of involvement in renewables 2014 and 2015

2015 Source: Q2ai & Q2bi

As Figure 3 demonstrates, onshore wind accounts for the greatest number of respondents (23%) and just over one in ten (13%) is involved in hydro.

3.4 Involvement with Environmental Impact Assessment

Respondents were also asked: “If you are involved with Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), at which stages are you involved with SNH?” A majority said they were involved with EIA (69%), and most were involved at the stages of Scoping or the Environmental Statement:

- Before Scoping (45%)
- Scoping (58%)
- Environmental Statement (56%)
- Other (13%)
- Not involved with EIA (31%)

3.5 SNH's contribution to the planning system

To help put their views into context, all respondents were asked to state the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that SNH makes a positive contribution to planning and development processes.

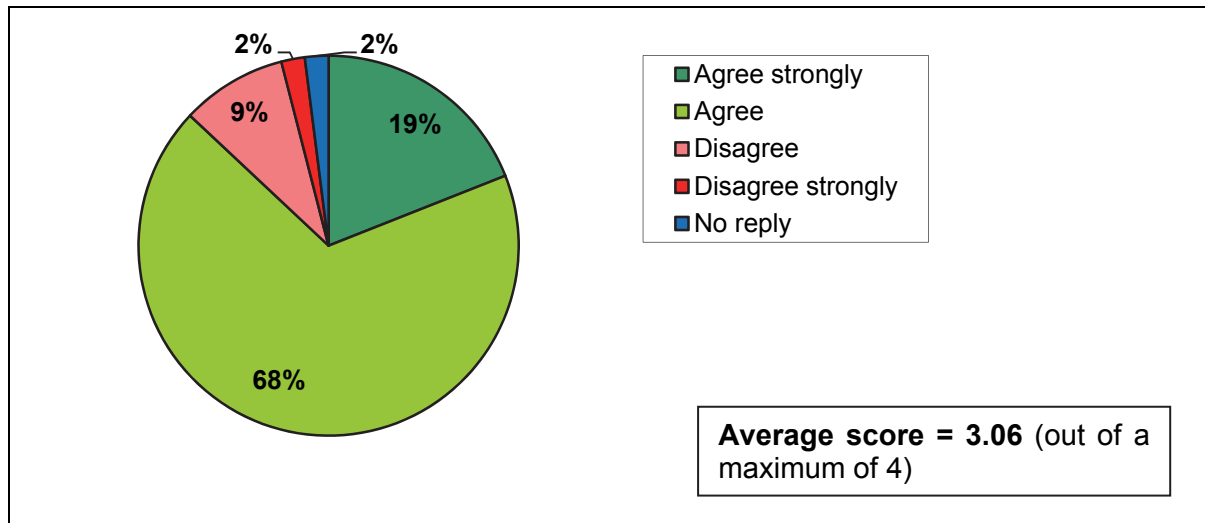


Figure 4. SNH's contribution to planning and development processes

Source: Q20 (Base=476)

As can be seen in Figure 4 above, results to this question are positive, with a large majority (87%) agreeing to some extent that SNH makes a positive contribution to planning and development processes. Just over one in ten (11%) disagreed with this statement.

Comparing results with a similar question asked in 2014 (Agreement or disagreement that that SNH makes a positive contribution to the planning system) shows that:

- The percentage of respondents agreeing to any extent has risen from 70% to 87%
- The percentage disagreeing to any extent has fallen from 28% to 11%

As mentioned previously, positive movements in data between 2014 and 2015 can be explained by a marked difference in respondent types.

When we examine the data from the larger sub-groups in 2015, it is planning authorities that are most positive (with 92% agreeing that SNH makes a positive contribution to the planning system).

4. CONTACT WITH SNH

4.1 Frequency of contact with SNH

Having ascertained some basic profile information from each respondent, all were asked to indicate how often they have contact with SNH on average, for any reason, and then how often they have contact with SNH on average, specifically in relation to its Planning for Development service.

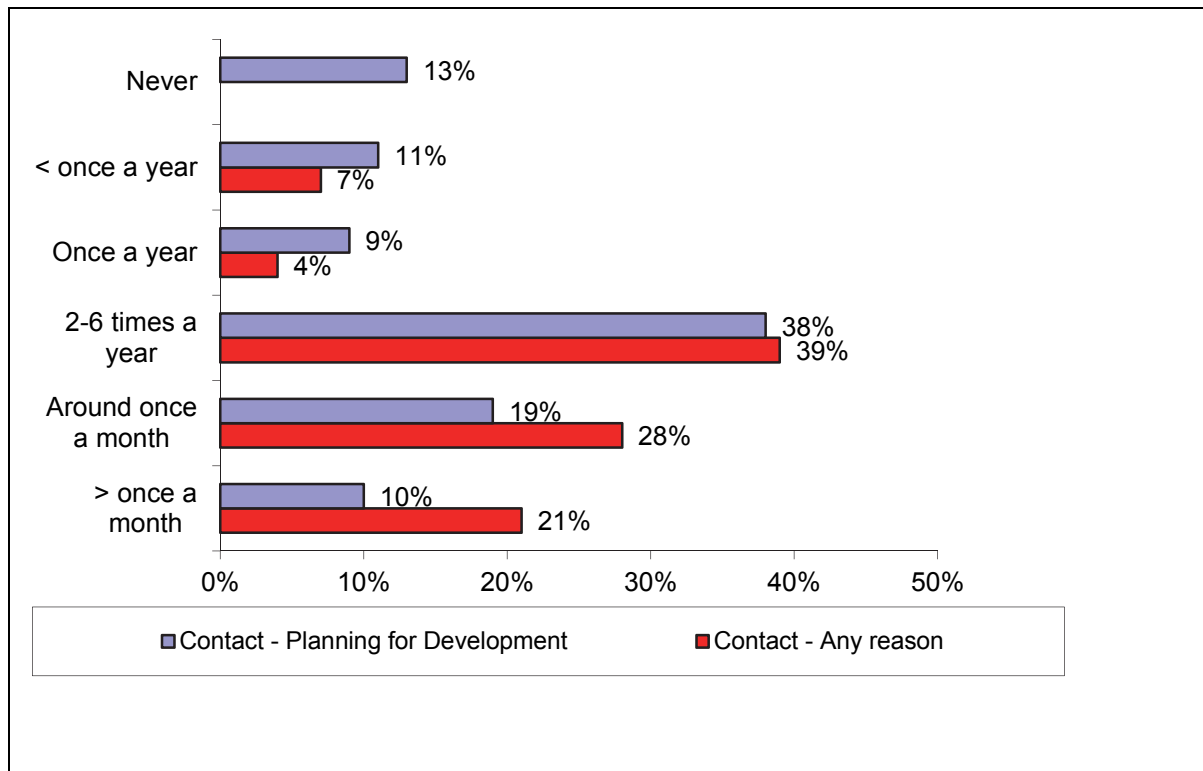


Figure 5. Frequency of contact with SNH

Source: Q3a & Q3b (Base=476)

As Figure 5 shows, over a fifth of respondents have contact with SNH **for any reason** more than once a month (21%), with more having contact around once a month (28%). This means that almost half of respondents contact SNH once a month or more frequently. The highest proportion (39%) have contact between 2-6 times a year and around one in ten have contact once a year or less. The average number of contacts with SNH per year is 10.13, a similar average to 2014.

In terms of having any contact with SNH in relation to its **Planning for Development service** specifically, contact levels are slightly less, with under a third having contact with SNH once a month or more frequently; the highest proportion again makes contact between 2-6 times a year (38%) and around a fifth have contact once a year or less. The average number of contacts with SNH per year is 7.29.

Of the 476 respondents, 412 have contacted SNH in relation to both general issues and Planning for Development specifically, while 64 (13%) have had no contact in relation to Planning for Development.

When we examine sub-group data in relation to any contact with SNH, the most frequent contact is with Scottish Government departments (an average of 16.19 times per year), NGO / voluntary bodies (average = 14.08) and government agencies (average = 12.1). Least

contact is with community / local organisations (average = 2.92) and individuals (5.39). Planning consultant or agents contact SNH an average of 10.39 times per year; this is slightly more frequently than planning authorities who contact SNH an average of 10.29 times per year.

When we look at contact regarding the Planning System specifically, the most frequent contact is with NGO / voluntary bodies (average = 12.13 times per year) and Scottish Government departments (average = 11.22). Once again, least contact is from community / local organisations (average = 1.75) and individuals (2.70).

Data shows a connection between contact and satisfaction scores; the 42 respondents who gave SNH a satisfaction rating of 10 out of 10 had more frequent contact (average 7.84) than those giving lower ratings.

4.2 Finding the most relevant person at SNH

Respondents were then asked to indicate how, when they wish to contact SNH, they tend to find the most relevant person.

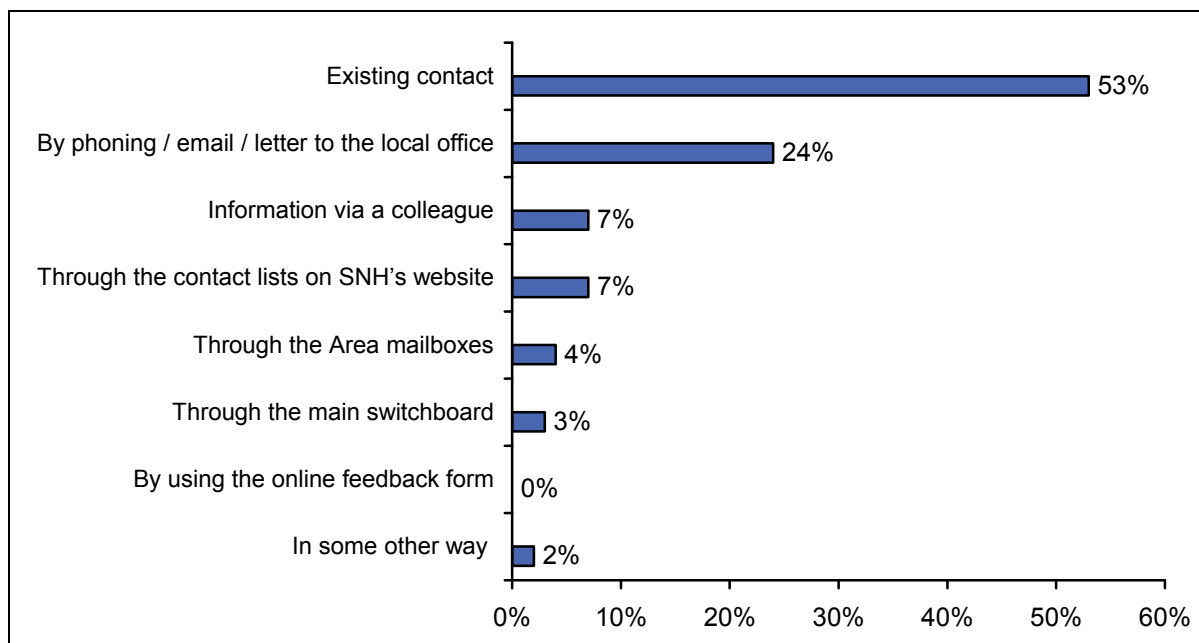


Figure 6. Finding the most relevant person at SNH

Source: Q4a (Base=476)

As Figure 6 shows, existing contacts at SNH are clearly important, with over half (53%) citing this contact method. Around a quarter (24%) referred to telephone, email or letter to their local SNH office. Less than one in ten respondents used another form of contact to find the most relevant person at SNH.

