



# Wyre Forest District Council

Planning & Regulatory Services Directorate

## Building Control Section

# Local Marketing Strategy 2010 - 2013

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# CONTENTS

Background	Page 1
Context	Page 1
Introduction	Page 2
Previous Progress / Performance	Page 2
Market Share	Page 3
Marketing Organisation	Page 6
Key Objectives & Targets	Page 7
Strategy	Page 7
Action Plan	Page 8
Resources	Page 9
Review	Page 10
<b>Appendix 1</b> Risk Assessment of Key Objectives	
<b>Appendix 2</b> Action Schedule	

## **WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL BUILDING CONTROL SECTION**

### ***LOCAL MARKETING STRATEGY 2010 - 2013***

#### **BACKGROUND**

The Building Regulations form part of a comprehensive legislative framework governing the design and construction of building work throughout England and Wales.

The object of these regulations is:

- Securing the health, safety and welfare of people in and around buildings
- Conservation of fuel and power
- Provision of access and facilities for disabled people

Legislative changes have 'de-regulated' the market for these services, enabling private sector competition and devolved charge setting to local authorities, with the proviso that Building Control should be completely self-financing taking one financial year with another.

#### **CONTEXT**

The context for this marketing strategy derives from the Council's range of linked plans and strategies that underpin the way we deliver our services.

The District's second Community Strategy 'Making a Real Difference 2008 – 2014' sets out the Community's shared vision and priorities, and links very closely with the Council's Corporate Plan, which outlines the Council's values and identifies how it will conduct its business in order to deliver its strategic aims and objectives.

The Building Control Service operates within the Community Strategy Theme of A Better Environment for Today and Tomorrow and the Corporate Aim of "a vibrant local economy", where the key priority area of District – wide regeneration aims to support and promote development in accordance with adopted plans, regulation and policies, which contribute to a safe, sustainable, attractive and accessible environment.

The Planning and Regulatory Services Directorate produces an annual Service Business Plan explaining how its own services work towards achieving the strategic aims and priorities as defined by the Corporate Plan. Feeding into this is Building Control's own 3 year Business Plan, which translates the Directorate Plan into more specific targets and actions.

## INTRODUCTION

The Planning and Regulatory Services Directorate Business Plan 2010 - 2011 includes a 'SWOT' analysis of the section highlighting internal strengths and weaknesses as well as external opportunities and threats. This provides a basis for evaluating the current competitive position of the service and, in conjunction with the Building Control trading account, forms part of the sections own business plan 2008 – 2011. This states that *"the aim of the Building Control Section is to provide a value for money Building Control Service based on clearly defined outputs, programmes and budgets which, through its well informed decisions, creates and maintains a safe built environment in the Wyre Forest area"*.

Operating in a competitive environment and in order to remain an effective force in service delivery, it is important that our marketing strategy is continually reviewed and updated. Comments and suggestions from customers are gathered through surveys, focus groups, seminars and continuous feedback through regular contact with our clients, and are fed into the development of the strategy. As the strategy evolves, we will continue to listen to the needs and requirements of people in the market place to ensure our service remains relevant and consistent. The aim of this strategy is to maintain and extend our market share whilst addressing the changing needs of our customers.

## PREVIOUS PROGRESS / PERFORMANCE

Since this strategy was first adopted in 2001 we have made significant progress in introducing new initiatives and working practices to enhance and improve upon service delivery standards and procedures. This is borne out in our Customer survey results which show an improvement in the number of people who think that we provide a 'value-for-money' service (80% in 2001 to 85% in 2007), and those who rate the standard of site inspection as 'very satisfactory' increasing from 56% in 2003 to 65% in 2007.

Performance is constantly measured over a range of areas as indicated below:

<b>Performance Indicator</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>2006/07</b>	<b>2007/08</b>	<b>2008/09</b>
Initial Registration	3 Days	94.3%	94.9%	98.5%
Application Checked	3 Weeks	61.0%	79.0%	93.0%
Completion Certificate Issued.	5 Days	80.0 %	97.0%	99.0%

These figures are published in our biennial Newsletter, which has been enhanced by the addition of a Development Control / Forward Planning news page. We have, also, been working closely with Development Control on the establishment of service level agreements for the Enforcement process and the Development Team Approach, which both sit comfortably with our objective of providing a more customer – orientated Building Control service.

