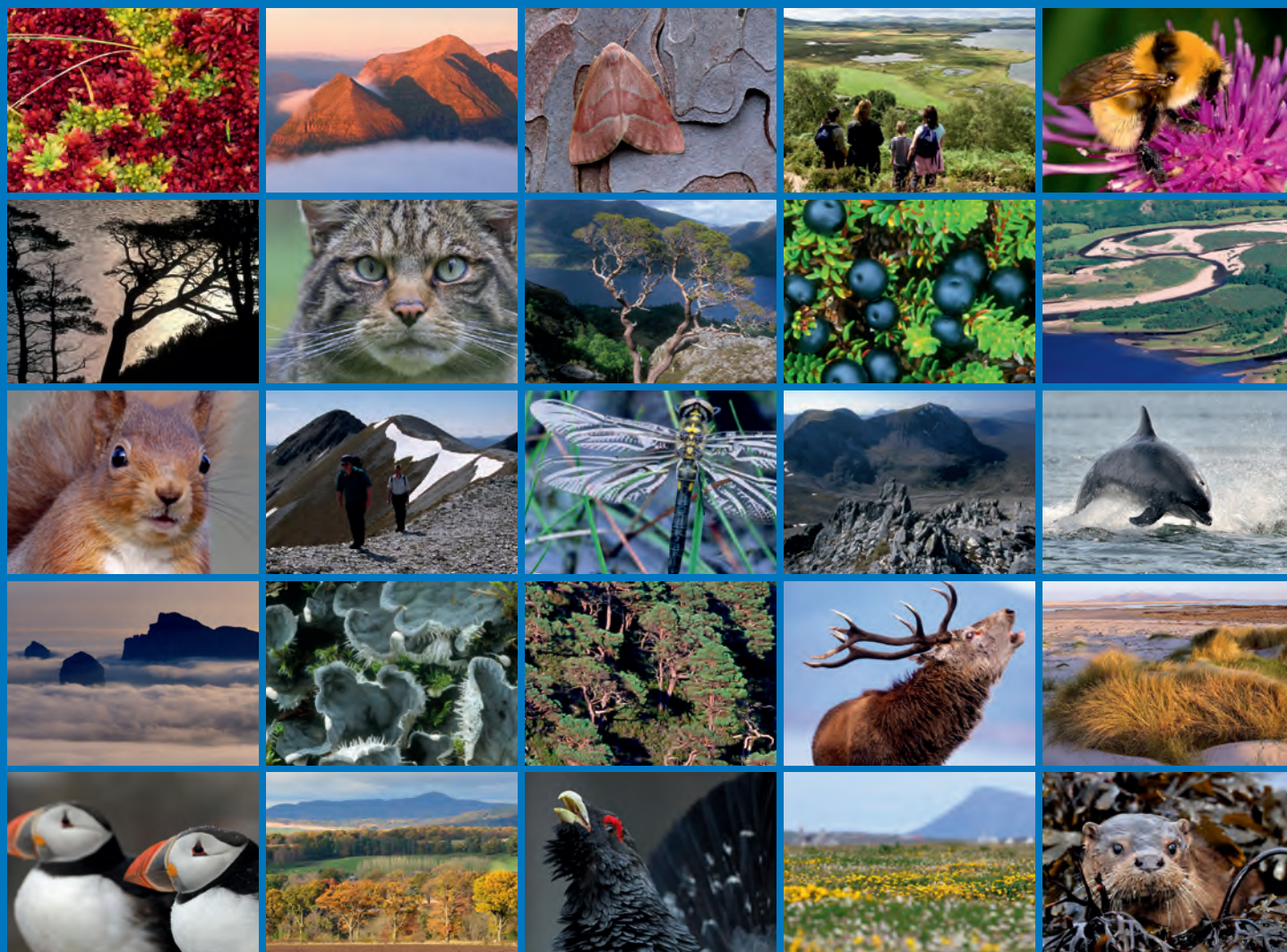


Planning for development – customer survey 2016





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. 955

Planning for development – customer survey 2016

For further information on this report please contact:

Paul Sutherland
Scottish Natural Heritage
Holmpark Industrial Estate
New Galloway Road
NEWTON STEWART
DG8 6BF
Telephone: 01671 404706
E-mail: paul.sutherland@snh.gov.uk

This report should be quoted as:

Mulholland, S. 2017. Planning for development – customer survey 2016. *Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report No 955.*

This report, or any part of it, should not be reproduced without the permission of Scottish Natural Heritage. This permission will not be withheld unreasonably. The views expressed by the author(s) of this report should not be taken as the views and policies of Scottish Natural Heritage.



COMMISSIONED REPORT

Summary

Planning for development – customer survey 2016

Commissioned Report No. 955

Project No: 016097

Contractor: Why Research

Year of publication: 2017

Keywords

Customer; satisfaction; survey; advice; guidance; service statement; planning system.

Background

SNH commissioned Why Research to undertake the third of four annual customer satisfaction surveys covering its planning and development customers. The purpose of this work is to gather evidence to inform SNH's judgements about service improvement and support SNH's commitment to continuously improving the way the organisation operates.

Main findings

- The findings from this 2016 customer survey are broadly positive and there are improvements in many areas over the findings from the 2015 survey.
- Customer satisfaction is high and most customers agree that SNH's advice and guidance is enabling and helpful.
- Although customers have a better understanding of the role SNH plays in the planning system, there remain some areas where greater clarity is required.
- Awareness of the SNH Planning for Development Service Statement is increasing.
- Views on the guidance produced by SNH are largely positive.

For further information on this project contact:

Paul Sutherland, Scottish Natural Heritage, Holmpark Industrial Estate, New Galloway Road,
Newton Stewart, DG8 6BF.

Tel: 01671 404706 or paul.sutherland@snh.gov.uk

For further information on the SNH Research & Technical Support Programme contact:

Knowledge & Information Unit, Scottish Natural Heritage, Great Glen House, Inverness, IV3 8NW.

Tel: 01463 725000 or research@snh.gov.uk

Table of Contents		Page
1.	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
1.1	Overview	1
1.2	Contact with SNH	1
1.3	SNH's Planning Services	2
1.4	SNH's Planning for Development Service Statement	2
1.5	SNH's Role in the Planning System	2
1.6	Guidance	2
1.7	Approach	3
1.8	Satisfaction	3
2.	INTRODUCTION	4
2.1	Service Statement	4
2.2	A need to gather feedback and update information on customer satisfaction	4
3.	RESPONDENT PROFILE INFORMATION	5
3.1	Respondent groupings	5
3.2	Primary area of business or involvement	6
3.3	Area of involvement in renewables	6
3.4	Involvement with Environmental Impact Assessment	7
3.5	SNH's contribution to the planning process	8
3.6	Examples of where SNH could have been more enabling	9
4.	CONTACT WITH SNH	10
4.1	Frequency of contact with SNH	10
4.2	Finding the most relevant person at SNH	11
4.3	Ease of contacting relevant SNH staff	12
5.	SNH'S PLANNING SERVICES	13
5.1	SNH services used	13
5.2	Views on SNH services and advice given by SNH	15
5.3	Views on advice given by SNH	17
5.4	Patterns of satisfaction or dissatisfaction	19
5.5	Examples of inconsistencies	20
6.	PLANNING FOR DEVELOPMENT SERVICE STATEMENT	22
6.1	Awareness of the Service Statement	22
7.	SNH'S ROLE IN THE PLANNING PROCESS	23
7.1	Understanding of SNH's role	23
8.	GUIDANCE	30
8.1	Awareness of SNH guidance	30
8.2	Views on SNH guidance	32
8.3	Usefulness of information and / or guidance accessed through SNH's website	34
8.4	Possible improvements to SNH guidance	35
8.5	Planning and Development e-newsletter	35
8.6	Usefulness of SNH's responses in relation to SEA	36
9.	APPROACH	38
9.1	SNH's focus	38
9.2	SNH's approach to guidance and advice	38
10.	SATISFACTION	40
10.1	Satisfaction with SNH's service	40
10.2	Improvements to SNH's service	41

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Overview

SNH commissioned Why Research to carry out a customer satisfaction survey amongst its planning and development customers. The purpose of this work is to gather evidence to inform SNH's judgements about service improvement and to support SNH's commitment to continuously improving the way the organisation operates. The survey asked many similar questions to those used in the 2014 and 2015 surveys in order to gather information on any changes in customer views.

The findings from this 2016 customer survey are broadly positive, and satisfaction with the services provided by SNH remains high. There are some differences among different customer groupings and those customers who have more frequent contact are the most satisfied. This reflects the results of the 2015 survey.

Views on advice given by SNH are broadly positive and a majority agree that it does improve outcomes for landscape and nature. However, responses to a series of statements show that there is still room for improvement. As in 2015, there continue to be reports of a lack of consistency of advice within SNH, or between SNH and other organisations – particularly SEPA and FCS. Additional questions were asked about this in 2016 and it seems that the main area where respondents feel there are inconsistencies is within SNH: across different geographical areas or simply between SNH officers.

Views on SNH's services, such as pre-application discussions, are improving and there has been an increase in six out of seven service indicators. When compared with 2014, it demonstrates that improvements have been and are continuing to be made – although the pace of improvement has slowed a little.

Awareness of SNH's Planning for Development Service Statement is increasing; well over half of respondents are aware of this and a quarter have read the Service Statement.

Understanding of SNH's role in the planning system is increasing. However, questions designed to test this understanding show that some customers are unable to comment on or identify different areas of SNH's remit. Customers who are involved in the planning system on a professional basis have the clearest understanding of SNH's role.

Views on the guidance produced by SNH are largely positive and it is seen as useful, relevant, well laid-out and relatively free of jargon. All of these factors have seen an improvement since 2015.

Top-level findings from the survey questions are outlined below.

1.2 Contact with SNH

Under half of those responding to this survey contact SNH for any reason around once a month or more frequently. Of those contacting SNH in relation to their planning service, under a quarter have contact with SNH around once a month or more frequently.

While respondents use a number of different channels to find the most relevant person in SNH, existing contacts remain the most important across all respondents groups. As in 2015, over three-quarters say it is easy to contact SNH staff.

1.3 SNH's Planning Services

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

Respondents are generally positive about services provided by SNH and most areas show an improvement compared with the findings of the 2015 survey.

While respondents were positive about the advice given by SNH, there continues to be some concern in relation to consistency of advice both within SNH and between SNH and other organisations.

1.4 SNH's Planning for Development Service Statement

There is increasing awareness of the Service Statement. Awareness is highest among respondents likely to be accessing it (primarily planning authorities).

1.5 SNH's Role in the Planning System

There continues to be improvement in customers' understanding of SNH's role in the planning system. However, some groups of respondents show a lack of awareness of SNH's role or remit.

It is those involved in the planning system on a professional basis – developers, planning consultants/agents and planning authority respondents – who have the clearest picture of SNH's role; this finding is similar to the results from the 2015 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 Habitats Regulations Appraisal, less than half correctly identified that SNH will focus its input on issues which are of national significance and cannot enter into extensive dialogue on natural heritage issues of local importance. The score for the latter has decreased since 2015, implying a poorer understanding of SNH's focus than in earlier years.

1.6 Guidance

Results show a fair awareness of EIA, wind farm, scoping and pre-application guidance – but less awareness of more specialised areas. 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 largely free from jargon. However, as was the case in 2015, more than half of respondents feel that SNH's guidance could be more concise or less ambiguous than at present.

As in 2015, a large majority of respondents considered 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 and streamlined. However, a similar proportion said that guidance is generally good or that no changes are needed. These findings are very similar to what was found in 2015.

When asked to say what else SNH could do to better help other organisations consider natural heritage assets, 'Host a programme of sharing good practice events' proved the most

popular suggestion across all respondents groups. A large majority of those who are aware of the SNH newsletter said that they found it useful.

1.7 Approach

Pre-application discussion was identified by respondents as the area most would like to see SNH focus its efforts; this option was added in 2016. Design Frameworks, Development Briefs and Masterplanning attracted least support.

As was the case in 2015, 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 with this while planning agents 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 7.59 out of a possible 10. This is an increase from the 7.39 seen in 2015.

The need for more consistency within SNH emerged as the area respondents felt would most benefit from improvement; this was also the main area mentioned in 2015.

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 an early stage, to be clear and proportionate and focus on issues presenting the greatest opportunities and threats to the natural heritage, to be collaborative and flexible 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 surveys in [July 2014](#) and [October 2015](#), research on [SNH's influence on natural heritage outcomes](#) and research on the effectiveness of its guidance.

In line with its commitment to continuous improvement, SNH appointed Why Research Ltd, an independent market research company based in Edinburgh, to undertake a customer survey in 2014. Why Research Ltd was appointed again to undertake 3 further annual customer surveys from 2015 to 2017. In October 2015 the first of these 3 online surveys was conducted and in October 2016 the survey was repeated, with some amendments.

The key objective of the 2016 survey was to provide SNH with a customer satisfaction survey that covered the full range of Planning System 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.

3. RESPONDENT PROFILE INFORMATION

Invitations to participate in this survey were sent to 2,796 individuals and organisations who have had contact with SNH. A total of 363 responded to this survey, a response rate of around 13%.

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. The profile seen in 2016 is very similar to that of 2015.

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.

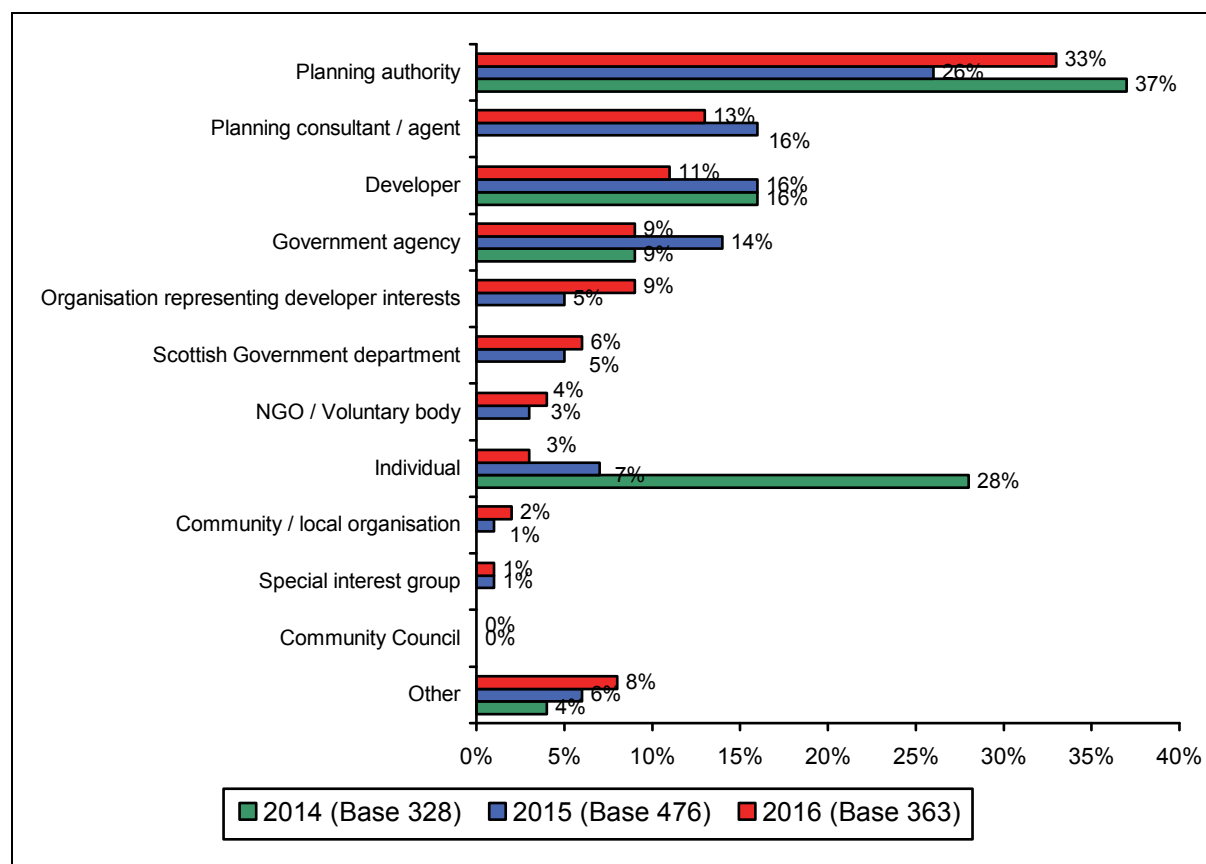


Figure 1. Respondent groupings (2014, 2015 and 2016)

2016 Source: Q1

As shown in Figure 1, the four groups with the highest numbers of respondents were planning authorities (33%), planning consultants or agents (13%), developers (11%) and government agencies (9%). This data is very similar to that seen in the 2015 survey. Where possible we have included 2014 data, although the groupings used were not exactly the same as in 2015 and 2016. In 2014 there was a far higher proportion of ‘individual’ respondents.