When we examine the data from the larger sub-groups, it appears that existing contacts at SNH are a key channel for contacting SNH across all groups.

4.3 Ease of contacting relevant SNH staff

Respondents were also asked to indicate how easy it is to contact relevant staff at SNH.

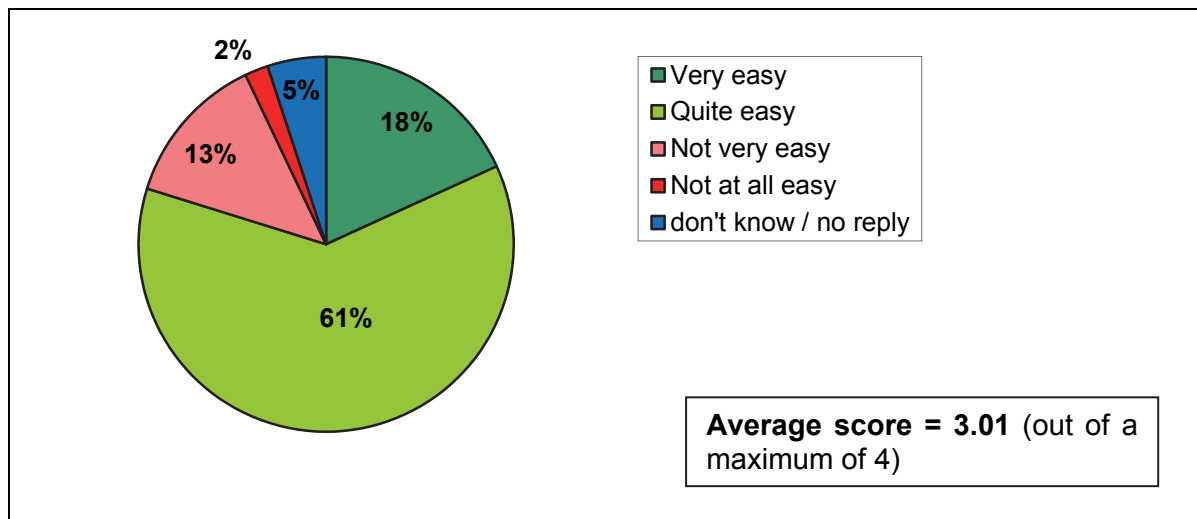


Figure 7a. Ease of contacting relevant SNH staff

Source: Q4b (Base=476)

As shown in Figure 7, over three quarters (79%) of respondents agree, to some extent, that it is easy to contact the relevant staff at SNH. Only 16% disagree. These results show a small improvement on 2014 when the average score was 2.96.

The sub-group who had easiest contact with SNH staff is planning authority respondents (87%). The sub-groups where lowest proportions of respondents agree to any extent that it is easy to contact the relevant SNH staff are planning consultant / agents (69%).

Comparing the current survey with that carried out in 2014 shows that respondents in 2015 find it easier to contact relevant SNH staff (average 3.01) than in 2014 (average 2.96).

Looking at differences across respondent groups shows that some find it easier to contact relevant SNH staff in 2015 than had been the case in 2014:

- Developers (2.78 in 2014, 2.94 in 2015)
- Individuals (2.45 in 2014, 3.04 in 2015)

However, other respondent groups now found it less easy:

- Planning authorities (3.26 in 2014, 3.15 in 2015)
- Planning consultants / agents (2.90 in 2014, 2.79 in 2015)

5. SNH'S PLANNING FOR DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

5.1 SNH services used

SNH offers a wide range of services to organisations, communities and the general public as part of its overall Planning for Development Service. This part of the survey was designed to help understand which of these services have been used, and by whom.

Respondents were asked which services they had used and whether these had been mainly accessed directly (through SNH correspondence; by letter or email) or indirectly (through the SNH website).

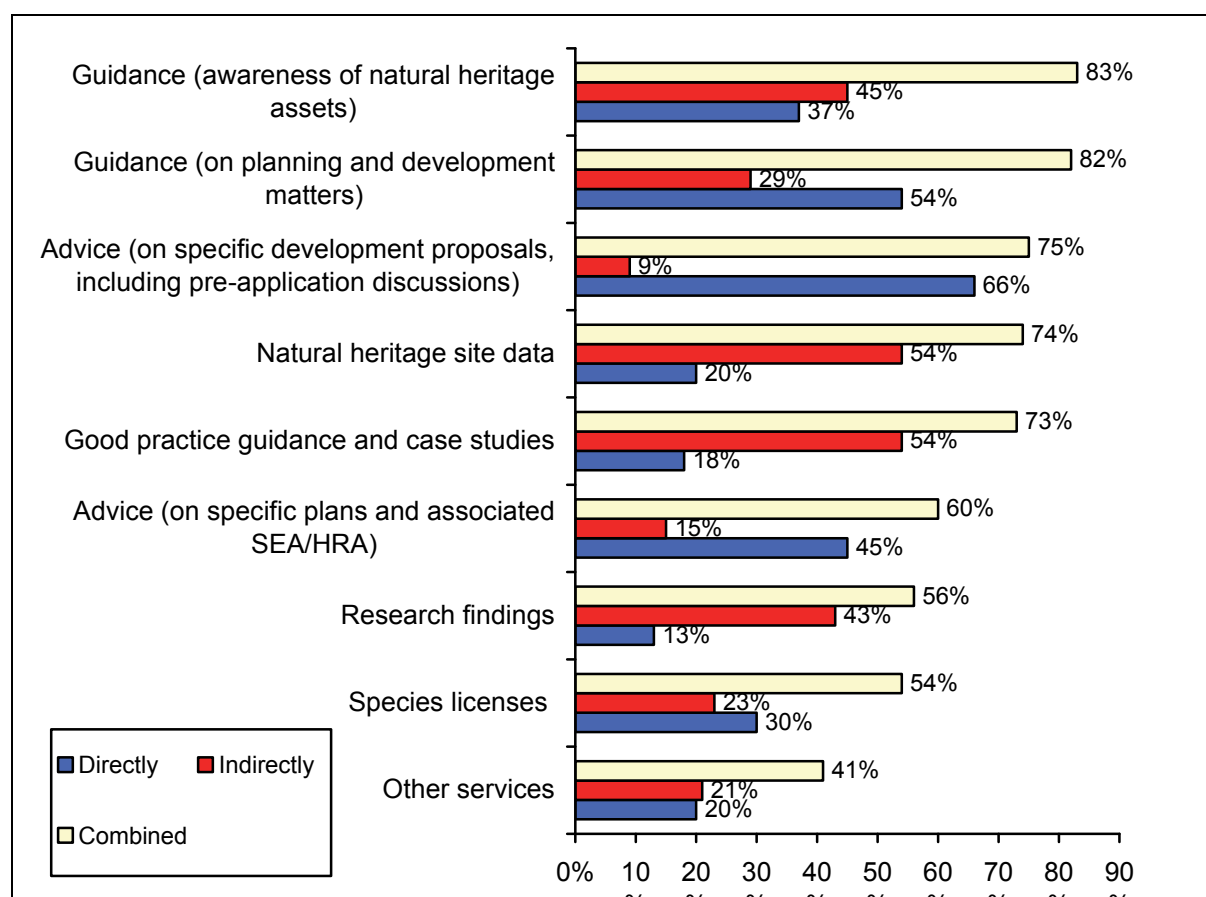


Figure 8. SNH services used

Source: Q12 (Base=476)

As Figure 8 demonstrates, numbers accessing SNH services are relatively high, with over half having accessed each named service either directly or indirectly.

Looking at services accessed directly shows that advice on specific development proposals, including pre-application discussions was accessed by 66% and guidance relating to planning and development matters by 54%. Less than half of respondents used direct methods to access other types of services.

For services accessed indirectly, over half accessed natural heritage site data (54%) and good practice guidance and case studies (54%) via the SNH website.

Similar proportions of respondents said they had accessed guidance relating to awareness of natural heritage assets directly (37%) and indirectly (45%).

The services accessed in any way by greatest numbers of respondents were guidance relating to awareness of natural heritage assets (access directly or indirectly by 83%) and guidance relating to planning and development matters (accessed by 82%).

Three-quarters (75%) said that they accessed advice on specific development proposals, including pre-application discussions and similar numbers said they access natural heritage site data (74%) and good practice guidance and case studies (73%). Over half of respondents accessed advice on specific plans and associated SEA/HRA (60%), research findings (56%) or species licensing information (54%).

5.2 Views on SNH services and advice given by SNH

Having gathered information on which SNH services are used, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a number of statements about SNH services. Seven of these statements related specifically to SNH services and eight related to advice provided by SNH. The following figure shows responses relating to views on SNH services.

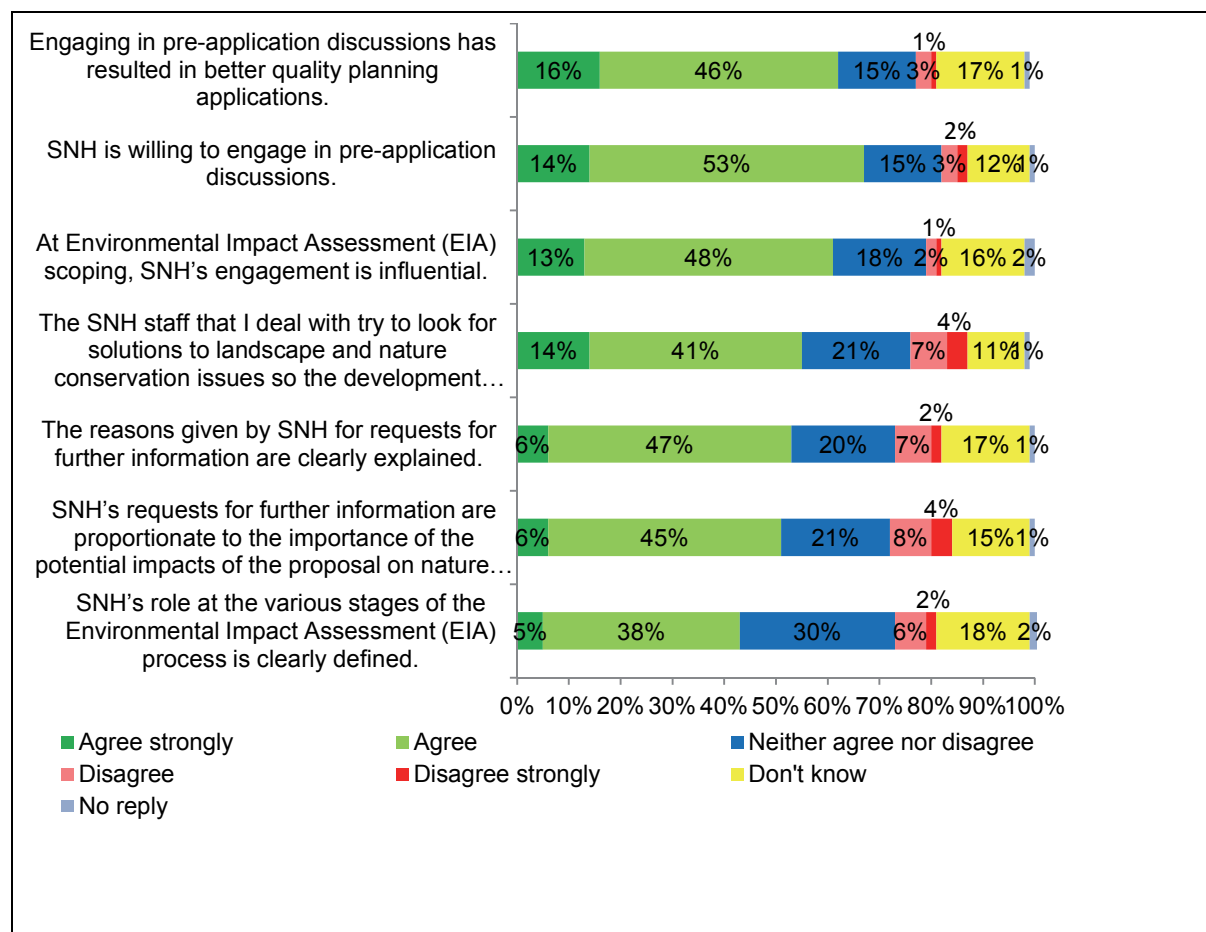


Figure 9. Views on SNH services

Source: Q13 (Base=476)

The figure above shows that, for most statements, views were positive. For most of the services provided by SNH, more respondents agree than disagree with each statement, although significant proportions 'sit on the fence' and give a neither / nor or don't know response.

