



PLANNING ENFORCEMENT CHARTER

Updated November 2025

Introduction

Enforcement of planning controls can be a complicated part of the planning system and affect many members of a community. This charter explains how the planning enforcement process works in the Cairngorms National Park.

It explains the roles of the Cairngorms National Park Authority and the local authorities who share planning powers. It should help anyone with an interest in the enforcement process to understand the procedures involved, the powers available to a planning authority as well as the limits of those powers.

The aim of this charter is to ensure that the procedures adopted by the National Park Authority are fair, reasonable, consistent and accountable.

What is Planning Enforcement?

Most development that takes place in Scotland needs planning permission. Sometimes developers, householders or landowners undertake work without planning permission or do not implement work in the way that the approved plans and conditions set out. These are breaches of planning control.

The purpose of planning enforcement is to resolve those breaches of planning control. It is not used to punish the developer or householder who has breached a planning control. Most breaches of planning control are resolved by discussion between the planning authority and developer or landowner. If that does not resolve the problem, planning authorities have powers to enforce planning controls where they decide it is in the public interest.

The [Scottish Government Planning Circular 10/2009: Planning Enforcement](#) has detailed information about the use of planning enforcement powers.

Planning enforcement also covers the display of advertisements such as billboards and advertisement hoardings. The procedures for enforcement are slightly different and are explained in the appendix to this note.



The content of an advertisement is not covered by planning control. Only the Advertising Standards Authority <http://www.asa.org.uk> can consider complaints about the content of an advertisement.

Who takes enforcement action?

All the planning authorities in Cairngorms National Park have powers to investigate and take enforcement action on development that does not have planning permission, breaches of planning conditions or other environmental matters that affect general amenity of an area. In most cases, the planning authority who granted planning permission will take action. This will either be your local authority's planning service or the National Park Authority. The contact details for the enforcement teams of each planning authority are listed on page 7.

If development is undertaken without planning permission, then the planning authority who would have considered a planning application for that development will take action. This will either be your local authority's planning service or the National Park Authority. You can find out what types of development the National Park Authority is likely to call-in and determine in this [Planning Advice Note: Applying for Planning Permission in the Cairngorms National Park](#).

Enforcement powers are used at a planning authority's discretion. They will only use them where they decide it is in the public interest to correct the breach of planning control in that way. The planning authority can decide that no enforcement action is needed. Any action taken must be proportionate, balanced and reasonable.

Local authorities also have powers to resolve disputes about high hedges. This [Scottish Government guidance](#) explains more.

Has a breach of planning control taken place?

A breach of planning control can be any of the following actions that take place without planning permission:

- Development, e.g. new buildings or changes of use;
- Development that is not in accordance with approved plans or conditions;
- Carrying out works to or demolition of a listed building;
- The display of an advert;
- Felling or carrying out works to a tree protected by a Tree Preservation Order or within a conservation area;



- Demolition of a building in a conservation area.

How to report a breach of planning control

Planning authorities monitor development and may identify breaches of planning control but members of the public play an important role in reporting breaches.

If you think a breach has taken place you can check for relevant planning or other related consents and any current enforcement cases on the planning authority's website. You may need to check both your council's planning web pages and the National Park Authority's website. You can also email planning@cairngorms.co.uk or phone 01479 873 535 for some advice.

If you decide to report a suspected breach, the planning authority will need:

- The address of the property concerned;
- The name of the owner of the property and if you know, the person responsible for the suspected breach;
- Details of the suspected breach of planning control, with times and dates if relevant;
- Your name, telephone number, address and if possible, email address;
- Information on how the breach affects you;

Although you can request that your report remains confidential, some information may be released under requests for information from the planning authority or if a case leads to court proceedings. The National Park Authority and local authority planning teams may also need to share a reported breach if the other authority will be responsible for any investigation. You will be asked for your permission if this is the case.

Prioritising investigations of possible breaches of planning control

While each planning authority will consider all reports of suspected breaches, they will also prioritise the most significant breaches for investigation and enforcement action.

