
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR INFORMATION

Title: PLANNING SERVICE PERFORMANCE UPDATE

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Purpose

To update and inform the Committee on the statistical performance of the CNPA planning service to Quarter 1 of 2019/20 and wider planning service work delivery.

Recommendation

That the Committee:

- i. Note the internal planning service monitoring results outlined in this report**

Background

1. The CNPA Planning Service and Management Team biannual performance reports to examine planning service performance and implement improvements and changes to the service. Officers take performance updates to the Planning Committee every six months for information and as a way of supplementing annual Planning Performance Framework (PPF) reports and the Scottish Government's feedback on PPF reports. The Planning Committee's last planning service performance update was in December 2018.

Planning Service Performance Update to Quarter 1 2019/20

Determination timescales and processing agreements

2. The CNPA's use of processing agreements continues to be a good way to provide certainty for applicants and for CNPA staff. During the final two quarters of 2018/19, 93% of all the planning applications determined by the CNPA had processing agreements. The agreed timescales were met on 72% of these applications. The average time for determination of planning applications with a processing agreement was 16.4 weeks, 10 weeks faster than during the first six months of the year.
3. The use of processing agreements is reflected in the official statistics produced by the Scottish Government, which exclude timescales for applications with processing agreements. Figures 1 and 2 show the official statistics for applications that did not

have processing agreements and the fact that during quarters 3 and 4, only one application was determined that did not have a processing agreement and that application was determined in 8 weeks.

Figure 1

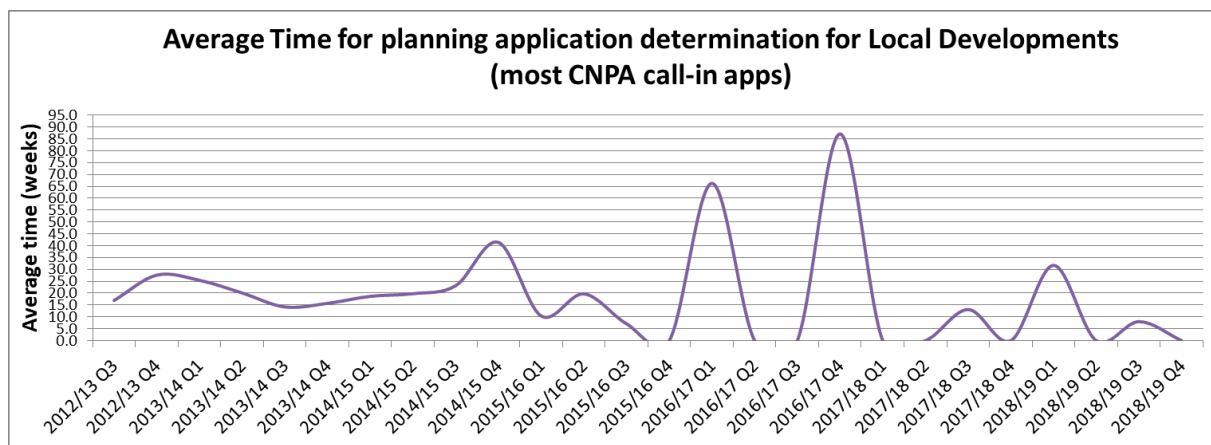
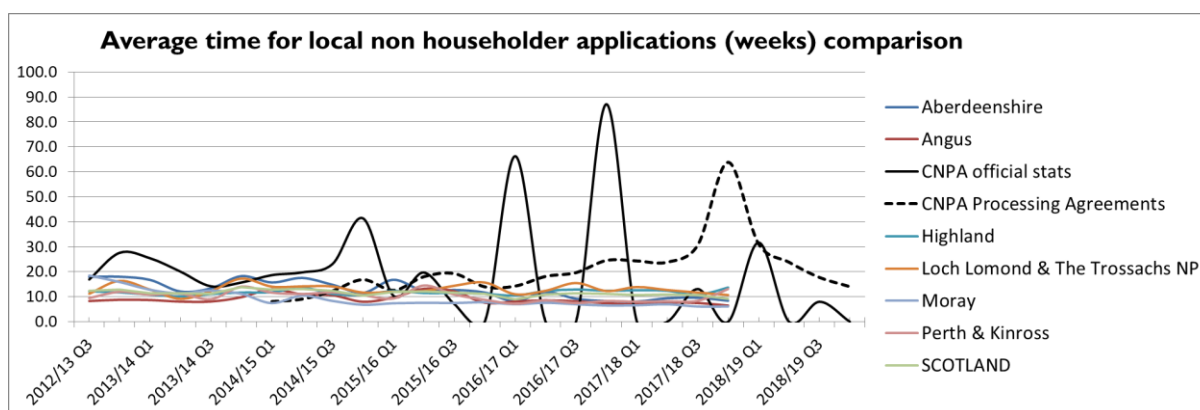
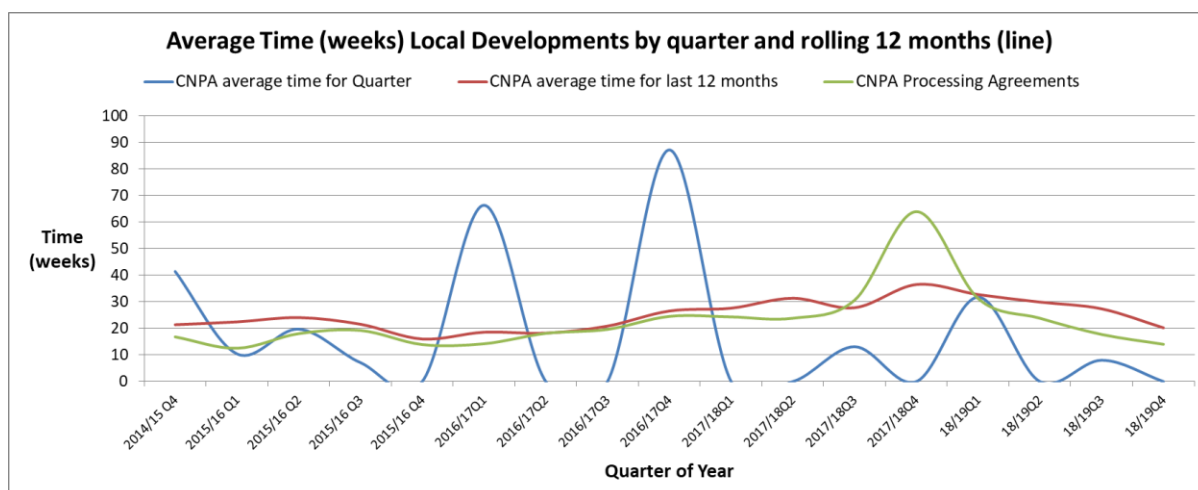