The only statement where a majority did not agree was 'SNH's role at the various stages of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process is clearly defined': 42% agreed to

some extent and 30% neither agreed nor disagreed, 18% said don't know or did not reply and 8% disagreed to some extent.

Several of these statements had also been asked in the 2014 survey and the following table shows the average scores (out of a potential 5) for the 2015 and, where relevant, the 2014 surveys:

Table 1. Views on SNH services (2015 and 2014 average scores)

	Average score						
	Total % (476)	Devel oper % (78)	Planning agent % (75)	Planning auth. % (122)	Govt. agency % (67)	Area = Renew. % (134)	Area = Hydro. % (61)
Engaging in pre-application discussions has resulted in better quality planning applications.	3.88	3.71	3.97	3.95	4.13	3.83	4.05
At Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) scoping, SNH's engagement is influential.	3.85	3.75	4.00	3.79	3.74	3.87	4.00
SNH's role at the various stages of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process is clearly defined.	3.47	3.18	3.58	3.61	3.46	3.48	3.58
SNH is willing to engage in pre-application discussions. (2015)	3.85	3.64	3.84	3.82	4.11	3.69	3.83
SNH is willing to engage in pre-application discussions. (2014)	3.70	3.68	4.05	4.04	4.33	3.32	3.50
The SNH staff that I deal with try to look for solutions to landscape and nature conservation issues so the development can be progressed. (2015)	3.62	3.28	3.37	3.87	3.83	3.27	3.43
The SNH staff that I deal with try to look for solutions to landscape and nature conservation issues so the development can be progressed. (2014)	3.47	2.79	3.43	4.06	3.91	2.92	2.88
The reasons given by SNH for requests for further information are clearly explained. (2015)	3.57	3.28	3.50	3.77	3.59	3.45	3.41
The reasons given by SNH for requests for further information are clearly explained. (2014)	3.52	2.95	3.50	4.06	4.00	3.10	3.00
SNH's requests for further information are proportionate to the importance of the potential impacts of the proposal on nature and landscapes. (2015)	3.48	3.26	3.30	3.69	3.42	3.38	3.40
SNH's requests for further information are proportionate to the importance of the potential impacts of the proposal on nature and landscapes. (2014)	3.19	2.42	3.10	3.86	3.60	2.56	2.63

Source: 2015 Q13, 2014 Q6

As shown in the table above, the overall average scores for each of the statements that appeared in both the 2014 and 2015 surveys have increased.

5.3 Views on advice given by SNH

Respondents were also asked for their agreement or disagreement with a range of statements on advice given by SNH. The following figure shows the findings.

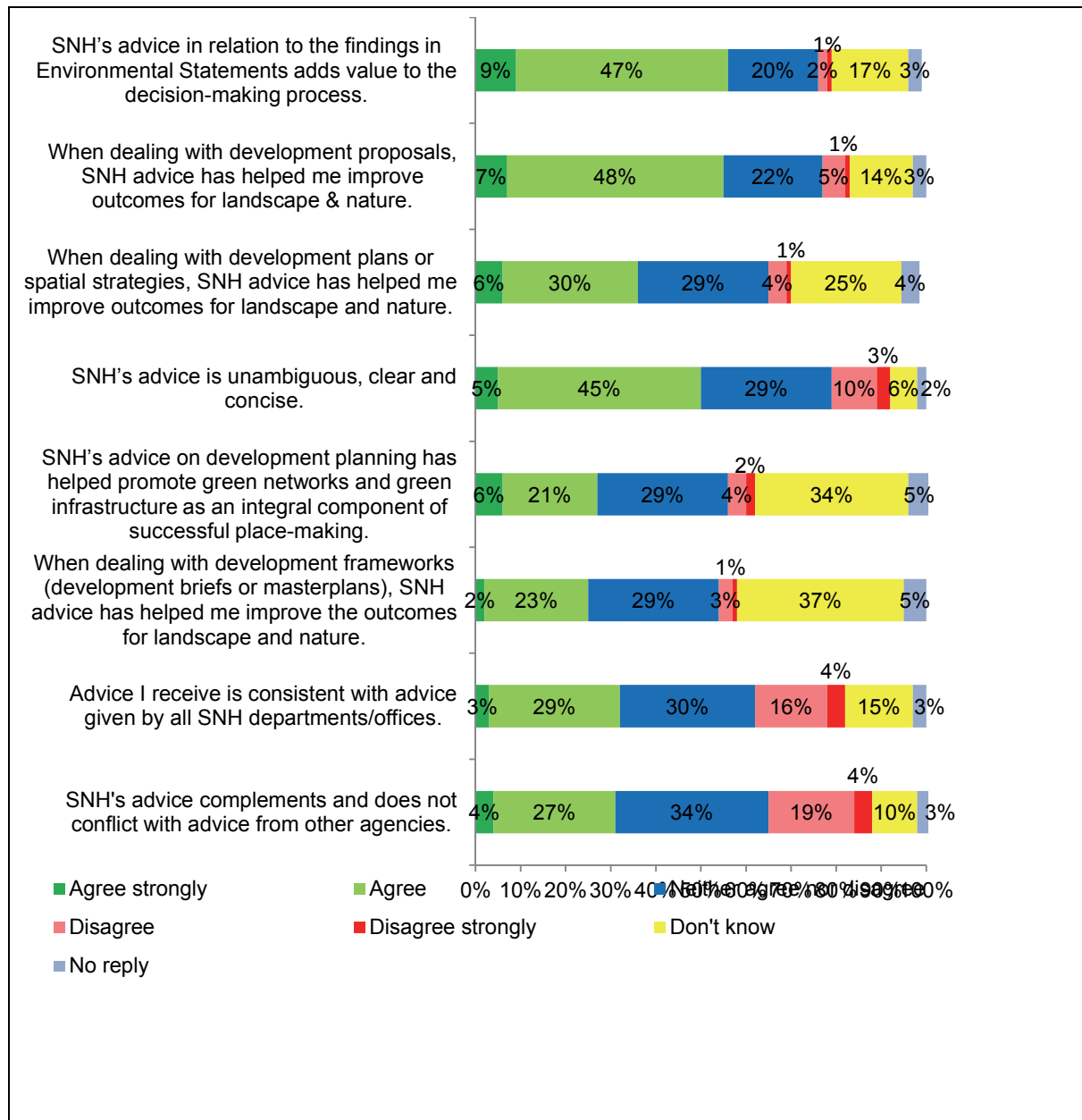


Figure 10. Views on advice given by SNH

Source: Q14 (Base=476)

As shown in the figure above, views in relation to many of the statements were positive although, as with the statements on service, significant proportions 'sit on the fence' and give a neither / nor or don't know response. However, at all of the statements, higher proportions agreed to some extent than disagreed.

Statements with the highest proportions agreeing to some extent were:

- 'SNH's advice in relation to the findings in Environmental Statements adds value to the decision-making process'; 56% agreed to some extent, 20% neither agreed nor disagreed, 21% said don't know or did not reply and 3% disagreed to some extent.
- 'When dealing with development proposals, SNH advice has helped me improve outcomes for landscape & nature'; 55% agreed to some extent, 22% neither agreed nor disagreed, 16% said don't know or did not reply and 7% disagreed to some extent.

The statement with the highest proportions disagreeing to some extent was:

- 'SNH's advice complements and does not conflict with advice from other agencies'; 31% agreed to some extent, 34% neither agreed nor disagreed, 12% said don't know or did not reply and 23% disagreed to some extent.

The average scores (out of a potential 5) for statements on advice, including scores for those statements included in the 2014 survey, are shown in the following table:

Table 2. Views on SNH advice (2014 and 2015 average scores)

	Average score						
	Total % (476)	Devel oper % (78)	Planning agent % (75)	Planning auth. % (122)	Govt. agency % (67)	Area = Renew. % (134)	Area = Hydro. % (61)
SNH's advice in relation to the findings in Environmental Statements adds value to the decision-making process.	3.76	3.50	3.75	3.93	3.74	3.71	3.76
When dealing with development frameworks (development briefs or masterplans), SNH advice has helped me improve the outcomes for landscape and nature.	3.39	3.02	3.47	3.61	3.47	3.29	3.39
SNH's advice on development planning has helped promote green networks and green infrastructure as an integral component of successful place-making.	3.39	3.07	3.36	3.65	3.42	3.37	3.43
When dealing with development proposals, SNH advice has helped me improve outcomes for landscape & nature. (2015)	3.64	3.30	3.70	3.81	3.65	3.46	3.62
When dealing with development proposals, SNH advice has helped me improve outcomes for landscape & nature. (2014)	3.29	2.89	3.57	4.09	4.00	2.52	2.83
When dealing with development plans or spatial strategies, SNH advice has helped me improve outcomes for landscape and nature. (2015)	3.50	3.26	3.38	3.73	3.63	3.31	3.32
When dealing with development plans or spatial strategies, SNH advice has helped me improve outcomes for landscape and nature. (2014)	3.11	2.69	3.50	3.84	4.00	2.47	2.95
SNH's advice is unambiguous, clear and concise** (2015)	3.43	3.14	3.28	3.69	3.21	3.27	3.39
The advice and information provided by SNH relating to development and planning is unambiguous, clear and concise. (2014)	3.10	2.37	3.35	3.70	3.80	2.42	2.58
Advice I receive is consistent with advice given by all SNH departments/offices. (2015)	3.13	2.97	2.79	3.41	3.10	2.94	2.96
Advice I receive is consistent with advice given by all SNH departments/offices. (2014)	3.17	2.32	3.10	3.75	3.36	2.71	2.74
SNH's advice complements and does not conflict with advice from other agencies. (2015)	3.08	2.92	2.87	3.33	3.02	2.86	2.98
SNH's advice complements and does not conflict with advice from other agencies. (2014)	2.92	2.42	2.76	3.51	3.09	2.32	2.40

Source: 2015 Q14, 2014 Q6

NB There was a small change to wording in 2015 at the statement marked **

In this instance, all but one of the statements (Advice I receive is consistent with advice given by all SNH departments/offices) show an improvement in the overall scores from 2014.