The National Park Authority prioritises the following factors:

- Works undertaken in contravention of an enforcement notice;
- Unauthorised development that could lead to damage to designated sites of national and international importance;



- Unauthorised works to trees in a Conservation Area or protected by Tree Preservation Orders;
- Unauthorised works to listed buildings or demolition of a building in a Conservation Area
- Breaches of planning control that cause significant harm to the aims of the National Park.
- Breach of conditions on a major development.

There are two stages of assessment:

- Whether there is a breach of planning control;
- Whether it is in the public interest to take action.

What happens if a breach of planning control has taken place?

If a breach of planning control is confirmed and action considered necessary, the case will be considered against the policies of [National Planning Framework 4](#) and the [Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan](#) to decide whether permission would be considered acceptable with the imposition of conditions or other limitations. The developer or householder may need to simply change part of their development to comply with their planning permission. In some cases, they may need to submit a planning application to correct the breach. This is known as a retrospective planning application. The public can comment on the planning application and anyone who had reported the suspected breach would be asked for their views. The fact that the development has already been carried out has no bearing upon the decision made on the application.

If the breach cannot be resolved through discussion, the planning authority will consider serving a formal notice. Formal action will only be taken for serious breaches of planning control where harm to public amenity is significant.

Formal Enforcement Notices

There are a number of different formal notices that can be used by a planning authority to enforce planning controls. They are listed in Appendix 1. The planning authority will write to the recipient of the notice to explain:

- A description of the breach of control;
- The options available to the recipient to resolve the breach of control;



- The timescales involved;
- The consequences of failure to comply with the notice;
- If the recipient has any rights of appeal against the notice and how to lodge one.

If you receive a formal notice on planning enforcement from a planning authority you should seek legal or independent professional advice.

Monitoring of Major Developments

This section outlines the processes which the National Park Authority uses to monitor compliance with planning permissions that have been granted for major developments. The definition of a major development is set out in [Scottish Planning Series Circular 5 2009: Hierarchy of Developments](#).

The National Park Authority is responsible for monitoring all such developments, as all planning applications for major developments within the National Park are called-in for determination by the Park Authority.

Currently, the planning officer handling a major planning application will receive, discharge and monitor conditions prior to and post development, and is the point of contact for the development.

If the planning officer is unable to resolve issues surrounding conditions within a reasonable timescale, or if development commences before all relevant pre-commencement conditions have been discharged, the planning officer will advise the developer that the matter is being referred to the Park Authority's Monitoring and Enforcement Officer for further action. The planning officer will notify the Monitoring and Enforcement Officer and an enforcement case will be created and investigated.

If there are specific conditions that the planning officer considers require regular monitoring during development (eg landscaping works, external materials, boundary treatment), the planning officer will notify the Monitoring and Enforcement Officer, and the development will be monitored at regular intervals. This may involve site visits undertaken with specialist consultees (eg in natural heritage, landscape etc) as well as consulting the planning officer if there are any significant changes from the approved drawings.

This process also applies to planning permissions granted by the National Park Authority for local developments, as all planning applications called-in and determined by the National Park Authority are considered to raise issues of significance to the overall aims of the National Park.



Service Standards

Each planning authority has service standards for planning enforcement. The National Park Authority's service standards for enforcement are available in our [Planning Service Charter](#).

Complaints about Planning Enforcement

Each planning authority aims to satisfy customers and welcomes suggestions to improve their service. If you are dissatisfied about the service provided by the planning authority dealing with an enforcement case, you can provide feedback or make a complaint direct to the enforcement and planning service or via the planning authority's formal complaints procedures.

The Park Authority's complaints procedure is available at <http://cairngorms.co.uk/working-together/authority/about/complaints/>

Further advice

This Planning Enforcement Charter has been produced to explain how the planning enforcement process works in the Cairngorms National Park.