In conjunction with other Building Control sections throughout the County, we have worked to produce standard forms and advice leaflets, together with common protocol agreements with Severn Trent Water Authority, Hereford and Worcester Fire Brigade and The Care Quality Commission. We see this internal and external joint - working as crucial to improving service performance and delivery, and will continue to work closely with other service providers, outside agencies and partners.

Maintaining our ISO 9001 management accreditation is vital to our business in terms of the confidence it gives our existing and potential customers. It is proof of our quality management standards and our ability to maintain our business based upon effective practices and procedures.

Looking to the future, building control is facing many challenges to the way the service is provided. With the ever-present competition from the private sector a continual threat to service provision, local authority building control has developed new ways of operating in terms of structure and performance.

Wyre Forest Building Control has adopted some of these initiatives to maintain and improve our business potential. We have numerous partnerships in operation with local agents and act as partner to Worcestershire County Property Services on behalf of the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Building Control Group.

Also, we are actively exploiting opportunities for joint working with neighbouring authorities to secure a continued improvement in resilience and robustness in the service that we provide. Examples of this type of working are already in place in various parts of the country.

## **MARKET SHARE**

The market we are targeting ranges over a wide area encompassing not only the professional world of architects, surveyors and engineers, but also commercial and industrial developers and the general public. The size of this market is boundless although obviously dependent on the economic climate of the day.

Charge income from this market covers three areas of works:

- new residential (schedule 1);
- domestic extensions (schedule 2);
- commercial, industrial and all other works (schedule 3).

Schedule 1 work is the only sector with long established competition in the shape of the NHBC who locally, over the last 3 years, have achieved 30 – 40% market share. Cost of service is invariably a determining factor in the selection of service provider, but the ability to offer a complimentary warranty scheme, something which LABC has only just recently been able to provide, has allowed the NHBC a commercial advantage.

Schedule 2 is an area in which, from early 2002, Approved Inspectors have been allowed to compete. However due to the very nature of people involved in domestic extensions, (i.e. small building companies through to 'one man band' and DIY enthusiasts) it is a segment of the market which is difficult to predict and control efficiently, thus providing a drain on both financial and human resources. Therefore, due to insufficient profit motivation for private sector providers, LABC maintains a large section of the market.

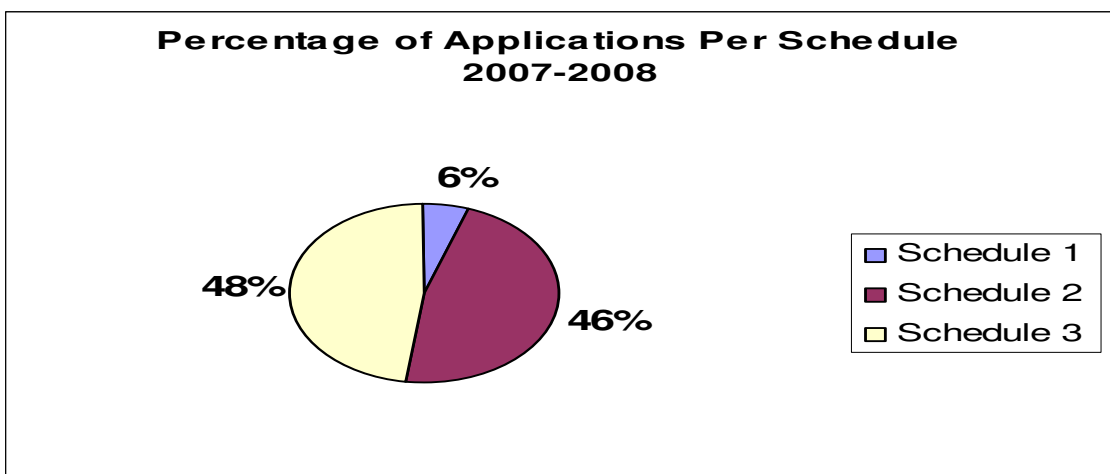
Generally speaking, the majority of L.A.'s 'surplus' generated on the fee earning trading account used to come from Schedule 3 – an area of work considered profitable by the private sector, which targets the major companies on a national scale. Large profit margins are attainable in this more aggressive sector with the choice of service provider often based on 'lowest cost' denominators. LABC market share has fallen gradually over recent years as a result of increased competition from the private sector.

