

Local Plan: Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is a Local Plan?

A Local Plan is a document used to guide where and how built development takes place in any particular part of Scotland. Local Plans contain detailed policies which help determine whether a particular planning application gets planning permission or not. In the Cairngorms National Park there are currently four Local Plans in place, covering each of the four authority areas but, by around the beginning of 2010, these will be replaced by one single Local Plan for the Park. It is this Plan that was discussed at the Local Plan Inquiry.

2. Why hold a Local Plan Inquiry?

A Local Plan Inquiry is held to hear any objections that have been made, but not withdrawn, to the Plan. There are strict rules and regulations from the Scottish Government about how the Inquiry should take place. The Reporters who will conduct the Inquiry come from the Scottish Government Directorate of Planning and Environmental Appeals. The overall purpose of the Inquiry is to make sure that everyone has a chance to participate in the process and to ensure that the finalised Plan is as good as it possibly can be.

3. How did CNPA reach this stage in preparing the Plan?

Work started in September 2004 and included several rounds of public consultation using questionnaires, many meetings at local level and opportunities to submit written comments. Each consultation period resulted in a revised draft of the Plan, approved by the Planning Committee.

The most recent public consultation ended in December 2008. Many of peoples' ideas for the Plan were incorporated at earlier stages. As the process moved on it became more formal and people had to submit "objections" as a way to get the Plan changed. Many objections have been successfully resolved through modifications.

4. Who decides what is discussed at the Inquiry and what is not?

The rules governing what can be discussed at the Inquiry are set out in Government Circulars and are the same throughout Scotland. Only people who submitted objections to the Plan during one of the formal consultation periods can have their views considered at the Inquiry. Depending on which type of method the objectors choose, the Inquiry format can either be quite formal, with legal representatives or agents questioning each other, or more like a round-table discussion chaired by the Reporter.

5. What happened at the Pre-Inquiry Meeting?

The purpose of this meeting, held on 16 March, 2009 near Aviemore, was to discuss the provisional timetable and other procedural arrangements for the Inquiry. The meeting was chaired by the Reporters and the main parties attending were objectors, the National Park Authority and any interested members of the public. Dates were set for submission of important documents. Nothing was discussed that related to the content of the Local Plan or to any particular objection. A note of the meeting was prepared by the Reporters and was available on the CNPA website as soon as possible after the meeting.

6. How many people have objected to the Plan?

A total of 176 people objected to the Plan and they raised over 620 objections. It is important to remember that very many more people have been involved in helping to prepare the Plan and that some have either removed their objections at an earlier stage or have never commented formally.

7. Who objected to the Plan and why?

People who objected to the current draft of the Local Plan come from a range of backgrounds and include land-owners, building companies, local community representatives, non-governmental organisations and individuals. A full list of objectors, and why they objected, is on the CNPA website.

8. When did the Inquiry start and finish and where was it held?

The Inquiry, which was conducted by Scottish Government Reporters Mr Hugh Begg and Mrs Jill Moody, began on 18 May 2009 in Aviemore and finished on Thursday 4 June 2009. Sessions of the Inquiry were held at various locations in Aviemore and Ballater.

9. When will the report of the Inquiry be received and what is likely to be in it?

It is hoped that the final report from the Inquiry will be available in several months time. The report will include the Reporters' conclusions and recommendation on each matter and a list of their proposed modifications to the Plan.

10. If the Reporter finds against the objectors do they have a further right of appeal?

If further changes to the Plan are proposed by the Park Authority then there will be a further chance to comment on those changes. Anyone who wants to raise issues about how the Park Authority has complied with the Code of Practice for Local Plan Inquiries may take up the issue with the Park Authority and then the Local Ombudsman. And anyone who wishes to question the validity of the Plan on the basis that it does not comply with existing legislation may apply to the Court of Session.

11. Who pays for all this?

The costs of preparing the Local Plan, including holding the Inquiry and the cost of the Reporters, are borne by the National Park Authority which is funded by the Scottish Government.

12. What happens next? When does new Local Plan come into force?

Once the final report has been received, the National Park Authority will decide what action to take. The Park Authority is responsible for the final content of the Plan. Any proposed changes to the Plan will be publicised and a further opportunity for objection given. Then the Park Authority can take steps to formally adopt the Plan. This stage should take place early in 2010.

**Cairngorms National Park Authority
June 2009**