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 10% of the sample): planning authority; planning consultant / agent and developers.

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; 49% of respondents fell into the public sector category.

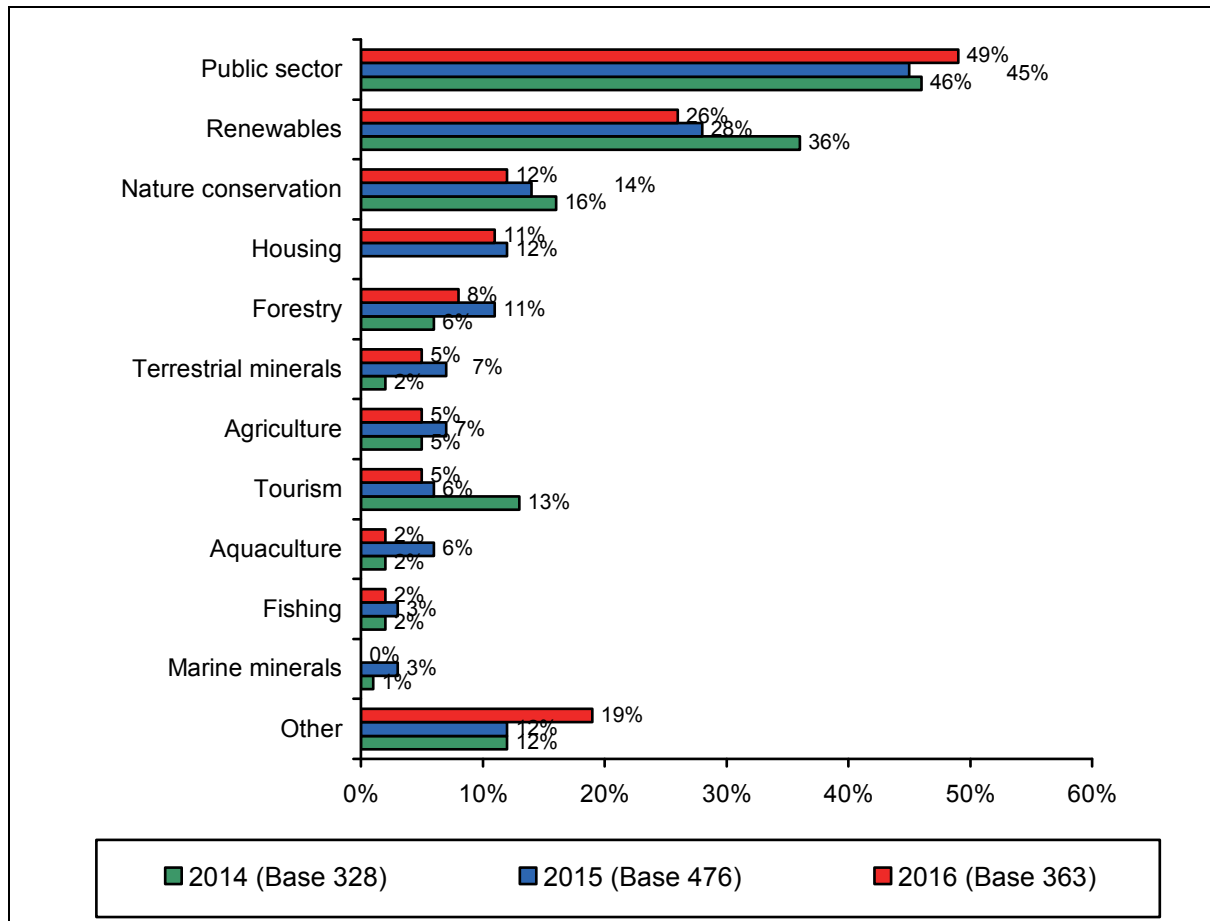


Figure 2. Primary area of business or involvement (2014, 2015 and 2016)

2016 Source: Q2a & Q2b

Over a quarter of respondents said that they are involved in renewables (26%), with smaller numbers involved in nature conservation (12%), housing (11%) or forestry (8%). Other sectors were noted in 5% or less of the sample.

3.3 Area of involvement in renewables

Respondents were also asked to say in which area of renewables, if any, they were involved.

As Figure 3 demonstrates, onshore wind accounts for the greatest number of respondents (20%) and just over one in ten (13%) is involved in hydro.

Other renewables such as solar, biomass and so on were each mentioned by 7% or less. Again, this is very similar to the previous survey conducted in 2015.

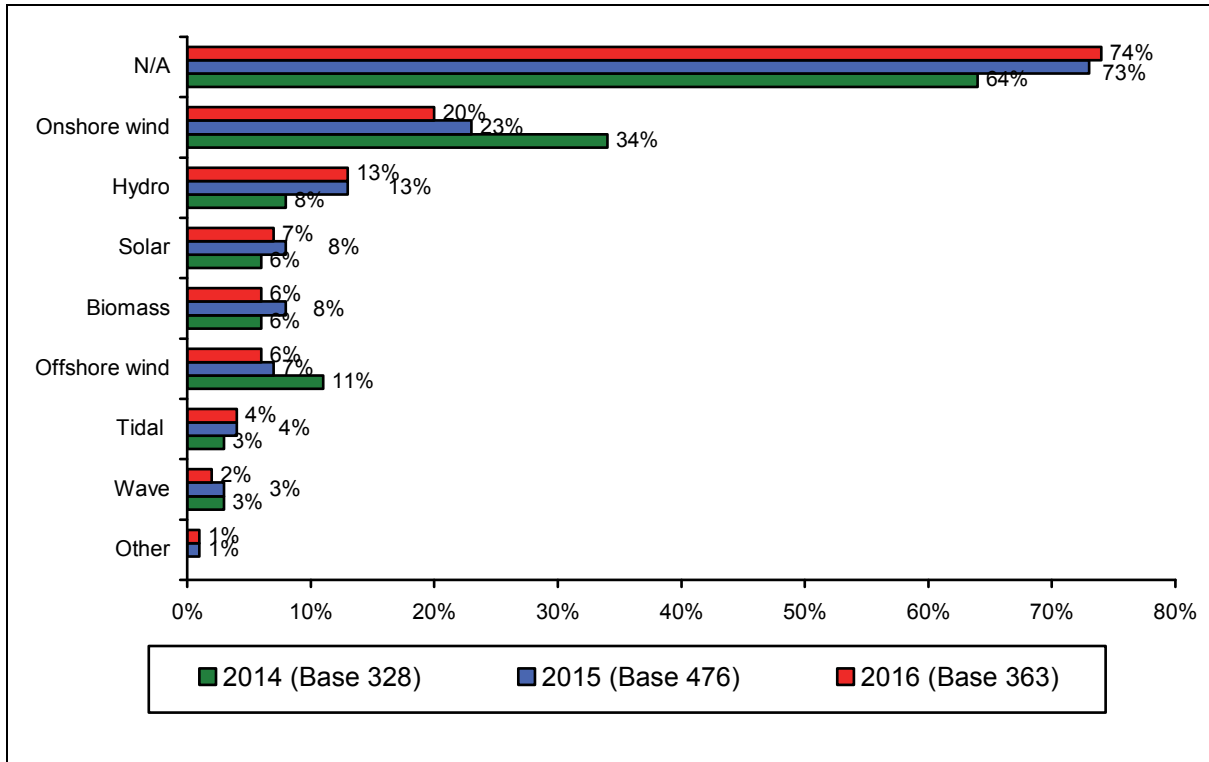


Figure 3. Area of involvement in renewables (2014, 2015 and 2016)

2016 Source: Q2ai & Q2bi

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 (65%), and, as was the case in 2015, most were involved at the stages of Scoping or the Environmental Statement:

- Before Scoping (43%)
- Scoping (56%)
- Environmental Statement (51%)
- Other (10%)
- Not involved with EIA (35%)

3.5 SNH's contribution to the planning process

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 the planning process.

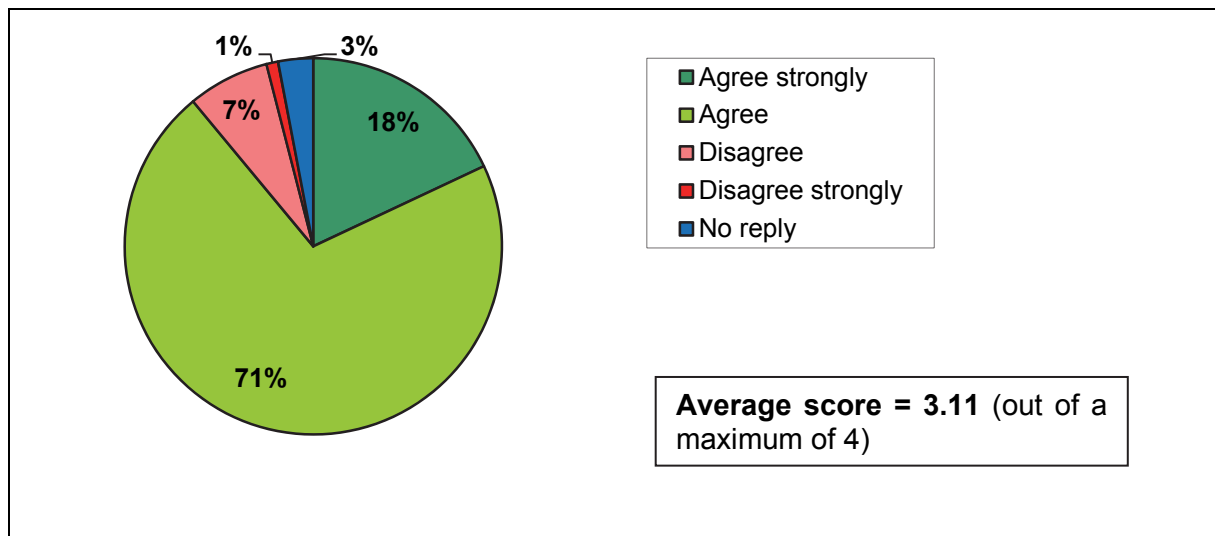


Figure 4a. SNH's contribution to planning process 2016

Source: Q20 (Base=363)

As can be seen in Figure 4a above, results to this question are positive, with a large majority (89%) agreeing to some extent that SNH makes a positive contribution to the planning process. Fewer than one in ten (8%) disagreed with this statement.

Comparing results with a similar question asked in 2014 and 2015 (Agreement or disagreement that that SNH makes a positive contribution to planning and development processes) shows that:

- The percentage of respondents agreeing to any extent has risen from 70% (2014) to 87% (2015) and 89% (2016)
- The percentage disagreeing to any extent has fallen from 28% (2014) to 11% (2015) and now to 8% (2016)

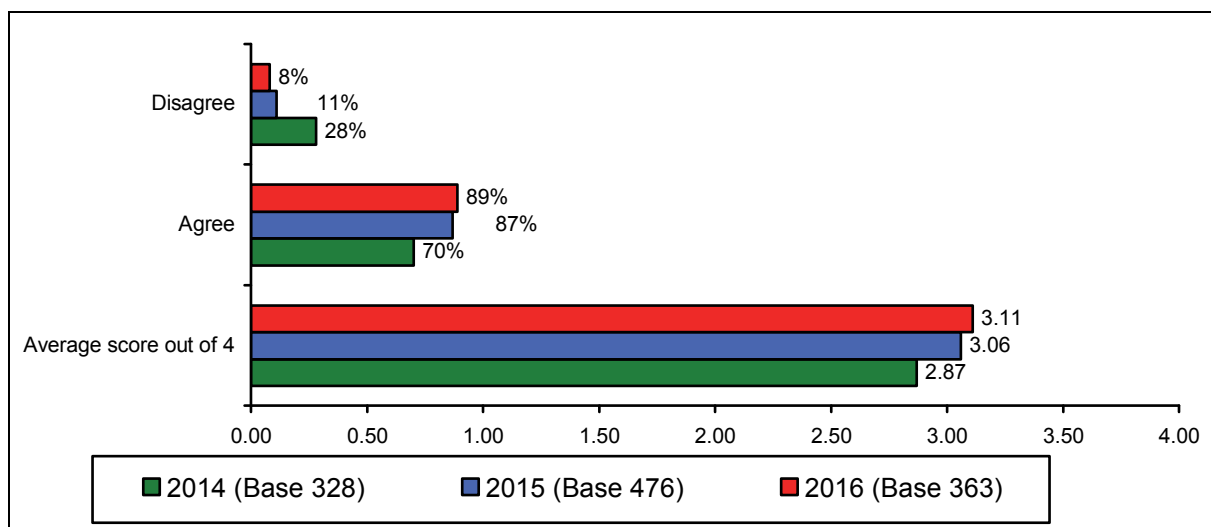


Figure 4b. SNH's contribution to planning process (2014, 2015 and 2016)

3.6 Examples of where SNH could have been more enabling

A new question was added in 2016: 'Please can you give any specific examples of where SNH could have been more enabling or made a more positive contribution to the planning system'. Comments were received from 69 respondents and the main themes noted in responses were as follows:

Comments in 17 responses related to issues with advice from staff being inconsistent, ambiguous or perceived as obstructive. For example:

"Initial SNH advice to our client was woolly & contradictory."

"Advice on bat surveys was a bit confusing and could have been more helpful. In addition, there was an apparent difference between advice received from different members of SNH."

There were also comments (in 10 responses) that communications can be slow, drawn out or that staff have a tendency to quote policy rather than engage in dialogue.

Comments in 11 responses indicated that respondents would like to see SNH engage earlier in the planning process; to provide advice or to give early indications as to whether they would object to an application.

The need for a more proportionate or flexible approach, or comments that SNH have a very restricted view or approach, featured in 10 responses.

Nine respondents wanted to see SNH able to comment on all applications while seven respondents felt they should be more engaged in the planning process overall.

Six respondents provided positive comments on SNH staff or advice while five wanted to see more experienced or knowledgeable staff.

Other comments included:

- The need for clear, specific, non-generic advice (four responses)
- That SNH focus too much on enabling development and not enough on the environment (four responses)
- Concern over the weight given to 'no comment' responses from SNH (four responses)

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 service.