Figure 2



4. Although the use of processing agreements has been an effective way of managing cases and providing certainty for applicants as well as the CNPA, there has a clear trend of processing timescales extending over time within processing agreements. This was particularly evident during the latter part of 2017/18. This has generally been because applicants seek extensions of time from the original agreement in order to provide the information needed to determine their application. Although the timescales have reduced over 2018/19, the planning team continue to explore ways of drawing such applications to a faster conclusion.
5. The internal audit of the planning service that reported during 2015/16 recommended that the CNPA use a rolling annual average indicator for service performance monitoring. Figure 3 shows the CNPA's quarterly average against a rolling annual average figure. In simple terms, if the average time for a quarter is lower than the rolling average figure, then performance should be improving, but given the small number of applications that are being recorded in this way, the data is easily misunderstood.

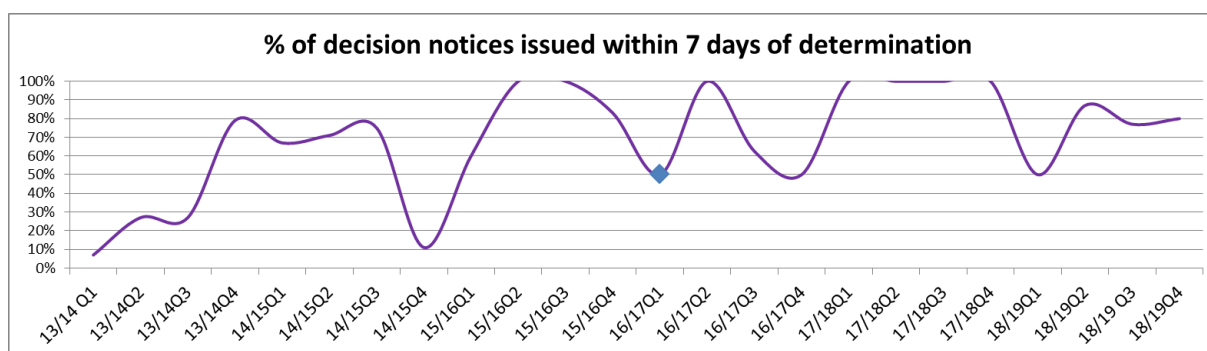
Figure 3



Issuing decision notices

- The planning service has continued to maintain a pattern of swift decision notice production following planning committee decisions.