**LABC Market Share 2007/2008**

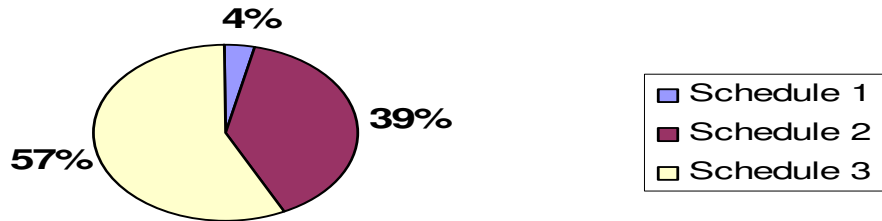
	<b>Schedule 1</b>	<b>Schedule 2</b>	<b>Schedule 3</b>
<b>Wyre Forest BC</b>	45%	99.2%	65%
<b>National</b>	55%	0.8%	35%

**LABC Market Share 2008/2009**

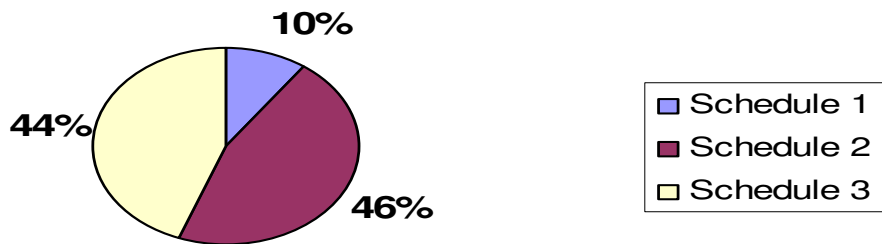
	<b>Schedule 1</b>	<b>Schedule 2</b>	<b>Schedule 3</b>
<b>Wyre Forest BC</b>	79%	99.6%	77%
<b>National</b>	21%	0.4%	23%



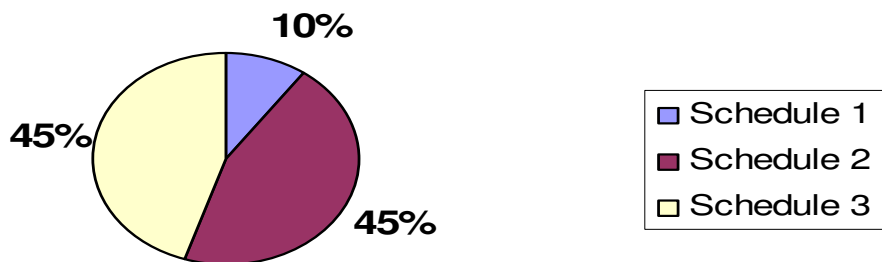
**Percentage of Applications Per Schedule  
2008-2009**