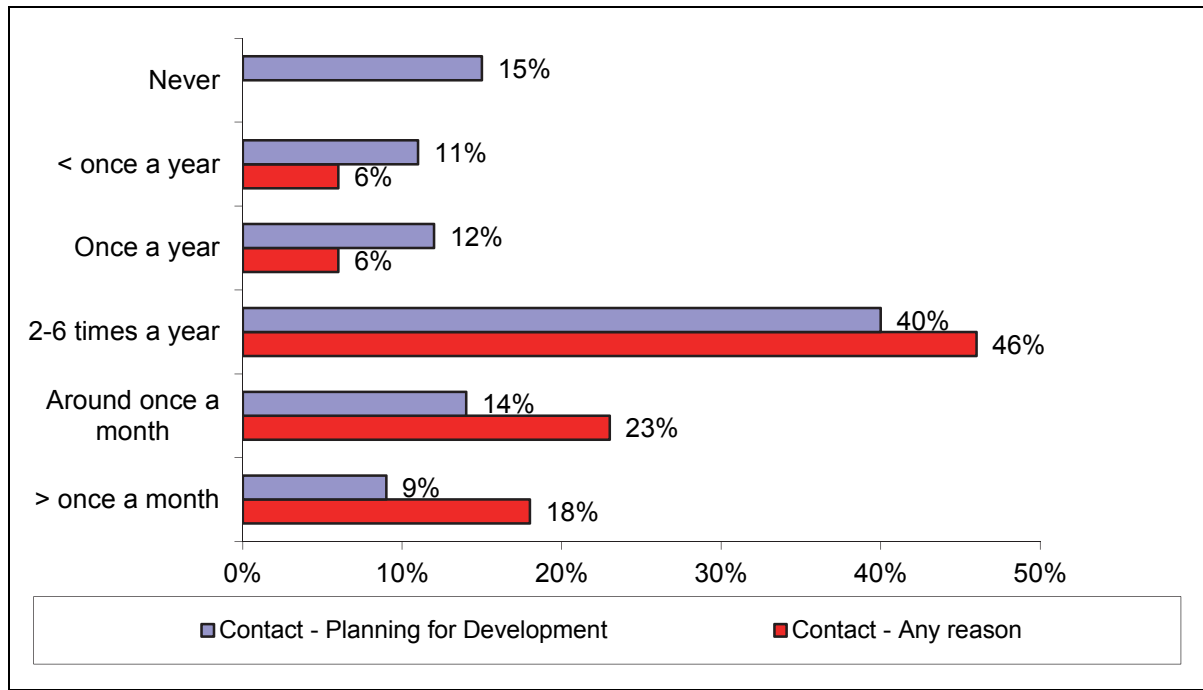


Figure 5. Frequency of contact with SNH

Source: Q3a & Q3b (Base=363)

As Figure 5 shows, just under a fifth of respondents have contact with SNH for any reason more than once a month (18%), with more having contact around once a month (23%). This means that almost half of respondents contact SNH once a month or more frequently. The highest proportion (46%) has 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 9.14, a slightly lower average than in 2015 (10.13).

In terms of having any contact with SNH in relation to its Planning for Development service specifically, contact levels are slightly less, with slightly under a quarter having contact with SNH once a month or more frequently; the highest proportion again makes contact between 2-6 times a year (40%) and around a quarter have contact once a year or less. The average number of contacts with SNH per year is 6.48. This compares to an average of 7.29 in 2015.

Of the 363 respondents, 309 have contacted SNH in relation to both general issues and Planning for Development specifically, while 54 have had no contact in relation to Planning for Development.

When we examine sub-group data in relation to any contact with SNH, respondents in Scottish Government departments have the most frequent contact while individuals have the least frequent contact.

When we look at contact regarding the Planning System specifically, the most frequent contact is again from Scottish Government departments while least frequent contact is government agencies.

Data shows a connection between contact and satisfaction scores; the 37 respondents who gave SNH a satisfaction rating of 10 out of 10 had more frequent contact (average 11.74) 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.

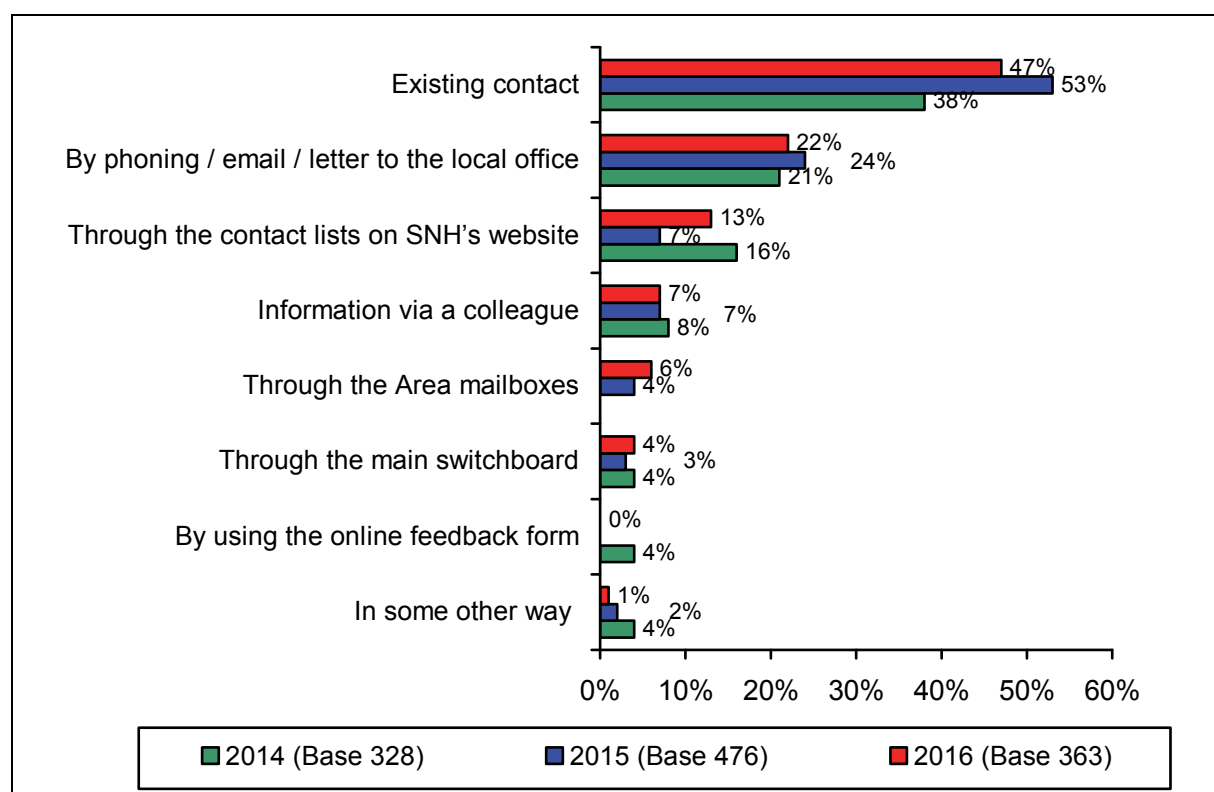


Figure 6. Finding the most relevant person at SNH (2014, 2015 and 2016)

Source: Q4a

As Figure 6 shows, and as was the case in 2014 and 2015, existing contacts at SNH are clearly important, with just under half (47%) in 2016 citing this contact method. Just under a quarter (22%) referred to telephone, email or letter to their local SNH office. Use of the website has varied across the three years; having dropped from 16% in 2014 to 7% in 2015, the percentage has risen again to 13% in 2016. 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.

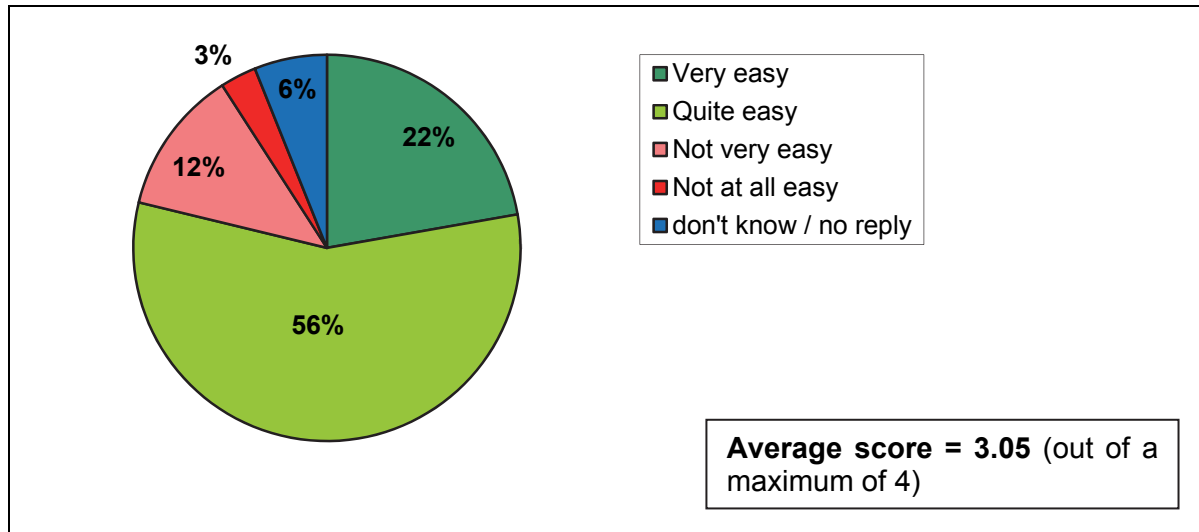


Figure 7a. Ease of contacting relevant SNH staff

Source: Q4b (Base=363)

As shown in Figure 7a, over three quarters (78%) of respondents agree, to some extent, that it is easy to contact the relevant staff at SNH. This is similar to the figure from 2015 (79%). Only 15% disagree.

In 2016, the sub-group where contact is seen as easiest are planning authority respondents (86%). The sub-groups where lowest proportions of respondents agree to any extent that it is easy to contact the relevant staff at SNH are those representing the interests of developers (71%). Looking at differences across respondent groups shows that Planning authorities and consultants / agents found it easier to contact relevant SNH staff in 2016 than had been the case in 2015 while developers are finding it slightly less easy.

Results show continuing improvements from 2014 (when the average score was 2.96) and 2015 (when the average score was 3.01).

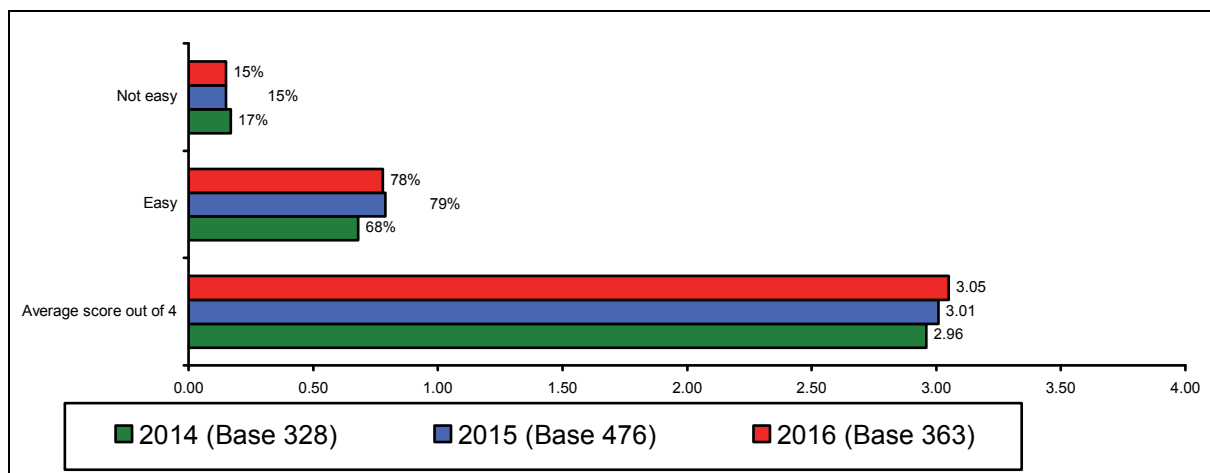


Figure 7b. Ease of contacting relevant SNH staff (2014, 2015 and 2016)

5. SNH'S PLANNING 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 Services. 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).

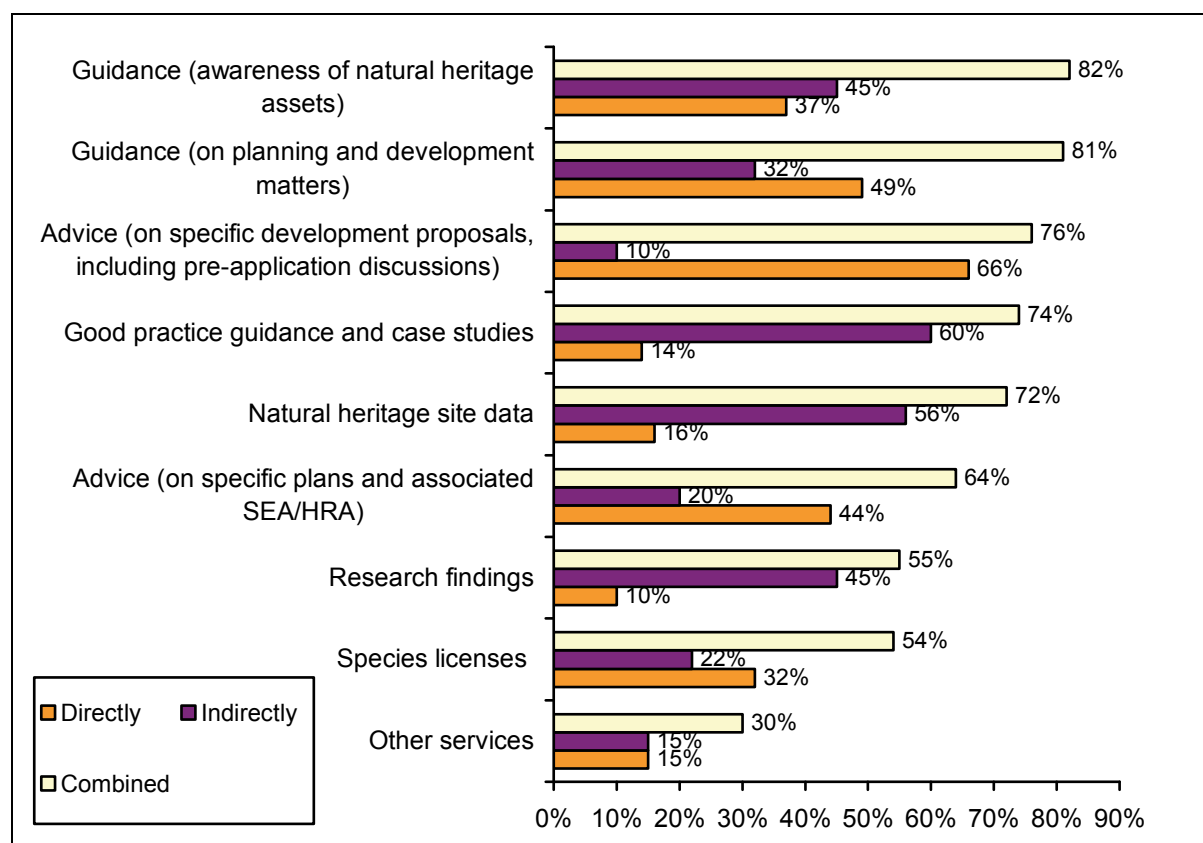


Figure 8a. SNH services used

Source: Q12 (Base=363)

As Figure 8a demonstrates, numbers accessing SNH services remain 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%. Less than half of respondents used direct methods to access other types of services.