5.4 Patterns of satisfaction or dissatisfaction

When we look at this data by organisation type, there are some differences in customer satisfaction with SNH's services and advice by type of organisation and individuals responding to this survey. Tables 3 and 4 provide the average 'agreement' scores for each of these statements according to different sub-groups. This agreement is used to provide an indication of satisfaction with SNH's service.

We have provided a traffic light system to draw out patterns of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with SNH's service. The colours used are green (with an average score of 3.5 or more out of 5), which is interpreted as a good score and not an aspect of customer service in need of attention; amber (an average score of between 2.5 and 3.5 out of 5) which is interpreted as needing possible attention; and red (an average score of less than 2.5) needing attention as a priority.

Table 3. Average score by sub-group (statements on services) 2015

Base = 476	Total	Devel oper	Planning agent	Planning auth.	Govt. agency	Ind.
Engaging in pre-application discussions has resulted in better quality planning applications.	3.88	3.71	3.97	3.95	4.13	3.65
SNH is willing to engage in pre-application discussions.	3.85	3.64	3.84	3.82	4.11	3.81
At Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) scoping, SNH's engagement is influential.	3.85	3.75	4.00	3.79	3.74	3.88
The SNH staff that I deal with try to look for solutions to landscape and nature conservation issues so the development can be progressed.	3.62	3.28	3.37	3.87	3.83	3.65
The reasons given by SNH for requests for further information are clearly explained.	3.57	3.28	3.50	3.77	3.59	3.63
SNH's requests for further information are proportionate to the importance of the potential impacts of the proposal on nature and landscapes.	3.48	3.26	3.30	3.69	3.42	3.59
SNH's role at the various stages of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process is clearly defined.	3.47	3.18	3.58	3.61	3.46	3.43

Source: Q13

Table 4. Average score by sub-group (statements on advice) 2015

Base = 476	Total	Devel oper	Planning agent	Planning auth.	Govt. agency	Ind.
SNH's advice in relation to the findings in Environmental Statements adds value to the decision-making process.	3.76	3.50	3.75	3.93	3.74	3.72
When dealing with development proposals, SNH advice has helped me improve outcomes for landscape & nature.	3.64	3.30	3.70	3.81	3.65	3.54
When dealing with development plans or spatial strategies, SNH advice has helped me improve outcomes for landscape and nature.	3.50	3.26	3.38	3.73	3.63	3.22
SNH's advice is unambiguous, clear and concise	3.43	3.14	3.28	3.69	3.21	3.63
When dealing with development frameworks (development briefs or masterplans), SNH advice has helped me improve the outcomes for landscape and nature.	3.39	3.02	3.47	3.61	3.47	3.27
SNH's advice on development planning has helped promote green networks and green infrastructure as an integral component of successful place-making.	3.39	3.07	3.36	3.65	3.42	3.29
Advice I receive is consistent with advice given by all SNH departments/offices.	3.13	2.97	2.79	3.41	3.10	3.33
SNH's advice complements and does not conflict with advice from other agencies.	3.08	2.92	2.87	3.33	3.02	2.80

Source: Q14

Planning authorities and government agencies appear more positive about their interaction with SNH staff. Developers are not as positive as these two groups. Many of the differences noted above, particularly those between developers and planning authorities, are statistically significant.

In the 2014 survey, several scores for the sub-group of individuals were highlighted as red; once again it should be noted that more individuals responded in 2014 and many came from groups campaigning against the effects of wind power on Scotland's landscapes and these respondents gave, in general, more negative answers and ratings than others.

5.5 Requesting advice

Respondents from planning authorities were asked a series of questions relating to planning applications. Firstly: When dealing with planning applications that fall outwith SNH's service provision (as defined in the Service Statement), do you feel able to ask for **protected species and/or ecological survey information**?

Table 5. Whether able to ask for protected species and/or ecological survey information

	%
Yes	48
Sometimes	13
No	2
I have never needed to	29

Source: Q15a (Base=122)

Those who answered Sometimes or No (n=18) were asked: Why have you not felt able to ask for this information? Most said it was because there was no ecological adviser in-house.

Table 6. Reasons for not asking for protected species and/or ecological survey information

	%
No ecological adviser in-house	56
In-house adviser too busy	11
Cannot find the right guidance on SNH website	11
I am new to my job	6
Guidance does not exist	6
Other	22
I'm too busy to check with in-house adviser	-

Source: Q15b (Base=18)

Planning authority respondents were also asked: When dealing with planning applications that fall outwith SNH's service provision (as defined in the Service Statement), do you feel able to ask for **landscape and visual assessment information**?

Table 7. Whether able to ask for landscape and visual assessment information

	%
Yes	43
Sometimes	7
No	6
I have never needed to	34

Source: Q15c (Base=122)

Those who answered Sometimes or No (n=16) were asked: Why have you not felt able to ask for this information? Most said it was because there was no landscape adviser in-house.

Table 8. Reasons for not asking for landscape and visual assessment information

	%
No landscape adviser in-house	69
I am new to my job	6
In-house adviser too busy	6
Cannot find the right guidance on SNH website	6
Other	19
I'm too busy to check with in-house adviser	-
Guidance does not exist	-

Source: Q15d (Base=16)

6. SERVICE STATEMENT

As well as satisfaction, SNH is keen to understand levels of awareness around the Planning for Development Service Statement.

6.1 Awareness of SNH Service Statement

All respondents were asked to indicate their awareness of the SNH Service Statement and a link to 'Planning for Development - Our Service Statement' was provided within the survey for respondents to access.

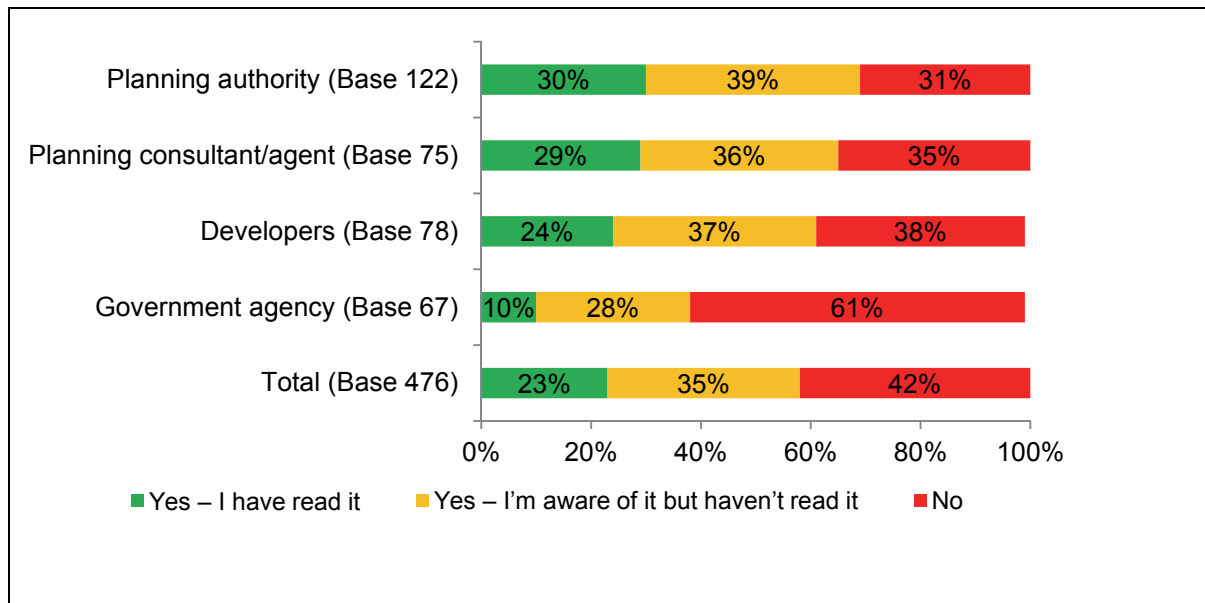


Figure 11. Awareness of Service Statement

Source: Q5 (Base=476)

Figure 11 shows that just over half of respondents (58%) are aware of the Service Statement and just under a quarter (23%) have read it.

Just under half (42%) are not aware of the Service Statement.

When we examine data from the larger sub-groups, planning authority respondents show fairly high levels of awareness (30% have read it and a further 39% are aware). Individuals show low levels of awareness (6% have read it and a further 39% are aware).

Those respondents who have had contact with SNH in relation to both general and planning issues who had higher awareness (26% have read the statement and a further 36% are aware of it) when compared to those who have had contact only in relation to general issues (5% have read it with a further 28% aware).

7. SNH'S ROLE IN THE PLANNING SYSTEM

7.1 Understanding of SNH's role

Respondents were asked to indicate yes or no to a series of statements in relation to SNH's role in the planning system. This was designed to ascertain the extent to which respondents understand the role of SNH. Some of the statements included were deliberately incorrect to test respondents' knowledge. The findings of this specific question show that understanding of SNH's role in the planning system is limited to an extent. As was the case in 2014, there are some relatively high levels of respondents saying 'not sure' to some of the statements at this question.

A large majority of respondents correctly identified that:

- SNH is not responsible for determining planning applications. (92% of respondents).
- SNH will provide advice before a planning application has been submitted. (81%).
- A 'no comment' response does not mean that SNH supports the application (77%).
- SNH is not responsible for deciding whether an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is required (76%)
- SNH is dependent on adequate environmental information from developers for assessing development proposals (75%).

The majority of respondents correctly identified that:

- Extensions to existing wind farms will be treated, by SNH, in the same way as any other application (61%).
- SNH is not responsible for monitoring the mitigation measures arising from Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) (inc. protected species surveys) (58%).

A minority correctly identified that:

- SNH will not comment on all types of renewable energy proposals, regardless of technology or scale (38%).
- Planning authorities and Marine Scotland do not have to consult SNH on all planning applications that may impact on any aspect of Scotland's natural heritage (26%).
- With regard to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) development, SNH normally wishes to avoid being consulted on draft Environmental Statements (15%)
- SNH does not aim to advise on the significance of impacts for all proposed wind farms of 4 turbines or more (13%)

When we examine sub-group differences across this question, it is those involved in the planning system on a professional basis; developers, planning consultants / agents and planning authority respondents, who have a clearer picture of SNH's role in the planning system than other groups of respondents.

That said, even among these groups, there are still some respondents who incorrectly identify an aspect of SNH's role. For example, when we examine the (false) statement 'SNH will comment on all types of renewable energy proposals, regardless of technology or scale', 37% of developers and 40% of planning consultants / agents said this was true.

The table overleaf shows the questions that were new to the survey in 2015.

Table 9a. Understanding of SNH's role (2015)

	Answered correctly						
	Total % (476)	Devel oper % (78)	Planning agent % (75)	Planning auth. % (122)	Govt. agency % (67)	Area = Renew. % (134)	Area = Hydro. % (61)
SNH is responsible for deciding whether an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is required (FALSE)	76	74	84	91	64	78	67
Extensions to existing wind farms will be treated, by SNH, in the same way as any other application (TRUE)	61	64	76	53	61	78	67
SNH is responsible for monitoring the mitigation measures arising from Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) (inc. protected species surveys) (FALSE)	58	46	64	70	51	56	51
With regard to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) development, SNH normally wishes to avoid being consulted on draft Environmental Statements (TRUE)	15	17	20	6	15	21	18
SNH aims to advise on the significance of impacts for all proposed wind farms of 4 turbines or more (FALSE)	13	14	12	18	6	15	13

Source: 2015 Q6

Looking at questions that were asked in 2014 and then again in 2015, as shown in the table overleaf, several statements show a positive movement in awareness from 2014 although a small number show a decrease.

