
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Title: REPORT ON CALLED-IN PLANNING APPLICATION

Prepared by: MARY GRIER (PLANNING OFFICER,
DEVELOPMENT CONTROL)

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED: DISPLAY OF ADVERTISEMENT
(ADVERTISEMENT CONSENT)

REFERENCE: 05/146/CP

APPLICANT: MS. JENNIFER GRAHAM, CRUBENBEG
HOLIDAY COTTAGES, NEWTONMORE,
PH20 1BE.

DATE CALLED-IN: 8 APRIL 2005

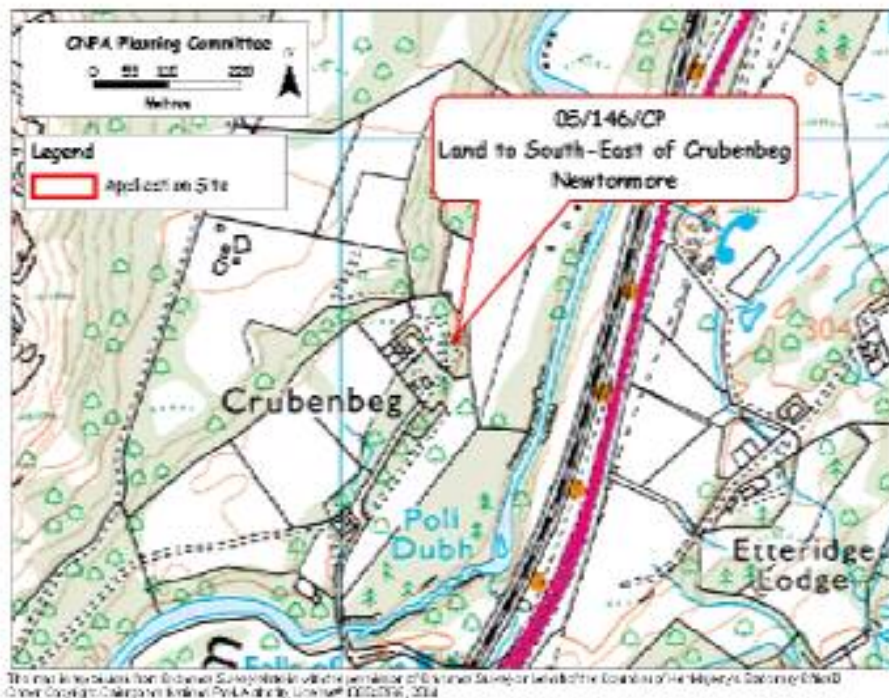


Fig. 1 - Location Plan

SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL

1. The development proposal concerns advertisement consent for the display of an advertisement on land to the south east of Crubenbeg, Newtonmore. The proposal involves the erection of large lettering, forming the words 'Crubenbeg.com'. The signage is proposed on land which is part of the Crubenbeg holiday cottage development near Glentruim, and is intended to advertise the tourism business there. The location of the proposed advertising sign is on land which forms part of the overall Crubenbeg complex where there are a number of single storey structures, centred around a courtyard. The structures accommodate a group of self catering holiday properties, in addition to associated buildings accommodating communal facilities. The courtyard buildings are located on a raised plateau, with the surrounding land to the east and north falling to lower ground. The land in those areas is rough grassland, with little other vegetation, and presents a bare and exposed terrain. The land to the west of the Crubenbeg complex rises to rear of the structures, to exposed upland terrain at of Cruban Beag. The tourist accommodation complex is accessed via a single track road off a minor road (leading to Dalwhinnie), adjacent to the A9 trunk road. The single track road leads past the Falls of Truim at the Bridge of Etteridge, and traverses north eastwards to terminate at the tourist accommodation complex, with a minor track leading west / south-westwards to Crubenmore Bridge and Crubenmore Lodge.
2. The advertising signage proposed is in the form of large lettering, forming the words 'Crubenbeg.com'. The signage is proposed in a highly prominent and exposed location, on a sloping grassy embankment to the north west of a plateau on which the holiday cottages are located. There is no particular vegetative screening in the vicinity to serve as a backdrop. There is a high degree of visibility from the A9, which is located approximately 220 metres to the east of the lands. The land between the A9 and the site of the proposed signage is lower lying, and with predominantly low ground covering of gorse, broom and other indigenous species. There are already two flagpoles in place to the south of the proposed site which attract attention to the existing development.
3. The Committee may recall from a previous discussion at the meeting of 8th April 2005 that there had been reported sightings by a member of the proposed signage in place. The subject site has been visited on two occasions (on 30th March and 14th April) in the course of this assessment, and the sign was not in place on either of those occasions. However, it appears from correspondence from the applicant, contained on the Highland Council file that the sign was temporarily erected for the purposes of photographing the proposal, to accompany the planning application.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONTEXT

The Highland Structure Plan 2001

4. Policy L4 (Landscape Character) states that in the consideration of development proposals, there will be regard to the desirability of maintaining and enhancing present landscape character. Policy G6 (conservation and promotion of the Highland Heritage) is applicable, where it is the general policy to conserve and promote sites which have been identified as high quality in terms of landscape etc.. The subject site is within part of the high quality area which has been designated as an Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV).

Badenoch and Strathspey Local Plan 1997

5. Section 2.2.20 of the Local Plan alludes to the fact that a degree of advertising is essential to many businesses, but notes that safeguards are required in the interests of amenity and traffic safety.