You can get more advice on planning enforcement from the planning department of the relevant local authority. You can also get advice and further copies of this Charter from the Cairngorms National Park Authority planning team in Grantown on Spey at: planning@cairngorms.co.uk. Tel: 01479 873535



Planning Enforcement Contacts

Cairngorms National Park Authority

14 The Square, Grantown on Spey PH26 3HG Telephone: 01479 870 512 or 01479 873 535

Email: planning@cairngorms.co.uk

<https://cairngorms.co.uk/planning-development/the-planning-service/enforcement/>

Aberdeenshire Council

Gordon House, Blackhall Road, Inverurie, AB51 3WA Telephone: 01467 534 333

Email: planningenforcement@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/planning/planning-enforcement

Angus Council

Angus House, Orchardbank Business Park, Forfar, DD8 1AN Telephone: 03452 777 778

Email – planning@angus.gov.uk or accessline@angus.gov.uk

https://www.angus.gov.uk/planning_and_building/planning_permission_and_applications/report_a_planning_breach

Highland Council

Glenurquhart Road, Inverness, IV3 5NX Telephone: 01349 886608

www.highland.gov.uk/planningenforcement

Moray Council

The Moray Council, PO Box 6760, Elgin, IV30 9BX Telephone: 03001234561

Email: development.control@moray.gov.uk

http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_82193.html

Perth and Kinross

Pullar House, 35 Kinnoull Street, Perth, PH1 5GD Telephone: 01738 475300

Email: PlanningEnforcement@pkc.gov.uk <https://www.pkc.gov.uk/article/15035/Planning-enforcement>



Appendix 1

Enforcement Powers

The enforcement powers available to a planning authority are set out in Part VI of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 and in Chapter IV of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 and Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006. Government policy on enforcement is set out in Planning Circular 10/2009.

All planning legislation can be viewed at www.gov.scot

Planning legislation is complex. If you receive a formal notice from a planning authority, you are advised to seek legal or independent professional advice.

Types of Notice

Enforcement Notice – this generally deals with unauthorised development but can also apply to breach of planning conditions. The notice must be served on the current owner, occupier and anyone else with an interest in the property. There is a right of appeal and the notice is suspended until a decision is reached. Failure to comply with an Enforcement Notice is an offence and may lead to a fine in the Sheriff Court. Failure to comply may also result in the planning authority taking Direct Action to correct the breach.

Breach of Condition Notice (BCN) – this enforces the conditions applied to any planning permission. It may be served on anyone carrying out development and/or any person having control of the land. There is no right of appeal to this notice. Anyone who contravenes a Breach of Condition notice can be fined by the Courts.

Listed Building Enforcement Notice – it is a criminal offence to undertake unauthorised works to demolish, significantly alter, or extend a listed building. This notice enforces any unauthorised works to a listed building and must be served on the current owner, occupier and anyone else with an interest in the property. Failure to meet the terms of the notice by the date specified is an offence. There is the right of appeal against the notice. In certain circumstances, this can lead either to an unlimited fine or imprisonment. Powers are also available to serve a Repairs Notice or carry out urgent works to a listed building that is not being properly maintained.



Stop Notice – this is used in urgent or serious situations where unauthorised activity must be stopped, usually on grounds of public safety. When a Stop Notice is served, the planning authority must also issue an Enforcement Notice. There is no right of appeal against a Stop Notice and failure to comply is an offence. An appeal can be made against the accompanying Enforcement Notice. If a Stop Notice is served without due cause, or an appeal against the Enforcement Notice is successful, the planning authority may face claims for compensation. Therefore, the use of Stop Notices needs to be carefully assessed by the planning authority.

Temporary Stop Notice (TSN) – this requires the immediate halt of an activity which breaches planning control. These notices are only enforceable for up to 28 days, after which time they expire. They may, however, be followed by further enforcement action such as an Enforcement Notice and Stop Notice. There is no right of appeal. Failure to comply with the notice is an offence which may result in a fine in the Courts. The Local Authority may face claims for compensation and therefore the use of TNs must be carefully assessed.

Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) – this provides the planning authority with an alternative process, in addition to the option to seek prosecution, to address situations where a person has failed to comply with an Enforcement Notice (EN) or a Breach of Condition Notice (BCN). By paying the penalty imposed by the FPN, the person will discharge any liability for prosecution for the offence. They will not, however, discharge the obligation to comply with the terms of the EN or BCN, and the planning authority will retain the power to take direct action to remedy the breach and recover the costs of such from that person. The planning authority is not required to offer the option of a fixed penalty. Any decision to do so would be dependent on considerations such as the scale of the breach and its impact on local amenity.

