

# **CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY PLANNING SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2011 – 2012**

## **Background**

1. The Scottish Government considers that a reformed and improved planning system is essential to their single overarching purpose: “To focus government and public services on creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth”.
2. In the Cairngorms National Park the provision of an effective and efficient planning service is a very significant tool to achieve the agreed vision for the Park in 2030, as set out in the Cairngorms National Park Plan.
3. For both these reasons the National Park Authority has agreed to set out on an annual basis a plan to identify areas for planning service improvement and how best they can be tackled.

## **Planning Functions in the National Park**

4. The planning arrangements in the Cairngorms National Park are unique in Scotland and are delivered on a collaborative basis between the National Park Authority and the five relevant local authorities. The key features are:
  - a) The Park Authority has a duty to prepare the National Park Plan for the Park which is approved by Ministers and gives appropriate strategic context and direction to all other planning-related work in the Park;
  - b) The Park Authority has duty to prepare a single Local Plan (now Local Development Plan) for the Park; and
  - c) Anyone seeking planning permission applies to the relevant local authority; the Park Authority then “calls in” those applications that are judged to be of “general significance to the aims of the Park” and from that point on acts as the planning authority. All remaining applications are determined by the local authorities.
5. The planning arrangements are comprehensively described in Section 1 of the Cairngorms National Park Local Plan (adopted 29 October 2010).  
<http://www.cairngorms.co.uk/parkauthority/publications/results.php?publicationID=265>

## **Scope of this Plan**

6. This is a Service Improvement Plan for the remainder of the period July 2011 to end of March 2012. This plan will be the subject of ongoing review and a new plan for 2012 – 2013 will be prepared in November 2011 in line with our Operational Planning cycle so that the next SIP is ready for the beginning of the next financial year 2012 - 2013.

7. The plan has taken account of a range of feedback including that from a series of Planning Service Workshops held in March 2011 and facilitated by Planning Aid Scotland. These events involved a range of users of the planning service including communities, developers, agents, and planning staff from the constituent local authorities in the Park.

### **Recent achievements and other changes**

8. There has been continuing progress on improving the CNPA planning service since the previous plan was approved:
  - a) Planning Service Workshops were held and these will be repeated each year.
  - b) A series of Community Awareness events took place across the Park in June 2011
  - c) The CNPA website, including planning pages, is being redesigned and will be launched over the summer
  - d) There has been consultation on a further tranche of Supplementary Planning Guidance with adoption expected in July 2011.
  - e) The 2011 Development Planning Scheme has been adopted.
  - f) Following successful completion of a trial period, the CNPA “call-in” function now takes place electronically.
  - g) Part of Perth & Kinross Council has been successfully included within the Park and regular contact established with the Council planning service on “call-in” and other aspects of the planning service.
  - h) The CNPA Enforcement Charter is published and available on the CNPA website.
  - i) The Local Plan is available via the Online Development Plan process and work on the Local Development Plan has progressed..
  - j) The Online Planning System has been developed, hosted by Loch Lomond & the Trossachs NPA, and will go live via the CNPA website in August 2011.
  - k) Planning application caseload has reduced and the number of applications “called-in” remains low.

### **Key actions and areas for Service Improvement Plan 2011/12**

Proposed actions for 2011/12 are described under one of eight key headings:

- I. A user-oriented Service
  - a. Discuss with partners the benefits and costs of CNPA becoming full planning authority.
  - b. Deliver four community-focussed events, undertake post-event review and plan follow-on events or approach for the next year
  - c. Convene two independently-facilitated Planning Service Workshops with Community Liaison Officers to gather feedback about the Planning Service (Nov 2011) and how it can be improved.

- d. Arrange independent analysis of the feedback received through consultation on the Local Development Plan Main Issues Report.
  - e. As part of refreshed the new CNP website (due August 2011) provide clearer information about the planning service and promote active engagement.
  - f. Develop a system to capture feedback about all aspects of the Planning Service on a routine basis using internet based service (ie using Survey Monkey or similar).
2. A strengthened role for the Planning Service in achieving Sustainable Rural Development
- a. Scope a Sustainable Design Award for the Park (with a view to launch during Spring 2012) as part of an integrated programme of work around design matters.
  - b. Deliver, and keep under review, a structured programme of development activity for Planning Committee (including field visits to see issues on the ground and sessions on best practice in design for members and staff of CNPA and Local Authorities involving architects / local builders / developers and craftspeople).
  - c. Scope out how best to engage with the development sector to share good practice and training opportunities to help ensure the skills required to take good design forward are available in the locality.
  - d. Scope out proposals for establishing a Design Review Panel for the Park, where a group of (mainly) architects, chaired by CNPA, would meet periodically to discuss and review major applications – providing expert professional input.
  - e. Investigate development of an energy saving information initiative for prospective planning applicants (with Energy Savings Trust or similar).
  - f. Pilot a stream of work with Planning Aid Scotland to promote awareness of the planning process amongst young people and in schools.
3. Efficient and effective “call in” procedure
- a. Review electronic “call in” procedure (by end October) and implement any necessary changes.

4. Joint working with local authorities and community councils
  - a. Agree revised protocol with local authority partners and extend scope to include issues beyond Planning (e.g. affordable housing, etc)
  - b. Offer to meet with at least half of Community Councils annually to discuss Planning Service and how it can be improved
  - c. Develop a network of Planning Contacts in each Community Council and share best practice.
  
5. Enforcement activity
  - a. Arrange shared services approach to enforcement with local authorities, particularly in relation to Highland Council area.
  
6. E-planning
  - a. Implement E-planning information system for planning applications (by end July)
  - b. Promote online Development Plan (which is already available for Local Plan) and implement of for Local Development Plan
  - c. Publicise availability of E-planning system to promote greater involvement in planning process.
  
7. Determination rates of applications
  - a. Arrange for delegation of authority to refuse applications due to lack of information to Head Planner
  - b. Publish key planning performance statistics on CNP website once launched (due August 2011).
  
8. Joint work with Loch Lomond and the Trossachs NPA
  - a. Undertake joint work with LLT NPA in relation to key areas of planning policy (including Renewables)

Progress on the Service Improvement Plan will be monitored with a formal review in October 2011.

Feedback on this plan and on any aspect of our Planning Service is always welcome and should be sent to [planning@cairngorms.co.uk](mailto:planning@cairngorms.co.uk). If you require further information please contact:

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