

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: Planning Service Improvement Plan

Prepared by: Murray Ferguson and Hamish Trench

Purpose:

To present proposals for package of measures that will improve the overall Planning Service provided by CNPA.

Recommendations

That the Planning Committee:

- a) approves the Service Improvement Plan noting that it will be forwarded to Scottish Government as part of programme of work towards Delivering Planning Reform; and
- b) notes that the plan will be reviewed and a Service Improvement Plan for 2011/12 will be prepared in March 2011.

Background

1. The Scottish Government considers a reformed planning system to be essential to increasing sustainable economic growth in Scotland. With the advent of the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006 the Scottish planning system is currently undergoing a significant period of modernisation and change. In October 2008 a series of joint actions in Delivering Planning Reform were agreed between Scottish Government, Local Authorities, National Park Authorities, public sector agencies and private sector business bodies. These actions are intended to increase co-operation and speed up the pace of planning reform with a view to contributing to increasing sustainable economic growth. The joint actions are grouped under the following headings:
 - Proportionate and Practical Planning Policies
 - Clear and Consistent Planning Advice
 - Effective and Efficient Planning Processes
 - Developing Skills and Improving Performance
2. As part of the action for Effective and Efficient Planning Processes, all planning authorities have agreed, on an annual basis, to identify areas for service improvement and how best they can be tackled. They have also committed to produce a development plan scheme, a new scheme of delegation and establish local forums to consider the quality of their planning service.
3. The Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) is a planning authority for the preparation of the local plan and for those planning applications which are called-in for determination. When discharging its planning function the CNPA must do so in accordance with the Planning Acts, as identified in the Designation Order of the Park, and also in accordance with the provisions of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000.
4. The planning function is a key tool for CNPA and others to use in the achieving the approved Vision for the Park, as set out in the National Park Plan. The planning function also plays a crucial role in the CNPA discharging its general purpose which is to ensure that the National Park aims are collectively achieved in relation to the National Park in a co-ordinated way. And, critically the Planning service is a function that is both important and highly visible to members of the public.
5. It is against this background that the 2010-2011 Planning Service Improvement Plan for the Cairngorms National Park Authority (attached) has been produced.

Preparation of the Service Improvement Plan

6. An earlier draft of the plan was prepared earlier in 2010 but shelved due to the pressure of work associated with Local Plan, Supplementary Planning Guidance and major casework. Scottish Government were kept informed of progress during the year.
7. Following the staff restructure (June 2010) it was agreed to use the Service Improvement Plan as a mechanism to consolidate a number of reforms that we wished to put in place. The findings of the audit that been undertaken of the CNPA Development Management function and discussions at the CNPA Audit Committee were also taken into account. In preparing the plan, discussions took place with Board members, an internal Programme Team, the Local Authority Protocol Group and the Delivery Team on Housing (which includes staff from local authorities, developers, housing associations, etc).

Implications

Financial Implications

8. The service improvements set out the plan can be accommodated within existing budgets as set out in the Operational Plan.

Presentational Implications

9. Preparation of the service improvement plan itself is not particularly newsworthy. The most significant items in the plan will be the Planning Service Feedback Forum and we will wish to present it as a further opportunity for people to engage with us in the management of the Park.

Implications for Stakeholders

10. Some stakeholders have been involved in preparation of this plan and all interested parties will be involved in delivering the plan as it is rolled out.

Recommendations

That the Board:

- a) approves the Service Improvement Plan noting that it will be forwarded to Scottish Government as part of programme of work towards Delivering Planning Reform; and
- b) notes that the plan will be reviewed and a Service Improvement Plan for 2011/12 will be prepared in March 2011.

Murray Ferguson and Hamish Trench

planning@cairngorms.co.uk

4 November 2010