Notice requiring application for planning permission for development already carried out (S33A) – where the planning authority considers that an unauthorised development may be acceptable, the planning authority may issue a S33A notice requiring the landowner or developer to submit a retrospective planning application. This application will be considered on its planning merits and handled in the same way as any other planning application. It allows the planning authority to consider granting permission subject to conditions or limitations which would make the development acceptable in planning terms. Issuing a S33A does not guarantee that permission will be granted; the planning authority may, on consideration of the application, decide instead to refuse permission. Failure to comply with this notice may result in further enforcement action by the planning authority.



Control of Advertisements

The display of advertisements is covered by the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (Scotland) Regulations 1984. Many advertisements are displayed with 'deemed consent' which means they do not require advertisement consent if they meet the criteria set out in the regulations.

Displaying an advertisement in contravention of the regulations is an offence and, if convicted in court, can lead to a fine. The court can impose further fines for each day the breach of the regulations continues.

Planning authorities have the power to serve an Advertisement Enforcement Notice if the planning authority believes there is a need for the advertisement to be removed or altered in the interests of public safety, or if the advertisement can be removed without any other work being required.

An Enforcement Notice can also state that a particular piece of land should not be used to display advertisements. This remains in force even if the original advertisement is removed. Any subsequent advertising on this site would amount to a breach of the notice.

Planning authorities also have powers to remove or destroy placards and posters that do not have advertisement consent. If the person who put up the poster can be identified, they have to be given at least two days' notice that the planning authority intends to take the poster down. If they cannot be identified, then the advert can be removed immediately.

If necessary, the planning authority officers can enter unoccupied land to remove an advertisement but have no powers to remove advertisements displayed within a building which has no public access.

Tree Protection

It is an offence to carry out works to or fell a tree protected by a TPO (Tree Preservation Order) or within a conservation area. If prosecuted, this can result in a fine being imposed by the Court.

Replacement trees are also required. Failure to protect trees and/or to cause damage to/ fell trees covered by a condition in a planning permission is also a breach of planning control. A Breach of Condition Notice may be served.

Other Powers



Planning Contravention Notice – this is used to obtain information about activities on land where a breach of planning control is suspected. It is served on the owner or occupier, on a person with any other interest in the land or who is carrying out operations on the land. They are required to provide the information requested. Failure to comply with the notice within 21 days of it being served or knowingly providing false or misleading information is also an offence and can lead to a fine in the Courts.

Notice under Section 272 (of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997) – this provides limited powers for planning authorities to obtain information on interests in land and the use of land.

Failure to provide the information required is an offence.

Amenity Notice under Section 179 (of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997) – this allows planning authorities to serve a notice on the owner, lessee or occupier of land which is adversely affecting the amenity of the area. This notice sets out the action that needs to be taken to resolve the problem within a specified period.

Interdict and Interim Interdict – planning authorities can apply for the courts to impose an interdict to stop or prevent a breach of planning control. Court proceedings can be expensive and there is a risk that the planning authority may be liable for damages. Therefore, the planning authority would normally only seek interdicts in serious cases or where Enforcement Notices have previously been ignored. However, the planning authority can seek an interdict in relation to any breach without having to use other powers first. Breaching an interdict is treated as a contempt of court and carries heavy penalties.

Direct Action – failure to comply with the terms of an Enforcement Notice within the time specified can result in the planning authority carrying out the specified work. The planning authority can recover any costs it incurs from the landowner.

Notification of Initiation and Completion of Development (NID/NCD) and display of notices while development is carried out – are not enforcement powers. They are intended to improve planning enforcement by requiring confirmation that development has started and been completed, and in the case of on site notices, to raise community awareness of developments in the local area. They help planning authorities be made aware of active development in their areas.



A NID must be submitted to the planning authority for any development which has been granted permission and state when development will start. It must be submitted after planning permission has been granted and before development has commenced. Starting development without submitting an NID is a breach of planning control and the Planning authority may consider enforcement action.

The NCD requires a developer to submit a further notice as soon as practicable after development had been completed. Depending on the nature and scale of a development, the developer may also be required to display on-site notices while development is taking place. These notices contain basic information about the site and the development. They also provide contact details where members of the public may find out more information or report alleged breaches of planning control. It is a breach of planning control to fail to display such a notice when it is required to do so.