For services accessed indirectly, over half accessed good practice guidance and case studies (60%) and natural heritage site data (56%) via the SNH website.

As was the case in 2015, 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 82%) and guidance relating to planning and development matters (accessed by 81%).

The following Figure shows that the main difference between 2015 and 2016 was an increase in respondents who had accessed advice on specific plans and associated SEA / HRA (60% in 2015, 64% in 2016).

Data from 2014 has also been included in the Figure below. However the list of services and specific names used changed somewhat between the 2014 and 2015 surveys and this, coupled with the much higher proportion of 'individual' respondents in 2014 explains the differences in figures.

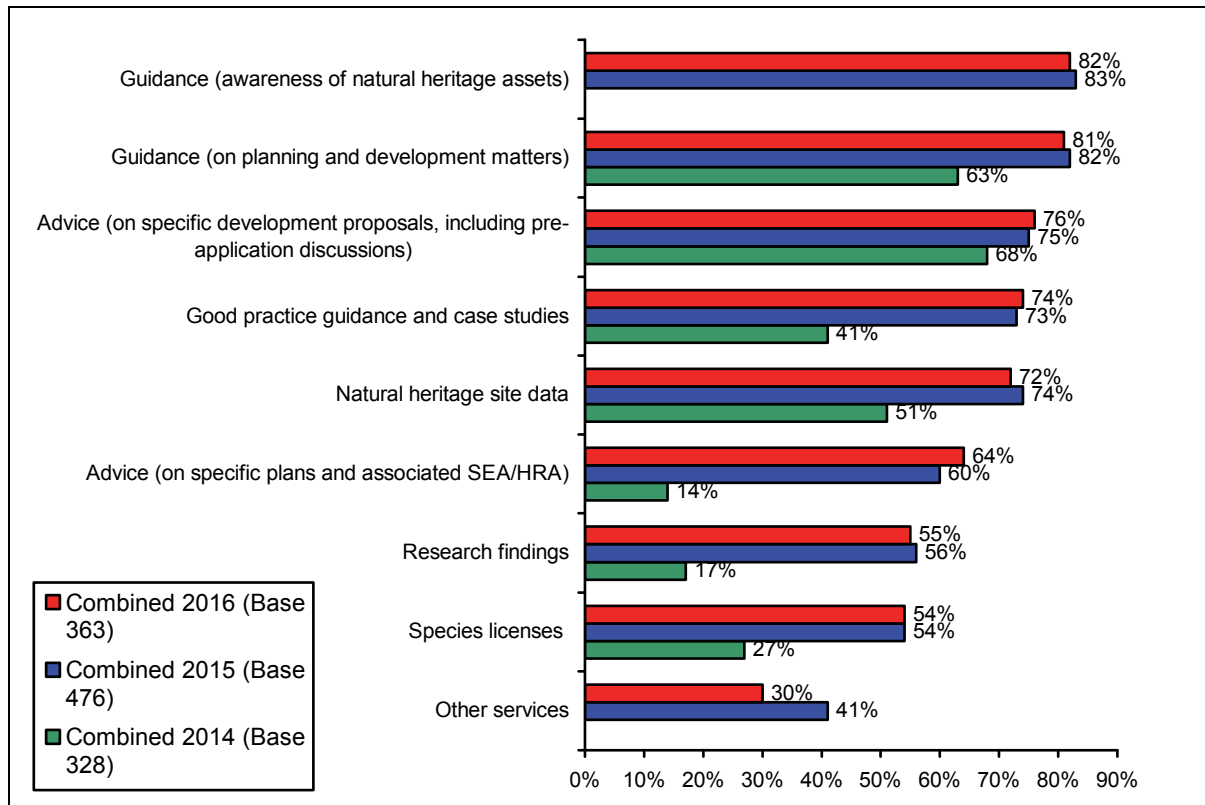


Figure 8b. SNH services used (2014, 2015 and 2016)

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.

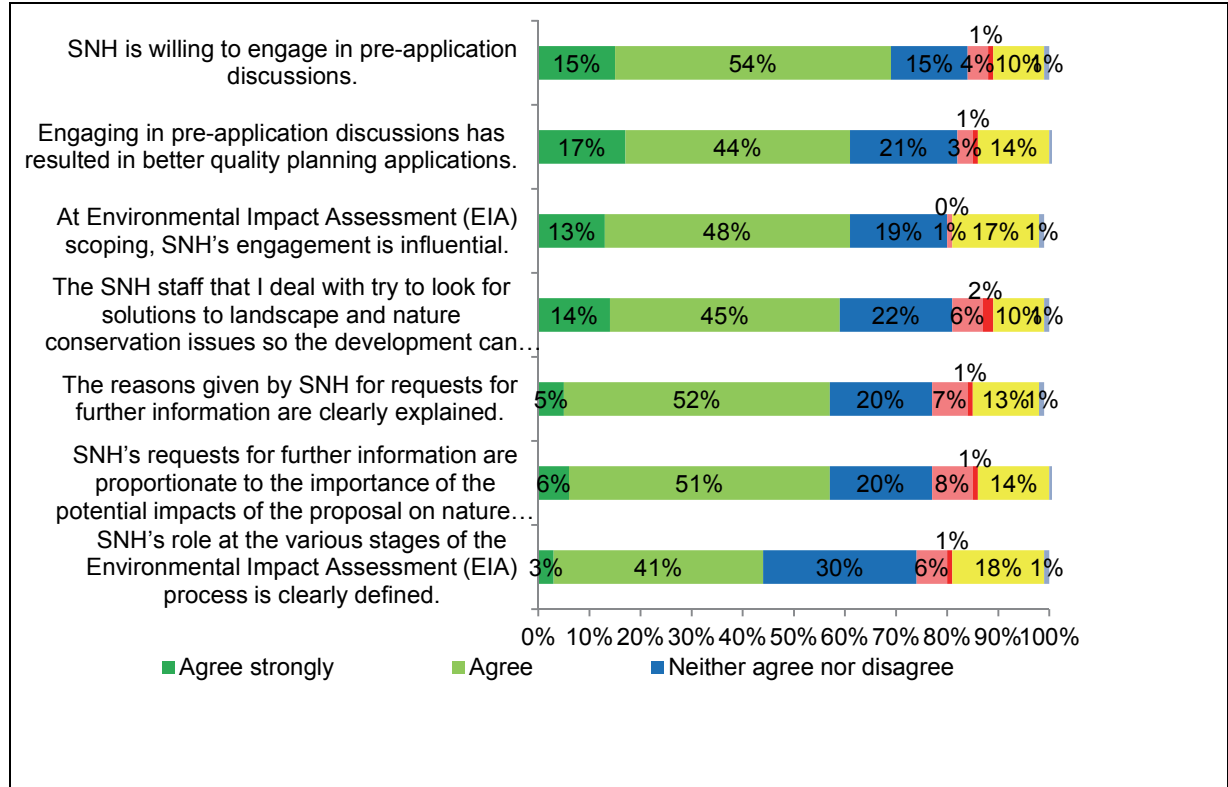


Figure 9. Views on SNH services

Source: Q13 (Base=363)

The Figure above shows that, for most statements, views were positive. Many 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.

As was the case in 2015, 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': 44% agreed to some extent and 30% neither agreed nor disagreed, 18% said don't know or did not reply and 7% disagreed to some extent.

These statements had also been asked in the 2015 survey and most had been asked in 2014. The following table shows the average scores (out of a potential 5) for the 2016 and 2015 surveys. Totals from the 2014 survey are also included for those questions which were asked in 2014.

Table 1. Views on SNH services (2014, 2015 and 2016 average scores)

	Average score						
	YEAR	Total	Devel oper	Planning agent	Planning auth.	Area = Renew.	Area = Hydro.
SNH is willing to engage in pre-application discussions.	2016	3.89	4.05	3.83	3.83	3.85	3.85
	2015	3.85	3.64	3.84	3.82	3.69	3.83
	2014	3.70					
Engaging in pre-application discussions has resulted in better quality planning applications.	2016	3.85	3.90	3.88	3.80	3.80	3.98
	2015	3.88	3.71	3.97	3.95	3.83	4.05
At Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) scoping, SNH's engagement is influential.	2016	3.88	3.81	3.91	3.89	3.80	3.70
	2015	3.85	3.75	4.00	3.79	3.87	4.00
The SNH staff that I deal with try to look for solutions to landscape and nature conservation issues so the development can be progressed.	2016	3.72	3.50	3.52	3.88	3.42	3.48
	2015	3.62	3.28	3.37	3.87	3.27	3.43
	2014	3.47					
The reasons given by SNH for requests for further information are clearly explained.	2016	3.62	3.41	3.49	3.85	3.48	3.73
	2015	3.57	3.28	3.50	3.77	3.45	3.41
	2014	3.52					
SNH's requests for further information are proportionate to the importance of the potential impacts of the proposal on nature and landscapes.	2016	3.61	3.56	3.41	3.77	3.48	3.72
	2015	3.48	3.26	3.30	3.69	3.38	3.40
	2014	3.19					
SNH's role at the various stages of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process is clearly defined.	2016	3.49	3.44	3.37	3.63	3.41	3.38
	2015	3.47	3.18	3.58	3.61	3.48	3.58

As shown in the table above, the overall average scores for each of statements have increased with the exception of 'Engaging in pre-application discussions has resulted in better quality planning applications' which has shown a slight decrease.

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.

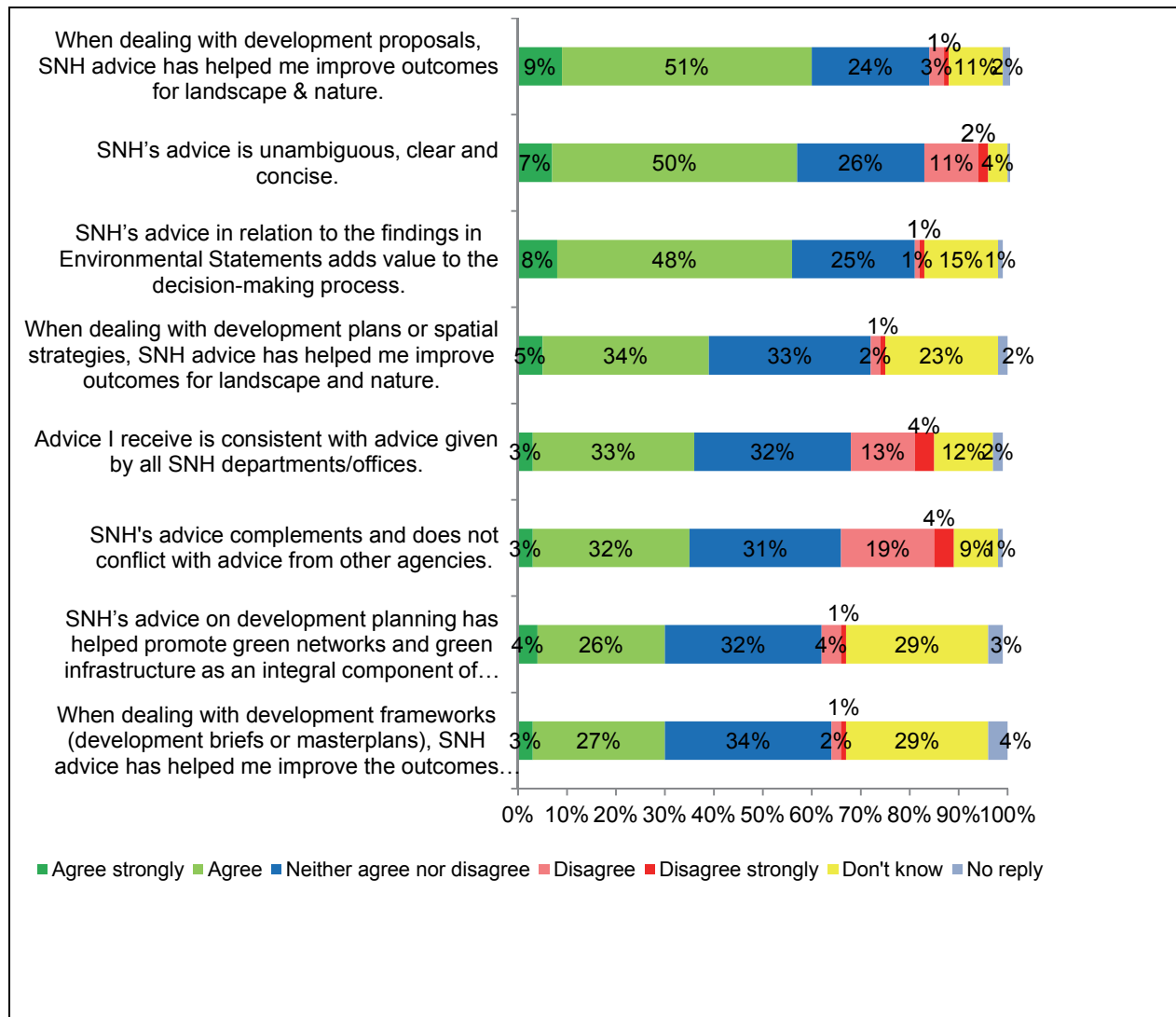


Figure 10. Views on advice given by SNH

Source: Q14 (Base=363)

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, for each of the statements, higher proportions agreed to some extent than disagreed.

Statements with the highest proportions agreeing to some extent were:

- 'When dealing with development proposals, SNH advice has helped me improve outcomes for landscape & nature'; 60% agreed to some extent, 24% neither agreed nor disagreed, 13% said don't know or did not reply and 4% disagreed to some extent.

- ‘SNH’s advice is unambiguous, clear and concise’; 57% agreed to some extent, 26% neither agreed nor disagreed and 5% said don’t know or did not reply. However, 13% disagreed to some extent.

As in 2015, the statement with the highest proportions disagreeing to some extent was:

- ‘SNH’s advice complements and does not conflict with advice from other agencies’; 35% agreed to some extent, 31% neither agreed nor disagreed, 10% said don’t know or did not reply and 23% disagreed to some extent (the same figure disagreeing as in 2015).

The average scores (out of a potential 5) for statements on advice from the 2016 and 2015 surveys, are shown in the following table. Totals from the 2014 survey are also included for those questions which were asked in 2014.