Table 9b. Understanding of SNH's role (2014 and 2015)

	Answered correctly						
	Total % (476)	Devel oper % (78)	Planning agent % (75)	Planning auth. % (122)	Govt. agency % (67)	Area = Renew. % (134)	Area = Hydro. % (61)
SNH is responsible for determining planning applications (FALSE) (2015)	92	91	95	98	88	94	92
SNH is responsible for determining planning applications (FALSE) (2014)	84	100	90	93	83	79	80
SNH will not provide advice before a planning application has been submitted (FALSE) (2015)	81	85	84	80	79	87	93
SNH will not provide advice before a planning application has been submitted (FALSE) (2014)	67	95	52	83	83	55	72
A 'no comment' means that SNH supports the application (FALSE) (2015)	77	73	80	86	76	75	69
A 'no comment' means that SNH supports the application (FALSE) (2014)	57	47	62	74	50	43	56
SNH is dependent on adequate environmental information from developers for assessing development proposals (TRUE) (2015)	75	76	87	74	70	79	75
SNH is dependent on adequate environmental information from developers for assessing development proposals (TRUE) (2014)	61	74	71	70	67	54	68
SNH will comment on all types of renewable energy proposals, regardless of technology or scale (FALSE) (2015)	38	26	33	61	25	40	31
SNH will comment on all types of renewable energy proposals, regardless of technology or scale (FALSE) (2014)	43	32	43	64	33	36	44
Planning authorities and Marine Scotland must consult SNH on all planning applications that may impact on any aspect of Scotland's natural heritage (FALSE) (2015)	26	8	9	65	18	13	7
Planning authorities and Marine Scotland must consult SNH on all planning applications that may impact on any aspect of Scotland's natural heritage (FALSE) (2014)	28	11	29	54	25	13	20

Source: 2015 Q6, 2014 Q8

The following figure shows the overall proportions saying true and false at each statement.

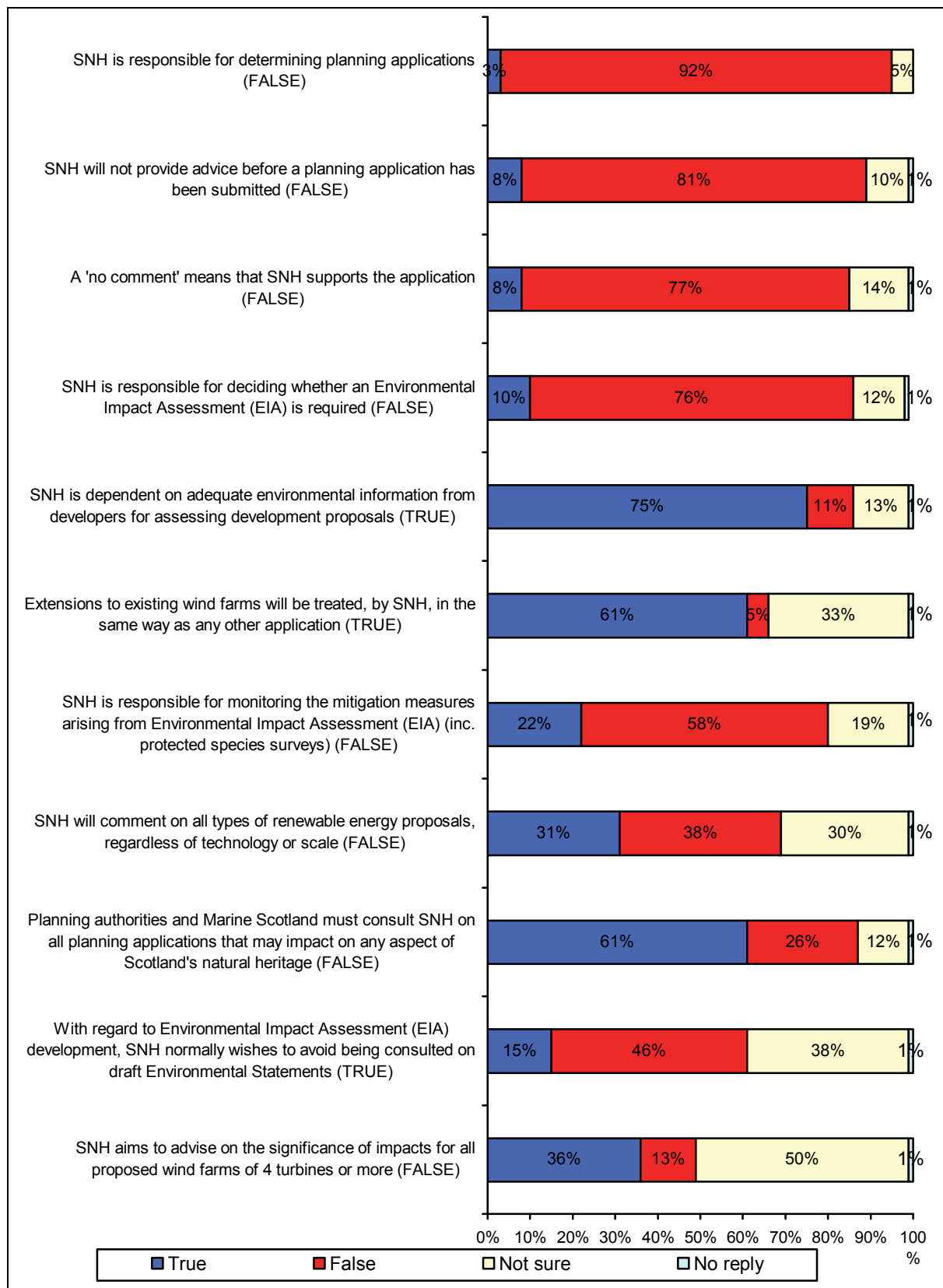


Figure 12. Understanding of SNH's role

Source: Q6 (Base=476)

Respondents were also asked to answer true or false to a new series of statements relating to SNH's Planning for Development service in general. Findings show a difference in awareness across the statements. Once again, several of the statements had a high proportion of respondents answered 'not sure'.

A large majority of respondents correctly identified that:

- SNH is a statutory consultee for developments which affect nationally or internationally designated areas, or developments subject to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and/or Appropriate Assessment. (93% of respondents)
- SNH aims to help enable the right development in the right place. (81%)
- In many cases, planning authorities and developers can identify and address any natural heritage impacts themselves using good practice guidance. (78%)

The majority of respondents correctly identified that:

- SNH are required to provide relevant information to developers, on request, to assist in the preparation of the Environmental Statement. (60%)
- SNH's approach to influencing development focuses on upstream and targeted engagement in the planning system. (50%)

A minority correctly identified that:

- It is not SNH's responsibility to define the assessment methodologies at the scoping stage of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process. (49%)
- The Service Statement applies to marine as well as terrestrial planning applications. (46%)
- SNH will focus its input on issues that are of national significance and cannot enter into extensive dialogue on natural heritage issues of local importance. (43%)

As with the previous set of statements, when we examine sub-group differences across this question, it is those involved in the planning system on a professional basis; developers, planning consultants / agents and planning authority respondents, who have a clearer picture of SNH's role in the planning system than other groups of respondents.

The table overleaf shows the sub-group data for this question.

Table 10. Understanding of SNH's Planning for Development service (by sub-group)

	Total % (476)	Answered correctly					
		Devel oper % (78)	Planning agent % (75)	Planning auth. % (122)	Govt. agency % (67)	Area = Renew. % (134)	Area = Hydro. % (61)
SNH will focus its input on issues that are of national significance and cannot enter into extensive dialogue on natural heritage issues of local importance (TRUE)	43	40	39	66	22	46	39
The Service Statement applies to marine as well as terrestrial planning applications(TRUE)	46	49	44	42	45	45	48
It is SNH's responsibility to define the assessment methodologies at the scoping stage of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process (FALSE)	49	45	59	54	40	57	51
SNH's approach to influencing development focuses on upstream and targeted engagement in the planning system (TRUE)	50	42	52	69	34	44	44
SNH are required to provide relevant information to developers, on request, to assist in the preparation of the Environmental Statement (TRUE)	60	69	75	54	60	67	62
In many cases, planning authorities and developers can identify and address any natural heritage impacts themselves using good practice guidance (TRUE)	78	76	84	86	75	80	80
SNH aims to help enable the right development in the right place (TRUE)	81	76	83	85	82	80	80
SNH is a statutory consultee for developments which affect nationally or internationally designated areas, or developments subject to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and/or Appropriate Assessment (TRUE)	93	94	96	95	93	93	89

Source: Q7

The figure overleaf shows the proportions answering true and false in relation to each of the statements.

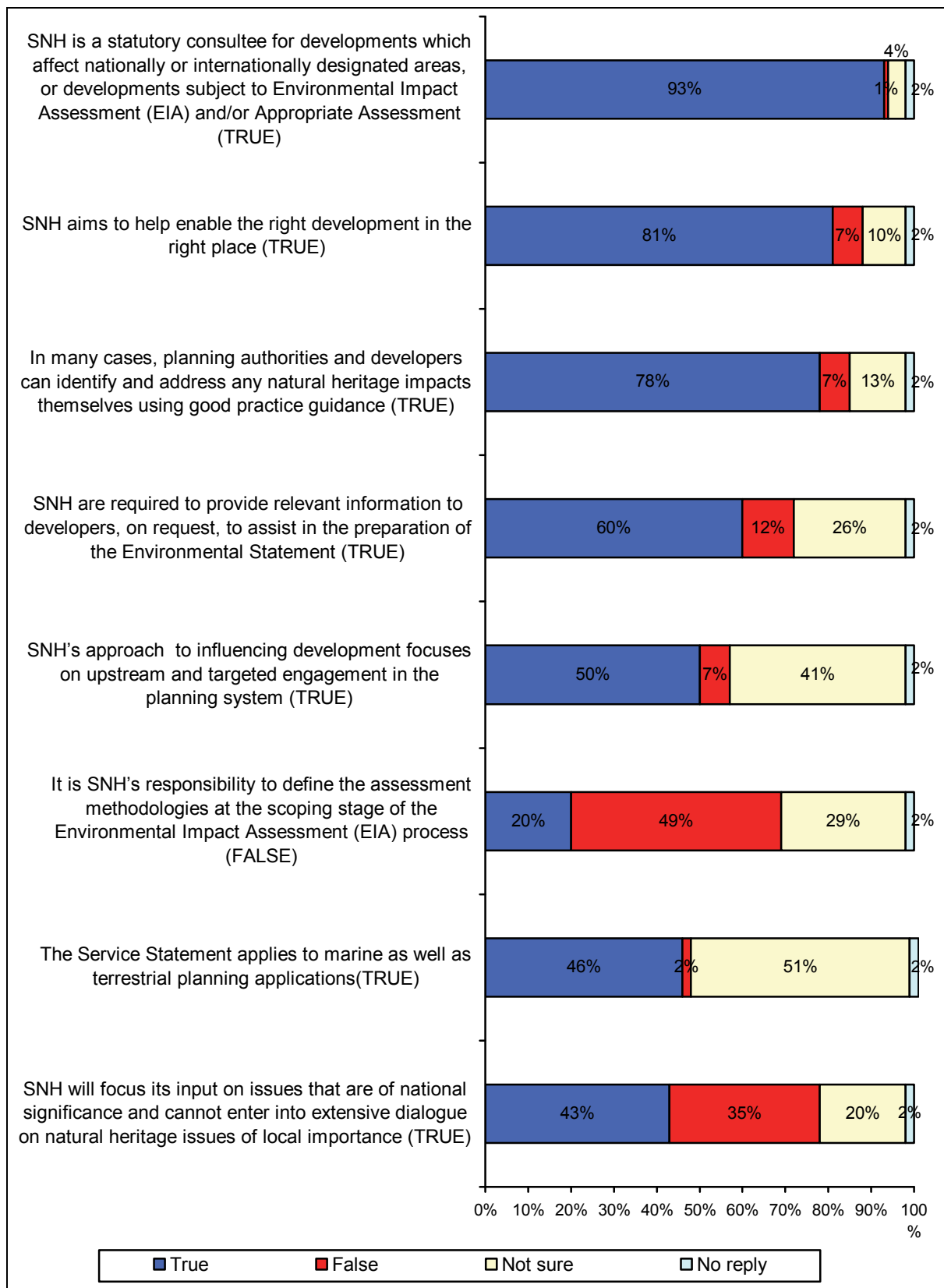


Figure 13. Understanding of SNH's Planning for Development service

Source: Q7 (Base=476)

8. GUIDANCE

SNH was keen to obtain views on the guidance it produces. It is integral to its efforts to influence development at the upstream end of the planning system and customers were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a series of statements in relation to SNH guidance.