CONSULTATIONS

6. The Natural Resources Group were consulted on this application during the call-in notification period, and have commented that the proposal is sited in a prominent location within an area designated for its landscape importance and as such the proposed development would be likely to have significant visual and landscape impacts.
7. Discussion has taken place to discuss the proposal with the Visitor Services and Recreation Group. The Group concur with the thrust of this report, in particular the fact that the proposed advertising signage is in a prominent location close to one of the main thoroughfares through the National Park, where the proposed signage would not assist in the promotion of the general public's enjoyment and understanding of the special qualities of this area of the Park, and would set a precedent for further signage of this nature associated with other commercial enterprises.
8. Consultation was not undertaken with the Scottish Executive as the proposed advertising sign, although having potential visibility from the A9, is not actually proposed on the trunk road.

REPRESENTATIONS

9. No representations have been received in respect of the proposed development.
10. Further to the applicant being contacted to inform her of the imminent presentation of a recommendation for the determination of this application, Ms. Jennifer Graham (the applicant) submitted a letter in support of her development proposal. In it the applicant refers to the limited budget of the

enterprise for signage / advertising and states that she feels that “the sign is innovative and aesthetic, with minimal intrusion on the scenery.”

11. The applicant also states that the photographs accompanying the application showing the proposed signage in place were taken with a zoom lens, showing the view from the A9 and according to the applicant “probably gave an exaggerated idea of the size of the sign and an unrealistic impression of its impact.”

APPRAISAL

12. The consideration of this proposal lies mainly with the acceptability of the siting and design of the sign, and its visual impact on the character and setting of the rural area in which it is proposed, which is within a designated Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV). The potential for the sign to impact upon highway safety is also an issue which must be considered.
13. The application fails to include details of proposed materials or signage dimensions, nor does it make reference to potential lighting of the proposed sign. However, as the members will note from the attached photomontage, the advertising signage is static, is of a significant scale and is clearly designed to be visible from considerable distances.
14. In the course of a site visit, I spoke briefly to one of the owners of the tourist accommodation complex, and she confirmed that the purpose in proposing the advertising signage at this location and in this form was to alert roads users of the A9 to the development, and to clearly identify the tourist accommodation units in an effort to guide visitors to the location. It was also noted that the business already has at least four individual advertising signs on the approaches to the development (i) on the grass margin of the south bound carriageway of the A9, close to junction with the minor road leading to Dalwhinnie / Falls of Truim / Crubenbeg; (ii) inside the crash barrier on the northbound carriageway of the A9 approaching the aforementioned junction; (iii) at the south of the entrance to the single track road leading off the Dalwhinnie road; (iv) at the north of the entrance to the aforementioned single track road.
15. The Badenoch and Strathspey Local Plan 1997 refers to General Development Control Policy No.4 (Display of Advertisements) and its application throughout the Local Plan area. However, the policy was not reapplied in the Highland Council’s Structure Plan in 2001. Nonetheless it is considered that much of the prohibitions of that policy remain pertinent, particularly its discouragement of advertising signage which would be “entirely detrimental to the scenic quality of the countryside.”

16. The proposed signage would be located in a highly prominent position, close to the heavily trafficked A9, which is the principal carriageway through the western side of the National Park. Whilst it is understandable that the applicant wishes to promote the tourist accommodation business to the maximum extent possible, it is considered that the introduction of signage of the nature proposed would be significantly detrimental to the character and landscape setting, particularly given the sites location within a designated Area of Great Landscape Value. In conclusion, it is considered that the proposed advertising sign would be obtrusive and would detract from the visual amenity and enjoyment of the rural character of the area, which is relatively close to one of the principle entry points to the National Park. Furthermore, an advertising display of the nature proposed would set a precedent for further similar signage, which would cumulatively have a detrimental visual impact on the landscape and would be injurious to the general enjoyment of the National Park.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE AIMS OF THE NATIONAL PARK

Conserve and Enhance the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Area

17. The development proposal does not make any positive contribution to this aim and is considered to be detrimental to the achievement of this aim by virtue of the adverse visual impact that it would have on the natural heritage in this designated Area of Great Landscape Importance.

Promote Sustainable Use of Natural Resources

18. The development proposal does not make any positive contribution to this aim.

Promote Understanding and Enjoyment of the Area

19. Apart from serving as a form of advertising for an individual commercial enterprise, it is not considered that the proposed advertisement display would be of assistance to the promotion of the general public's understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the area. It is considered that its appearance and commercial nature would in fact detract from the public's enjoyment of the general location within an Area of Great Landscape Value.

Promote Sustainable Economic and Social Development of the Area

20. The proposed signage could be considered to be of economic benefit to the operator of the tourist accommodation development which the sign is intended to advertise. However, the proposal is not considered to be of benefit in the promotion of sustainable economic and social development of the overall area.

RECOMMENDATION

21. That Members of the Committee support a recommendation to:

Refuse Advertisement Consent for the Display of an Advertisement on Land to the South East of Crubenbeg, Newtonmore, for the following reasons : -

- (i) The introduction of the proposed advertising sign in a highly prominent and exposed position within a designated Area of Great Landscape Value, and within close proximity to the heavily trafficked A9, which is one of the principal routes through the Cairngorms National Park, would be significantly detrimental to the character and landscape setting of the area and would be inconsistent with the provisions of section 2.2.20 of the Badenoch and Strathspey Local Plan (1997). The proposed development would be unacceptably visually prominent from public viewpoints, including the A9 and would detract from the visual amenity and general enjoyment of the rural landscape in this area of the Park. The development would therefore contravene Policy L4 (Landscape Character) of the Highland Structure Plan 2001, and would be in conflict with the aims of the Cairngorms National Park. The development would particularly detract from the conservation and enhancement of the natural heritage of the area, and would also detract from enjoyment of the special qualities of this area of the Park by the public.

Mary Grier
Planning Officer, Development Control

15th April 2005

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