Table 2. Views on SNH advice (2014, 2015 and 2016 average scores)

	Average score						
	YEAR	Total	Devel oper	Planning agent	Planning auth.	Area = Renew.	Area = Hydro.
When dealing with development frameworks (development briefs or masterplans), SNH advice has helped me improve the outcomes for landscape and nature.	2016	3.43	3.32	3.39	3.59	3.27	3.34
	2015	3.39	3.02	3.47	3.61	3.29	3.39
SNH’s advice is unambiguous, clear and concise.	2016	3.52	3.44	3.39	3.67	3.36	3.39
	2015	3.43	3.14	3.28	3.69	3.27	3.39
	2014	3.10					
SNH’s advice in relation to the findings in Environmental Statements adds value to the decision-making process	2016	3.74	3.62	3.81	3.79	3.69	3.76
	2015	3.76	3.50	3.75	3.93	3.71	3.76
When dealing with development proposals, SNH advice has helped me improve outcomes for landscape & nature.	2016	3.72	3.71	3.60	3.90	3.56	3.72
	2015	3.64	3.30	3.70	3.81	3.46	3.62
	2014	3.29					
Advice I receive is consistent with advice given by all SNH departments/offices.	2016	3.22	3.00	3.02	3.50	2.93	3.19
	2015	3.13	2.97	2.79	3.41	2.94	2.96
	2014	3.17					
SNH’s advice complements and does not conflict with advice from other agencies.	2016	3.12	2.66	3.00	3.37	2.89	3.07
	2015	3.08	2.92	2.87	3.33	2.86	2.98
	2014	2.92					
SNH’s advice on development planning has helped promote green networks and green infrastructure as an integral component of successful place-making.	2016	3.40	3.29	3.34	3.59	3.15	3.26
	2015	3.39	3.07	3.36	3.65	3.37	3.43

When dealing with development plans or spatial strategies, SNH advice has helped me improve outcomes for landscape and nature.	2016	3.52	3.45	3.41	3.70	3.32	3.46
	2015	3.50	3.26	3.38	3.73	3.31	3.32
	2014	3.29					

All but one of the statements (SNH's advice in relation to the findings in Environmental Statements adds value to the decision-making process) show an improvement in the overall scores from 2015. All relevant statements show positive movement 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) 2016

Base = 363	Total	Developer	Planning agent	Planning authority
SNH is willing to engage in pre-application discussions.	3.89	4.05	3.83	3.83
At Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) scoping, SNH's engagement is influential.	3.88	3.81	3.91	3.89
Engaging in pre-application discussions has resulted in better quality planning applications.	3.85	3.90	3.88	3.80
The SNH staff that I deal with try to look for solutions to landscape and nature conservation issues so the development can be progressed.	3.72	3.50	3.52	3.88
The reasons given by SNH for requests for further information are clearly explained.	3.62	3.41	3.49	3.85
SNH's requests for further information are proportionate to the importance of the potential impacts of the proposal on nature and landscapes.	3.61	3.56	3.41	3.77
SNH's role at the various stages of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process is clearly defined.	3.49	3.44	3.37	3.63

Source: Q13

The statement 'SNH's requests for further information are proportionate to the importance of the potential impacts of the proposal on nature and landscapes' was amber for its 2015 total and developer scores but these are now green.

In relation to the statement 'The SNH staff that I deal with try to look for solutions to landscape and nature conservation issues so the development can be progressed' in 2015 the planning agent and developer scores were amber but are now green.

In relation to the statements: ‘The reasons given by SNH for requests for further information are clearly explained’ and ‘SNH’s role at the various stages of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process is clearly defined’, the scores for planning agents were green in 2015 but are now amber.

Table 4. Average score by sub-group (statements on advice) 2016

Base = 476	Total	Developer	Planning agent	Planning auth.
SNH’s advice in relation to the findings in Environmental Statements adds value to the decision-making process.	3.74	3.62	3.81	3.79
When dealing with development proposals, SNH advice has helped me improve outcomes for landscape & nature.	3.72	3.71	3.60	3.90
When dealing with development plans or spatial strategies, SNH advice has helped me improve outcomes for landscape and nature.	3.52	3.45	3.41	3.70
SNH’s advice is unambiguous, clear and concise	3.52	3.44	3.39	3.67
When dealing with development frameworks (development briefs or masterplans), SNH advice has helped me improve the outcomes for landscape and nature.	3.43	3.32	3.39	3.59
SNH’s advice on development planning has helped promote green networks and green infrastructure as an integral component of successful place-making.	3.40	3.29	3.34	3.59
Advice I receive is consistent with advice given by all SNH departments/offices.	3.22	3.00	3.02	3.50
SNH’s advice complements and does not conflict with advice from other agencies.	3.12	2.66	3.00	3.37

Source: Q14

The total score for the statement ‘SNH’s advice is unambiguous, clear and concise’ has moved from amber to green.

The planning authority score for the statement ‘Advice I receive is consistent with advice given by all SNH departments/offices’ has moved from amber to green.

5.5 Examples of inconsistencies

In 2016, respondents who disagreed with the statements: ‘SNH’s advice complements and does not conflict with advice from other agencies’ or ‘Advice I receive is consistent with advice given by all SNH departments/offices’ were invited to provide examples of inconsistencies in advice that they have experienced between SNH departments or between SNH and other agencies and 104 respondents provided examples.

The main area where respondents felt there are inconsistencies is within SNH; between regions and areas or simply between SNH officers (cited by 21 respondents). For example:

“With regards to bat mitigation for wind farms. Received conflicting advice from different people in SNH which resulted in delays in obtaining a final decision on the appropriate mitigation to be implemented.”

“Different regions appear to have different approaches and advice on various issues. This can result in different levels of information/detail being required for the same assessments.”

“Some SNH staff say they won't give advice pre application, others are prepared to discuss issues. Some staff ask for particular surveys, others say they aren't necessary.”

“Area staff requesting changes to a SSSI which SNH Specialist Staff later decided the changes were not evidence based / reasonable.”

In addition, four respondents felt that some SNH staff are too focused on a single interest. For example:

“Some SNH reps are totally focussed on birds. Getting them to value habitats can be frustrating.”

Other inconsistencies mentioned were:

- Inconsistencies between SNH and SEPA (14 mentions)
- Inconsistencies between SNH and FCS (12 mentions)
- Inconsistencies between SNH and local authorities (5 mentions)
- Inconsistencies between SNH and Marine Scotland (5 mentions)
- Inconsistencies between SNH and HES (2 mentions)
- Inconsistencies between SNH and Scottish Water (1 mention)
- Inconsistencies between SNH and RSPB (1 mention)

6. PLANNING FOR DEVELOPMENT 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 the 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.

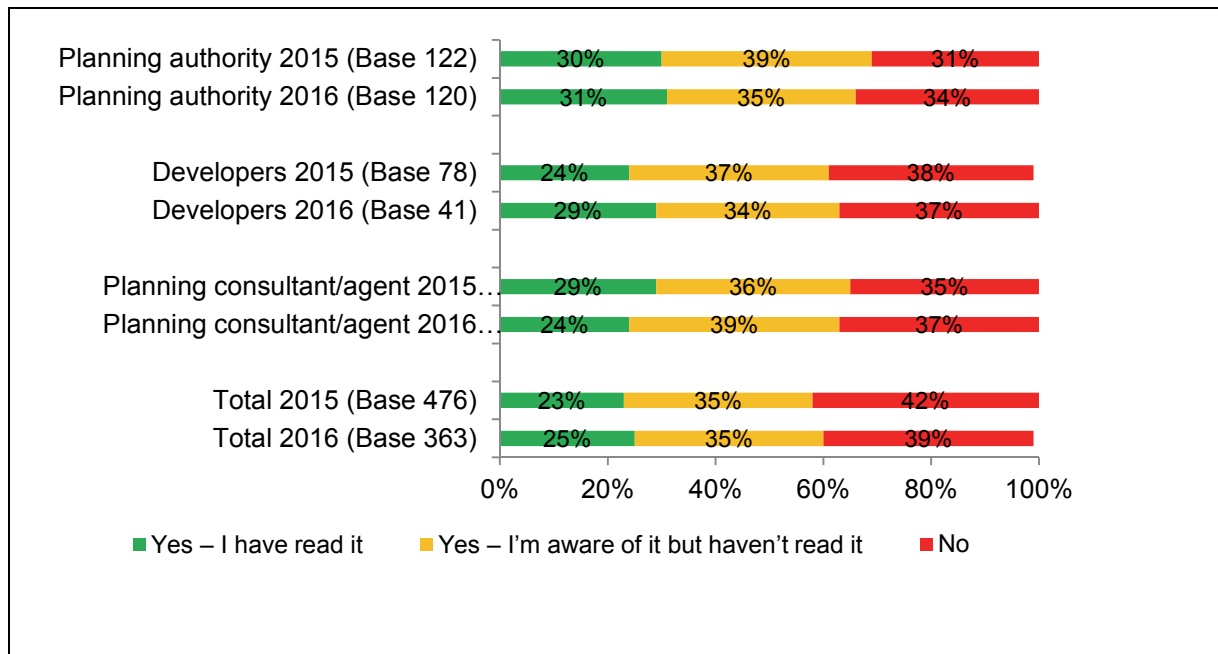


Figure 11. Awareness of Service Statement (2015 and 2016)

2016 Source: Q5

Figure 11 shows that over half of respondents (60%) are aware of the Service Statement, an increase on the 58% seen in 2015. This includes a quarter (25%) who have read it; a slight increase on the 23% who said they had read it in 2015.

Overall, 39% are not aware of the Service Statement, compared to 42% in 2015.

When we examine the 2016 data from larger sub-groups, planning authority respondents show highest levels of awareness (31% have read it and a further 35% are aware).

7. SNH'S ROLE IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

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 process. 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.

As was the case in 2015, there were 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. (91% of respondents).
- SNH will provide advice before a planning application has been submitted. (82%).
- A 'no comment' response does not mean that SNH supports the application (83%).
- SNH is not responsible for deciding whether an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is required (74%)
- SNH is dependent on adequate environmental information from developers for assessing development proposals (74%).

The majority of respondents correctly identified that:

- SNH advice on EIA developments will only refer to significant impacts on the natural heritage interests that are within their remit' (69%) this question was new in 2016.
- Extensions to existing wind farms will be treated, by SNH, in the same way as any other application (68%).
- SNH is not responsible for monitoring the mitigation measures arising from Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) (inc. protected species surveys) (61%).

A minority correctly identified that:

- SNH will not comment on all types of renewable energy proposals, regardless of technology or scale (46%).
- 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 (25%).
- With regard to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) development, SNH normally wishes to avoid being consulted on draft Environmental Statements (19%)

Looking at sub-group differences, those involved in the planning system on a professional basis; developers, planning consultants / agents and planning authority respondents; have a clearer picture of SNH's role in the planning process 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 (true) statement 'With regard to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) development, SNH normally wishes to avoid being consulted on draft Environmental Statements, 48% planning authority respondents said this was false.

Results from the 2016 and 2015 surveys are shown in the table below. Totals from the 2014 survey are also included for those questions which were asked in 2014.

Table 9. Understanding of SNH's role (2014, 2015 and 2016)

	Answered correctly						
	YEAR	Total	Devel oper %	Planning agent %	Planning auth. %	Area = Renew. %	Area = Hydro. %
	2016 Base 2015 Base	(363) (476)	(41) (78)	(46) (75)	(120) (122)	(95) (134)	(47) (61)
SNH is responsible for determining planning applications (FALSE)	2016	91	88	89	96	92	91
	2015	92	91	95	98	94	92
	2014	84					
A 'no comment' means that SNH supports the application (FALSE)	2016	83	85	78	86	89	87
	2015	77	73	80	86	75	69
	2014	57					
SNH will not provide advice before a planning application has been submitted (FALSE)	2016	82	78	93	84	86	91
	2015	81	85	84	80	87	93
	2014	67					
SNH is dependent on adequate environmental information from developers for assessing development proposals (TRUE)	2016	74	90	80	73	82	77
	2015	75	76	87	74	79	75
	2014	61					
SNH is responsible for deciding whether an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is required (FALSE)	2016	74	78	85	85	77	70
	2015	76	74	84	91	78	67
SNH advice on EIA developments will only refer to significant impacts on the natural heritage interests that are within their remit. (TRUE)	2016	69	68	72	67	71	77
	2015	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Extensions to existing wind farms will be treated, by SNH, in the same way as any other application (TRUE)	2016	68	73	72	66	79	79
	2015	61	64	76	53	78	67
SNH is responsible for monitoring the mitigation measures arising from Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) (FALSE)	2016	61	66	61	68	62	51
	2015	58	46	64	70	56	51
SNH will comment on all types of renewable energy proposals, regardless of technology or scale (FALSE)	2016	46	46	39	65	48	49
	2015	38	26	33	61	40	31
	2014	43					

Planning authorities and Marine Scotland must consult SNH on all planning applications that may impact on any aspect of Scotland's natural heritage (FALSE)	2016	25	7	20	52	15	11
	2015	26	8	9	65	13	7
	2014	28					
With regard to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) development, SNH normally wishes to avoid being consulted on draft Environmental Statements (TRUE)	2016	19	20	33	10	29	32
	2015	15	17	20	6	21	18

Source: 2016 Q6

Looking at questions that were asked in 2015 and then again in 2016, as shown in the table above, several statements show a positive movement in awareness from 2015 although some show a decrease.

Findings in relation to statements which had been included in 2014 mainly show a positive movement in awareness. However, the statement 'Planning authorities and Marine Scotland must consult SNH on all planning applications that may impact on any aspect of Scotland's natural heritage' has again shown negative movement.

The following Figure shows the overall proportions saying true and false at each statement in 2016.

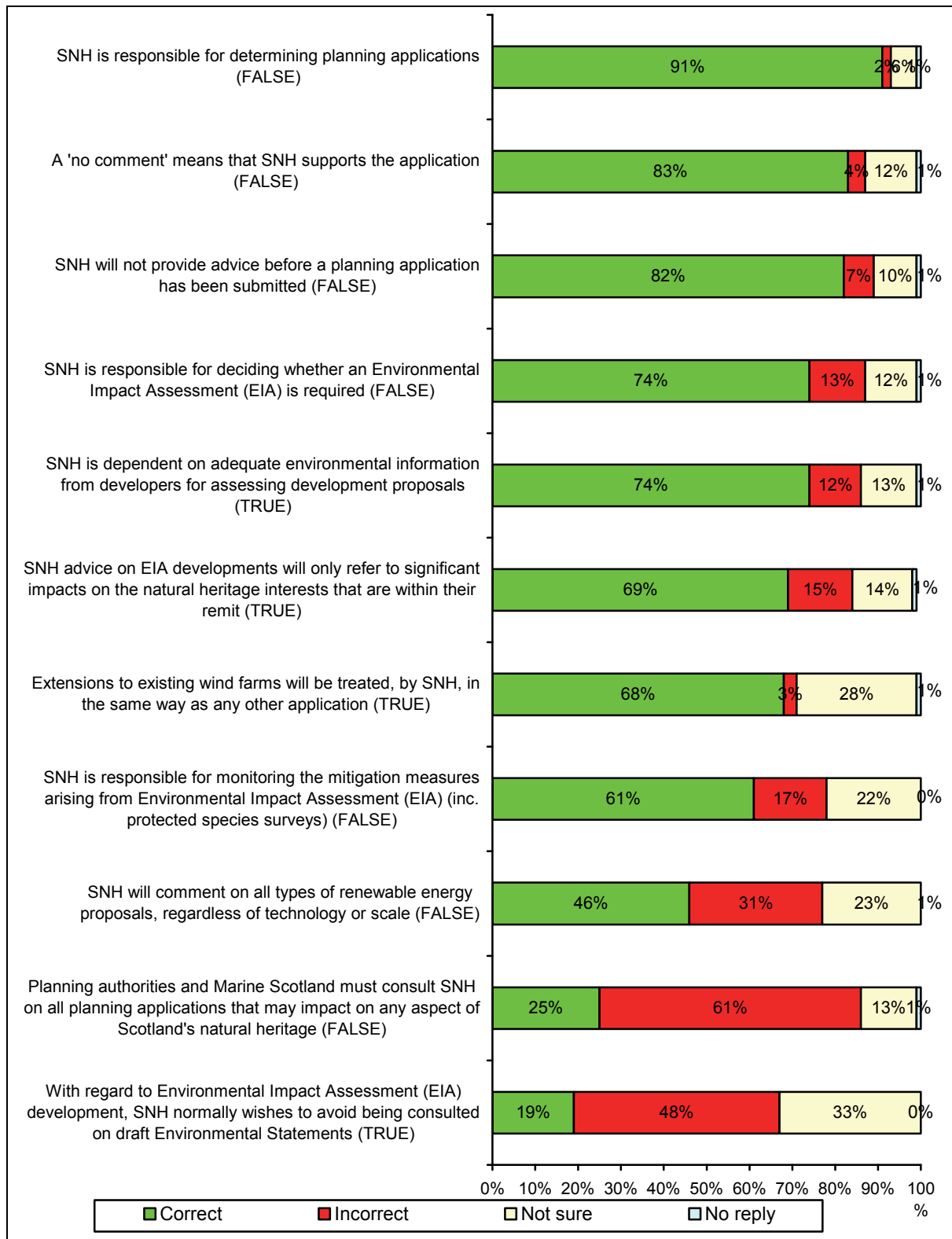


Figure 12. Understanding of SNH's role

Source: Q6 (Base=363)

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 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. (87%)
- In many cases, planning authorities and developers can identify and address any natural heritage impacts themselves using good practice guidance. (83%)
- SNH's approach to influencing development focuses on early and targeted engagement in the planning system. (81%) The wording of this question changed slightly from 2015 when it said: 'SNH's approach to influencing development focuses on **upstream** [changed to **early** in 2016] and targeted engagement in the planning system'

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. (55%)
- It is not SNH's responsibility to define the assessment methodologies at the scoping stage of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process. (53%)

A minority correctly identified that:

- The Service Statement applies to marine as well as terrestrial planning applications. (43%)
- 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. (39%)

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 process than other groups of respondents.