Figure 4



Proposed Local Development Plan Consultation Update

- The Planning Committee will receive a full report on the consultation on the proposed LDP in August 2019. The planning team are completing the analysis of the 207 formal responses and preparing the ‘Schedule 4’ documents that set out the CNPA’s position on them prior to Examination by a Scottish Government Reporter from the Directorate for Planning and Environmental Appeals (DPEA).
- Success in such consultations can be measured in different ways. The LDP is inevitably a detailed document that requires time and effort for anyone to comment on meaningfully. This immediately means that those with passing interest or little time are unlikely to consider it in detail if at all. Representations on the proposed Plan are mainly in form of objections, often from those directly affected and mainly from those with time through employment or lifestyle. The drop in sessions held across the National Park were often well-attended and in many cases people went away from them better-informed. A total of around 220 people attended the drop in sessions, the majority of whom staff estimated to be in the 60+ age range.

9. The CNPA also undertook an online and social media campaign to promote the proposed LDP consultation with videos and interactive online tools. It is not clear whether the campaign and materials produced to support it translate to a better informed public or any measurable change in the responses to the consultation. However, the way the material was presented and shared did result in very significantly more engagement with social media than in any other campaign that the CNPA has undertaken, with a general engagement rate of 26% of those exposed to the content (40,000 of the total reach of 153,000). This was significantly greater than any previous CNPA campaign, including those for subjects that we perceive as more immediately engaging and less contentious. The campaign's success was testament to hard and creative work by the forward planning and communications teams and will help the CNPA improve such work in future.

Enforcement Update

10. As the Planning Committee are aware the CNPA has committed to increasing our monitoring of hill tracks and raising awareness of policy amongst estates and land managers. The CNPA has a large number of live investigations into potential breaches that are not reported in public because to do so could undermine potential formal enforcement action and ultimately, possible prosecution of associated offences. The frequency of retrospective planning applications for track improvements to the Planning Committee provides an indication of the monitoring work, and investigations, as well as queries from members of the public.
11. To support this work, the CNPA is currently employing an intern to undertake a comprehensive mapping exercise of existing tracks across the moorland and hills over the National Park using the most up to date aerial photography and satellite imagery. Once completed, the mapping will provide a good baseline from which to monitor change. It will include all the long-established tracks, those that have been authorised through applications for planning permission, prior notification or prior approval, and will attempt to map the well-established or obvious ATV track lines. Our intention is that once the mapping is completed and the data is appropriately classified and qualified, it will be available in public as well as for the CNPA's use.
12. One of the most interesting possibilities of the project has been the investigation of freely available satellite images, some of which are renewed very frequently, leading to potential for a degree of automated monitoring of change in future. This part of the project is at an early stage but has potential to make some monitoring of change in remote and little visited places more reliable in future.

Planning Service Improvements 2019/20

13. The Planning Committee approved five improvement priorities for the planning service during 2019/20 at the 25 April 2019 meeting. Work is underway on all of these priorities.

2018/19 Planning Service Improvements		Status
1	<p>Simplify mechanisms for securing planning obligations and reduce need for planning agreements.</p> <p>Establishing simpler, cheaper and faster ways of securing necessary planning obligations</p>	Work ongoing
2	<p>Develop and deliver a schools engagement / involvement programme.</p> <p>In addition to work with local secondary Schools, we will ask the emerging Cairngorms Youth Action Group to help co-design a programme with young people.</p>	Planning underway
3	<p>Plan and deliver workshop on natural heritage with SNH, SEPA and Local Authorities</p> <p>Sharing good practice and ensuring consistent application of policy and practice across the National Park to be held autumn 2019.</p>	Planning underway
4	<p>Undertake a monitoring scheme on holiday and second home ownership, changes of use from residential property and impacts on communities.</p> <p>The development of the LDP has increased awareness of the changes in use of residential property to short term holiday letting property. The data available through council tax and non-domestic rates records requires some ground trothing for accuracy and the CNPA will undertake some additional monitoring of newly completed housing developments. We will also publish a Planning Advice Note to explain the rules on use and changes of use.</p>	Investigations into data availability
5	<p>Increase our monitoring of hill tracks development and awareness of policy amongst estates and land managers.</p> <p>Our monitoring and enforcement of unauthorised hill tracks has increased over the past three years. During 2019/20 we will complete a monitoring project using aerial photography and will provide further guidance for estates and land managers.</p>	Work ongoing

Next Report

14. The next planning service monitoring report will be in December 2019.

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