8.1 Awareness of SNH guidance

Respondents were asked whether they were aware of various pieces of guidance produced by SNH.

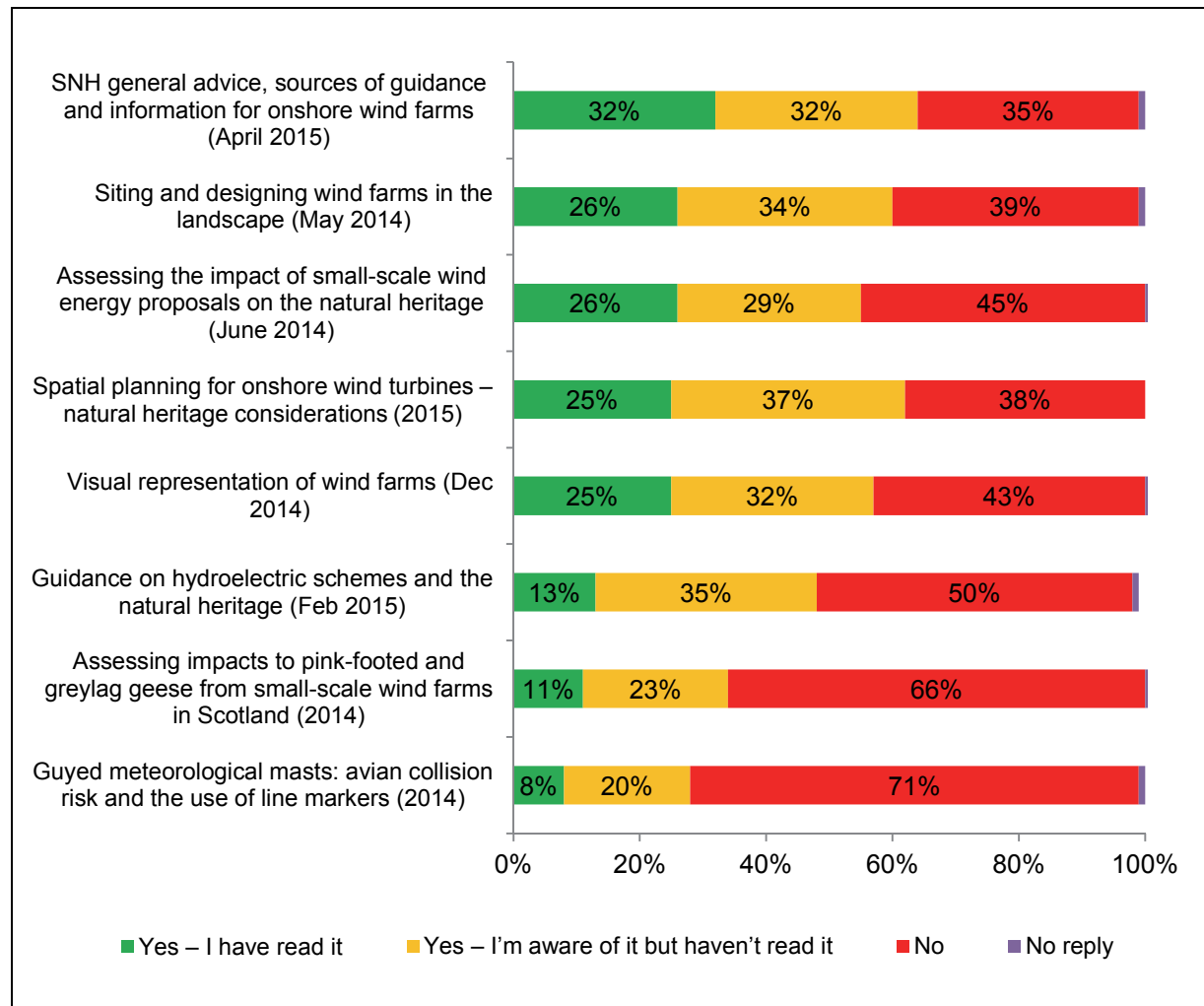


Figure 14. Awareness of SNH guidance

Source: Q8 (Base=476)

The table below shows the responses given by the main sub-groups and by those who gave 'renewables' as their area of business.

Table 11. Awareness of SNH guidance

		Total % (476)	Devel oper % (78)	Planning agent % (75)	Planning auth. % (122)	Govt. agency % (67)	Area = Renew. % (134)
Guyed meteorological masts: avian collision risk and the use of line markers (2014)	Yes - Read	8	10	13	7	-	18
	Yes - Aware	20	26	29	22	12	28
	No	71	63	57	70	88	54
Assessing impacts to pink-footed and greylag geese from small-scale wind farms in Scotland (2014)	Yes - Read	11	12	20	9	3	19
	Yes - Aware	23	27	35	20	12	36
	No	66	60	45	70	85	45
Guidance on hydroelectric schemes and the natural heritage (Feb 2015)	Yes - Read	13	15	23	11	9	22
	Yes - Aware	35	29	47	37	22	47
	No	50	53	31	51	67	30
Visual representation of wind farms (Dec 2014)	Yes - Read	25	36	35	33	4	40
	Yes - Aware	32	21	27	40	21	29
	No	43	42	39	26	75	31
Spatial planning for onshore wind turbines – natural heritage considerations (2015)	Yes - Read	25	28	36	36	4	43
	Yes - Aware	37	31	35	48	19	33
	No	38	40	29	16	76	24
Assessing the impact of small-scale wind energy proposals on the natural heritage (June 2014)	Yes - Read	26	10	43	43	1	38
	Yes - Aware	29	36	28	30	24	33
	No	45	53	29	27	75	29
Siting and designing wind farms in the landscape (May 2014)	Yes - Read	26	29	36	43	1	40
	Yes - Aware	34	28	31	39	30	31
	No	39	41	33	18	67	29
SNH general advice, sources of guidance and information for onshore wind farms (April 2015)	Yes - Read	32	32	45	37	12	54
	Yes - Aware	32	32	27	40	24	26
	No	35	35	28	20	63	19

Source: Q8

8.2 Views on SNH guidance

Across each of these statements, more respondents agree than disagree, although a significant number of respondents 'sit on the fence' and neither agree nor disagree.

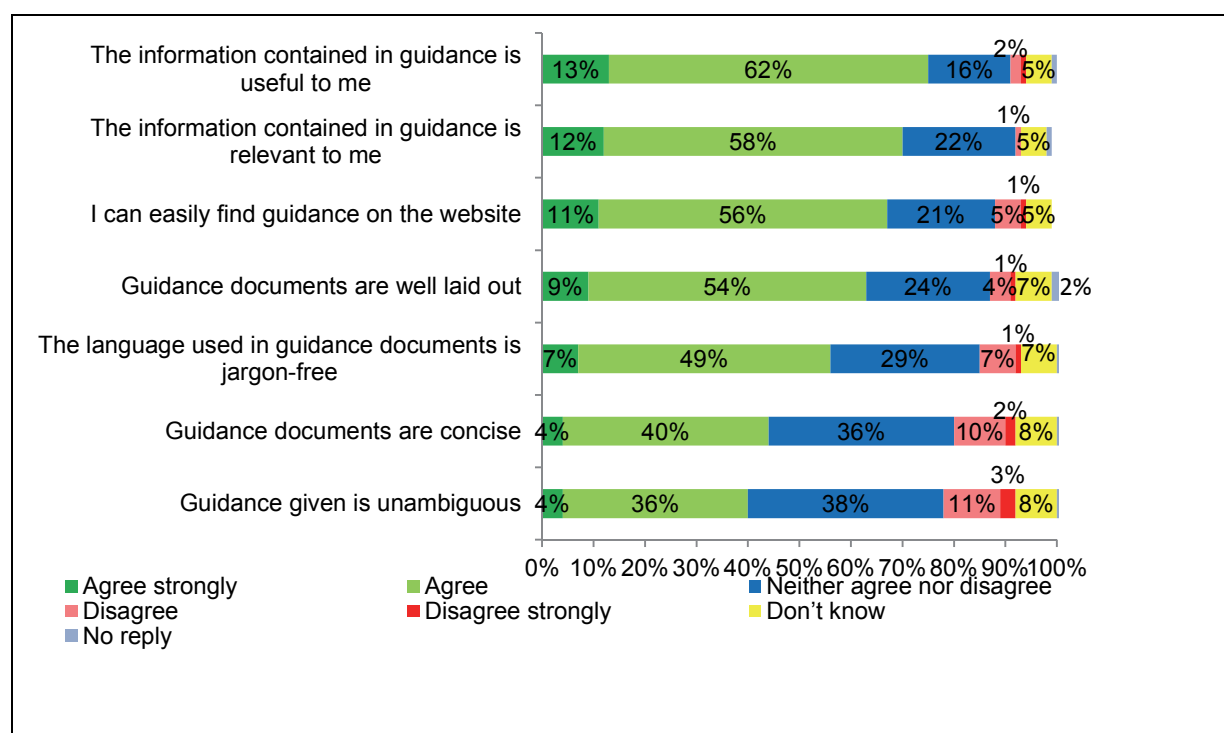


Figure 15. Views on SNH guidance

Source: Q9 (Base=476)

Encouragingly, over half the respondents agree that:

- The information contained in guidance is useful to me (75% agreeing compared to only 8% disagreeing)
- The information contained in guidance is relevant to me (71% agreeing compared to only 1% disagreeing).
- I can easily find guidance on the website. (66% agreeing; 7% disagreeing)
- Guidance documents are well laid out (63% agreeing; 5% disagreeing).
- The language used in guidance documents is jargon-free. (57% agreeing; 8% disagreeing)

As the table below shows, all of the statements saw positive improvements this year. The average scores (out of a potential 5) for the 2015 and the 2014 surveys were:

Table 12. Understanding of SNH's role (2014 and 2015)

	Average 2015	Average 2014
The information contained in guidance is useful to me.	3.91	-
The information contained in guidance is relevant to me.	3.86	3.59
I can easily find guidance on the website.	3.73	3.52
Guidance documents are well laid out.	3.72	3.45
The language used in guidance documents is jargon-free.	3.58	3.29
Guidance documents are concise.	3.36	3.09
Guidance is unambiguous.	3.29	3.09

Source: 2015 Q9 (Base=476)

When we examine the 2015 sub-group data by organisation type, it is once again mainly professionals involved in planning for development who are more positive about SNH guidance.