**Submission Fee Income Per Schedule  
2007-2008**



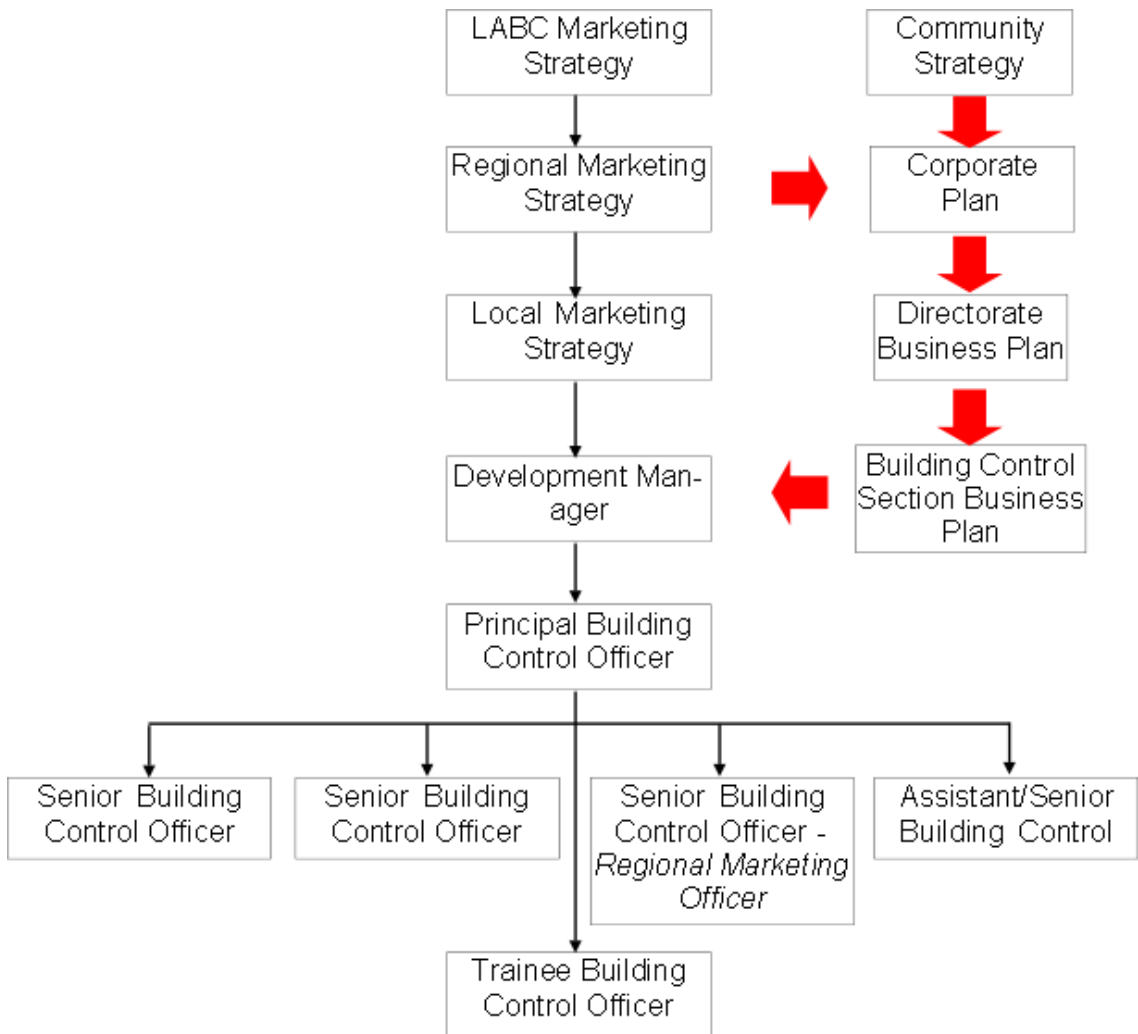
**Submission Fee Income Per Schedule  
2008-2009**



## MARKETING ORGANISATION

The strategy has not been produced in isolation, however, and it rightly draws upon the L.A.B.C. National Marketing Strategy, the Regional Marketing Strategy, the Corporate Plan, current Directorate Business Plan 2010/2011, and the Section's own Business Plan and Level of Service document.

The lines of authority and communication for marketing are set out in the following marketing flow chart:-





## **KEY OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS**

In order to achieve our stated aim, we have a number of key objectives:

1. Recover all relevant costs through charges over a rolling three year accounting period
2. Focus on the speed, efficiency and quality of service delivery in an attempt to achieve our performance targets as laid out in our Level of Service document.
3. Continually look for new ways of operating and broadening the scope of the service that are clear, understandable, user friendly and meet the needs of all our customers
4. Strengthen and improve upon customer feedback.

In order to meet our aims and objectives we have set ourselves clear targets. As part of the overall strategy we will endeavour to limit the decrease in Wyre Forest market share of the commercial sector to 5% between April 2010 and March 2013. We will also aim to increase our market share in the housing sector by 10% and to maintain our current position in schedule 2 category for the same period.

Please refer to Appendix 1 – Risk Assessment of Key Objectives.

