

## CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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### FOR DECISION

**Title: PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK ANNUAL REPORT 2013/14**

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#### **Purpose of Report**

To present the Planning Performance Framework Annual Report for 2013/14 to Committee before submission to Scottish Government.

#### **Summary**

This paper introduces the third annual report to be submitted to Scottish Government as part of the Planning Performance Framework (PPF). The PPF is a comprehensive performance management tool to assist Scottish Government in assessing planning performance across planning authorities.

The report covers a period of significant change for the CNPA planning service including a significant staff restructuring exercise, a change in location for the functional team and a higher than normal degree of staff turnover. Although some of the headline indicators in the report show little change we consider that good progress has been made which will lead to more significant improvements in next year's PPF report.

#### **Recommendation**

**That the Board:**

- a) **Approve PPF report for 2013/14 for publication (at Appendix 2) and for submission to Scottish Government.**

## PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK ANNUAL REPORT 2013/14 – FOR DECISION

### Background

1. The Planning Committee have considered and approved PPF reports for the Cairngorms National Park Authority for 2011/12 and 2012/13 previously. We received feedback from Scottish Government on last year's report in December 2013.
2. The PPF reports are submitted by all planning authorities as part of the Performance Management Framework developed by Heads of Planning Scotland (HoPS) to set out what a "high quality planning service" should look like and how it will be assessed. CNPA takes a proactive approach to improving our service to customers and have used the PPF planning and reporting process to help drive service improvements. In April 2014, the Planning Committee approved the Service Improvement Priorities for the year 2014/15.
3. The PPF reporting process has evolved since it was introduced three years ago. The Scottish Government responded to criticism after the first year by providing feedback much sooner last year. The fact that the PPF reports for the last financial year are required six months after that year has ended has also been criticised. We expect that the Scottish Government will ask planning authorities to provide reports by May or June in 2015 to bring the reporting timescales in line with many other financial year reports. Discussions are under way between Scottish Government and HoPS about how planning authorities with very poor performance can be penalised through the fee system and what more can be done to speed processes up.

### Scottish Government Feedback on the 2012-13 PPF

4. The Scottish Government's feedback on CNPA's 2012-13 PPF (**Appendix I**) report was constructive and generally positive, concluding:
  - *"Your report provides a good, clear assessment of where the authority has got to in reforming and delivering its planning service, while also identifying a fair amount of work still to be carried out. It includes some very encouraging signs of a culture of continually seeking out ways to improve the service offered to, and expected by, developers, community representatives and other stakeholders.*
  - *We are pleased to see continued progress towards the adoption of your LDP within 4 years from the current local plan.*
  - *While you have made some substantial improvements to application timescales, you are aware of scope to further quicken your processes and have a programme in place to take this forward. Your introduction of processing agreements and your planned improvements to your pre-application involvement and advice should contribute well to this.*
  - *You have taken forward some very positive work through your design awards scheme and case studies to encourage good quality development within the national park."*

## The CNPA Planning Performance Framework report for 2013-14

5. The PPF report is shown in **Appendix 2** and follows the format prescribed by Scottish Government. In addition to the feedback and advice from Scottish Government and HoPS over the year, managers from the CNPA planning team also attended a workshop run by HoPS and the Improvement Service on the PPF in February 2014. The best-practice advice is that PPF reports should be concise, realistic and focus on the big issues for the planning service, acknowledging problems or poor performance as well as demonstrating good performance or improvement.
6. In practical terms, the year 2013/14 was one of significant change for the CNPA planning service as well as CNPA. There were very significant staff and structural changes to the planning team within the period, many of which were explicitly intended to deliver an improved service to customers. The PPF report shows the results of some of those changes and reflects the impact they have had over a relatively short period of time.
7. However, as committee members are aware, the impacts of new staff, procedures and targets can take some time to be reflected in simple statistical information, and the National Headline Indicators used by Scottish Government to compare planning authorities do not always reflect the nature of the work that the CNPA planning service (particularly the development management service) undertakes. The planning team now produce more detailed quarterly monitoring reports on planning service delivery where more detail is provided on the most relevant indicators of performance (Committee Paper, Planning Service Performance Update; August 2014) and the Committee will be given summary reports every six months for information. The next report will be given to the February 2015 Planning Committee.
8. The PPF report for 2013/14 demonstrates a generally positive picture of our planning service and acknowledges the areas where further improvement is required (and where we have identified actions to deliver those improvements). Although our average determination timescales are less positive than for 2012/13, we have pointed out in the report that the most representative indicator (time of applications taking more than 2 months to determine) have been showing signs of improvement throughout the four quarters of the year. Our more detailed monitoring, use of processing agreements and use of procedures to conclude cases with legal agreements of obligations should demonstrate further improvements in next year's PPF report for 2014/15.
9. While the PPF report demonstrates good progress in delivering last year's improvement priorities, there is still work to be done in implementing new processes, inducting new staff and seeing changes fully embedded as normal practice. The improvement priorities that the planning committee approved for this year are intended to build on and consolidate the priority areas that this PPF Report relates to.

## **Looking to the Future**

10. The planning team have been using the priorities agreed by the Planning Committee in April to drive changes and improvements in the service as part of the team's work planning. The Planning Committee will receive another Planning Service Performance Update after the end of quarter 3 of 2014/15 that will further demonstrate progress and improvement. We expect to receive feedback from Scottish Government on this year's PPF report before the end of 2014 and to be told of an earlier, more meaningful deadline for next year's report. Planning Service Priorities for the next year will be brought to the Planning Committee as part of the Operational Plan in Q4 of 2014/15.

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**September 2014**  
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