
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: Planning Call-In Arrangements

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Purpose:

To secure Members' agreement to move to online "call-in" on a permanent basis.

Recommendation

That Members of the Planning Committee agree to ending of the trial and move to online "call-in" on a permanent basis subject to:

- Reporting back on its operation every 6 months;
- Continuing to improve the effectiveness of the system.

Background

1. As Members are aware the timescales prescribed in the 2003 Designation Order for Local Authority notification of applications and CNPA decisions to “call-in” applications have meant that the Planning Committee has had to meet fortnightly. The 2010 Designation Order does not change the timescales, but allows more flexibility in how CNPA discharges this function.
2. At the Board meeting on 15 October 2010, as part of a paper on Planning Committee Operating Arrangements, Members agreed new arrangements for calling in planning applications based on an officers’ report being available online or by e mail, only to take effect once a suitable and satisfactory period of testing has taken place and the Board has given its final approval.
3. In agreeing to the test period Members wished to ensure we have a system that combined efficiency with transparency and effectiveness.
4. The detail of the current arrangements is as follows:
 - Local Authorities notify CNPA of planning applications on an ongoing basis with CNPA deciding every 2 weeks whether to “call-in” or comment on applications.
 - Call-In List closes at noon every second Friday and is sent out to Members and posted on our website.
 - Planning staff research the applications on the list and prepare a presentation that will be available on the CNPA website for Members and the public from noon on the following Wednesday.
 - This presentation with maps, plans, photos and text combines the information previously given at Committee in powerpoint and verbal reports.
 - Members have until noon on Friday (or 0900 if a Planning Committee day) to look at the presentation and respond;
 - Members have to respond to planning@cairngorms.co.uk confirming they have looked at the presentation, state if they agree with the recommendations, and provide any comments they wish to make where there is no “call-in”. Members also have to state if they have a direct or indirect interest in any application on the list.
 - Where 2 or more Members do not agree with a recommendation it is then referred to the Convener and Vice-Convener of the Planning Committee to decide and they have until 1500 on the Friday to do this. If they are not going to be available they will name substitutes.
 - After 1500 on Friday the Local Authorities are notified of the decision and any comments on applications not called in. The existing arrangements for comments continue with it being left to planning staff to determine if and how to pass them on.
 - The note of the outcome of the process is available on the CNPA website the following Monday and is reported to the next Planning Committee.

5. We have been running this system on a trial basis since October 2010 and Members are now familiar with its operation and have been participating very effectively. When the matter was previously considered at the Planning Committee on 7 January 2011 Members resolved to continue on a trial basis for a further 3 months and reassess the position in March.
6. The Planning Service Improvement Plan (SIP) for 2010/11 required the trial to be complete by January 2011 and the Planning Committee meeting schedule reviewed accordingly. The meeting schedule has been reviewed and the routine of alternate monthly Planning Committees and Board Days is now well established. We are in the course of preparing the SIP for 2011/12 and it is therefore necessary to formally “sign off” the new arrangements for call-in.
7. It is the intention to maintain an ongoing review of the operation of the electronic call-in process and report to the Planning Committee every 6 months. It is also the intention to continually refine the process to make it more accessible and efficient. In particular we will continue to investigate solutions for loading material directly onto the website from the planning office and to improve the quality of the presentation material.

Recommendation

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- **Reporting back on its operation every 6 months;**
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