The table overleaf shows the sub-group data for this question from the 2015 and 2016 surveys.

Table 10. Understanding of SNH's Planning for Development service (2015 and 2016)

	YEAR	Answered correctly					
		Total	Devel oper	Planning agent	Planning auth.	Area = Renew.	Area = Hydro.
		% 2016 Base 2015 Base	% (363) (476)	% (41) (78)	% (46) (75)	% (120) (122)	% (95) (134)
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)	2016	93	93	96	98	97	100
	2015	93	94	96	95	93	89
SNH aims to help enable the right development in the right place (TRUE)	2016	87	88	96	88	91	94
	2015	81	76	83	85	80	80
In many cases, planning authorities and developers can identify and address any natural heritage impacts themselves using good practice guidance (TRUE)	2016	83	85	93	88	86	85
	2015	78	76	84	86	80	80
SNH's approach to influencing development focuses on early and targeted engagement in the planning system (TRUE)**	2016	81	73	76	90	78	77
	2015	50	42	52	69	44	44
SNH are required to provide relevant information to developers, on request, to assist in the preparation of the Environmental Statement (TRUE)	2016	55	63	70	53	59	57
	2015	60	69	75	54	67	62
It is SNH's responsibility to define the assessment methodologies at the scoping stage of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process (FALSE)	2016	53	59	74	50	65	49
	2015	49	45	59	54	57	51
The Service Statement applies to marine as well as terrestrial planning applications (TRUE)	2016	43	39	35	46	40	49
	2015	46	49	44	42	45	48
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)	2016	39	39	43	54	42	43
	2015	43	40	39	66	46	39

Source: Q7

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

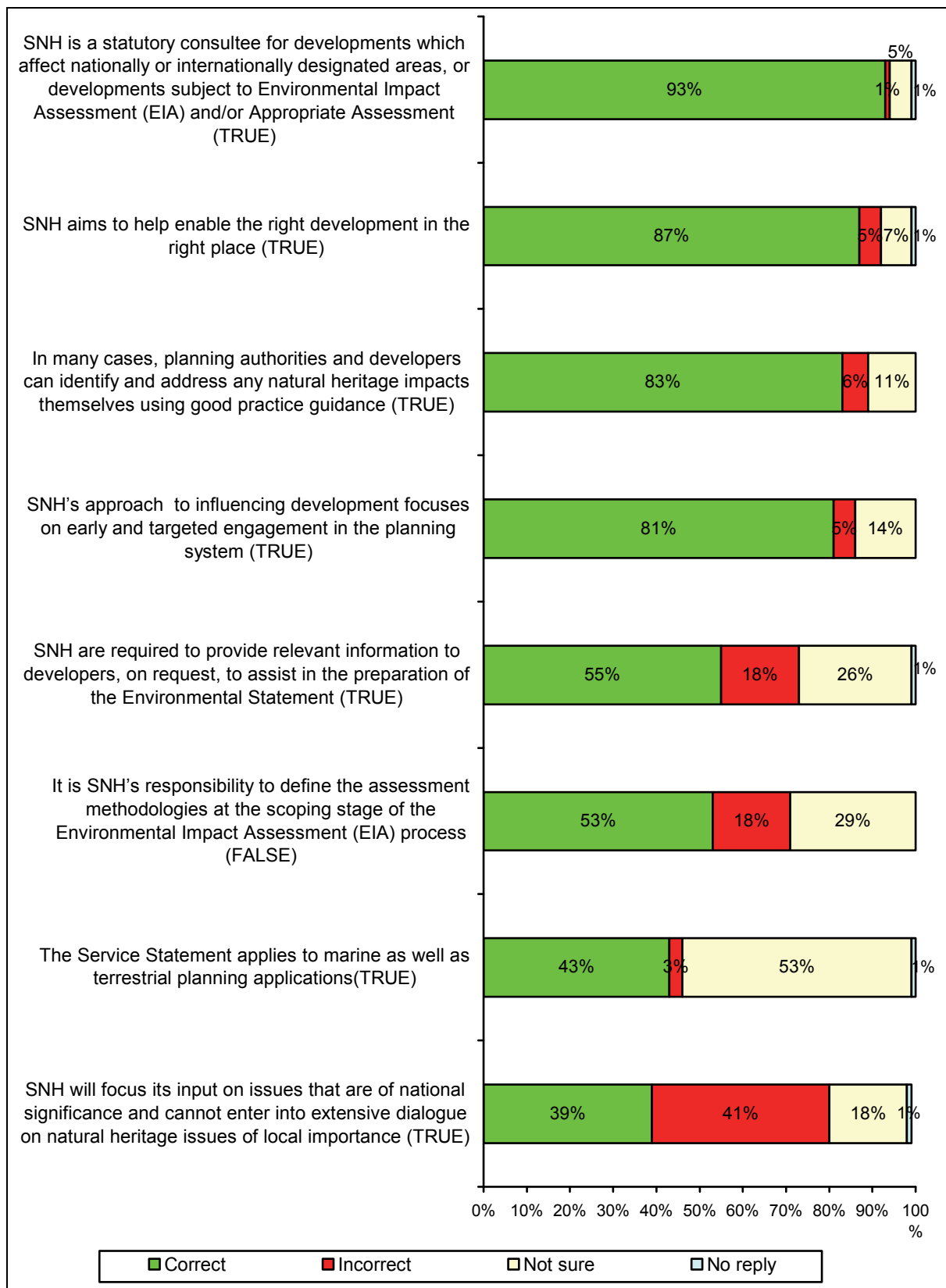


Figure 13. Understanding of SNH's Planning for Development service

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 (<http://www.snh.gov.uk/planning-and-development/planning-renewable-guidance/>).

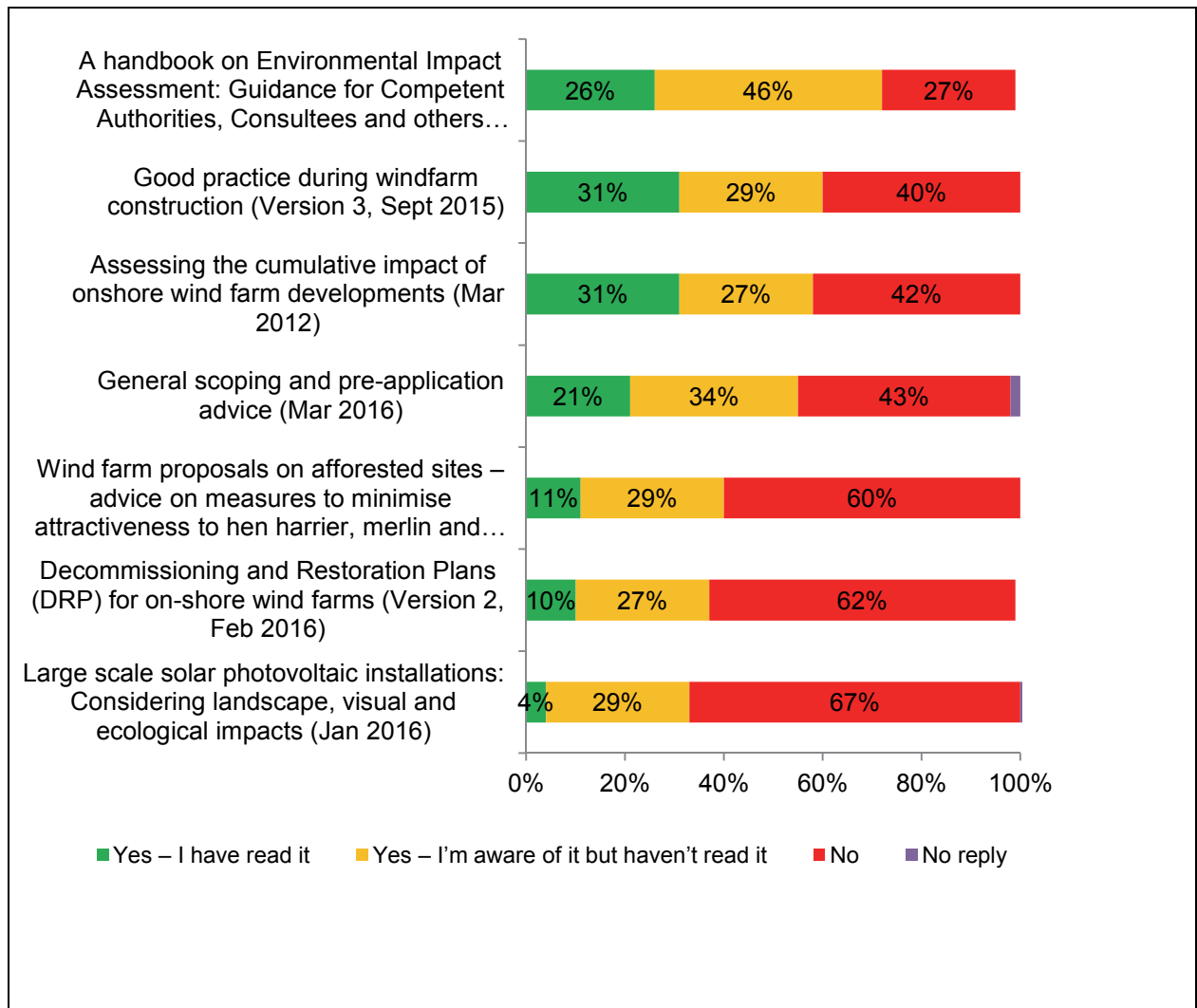


Figure 14. Awareness of SNH guidance

Source: Q8 (Base=363)

The table overleaf 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 % (363)	Devel oper % (41)	Planning agent % (46)	Planning auth. % (120)	Area = Renew. % (95)
A handbook on Environmental Impact Assessment: Guidance for Competent Authorities, Consultees and others involved in the EIA process in Scotland (4th Edition 2013)	Yes - Read	26	32	41	22	39
	Yes - Aware	46	44	41	56	40
	No	27	24	17	23	21
Wind farm proposals on afforested sites – advice on measures to minimise attractiveness to hen harrier, merlin and short-eared owl (Jan 2016)	Yes - Read	11	20	15	5	26
	Yes - Aware	29	12	41	32	26
	No	60	68	43	63	47
Assessing the cumulative impact of onshore wind farm developments (Mar 2012)	Yes - Read	31	29	52	35	57
	Yes - Aware	27	20	20	36	16
	No	42	51	28	29	27
General scoping and pre-application advice (Mar 2016)	Yes - Read	21	24	33	22	27
	Yes - Aware	34	32	26	46	32
	No	43	41	39	32	39
Decommissioning and Restoration Plans (DRP) for on-shore wind farms (Version 2, Feb 2016)	Yes - Read	10	7	22	10	17
	Yes - Aware	27	20	33	36	33
	No	62	73	46	54	51
Large scale solar photovoltaic installations: Considering landscape, visual and ecological impacts (Jan 2016)	Yes - Read	4	-	9	7	4
	Yes - Aware	29	17	33	43	32
	No	67	83	59	51	63
Good practice during windfarm construction (Version 3, Sept 2015)	Yes - Read	31	39	54	23	57
	Yes - Aware	29	24	24	40	20
	No	40	37	22	38	23

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.

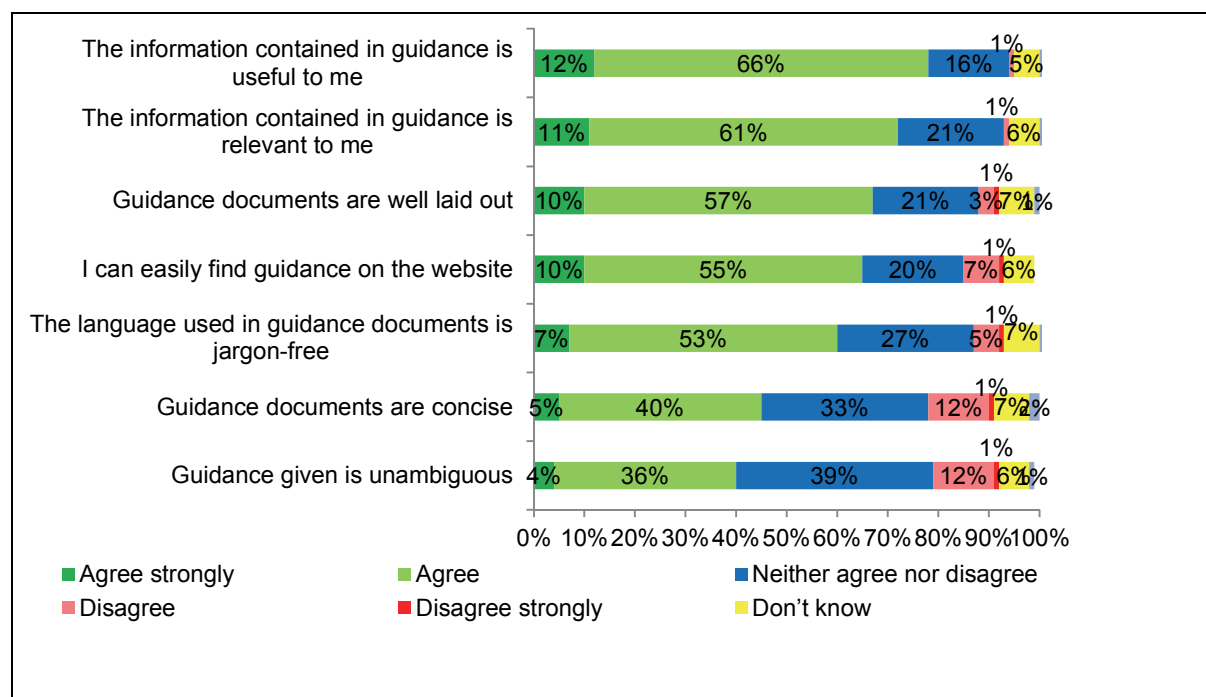


Figure 15a. Views on SNH guidance

Source: Q9 (Base=363)

Encouragingly, as in 2015, over half the respondents agree that:

- The information contained in guidance is useful to me (78% agreeing compared to only 1% disagreeing).
- The information contained in guidance is relevant to me (72% agreeing compared to only 1% disagreeing).
- I can easily find guidance on the website. (65% agreeing; 8% disagreeing).
- Guidance documents are well laid out (67% agreeing; 4% disagreeing).
- The language used in guidance documents is jargon-free. (60% agreeing; 6% disagreeing).