Table 13. Average score by sub-group (statements on guidance)

Base = 476	Total	Devel Oper	Planning agent	Planning auth.	Govt. agency	Ind.
The information contained in guidance is useful to me	3.91	3.76	4.12	3.89	3.74	3.83
The information contained in guidance is relevant to me	3.86	3.74	4.09	3.90	3.63	3.63
I can easily find guidance on the website	3.73	3.62	3.89	3.76	3.59	3.83
Guidance documents are well laid out	3.72	3.63	3.79	3.75	3.66	3.43
The language used in guidance documents is jargon-free	3.58	3.59	3.67	3.52	3.41	3.43
Guidance documents are concise	3.36	3.28	3.46	3.33	3.29	3.23
Guidance given is unambiguous	3.29	3.16	3.17	3.41	3.31	3.26

Again, the colours used are green (with an average score of 3.5 or more out of 5), which is interpreted as a good score and not an aspect related to guidance that is in need of attention; amber (an average score of between 2.5 and 3.5 out of 5) which is interpreted as needing possible attention; and red (an average score of less than 2.5) needing attention as a priority.

8.3 Usefulness of information and / or guidance accessed through SNH’s website

Respondents were also asked to indicate how useful they found the information and / or guidance that they have accessed through the SNH website.

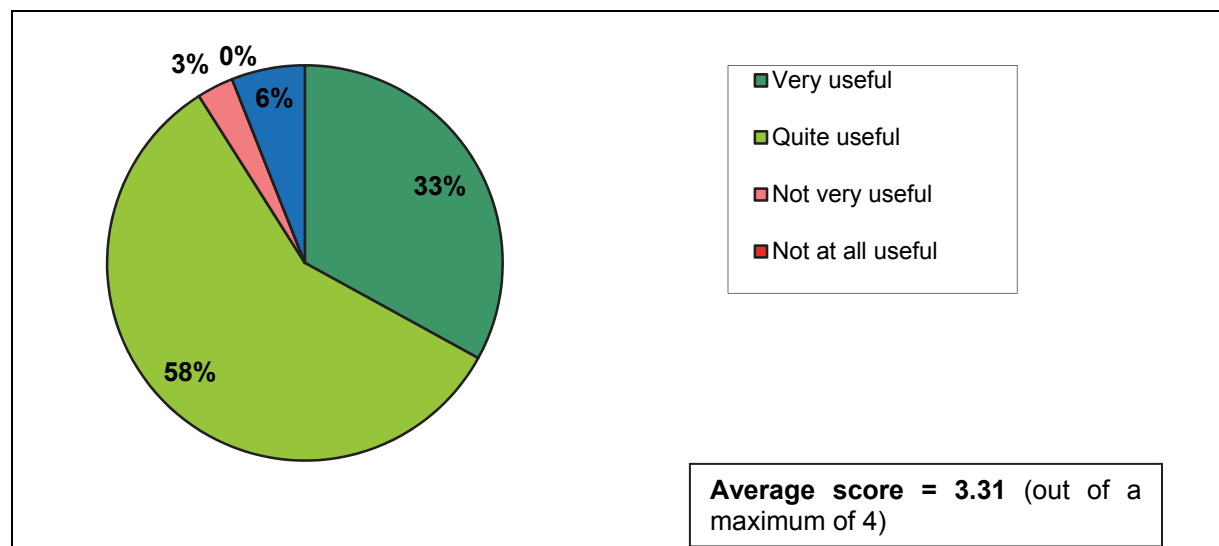


Figure 16. Usefulness of information and / or guidance accessed through SNH’s website

Source: Q16 (Base=476)

As shown in Figure 16, the response to this question is very positive, with almost all respondents (91%) describing the information and / or guidance they had accessed via the website as ‘very’ or ‘quite’ useful. 3% said this was not useful to any extent.

8.4 Possible improvements to SNH guidance

Respondents were also given the opportunity to provide further comment on what SNH could do to improve their guidance in order to help reduce impacts on the natural heritage. Just over half of the respondents (55%) did not provide any further commentary; and most comments were made by very small numbers of respondents (5% or fewer). The figure below shows the comments made by the largest numbers of respondents (3% and above).

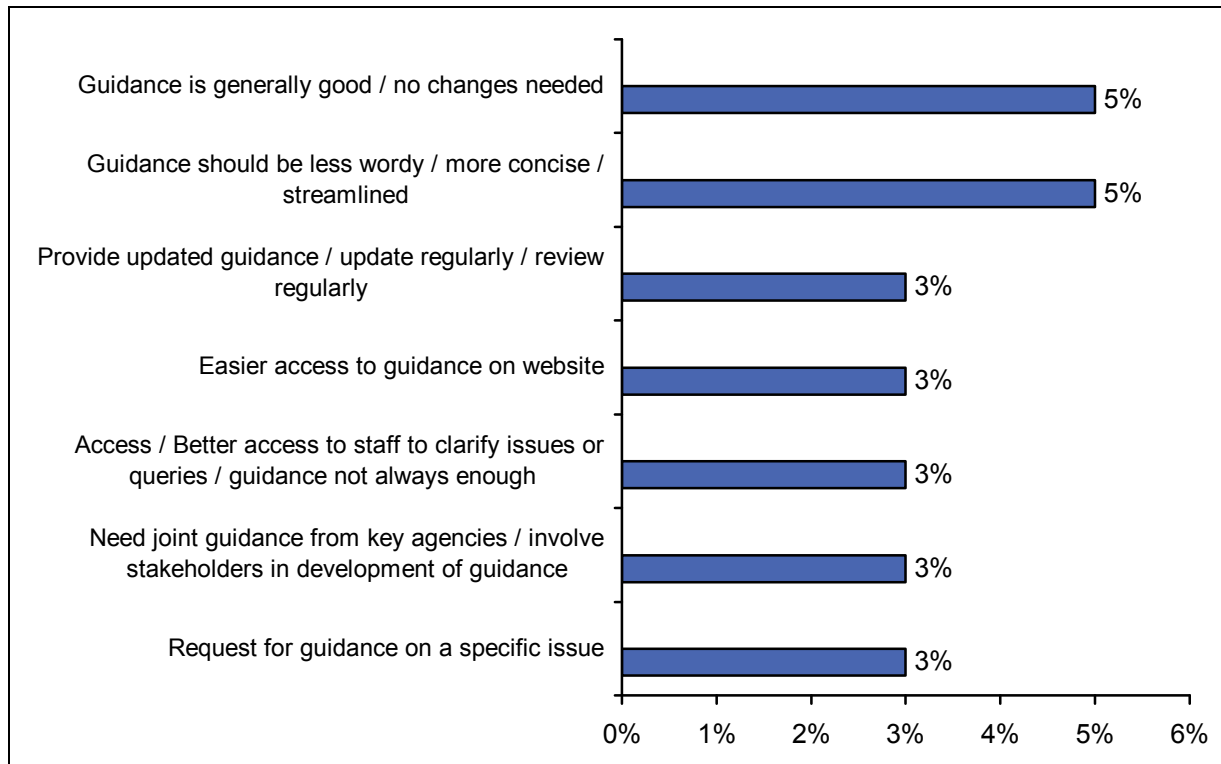


Figure 17. Possible improvements to SNH guidance

Source: Q10 (Base=476)

The main comment made by respondents was that guidance is generally good or that no changes are needed (mentioned by 5%). For example:

"I think that the documents provided by SNH that I have used have been fit for purpose and I have no improvement ideas to suggest." (government agency)

The main suggestion was for SNH to make guidance less wordy, more concise or streamlined (mentioned by 5%). For example:

"Some guidance is relatively lengthy eg Habitats Regulations Appraisal of Plans." (planning authority)

"Sometimes it could be more concise! Bullet points are very effective. Also I love the photos that you tend to put in documents, but text only (while dull) would be easier to download!" (planning consultant / agent)

"Be less verbose." (individual)

Respondents were also asked to say what else SNH could do in support of their guidance to better help other organisations consider natural heritage assets. Sharing Good Practice events proved the most popular suggestion across all respondents groups.

Table 14. What else could SNH do in support of their guidance

	%
Sharing Good Practice events	75
Training events	60
Guidance summary videos	28
Other	7
Don't know / No reply	12

Source: Q11 (Base=476)

8.5 Usefulness of SNH's responses in relation to SEA

Customers were also asked to indicate how useful they have found SNH's responses in relation to Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

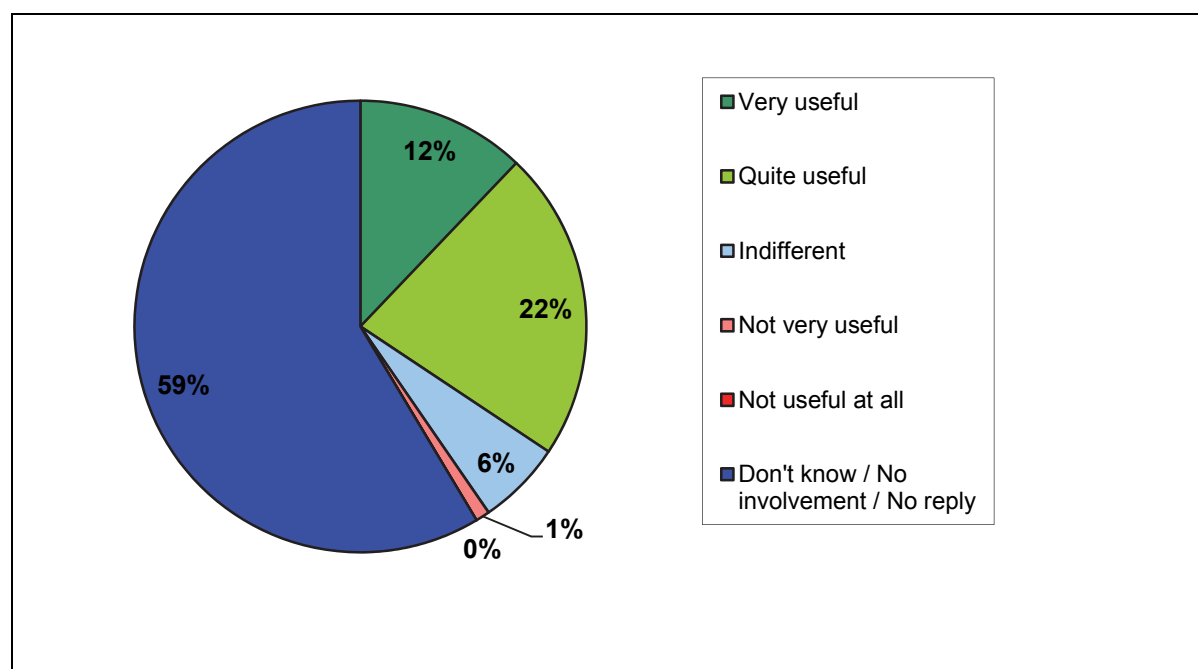


Figure 18. Usefulness of SNH's responses in relation to SEA

Source: Q17 (Base=476)

As can be seen in the table above, higher proportions of respondents (34%) found this very or quite useful, compared to only 2% who claimed this was not useful. However, most (59%) said don't know, that they had no involvement in SEA or simply didn't reply.