## **STRATEGY**

In order to be successful in achieving the key objectives, the following strategy is to be adopted:

- To increase the profile of Wyre Forest Building Control to all existing and potential partners and customers and to raise their awareness of the national initiatives and benefits to be gained by using L.A.B.C.
- To ensure closer working relations within the region and with the National Business Development Team
- To strengthen our 'project tracking' methods from planning applications, local press information or other relevant sources
- To build and strengthen our liaisons with local professional and trade bodies and establish a comprehensive database of customers, identifying and developing contacts within the industry
- To embrace mobile / flexible working as part of our working practices and procedures to help improve our responsiveness to customer requirements.
- To continue to explore and develop the potential for joint working with neighbouring authorities as a way forward

- To further develop and improve on communication to our customers, keeping them continually informed and aware of developments and improvements to our service provision through brochures, promotional items, newsletters and regional seminars and presentations etc.
- To build upon the existing range of customer information leaflets
- To develop our marketing and advertising campaign, whilst encouraging and taking into account customer feedback as a means of improving service delivery
- To continually improve our I.T. systems as part of the delivery of e-government objectives, maximising the use of the Worcestershire Hub, updating our presence on the Wyre Forest web site and moving towards digital data processing and map handling via the internet.

### **ACTION PLAN**

- Research and investment will be focused on developing our Information Technology systems to support the provision of better quality services and performance. We will continue to encourage the use of electronic plan submission by involving staff and customers in training exercises. It will also be acknowledged that a proportion of customers will not have access to computers and will, therefore, require, and possibly prefer, a more traditional means of communication.
- The Building Control Team will maximise contacts with key building control decision makers by ensuring regular communication via written, verbal or face to face discussions. The Development Manager will maintain the annual focus group meetings of customers to review the service provision.
- We will explore the development of a customer/service matrix, which will provide information on annual and future trends in usage to allow resources to be maximised in areas where the market share is falling.
- The Building Control Team will continually improve and enhance their efforts to promote customer awareness of the latest service, regulatory and promotional developments and initiatives. We will continue to produce the twice yearly newsletter, increase and develop the range of advice leaflets and arrange annual seminars for local customers. Participation in the L.A.B.C. 'Building Excellence Awards' scheme will also be actively pursued and encouraged.
- Building Control will maintain and build on it's contacts with Local, Regional and National marketing strategies to ensure co-operation and co-ordination and to facilitate exchange of market intelligence and information.
- The Building Control Team will promote the 'added value' of the service through the Development Team Approach utilising existing internal and external links with consultees and other regulatory bodies.

- We will regularly monitor the service provision performance against the LABC's 'Quality Performance Matrix' indicator to ensure continual improvement in the quality and scope of the overall service. Our present score is 71.5% and the target will be to achieve a score of 72.5% by March 2011 and in the range of 74% – 78% by 2013.
- We will use our ISO 9001 accreditation to demonstrate the efficiency and effectiveness of our processes and procedures, thus raising customer expectations.
- Building Control will build on, and strengthen, the existing arrangements with our Partner Companies whilst looking to encourage new partnership agreements with potential clients.
- We will actively pursue the possibility of joint working with neighbouring authorities by entering into initial discussions, and will embrace mobile / joint working practices and processes into our everyday procedures.

Customer feedback from surveys, focus groups and day-to-day contact will highlight the degree of success of these actions in terms of satisfaction with level of service and value for money.

An Action schedule is appended illustrating the time scales that we have allowed ourselves to achieve the targets set (see Appendix 2).

## **RESOURCES**

To meet the Action Plan, the following resources have been or will be allocated:

- Funding has been reinvested to enable the section to improve and develop our I.T. provision with the emphasis being on the potential growth in electronic data transfer to enable applications and plans to be down loaded via the internet. The purchase of energy calculation software, electronic on-line plan submission technology and technical indexes through re-investment will improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the section.
- Employee training needs will be identified via the Employee Development Review and Training Needs Analysis, and staff will be encouraged to keep up-to-date on all the latest developments and initiatives, by attendance at professional and trade seminars, exhibitions etc.
- Funding is provided through the section's own marketing budget to enable the promotion of the service through literature, (newsletter, advice leaflets etc.), seminars and other marketing items.

**REVIEW**

This Marketing Strategy will be reviewed annually to check progress against the Action Plan and to ensure continued adequate funding, and will last for 3 years until the full review in 2013.

The review will be carried out by the Development Manager and Principal Building Control Officer in consultation with the B.C. Team.

A customer satisfaction survey will be undertaken to monitor our level of service and performance standards and help us understand customer needs.

Any revised strategy arising from the review will be reported to the Council's Cabinet and Full Council, as appropriate, for approval.