
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

TITLE: PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK
ANNUAL REPORT 2011/12

PREPARED BY: MURRAY FERGUSON AND DON MCKEE

Purpose of Report:

To present the Planning Performance Framework Annual Report for 2011/12.

Summary

This paper introduces the first annual report that is to be submitted to Scottish Government in line with the new Planning Performance Framework (PPF) which was launched by Heads of Planning Scotland (HoPS) in April 2012 and promoted by Scottish Government. The PPF is a comprehensive performance management tool to assist Scottish Government in assessing planning performance across planning authorities. A draft annual report has already been submitted to Scottish Government to meet the deadline of 28 September and, once considered by Committee, a finalised report will be submitted and published on the CNPA website.

Recommendation

That Members **approve** the annual report for publication and submission to Scottish Government.

Background

1. On 28 March 2012 Derek Mackay, the Minister for Local Government and Planning, made a statement to the Scottish Parliament setting out the Scottish Government's proposals for reform of the planning system to help reach its potential in supporting economic recovery. The emphasis is on non-legislative measures, but the Minister noted that legislative changes would be brought forward where necessary. The key priorities for the next stages of planning modernisation are:
 - a) promoting the plan-led system
 - b) driving improved performance
 - c) simplifying and streamlining processes
 - d) delivering development
2. In association with this statement a new Performance Management Framework was launched by Heads of Planning Scotland (HoPS), setting out very clearly what a "high quality planning service" should look like and how it will be assessed. The Framework was developed following Audit Scotland's report (Sept 2011) on 'Modernising the Planning System' which recognised that speed is only one indicator of performance and that a more comprehensive performance measurement framework was needed. The Framework is similar to the Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF) which is a self-assessment process to encourage authorities to conduct a comprehensive review of their own activities and results. It promotes a holistic approach to continuous improvement by incorporating a number of established improvement tools.
3. We take a proactive approach to service improvement and has already implemented consecutive Service Improvement Plans over the last three years. A review of progress was considered by Committee in June 2012. At that time the Committee considered the new Planning Performance Framework and approved the Service Improvement Plan for the period 2012-14. The new Framework provides a good basis for such work and, since its publication, we have used the Framework as the basis for all of discussions around our provision of a high quality Planning Service. The Service Improvement Plan has been incorporated within the attached Annual Report.

Our Planning Performance Framework

4. The work covered by the attached report is principally associated with Programmes 4 and 8 in the Authority's Corporate Plan as set out below. However, it is important to note that the Planning Service underpins all other aspects of our Corporate Plan and contributes positively to a wide range of programmes of work going on in the Park – from providing new sustainable tourism opportunities to conserving important sites for nature:

High Quality, Effective Planning Service

Purpose: To deliver an outstanding Planning Service across the National Park, in partnership with the five local authorities, which exceeds the requirements of the Scottish Planning Performance Framework and which supports the delivery of all the Corporate Plan and Partnership Plan programmes.

A Special Place

Purpose: To deliver a clear framework of strategic policy and spatial planning that sets out our approach to delivering the aims of the National Park collectively, delivers good development, supported by action to enhance the built environment and a shift towards a low carbon National Park

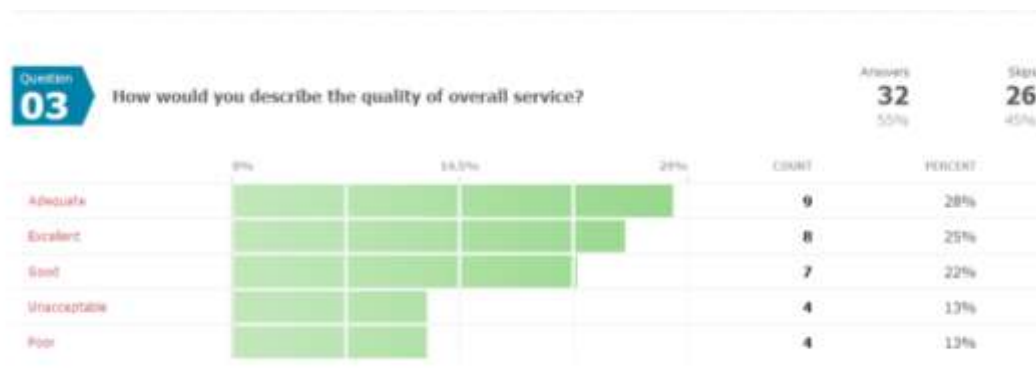
5. The Annual Report has been written in the standard format prescribed by the Framework. In addition to the required information about the factors which have influenced our performance during the year, we have added some context about the unique planning arrangements in the Cairngorms. We have drawn particular attention to:
 - The new Local Plan, adopted within last two years, and our programme to replace it with the Local Development Plan covering the extended area of the Park well within the target timetable
 - The challenges of providing an effective pre-application advice service across six planning authorities and the inevitable time delays and inefficiencies associated with the call-in process
 - The high proportion of major/complex cases considered by CNPA and the effect on the average processing time for applications
 - The need to improve our performance with respect to the timescales for decision-making. The processing time covered by the figures in the Annual Report extends to cover a period beyond the point where the Committee considers an application and includes what can be a protracted period of negotiation over planning agreements (where they are required).
 - Our proactive approach in tackling enforcement issues.

6. As part of our approach to work positively with the community of regular applicants for planning permission (e.g. local planning agents) we will have further discussion with the Developers Forum in late October to determine what further steps we can take to improve decision-making timescales. This is likely to result in officers advising the Planning Committee to take a firmer approach than we have in the past when planning agreements are required and to issues associated with the supply of inadequate information. Meanwhile we will also reinforce with statutory consultees and other interested parties the importance of supplying information within the required timetables so that decisions can be taken within the required timescales.

Looking to future Annual Reports

7. Finally, it is worth noting that within the financial year 2012/13, and therefore outwith the period covered by the attached report, we have instigated a number of new initiatives that will fit well with the requirements of the PPF in future annual reports. For example:

- The judging panel are currently assessing more than 50 entries for the first Sustainable Design Awards in the National Park and the results will be available shortly.
- The new network of planning representatives from Community Councils and Associations has met twice, been very well attended and had some extremely positive discussions about how community views can be collected and well-reflected in the development of planning policy and in development management decisions.
- We have recently significantly reduced the time available for comments to be made on applications so that we can process applications more speedily while still making decisions that are appropriate for a National Park.
- In April 2012 we commenced an online customer feedback initiative which helps inform the plans we make to improve our service. The results to date, based on 58 responses to the survey, are summarised below. Overall, 47% of customers of our Planning Service indicated that the quality of service was either Good or Excellent. Commenting on six particular aspects of our service, most respondents said we were Excellent with the weakest aspect judged to be “Keeping you informed of progress” where most respondents said we were Good:



Recommendation

That Members **approve** the annual report for 2011/12 for publication and submission to Scottish Government.

Murray Ferguson

Don McKee

planning@cairngorms.co.uk

4 October 2012