As the Figure below shows, almost all of the statements saw positive improvements this year and all show an improvement since 2014 (one of the statements was not included in 2014). The average scores (out of a potential 5) for the 2016, 2015 and 2014 surveys were:

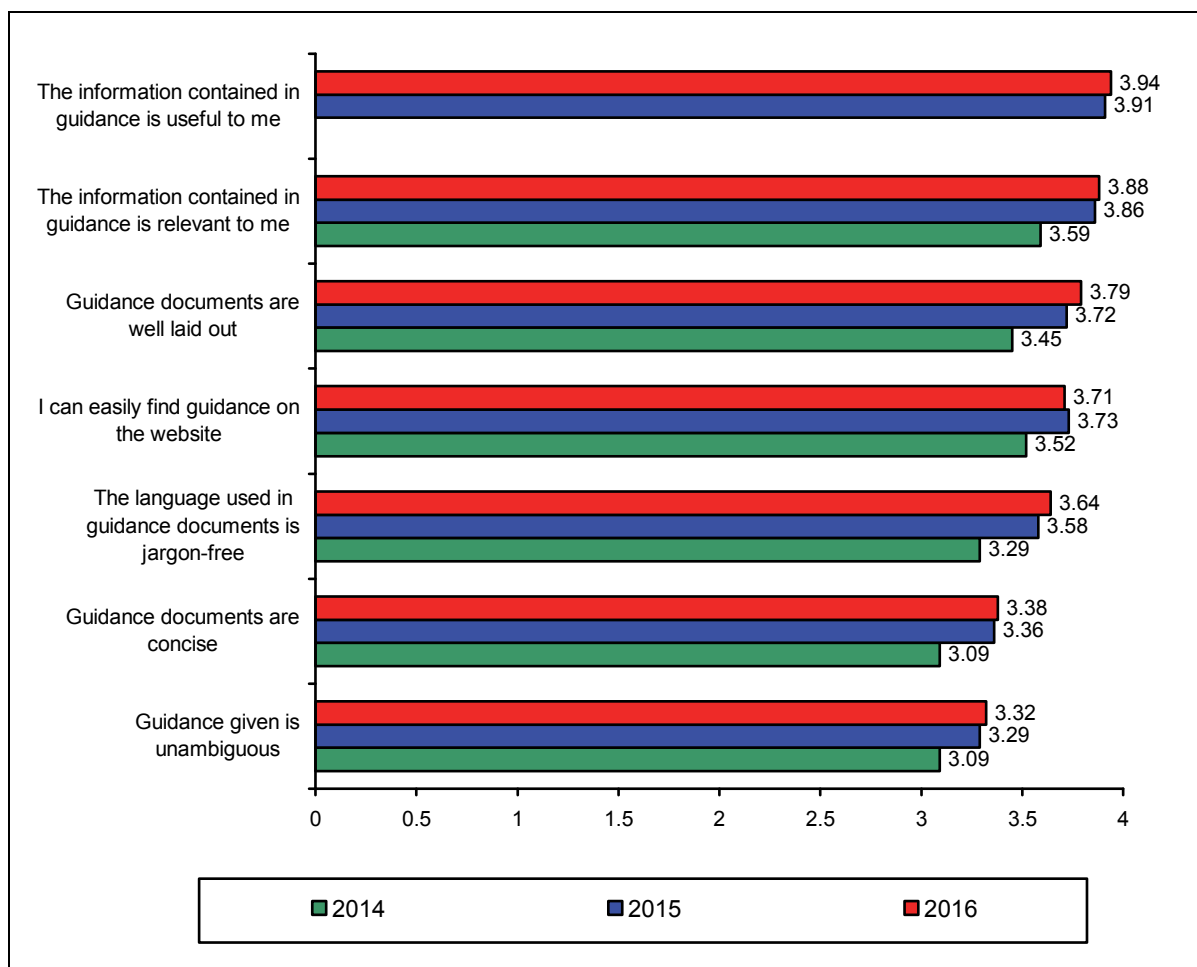


Figure 15b. Understanding of SNH's role (2014, 2015 and 2016)

When we examine the 2016 sub-group data by organisation type, it is once again mainly professionals involved in planning for development who are more positive about SNH guidance.

The table below looks at the main sub-groups. 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.

Table 12. Average score by sub-group (statements on guidance)

	Total	Developer	Planning agent	Planning auth.
The information contained in guidance is useful to me	3.94	3.90	4.09	3.87
The information contained in guidance is relevant to me	3.88	3.98	4.00	3.81
Guidance documents are well laid out	3.79	3.92	3.98	3.72
I can easily find guidance on the website	3.71	3.78	3.78	3.66
The language used in guidance documents is jargon-free	3.64	3.78	3.86	3.55
Guidance documents are concise	3.38	3.45	3.36	3.52
Guidance given is unambiguous	3.32	3.12	3.33	3.35

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.

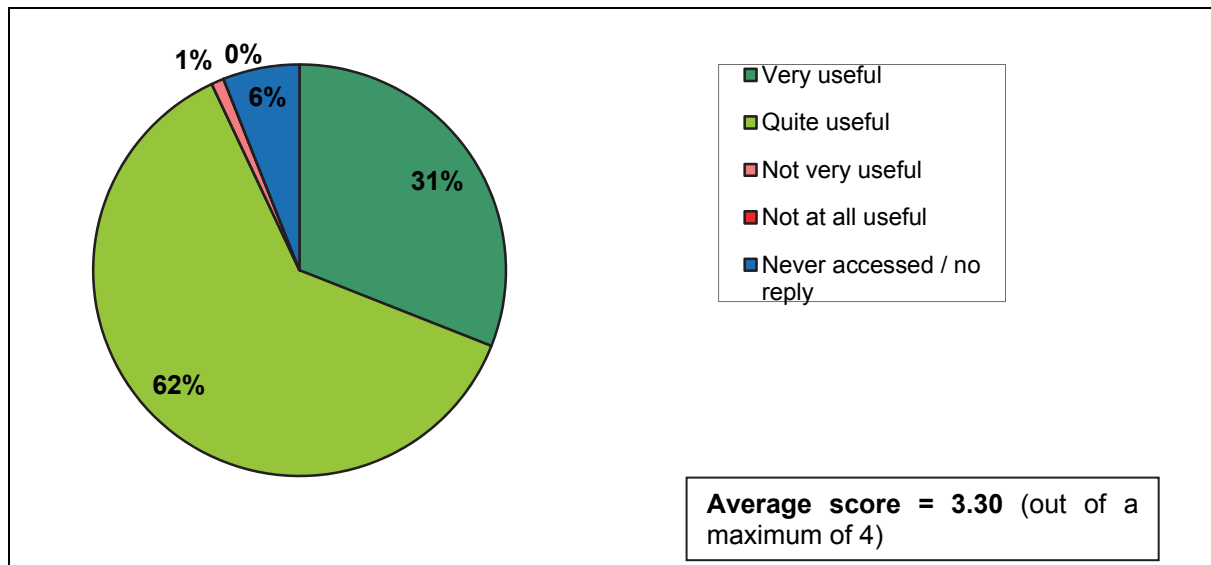
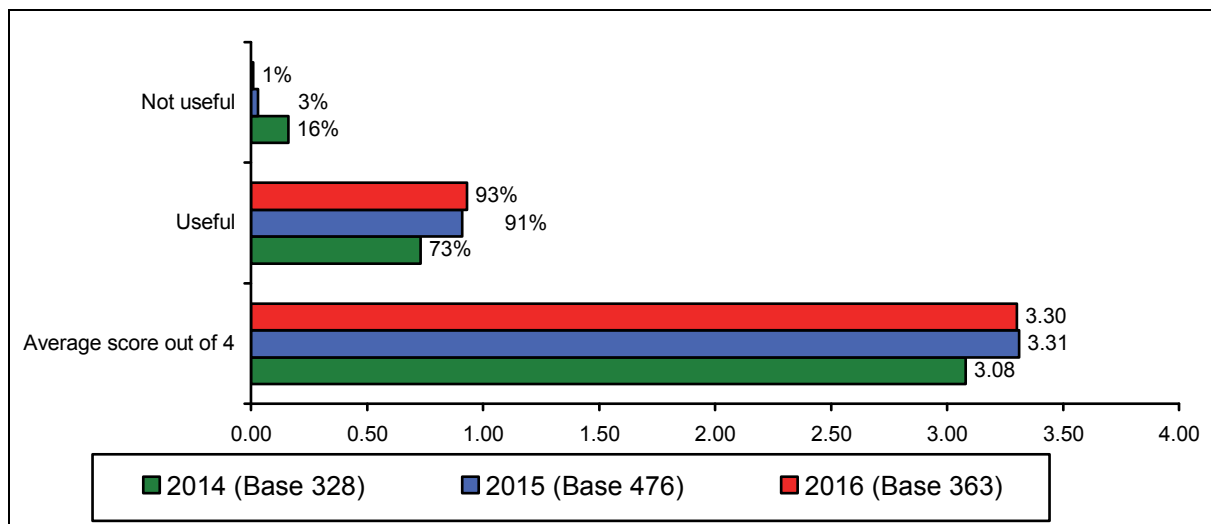


Figure 16a. Usefulness of information and / or guidance accessed through SNH’s website

Source: Q16 (Base=363)

As shown in Figure 16a above, the response to this question is very positive with almost all respondents (93%) describing the information and / or guidance they had accessed via the website as ‘very’ or ‘quite’ useful. Only 1% said this was not useful to any extent.

Results show a slight increase from 2015 when 91% described the information and / or guidance as ‘very’ or ‘quite’ useful. The following Figure shows the data from 2016 as well as from 2015 and 2014.



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. Over half of the respondents (63%) did not provide any further commentary; and most comments were made by very small numbers of respondents (5% or fewer).

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

“The guidance available is comprehensive enough.”

“I am unable to think of anything specific. In general, I find the guidance very useful.”

The main suggestion was for SNH to make guidance less wordy, more concise or streamlined (mentioned by 5%). The need for consistency in advice, guidance or application by SNH staff was mentioned by 3%. For example:

“Be more concise, easier to access and clearer to use - ie outline that it is the view of SNH and carries as much weight as a formal response.”

“Make it shorter, less of it, use a checklist approach.”

“Some of them can be quite wordy.”

“Some guidance could be summarised better. A lot of description and reasoning is essential, but a bullet point concise summary in each section of guidance is essential to help busy planning officers / specialist advisers in planning authorities get directly to the critical information.”

“Be consistent in its implementation across all areas of Scotland.”

“I feel that sometimes there is a difference between guidance and the subjective views of individual officers on the ground.”

8.5 Planning and Development e-newsletter

In 2016, a new question was added asking respondents: ‘Did you find SNH’s Planning and Development e-newsletter (<http://dmtrk.net/1FWH-4CJD8-A5NE1KM498/cr.aspx>) useful?’ The Figure below shows that most of those who were aware of the newsletter did find it useful (37% of the total or 86% of those aware of the e-newsletter).

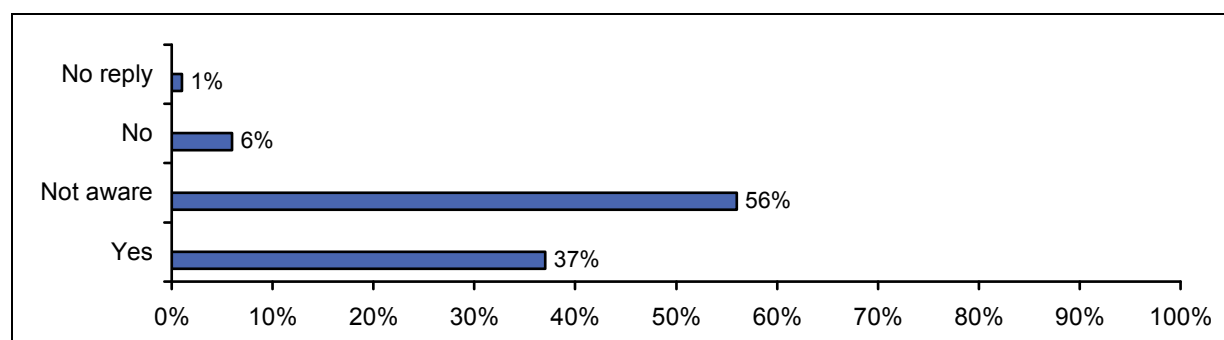


Figure 17. Usefulness of SNH’s Planning and Development e-newsletter

Source: Q11a (Base=363)

Respondents were also asked to say what else SNH could do in support of the guidance to better help other organisations consider natural heritage assets. Hosting a programme of sharing good practice events proved the most popular suggestion across most groups. The top answer from planning authority respondents, however, was 'Deliver capacity building and/or continued professional development training'.

Table 13. What else could SNH do in support of their guidance

	%
Host a programme of sharing good practice events	65
Deliver capacity building and/or continued professional development training	55
Deliver a programme of webinars aimed at planning professionals	37
Develop online, interactive scenario based eLearning activities	36
Develop video podcasts that demonstrate best practice and guidance in action	33
Other	6
Don't know	13

Source: Q11b (Base=363)

8.6 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).

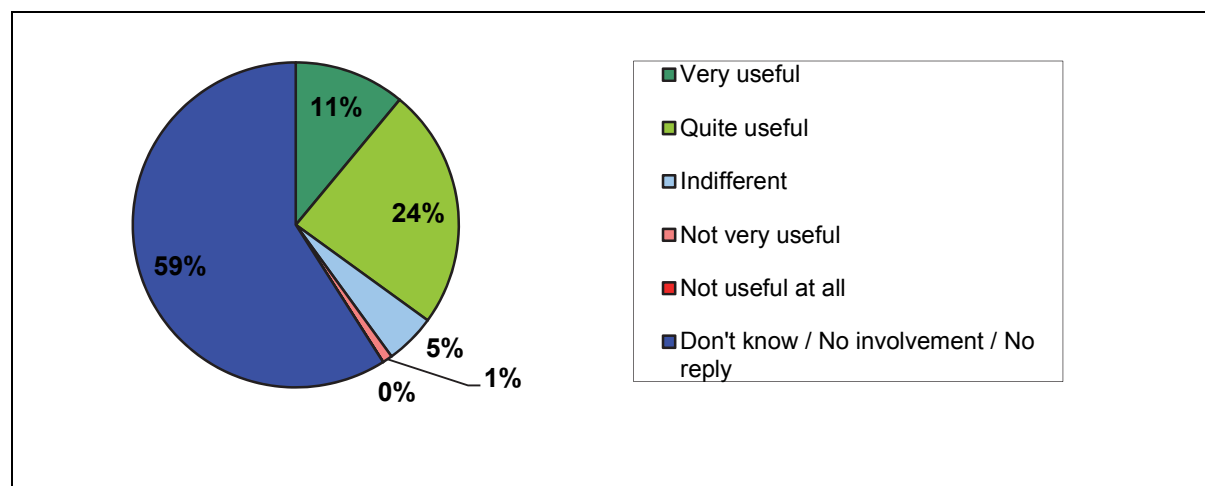


Figure 18a. Usefulness of SNH's responses in relation to SEA

Source: Q17 (Base=363)

As can be seen in the table above, higher proportions of respondents (35%) found this very or quite useful, compared to only 1% 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. These figures are very similar to those seen in 2015.