Planning authority respondents gave the highest rating with an average score of 4.24 (out of a possible 5) compared to an overall average of 4.05.

Taking out those who said don't know/no involvement (presumably due to SEA being quite a specialist aspect of the planning system) shows 81% of those who gave a rating said very or quite useful.

Looking at the data from 2014 shows that more respondents in 2015 said very or quite useful. Excluding those who gave no rating, 56% in 2014 said very or quite useful and this has risen to 81% in 2015.

9. APPROACH

9.1 SNH's focus

The 2015 survey introduced a series of questions relating to which areas of work respondents would like see SNH to focus its efforts.

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of SNH's efforts in these areas and the table below shows the average scores (out of a possible 10) for each area.

Respondents identified Strategic and Local Development Plans as the area most would like to see SNH focus their efforts.

Table 15. Focus of SNH efforts

	Average
Strategic and Local Development Plans	7.91
Habitats Regulations Appraisal	7.85
National plans	7.53
Strategic Environmental Assessment	7.48
Design Frameworks, Development Briefs, Masterplanning	6.98
Capacity building	6.93

Source: Q18 (Base=476)

Looking at data from the larger sub-groups shows:

- Strategic and Local Development Plans were seen as most important by planning authority respondents (8.57 out of 10)
- Habitats Regulations Appraisal was seen as most important by individuals (8.28)
- National plans were seen as most important by individuals (8.43)
- Strategic Environmental Assessment was seen as most important by planning authority respondents (7.94)
- Design Frameworks, Development Briefs, Masterplanning were seen as most important by planning authority respondents (7.48)
- Capacity building was seen as most important by planning authority respondents (7.40)

9.2 SNH's approach to guidance and advice

Respondents were asked whether they agree or disagree that SNH's approach to guidance and advice is enabling (i.e. constructive and customer-focussed).

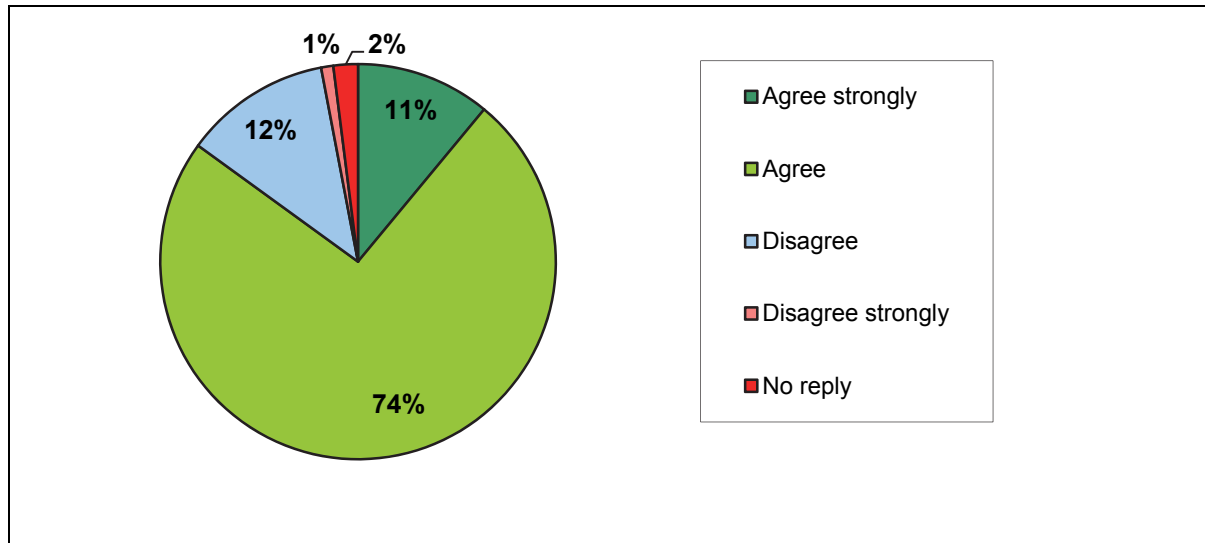


Figure 19. Whether SNH's approach to guidance and advice is enabling

Source: Q19 (Base=476)

As shown in the figure above, most said they agreed, giving an average score of 2.97 (out of a possible 4). 74% said they agree while 11% said they agree strongly.

Data from the larger sub-groups shows that planning authority respondents gave the highest score (3.03 out of 4) while developers gave the lowest (2.87).

10. SATISFACTION

10.1 Satisfaction with SNH's service

The 2015 survey also introduced a question on overall satisfaction with the service received from SNH.

Respondents gave an average score of 7.39 (out of a possible 10).

The following table shows the average scores (out of a possible 10) for all of the sub-groups.

Table 16. Overall satisfaction with the service received from SNH

	Average
Community or other local organisation (Base: 6)	8.50
Scottish Government department (Base: 26)	7.96
Planning authority (Base: 122)	7.78
Another organisation representing interests of developers (Base: 26)	7.73
Non-government organisation (NGO) or voluntary body (Base: 12)	7.50
Other (Base: 27)	7.31
Government agency (Base: 67)	7.30
Planning consultant or agent (Base: 75)	7.22
Individual (Base: 33)	7.20
Developer (Base: 78)	6.79
Special interest group (Base: 4)	6.00

Source: Q21 (Base=476)

As shown in the table above, looking at the larger sub-groups, planning authority respondents gave the highest satisfaction score (7.78) while developers gave the lowest (6.79).

Looking at actual scores:

- 4 respondents said they were not at all satisfied (3 developers and one special interest group)
- 309 gave a score of 7, 8 or 9
- 42 respondents gave a score of 10, completely satisfied; these came from all groups except the special interest group and included 10 developers and 8 planning authority respondents.

10.2 Improvements to SNH’s service

Finally, those respondents who had not given a score of 10 out of 10 were asked to say what SNH could do to achieve a rating of 10.

The figure below shows the comments made by the largest numbers of respondents (3% and above).

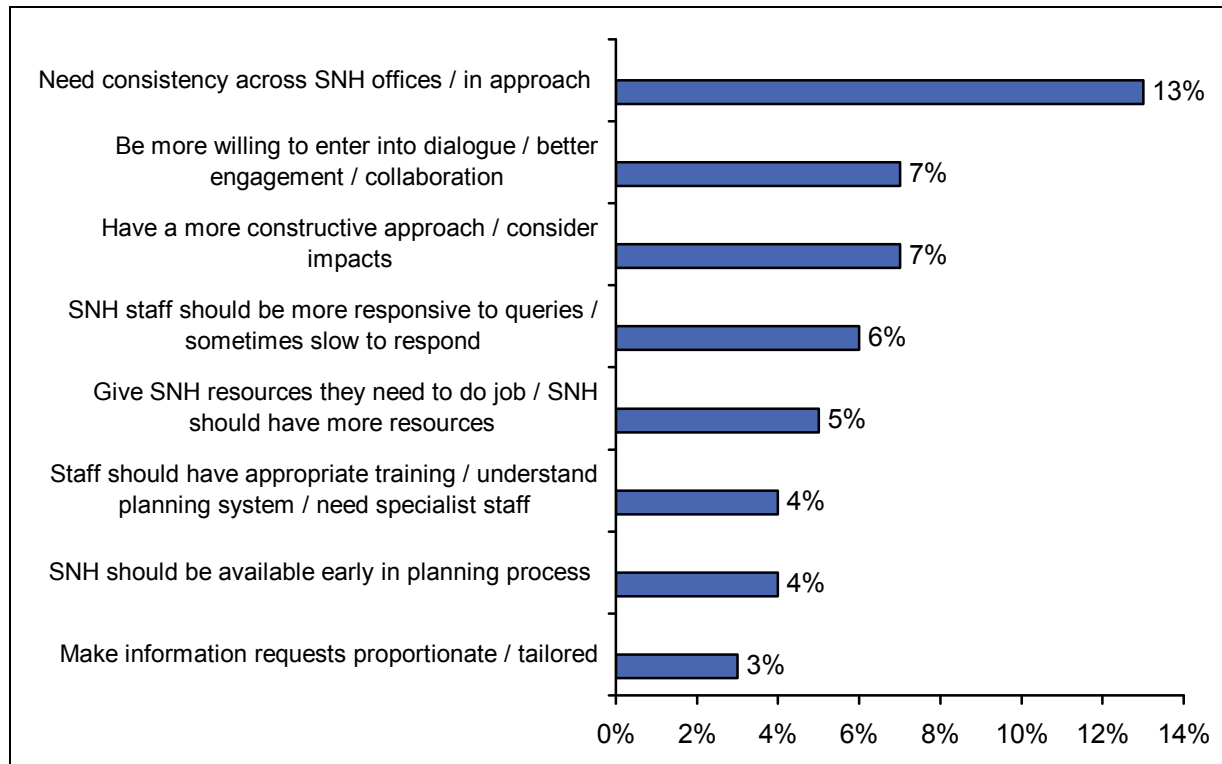


Figure 20. What SNH could do to achieve 10 out of 10

Source: Q21a (Base=434)

Almost half of respondents (47%) chose not to respond to this question. Of the respondents who did answer, only small numbers cited any specific issue; thus indicating that there is no one area where SNH is doing badly.

The theme noted in the highest percentage of responses (13%) was the need for consistency across SNH offices or for consistency in approach. For example:

“My experience is that there can be a discrepancy between local area advice and advice from Edinburgh.” (other)

“Better consistency of advice pre-scoping and in planning, and across offices, better communication cross working with other key agencies, and more engagement at local level.” (developer)

“Improving consistency of advice from pre-application, through scoping and into responses to planning applications. We have experienced instances in the past where we felt the pre-application advice from an SNH case officer did not sufficiently clarify the risks to an onshore wind farm project arising from landscape, and that the response to the planning application by SNH was considerably less favourable than we had expected.” (planning consultant / agent)

“Consistency of case officer; speed of response.” (planning authority)

7% commented on the need for SNH to be more willing to enter into dialogue or have better engagement or collaboration and comments included the following examples:

“At times be more willing to discuss development proposals and what is and what is not acceptable.” (developer)

“More proactive engagement - “How can we help you” rather than reacting to a request.” (government agency)

7% commented on the need for SNH to have a more constructive approach or to consider impacts and comments included the following examples:

“A more consistent approach by all officers, and more constructive tone from certain officers at times. The mixed messages sent by not objections but providing highly negative consultation responses is also not helpful.” (developer)

“Become more practically minded rather than just (appearing) to stick to what appears to be a very strict set of guidelines regardless of any other aspects.” (other)

6% felt SNH could be more responsive to queries or commented that they are sometime slow to respond, for example:

“Quicker turn-around times please!” (planning consultant / agent)

There was a feeling, from 5% that SNH require more resources to do their job, for example:

“This is out of SNH's full control, but more staff seem to be needed for SNH to achieve comprehensively its remit. Shortcomings to date appear to be more a factor of limited manpower than competency or commitment within current staff.” (developer)

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