Taking out those who said don't know/no involvement shows 85% of those who gave a rating said very or quite useful; an increase on the 81% seen in 2015.

The Figure below shows findings from 2016 and from 2015 and 2014, based on data from those who gave a rating.

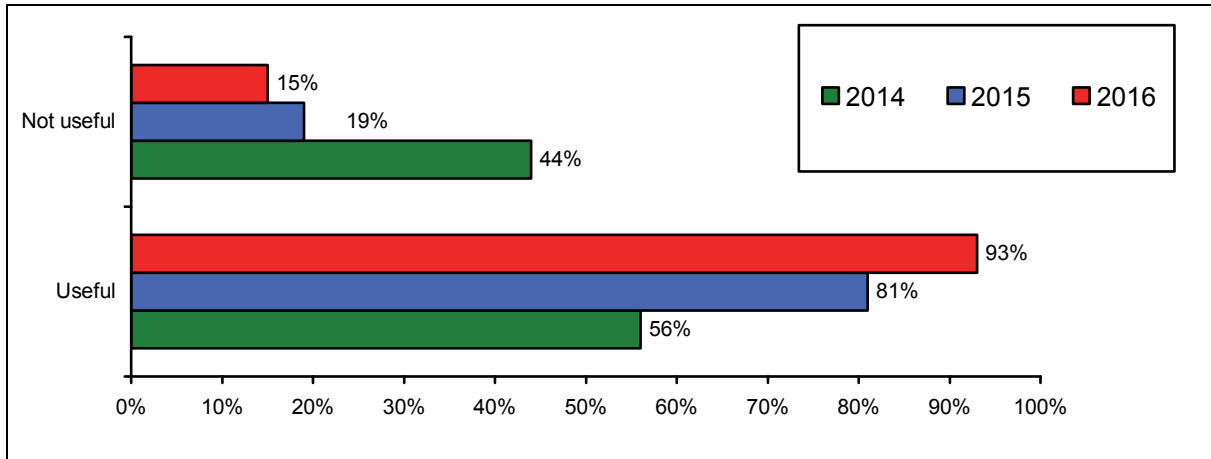


Figure 18b. Usefulness of SNH's responses in relation to SEA (2014, 2015 and 2016) (excluding don't know/no involvement)

9. APPROACH

9.1 SNH's focus

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.

In 2015, respondents had identified Strategic and Local Development Plans as the area most would like to see SNH focus their efforts. In 2016 a new option was added: 'pre-application discussion' and this received the highest average score in 2016.

Table 14. Focus of SNH efforts

	Average 2016	Average 2015
Pre-application discussion	8.32	n/a
Habitats Regulations Appraisal	8.02	7.85
Strategic and Local Development Plans	7.98	7.91
Strategic Environmental Assessment	7.55	7.48
Building capacity in others through guidance and training (2015: Capacity building)	7.54	6.93
National plans	7.29	7.53
Design Frameworks, Development Briefs, Masterplanning	7.12	6.98

Source: Q18

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).

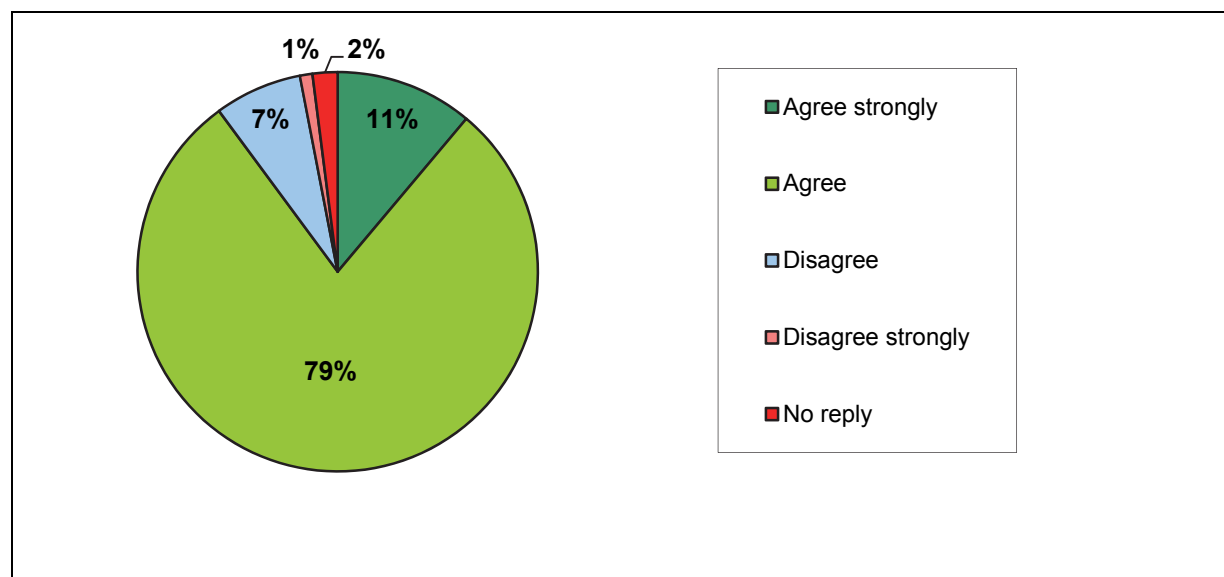


Figure 19a. Whether SNH's approach to guidance and advice is enabling

Source: Q19 (Base=363)

As shown in the Figure above, most said they agreed, giving an average score of 3.02 (out of a possible 4). 79% 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 planning agents gave the lowest (2.91).

The following Figure shows that there has been a small increase in those agreeing; 2.97 in 2015 and 3.02 in 2016. This question was not included in the 2014 survey.

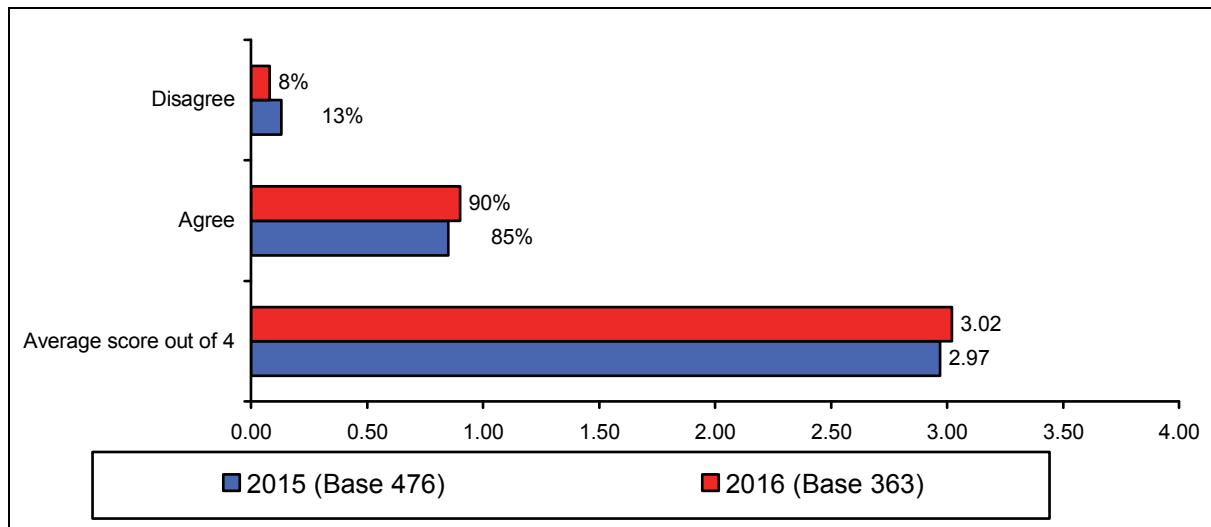


Figure 19b. Whether SNH's approach to guidance and advice is enabling 2015 and 2016

10. SATISFACTION

10.1 Satisfaction with SNH's service

In 2015 and again in 2016, respondents were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with the service received from SNH.

In 2015, respondents gave an average score of 7.39 (out of a possible 10). In 2016, this rose to 7.59.

The following table shows the average scores (out of a possible 10) for all of the respondent sub-groups. There are some differences between 2015 and 2016 however the very small base sizes for some groups should be noted.

Table 15. Overall satisfaction with the service received from SNH

2016 Bases	Average 2016	Average 2015
Community or other local organisation (Base: 8)	8.17	8.50
Planning authority (Base: 120)	7.80	7.78
Another organisation representing interests of developers (Base: 31)	7.71	7.73
Non-government organisation (NGO) or voluntary body (Base: 16)	7.67	7.50
Government agency (Base: 34)	7.58	7.30
Special interest group (Base: 2)	7.50	6.00
Developer (Base: 41)	7.49	6.79
Scottish Government department (Base: 23)	7.39	7.96
Planning consultant or agent (Base: 46)	7.11	7.22
Individual (Base: 11)	6.45	7.20
Other (Base: 30)	7.93	7.31
TOTAL	7.59	7.39

Source: Q21

Looking at actual scores:

- Only one respondent (a developer) said they were not at all satisfied
- 255 (70%) gave a score of 7, 8 or 9
- 37 (10%) respondents gave a score of 10, completely satisfied; these came from all groups except the individual and special interest groups.

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.

More than half of respondents (55%) chose not to respond to this question. The following Figure shows the comments made by the largest numbers of respondents (3% and above) along with the percentage giving the same response in 2015.

The main themes in 2016 are the same as those seen in 2015; the top comment in both years was the need for more consistency within SNH (13% in 2015, 10% in 2016).

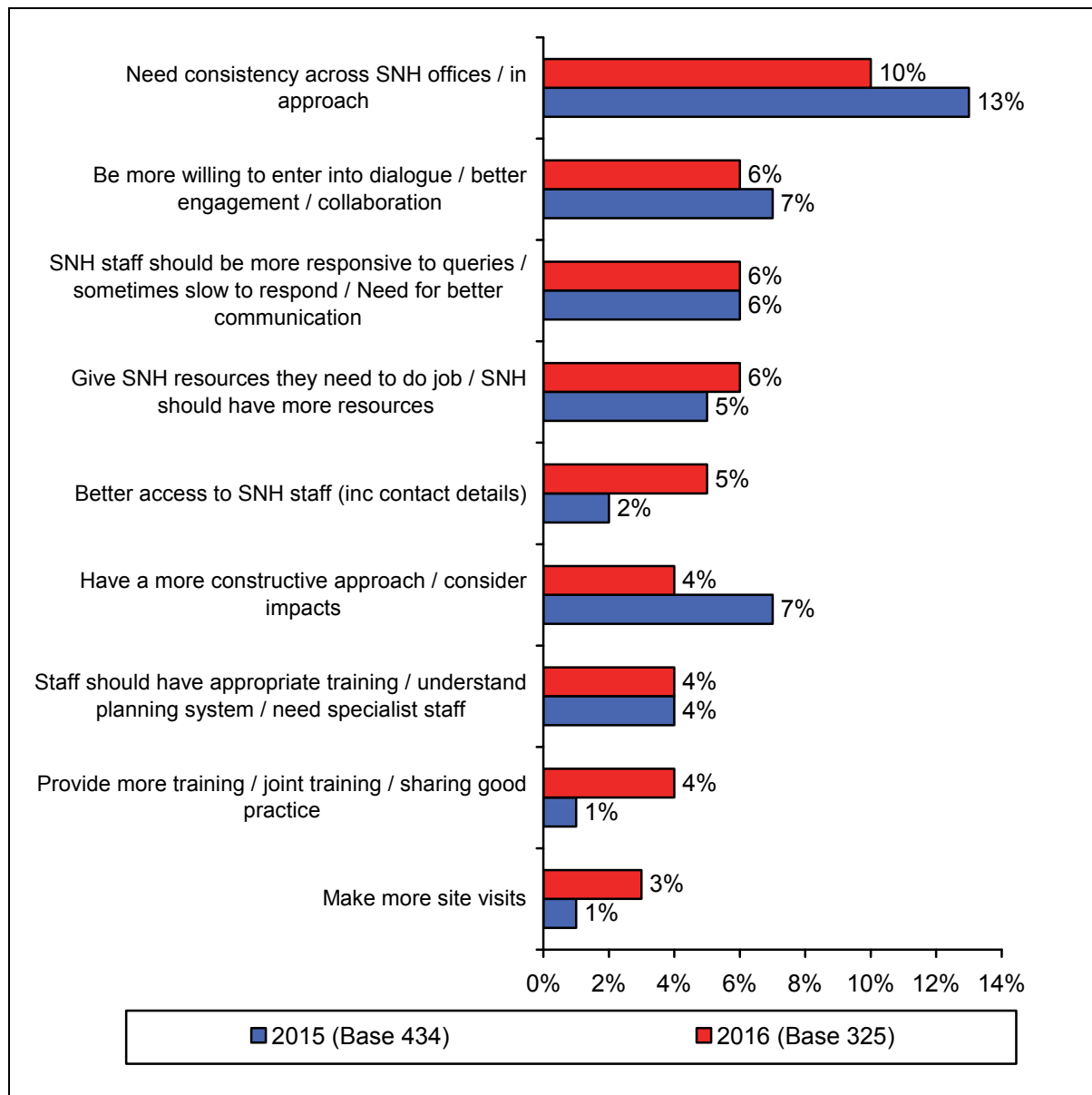


Figure 20. What SNH could do to achieve 10 out of 10

Source: Q21a

The theme noted in the highest percentage of responses (10%) was the need for consistency across SNH offices or for consistency in approach. For example:

“SNH seems to be inconsistent in its approach between offices and staff members. The service provided appears to be disjointed from the service statement and guidance. These issues must be resolved, and communication channels improved, in order to provide an effective service for business while protecting and enhancing Scotland's natural heritage.” (planning agent)

“Improve inconsistency between staff. There are many excellent staff who truly understand the process and SNH's role as a statutory advisor, and there are staff who simply don't.” (respondent representing interests of developers)

“Better engagement, more staff on the ground and better consistency across offices/officers and with other NGO's that have competing interests.” (developer)

“Clear, consistent advice and early engagement particularly in SEA process” (planning authority)

6% 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:

“Tailoring responses to specific issues/cases, increase direct engagement.” (planning authority)

“When giving scoping responses, take a little more time to fully read the scoping request documents. Sometimes it feels as if we are getting stock generic answers to our scoping requests. Detail we need as consultants from SNH is whether you are happy with our proposed survey efforts etc.” (respondent representing interests of developers)

“I miss the days of greater 'made to measure' advice on planning matters.” (planning authority)

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

“Quicker response time to consultation - more staff resources” (planning agent)

“Improve turn-around time on responses to queries and review of documents.” (developer)

There was a feeling, from 6% that SNH require more resources to do their job, for example:

“Increase resources so that advice is timeous and considered.” (planning agent)

“Resources often stretched, provision of more resources would improve service.” (respondent representing interests of developers)

5% felt there needed to be better and/or easier access to SNH staff, for example:

“shorter guidance and being clearer on who to contact in different areas - not everyone understands SNH's internal structure.” (planning authority)

www.snh.gov.uk

© Scottish Natural Heritage 2017
ISBN: 978-1-78391-428-9

Policy and Advice Directorate, Great Glen House,
Leachkin Road, Inverness IV3 8NW
T: 01463 725000

You can download a copy of this publication from the SNH website.



Scottish Natural Heritage
Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba

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